

# Family Matters Blog

## Part 5

### *The Goals Of Parenting*

Whenever I have gone with someone to the shooting range or hunting with friends, our main goal is to shoot at something precisely, not to just shoot into the air, which can have serious consequences. Paul said, “Run in such a way that you may win... Therefore, I run in such a way as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air” (1 Cor. 9:24b, 26). He told the Philippian church, “I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 3:14). He told Timothy, “The goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith” (1 Tim. 1:5).

What you aim at matters ultimately because it defines what you will need to do to hit your target accurately. Your focus is not just on what is nearby, but what will be the end result. It is the same way with parenting. If you don't know what you ultimately hope to see in your children, you will have no idea if you ever get there, or discern what is important to do today to get you where you want them to be tomorrow. If you take your eyes off the goal, you will miss it every time.

Before we can look at our target and what is behind it, we need to honestly evaluate where our kids are presently. We call this honest situational awareness. We need to bring our optic in line with where we are aiming. If our scope is even a fraction off, we will completely miss our target. What are our child's present patterns of behavior? Honesty is the best policy.

#### **Evaluate your children individually:**

- Are they usually obedient when asked to do something, or are they constantly needing to be asked to obey and fight your correction?
- Do they have a willing, compliant heart, or are they known for whining, complaining, and not listening to your reproof?
- Are they honoring and respectful to authority, or are they disrespectful in their tone of voice and attitude to you and others?

- Do they desire to read God’s Word and attend church, or do you have to fight them to do so, and they are spiritually disinterested and apathetic?
- Are they peaceful and able to play contentedly using their creative gifts, or are they discontent, restless, easily agitated, and prone to anger?
- Do they have eyes to see things that need to be done and are helpful and hardworking around the home, or are they lazy, feel entitled, wanting others to serve them, self-centered, or demanding?
- Do they acknowledge their sin, repent, and change for good, or do they live with unconfessed sin, and are unconcerned about the spiritual consequences or any future judgment?
- Have they professed their faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and are they demonstrating the fruit of regeneration, or are they uncertain of any personal faith or assurance of their salvation? Do you doubt they are saved? Do they know where they are with God?
- Are they focused on others and giving preference to siblings or friends, or are they self-centered, selfish, and hedonistic?
- Do they exhibit godly interests, wholesome speech, good friendship choices, and a humble attitude, or do they exhibit a love for the world and things in the world as seen in their pride, choices, pursuits, words, and bad friendships?
- Do they fear God and live accordingly, or do they fear man and live accordingly?
- Do they live to please God, or do they live to please themselves and the secular culture?
- Do they exhibit the fruit of the Spirit, or do they exhibit the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life?
- Do they have a desire to be a positive witness for Jesus Christ to their unsaved friends, or do they blend in with their unsaved friends and follow carnal peer pressure in their words and actions?
- Do you have great joy at home with your kids, or are you usually worn out, angry, and frustrated with your children’s behavior and attitudes?
- Is your home a place of love and peace, or a place of war and bitterness?
- Are you satisfied with where your kids are heading, or do you find yourself constantly wishing they were something or someone else?

As you come to your parenting, what is your ultimate goal? What are you ultimately shooting for in your kids? What are you trying to accomplish with what you do with your children in the 0-18+ years you have with them under your roof? What do you hope for them as far as who they are, what

they know, and what they should experience, as you train them to leave your home? What ultimately do you want from your children?

**The Goal Of Parenting:** (desired end result)

- What are you ultimately trying to accomplish in your parenting?

Galatians 4:19 “My children, with whom I am again in labor **until Christ is formed in you.**”

Ephesians 4:13a, 15b “Until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, **to a mature man.**” “We are to grow up in all aspects into Him, who is the head, even Christ.”

Colossians 1:27b, 28, 29a “**Christ in you**, the hope of glory.” “We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, **that we may present every man complete in Christ . . .** for this purpose also I labor.”

Ephesians 6:4b “Bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.”

Proverbs 1:8, 3, 4 “Hear my son your father’s instruction and do not forsake your mother’s teaching.” “To receive instruction in wise behavior, righteousness, justice and equity; to give prudence to the naive, to the youth knowledge and discretion.”

Proverbs 2:1, 3, 5, 6, 9, 12a “My son . . .” “If you cry for discernment, lift your voice for understanding . . . then you will discern the fear of the LORD and discover the knowledge of God. For the LORD gives wisdom . . . then you will discern righteousness and justice and equity and every good course . . . to deliver you from the way of evil.”

- What should a godly teenager look like?

Colossians 1:9, 10, 28 “For this reason... we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.”

Three tangible goals:

1. That my children come to know God (salvation)

Yes, ultimately God is the One who changes our children’s hearts through the gospel, but we are tasked with both presenting the gospel and living the

gospel before our children faithfully. If we fail to disciple our own children, we are responsible.

2. That my children grow in their knowledge of God so they can please Him (sanctification). We are tasked to bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. If we fail in this task, we are responsible.
3. So their life will produce visible evidence of Jesus Christ being their Savior and Lord (fruitfulness). Spiritual fruit will be the end result of #1 and #2.

Psalms 144:12, 15 “Let our sons in their youth be as grown-up plants, and our daughters as corner pillars fashioned as for a palace. How blessed are the people who are so situated, how blessed are the people whose God is the LORD!”

Proverbs 20:11 “A child (teen) makes himself known by his acts, by whether his conduct is pure and upright.” (ESV)

- As parents, we need to re-evaluate what we want for our children.

Our culture has a different definition of what is successful. This fallen world puts more emphasis on a life making money or being comfortable. Biblically, God defines a life by one’s heart and one’s character that flows from it. God defines success not based on what we can do, what we have, or the position we hold, but on who we are. Proverbs 4:23 says that out of the heart flows everything (1 Sam. 16:7). Godly fear begins the maturing process (Prov. 1:7; 9:10).

### **A Spiritually Maturing Teenager Should Exhibit:**

(We ultimately want our child to demonstrate these qualities when they leave our home.)

- True repentance and faith in Christ, and give evidence of Christ being Lord and Savior in his/her lifestyle choices
- Godly fear & a desire to glorify God by turning from sin to God in obedience
- A heart for God: spending time in God’s Word/prayer (internally motivated)
- A brokenness over lost people & desire to share the gospel with unbelievers
- A diligent, hard work ethic (dependable/responsible/persevering)
- A teachable spirit with a positive attitude towards listening, learning, and heeding which shows up in wise choices.
- A humble, sacrificial, servant’s heart (personal initiative to serve others)
- Honor, respect, and obedience to all God-given authority

- A clean conscience before God demonstrating personal purity and self-control
- A generous, giving, compassionate, content heart when it comes to money and things
- Good stewardship, right perspective, and thankfulness with personal things
- A desire for godly friendships and personal purity (relationships)
- A sense of personal direction, life goals, self-discipline, and wise use of time
- Pursuing Christ-likeness in word, attitude, motive, thought, and behavior
- Trustworthy (truthful) and faithful in the little things
- A love for the Church and a desire to be with God's people (fellowship)

To reach these goals as parents, we need to focus our children's discipline and instruction in the Lord on these aspects of Christian living: the gospel, expecting obedience, teaching honor, training in a good work ethic, biblical manhood, biblical womanhood, and righteous behavior. We need to focus our own parenting on a biblical understanding of the nature of a child, correct modeling, fatherhood, motherhood, loving discipline, faithful instruction, and how to guard our homes from ungodly influences. We also need to evaluate our choice of education, ways we spend time together as a family, and how we see the church and service. We need to be intentional concerning these things. These will affect the end result.

These are things we desire in our children one day. If we live obediently to God's Word as parents, we should see the fruit of our labor, Lord willing. Each of these character traits is possible in a teenager who has responded to the gospel, and Christ has done a work in their heart. 2 Corinthians 5:17 says, "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come." The gospel has a real affect in the life and character of a child. We do not expect perfection, but the direction of a child's life that knows Christ, should thereby reflect Christ in their character and the fruit produced.

If these things are not evident in our teenagers, it is because either they are not saved and cannot bear spiritual fruit, or we have not disciplined and instructed them in the Lord, and they are reflecting our failures as parents with what we have modeled before them daily. Children are great mirrors and imitators. Luke 6:40 says, "A pupil is not above his teacher; but everyone, after he has been fully trained, will be like his teacher."

### **A Christian Parent's Ultimate Goals Are:**

Ultimately, we want to work ourselves out of a job. We want to train and prepare our children to leave home and succeed in life as mature believers. We want to train and equip them to effectively live on their own as adults, whether they get married or remain single (Genesis 2:24). We want to glorify God in every aspect of our parenting and family (1 Corinthians 10:31), so that one day we can hear Jesus say, "Well done." (Matt. 25:21a).

May we see our goals of parenting biblically through God's eyes, and define successful parenting according to God's Word. Only God can change the heart of our children, which will ultimately be reflected in who they are and the way they live. These goals are possible (Deut. 30:11, 14). God is faithful, even when we are not. No parent or child is perfect, but if we live in obedience to God's Word, we will see visible blessing in ourselves and our kids. Because He said so and I believe it wholeheartedly. I have seen it true in my own family. Praise God.

Dale Payne