

PRINCIPLES FOR BIBLICAL PARENTING

Foundations

Lesson 1

The subject of parenting is huge both in importance and scope. Parents love their children and want to see them blessed. Sadly, many parents have no idea what is best for their children. Armed with good intentions, parents often wade through a never ending swamp of methods and techniques for parenting propagated by the world. They try one thing and then another, never really knowing which method is best. Other parents do what their parents did, after all they say, "It worked for me." Still others go to the latest book written by the most popular psychologist. There are also a surprising number of parents who never really study parenting at all, but just "wing it" one day at a time, doing whatever comes natural to them or what works the best for the moment. J. C. Ryle over 100 years ago said:

We live in days when there is a mighty zeal for education in every quarter. We hear of new schools rising on all sides. We are told of new systems, and new books for the young, of every sort and description. And still for all this, the vast majority of children are manifestly *not* trained in the way they should go, for when they grow up to man's estate, they do not walk with God.

Now how shall we account for this state of things? The plain truth is, the Lord's commandment in our text [Prov. 22:6] is not regarded; and therefore the Lord's promise in our text is not fulfilled.¹

In stark contrast to being tossed around by every wind of parenting, the Word of God gives us explicit instruction and absolute principles so we can know how to parent for His glory and the well being of our children. This series, "Principles for Biblical Parenting," will attempt to introduce you to what the Word of God says about parenting and to help you discover practical ways to apply biblical principles to raising children who give glory to God. This class will focus on 1) the foundations of Biblical parenting; 2) the resources for Biblical parenting; 3) the focus of biblical parenting; and 4) the method of biblical parenting. By the end of the class you should have been sufficiently exposed to what the Scriptures say about parenting to raise up children in the fear and admonition of the Lord.

I. **THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND**

- A. I am not a perfect parent.
- B. You love your children.
- C. You and I must submit to God's Word.
- D. I am not speaking about "your child."

¹ J. C. Ryle, *Duties to parents*, Old Paths Gospel Press, pg. 1.

- E. I am not speaking to your child, I am speaking to “the parent” of your child.

- F. Each child is different but the standard is the same for everyone.

- G. Biblical mandates, principles, convictions, legalism, and “things you can try”
 - 1. **Biblical Mandates** are specific commands given in Scripture which apply to believers. For example, **train up your child in the way they should go; Fathers do not provoke your children to anger; or children obey your parents in the Lord.** Biblical mandates are not optional for the Christian, they must be submitted to or you are sinning.

 - 2. **Biblical Principles** are timeless truths derived from the Word of God which He expects us to apply to our life. For example, you may be reading **Psalm 1** about the man who walks in the way of the Lord. Though this text does not mention parents specifically, it has principles which apply to parenting that must be observed. You must teach your children not to walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the path of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scoffers, but to delight in the law of the Lord and meditate on it day and night. Maybe you are reading the story of Abraham in **Gen. 22** and learn how Abraham put God first before his only son. There is a principle to learn from that text which you need to apply to your life as a parent. You must put God first before your children. We must apply biblical principles or we are sinning against God.

 - 3. **Convictions** are personal regulations which we make for ourselves and how we do things based on biblical mandates, scriptural principles, personal weaknesses, goals, or views. Let’s say you read in **Deut. 6:7** to “teach your children diligently.” How are you going to do that? There are many ways to teach a child diligently. Though teaching is mandated and diligence is necessary, how you diligently train is a matter of personal conviction.

 - 4. **Legalism** comes in several forms. **First**, legalism can take the form of thinking you can achieve righteousness before God by your good works. A **second form of legalism** is when a person tries to keep all of God’s commandments but not out of love and devotion to God. **Third and finally, legalism** can be the practice of trying to force your convictions on someone else. If you elevate your personal convictions and opinions to the same level and authority as the Scriptures, treating them like biblical mandates, you are practicing a form of legalism. The legalist believes others are sinning because they do not conform to his personal convictions. As parents we can find ways of applying biblical principles and mandates that work for us and then think that others are sinning because they are not doing it like we are. This is a form of legalism.

5. **Things you can try** will be mentioned frequently throughout the series. These things are pragmatic, helpful ways you might want to apply the biblical principles and mandates learned in the class. Though the Biblical mandates and principles must be obeyed and applied in parenting, “how they are applied” is often left up to the conviction of the parents. When you see a “Things You Can Try” section, do not confuse what must be done (biblical mandates and principles), with what might be done (Things you can try).

H. God’s grace is sufficient you

1. Zech. 4:6-7 Then he said to me, “This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel saying, ‘Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,’ says the Lord of hosts. 7‘What are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel *you will become* a plain; and he will bring forth the top stone with shouts of “Grace, grace to it!” ’ ”
2. Jn. 1:16 For of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace.
3. II Cor. 12:9 And He has said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.” Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me.
4. Eph. 1:7-9 In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace 8which He lavished on us. In all wisdom and insight 9He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him.

II. BIBLICAL PARENTS MUST BE SAVED

- A. If you died today, are you sure you would go to heaven?
- B. If you did die today, and you stood before the Lord, what would you say if He were to ask you, “Why should I let you into heaven?”
 - 1.
 - 2.

- C. What is the gospel? Or, what must a person do or believe in order to be saved?
- D. What is the fruit of salvation?
- E. Are you a Christian?
- F. What if you are not a Christian?

III. YOU MUST HAVE GOALS TO STRIVE FOR

- A. Strive for your child's salvation.
- B. Strive to train your child to walk in the ways of the Lord.
- C. Strive to train your child to become independent of you and dependent upon the Lord.
- D. Strive to constantly assess your child and form specific goals for them.
 - 1. Prioritize specific needs.
 - 2. Consider specific biblical methods.
 - 3. Evaluate specific progress.
 - 4. Reevaluate goals, methods and progress.
- E. Strive to become the best biblically informed parent you can be.

IV. YOU MUST KNOW WHAT YOU ARE AS A PARENT

A. You are a sinner like your child

1. Rom. 3:10-18, 23 as it is written, "There is none righteous, not even one; 11There is none who understands, There is none who seeks for God; 12All have turned aside, together they have become useless; There is none who does good, There is not even one." 13"Their throat is an open grave, With their tongues they keep deceiving," "The poison of asps is under their lips"; 14"Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness"; 15"Their feet are swift to shed blood, 16Destruction and misery are in their paths, 17And the path of peace they have not known." 18"There is no fear of God before their eyes." . . . 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,
2. I Jn. 1:8 If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us.

B. You are under God's authority

1. Deut. 8:3" He humbled you and let you be hungry, and fed you with manna which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that He might make you understand that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord.
2. Lk. 11:26-28 "Then it goes and takes *along* seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they go in and live there; and the last state of that man becomes worse than the first." 27While Jesus was saying these things, one of the women in the crowd raised her voice and said to Him, "Blessed is the womb that bore You and the breasts at which You nursed." 28But He said, "On the contrary, blessed are those who hear the word of God and observe it."
3. I Jn. 2:3; 5:3 By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. . . . 3For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome.

C. You are placed in authority over your child

1. Gen. 18:19 "For I have chosen him, so that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice, so that the Lord may bring upon Abraham what He has spoken about him."
2. Prov. 22:6 Train up a child in the way he should go, Even when he is old he will not depart from it.
3. Eph. 6:4 Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

V. YOU MUST KNOW WHAT YOUR CHILD IS

A. Your child is a sinner like you

1. Gen. 8:21 The Lord smelled the soothing aroma; and the Lord said to Himself, "I will never again curse the ground on account of man, for the intent of man's heart is evil from his youth; and I will never again destroy every living thing, as I have done.
2. Psa. 51:5 Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me.
3. Psa. 58:3 The wicked are estranged from the womb; These who speak lies go astray from birth.

B. Your child is under your authority

1. Prov. 1:8; 6:20; 23:22 8 Hear, my son, your father's instruction And do not forsake your mother's teaching; . . .20 My son, observe the commandment of your father And do not forsake the teaching of your mother; . . . 22 Listen to your father who begot you, And do not despise your mother when she is old.
2. Eph. 6:1-3 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 2Honor your father and mother (which is the first commandment with a promise), 3so that it may be well with you, and that you may live long on the earth.
3. Col. 3:20 Children, be obedient to your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing to the Lord.

C. Your child is a stewardship entrusted to you

1. Psa. 127:3-5 Behold, children are a gift of the Lord, The fruit of the womb is a reward. 4Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, So are the children of one's youth. 5How blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them; They will not be ashamed When they speak with their enemies in the gate.
2. I Cor. 4:1-7 Let a man regard us in this manner, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. 2In this case, moreover, it is required of stewards that one be found trustworthy. 3But to me it is a very small thing that I may be examined by you, or by any human court; in fact, I do not even examine myself. 4For I am conscious of nothing against myself, yet I am not by this acquitted; but the one who examines me is the Lord. 5Therefore do not go on passing judgment before the time, but wait until the Lord comes who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of men's hearts; and then each man's praise will come to him from God. 6Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively applied to myself and Apollos for your sakes, so that in us you may learn not to exceed what is written, so that no one of you will become arrogant in behalf of one against the other. 7For who regards you as superior? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?

3. I Cor. 10:31 Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

D. You are to be a student of your child as they grow²

1. Infant (1-6 months)
2. Toddler (7 months to 3 years)
3. Child (4 to 11 years)
4. Young adult (12-17)
5. Adult (18-969)

VI. **YOU MUST BE COMMITTED TO HARD WORK**

A. Deut 6:6-12 “These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. 7You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. 8“You shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. 9““You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. 10“Then it shall come about when the Lord your God brings you into the land which He swore to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to give you, great and splendid cities which you did not build, 11and houses full of all good things which you did not fill, and hewn cisterns which you did not dig, vineyards and olive trees which you did not plant, and you eat and are satisfied, 12then watch yourself, that you do not forget the Lord who brought you from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.”

1. You must work hard to put God’s word in your own heart.
2. You must work hard to diligently put God’s word in your child’s heart.
 - a) You shall talk of them when you sit in your house.
 - b) You shall talk of them when you walk by the way.
 - c) You shall talk about the Word of God when you lie down.

² The ages listed in the various stages of child growth are arbitrary and not biblically defined. They provided as representations of various ages in a child’s growth.

- d) You shall talk about the Word of God when you rise up.
3. You shall keep the Word of God ever before you.
- a) You shall apply the Word of God in all that your hands do.
 - b) You shall keep the Word of God in the forefront of your mind.
 - c) You shall remind yourself of the Word of God as you enter into your house.
 - d) You shall remind yourself of the Word of God when go out into the world.
4. You shall be careful not to forget the Lord, by forgetting to do everything He tells you to do as a parent.
- B. You must work hard to parent when it is convenient.
- C. You must work hard to parent when it is inconvenient.

Parents sometimes complain that they cannot teach their children, they are so wilful. Ah, if they were as wilful as we are towards God, we should have cause enough to complain. The teacher says, “ I have taught this child nineteen times, and he will not learn; ” but God has taught us nineteen thousand times- “ Line upon line, and precept upon precept, here a little and there a little; ” every day has had its word and every night its sentence; and yet we are like the deaf adder, which will not hear the voice of the charmer, though he charm never so wisely. This is humbling, but it is true. God makes us feel it to be true, and puts us in a proper frame of mind on account of it.³

³ Spurgeon, Charles H. , “Kicking Against The Pricks” Vol. 12, Spurgeon’s Sermons: electronic ed. Logos Library System; Albany, OR: Ages Software, 1998.