

PARENT-CHILD EVANGELISM
Part 1

Godly Parenting: Preparing and Protecting Your Child's Heart

For the parent who has been a recipient of God's saving grace, there is nothing more important than seeing their children enter into a real, living relationship with God through the Lord Jesus Christ. The process of evangelizing one's children is a solemn task that presents many challenges and questions. In this series called "Your Child's Salvation" you will be instructed on how to Biblically evangelize your children.

One of the most important things for parents to remember is that it is God who saves. One of the worst things you can do as a parent is run ahead of God and generate a meaningless "decision" from your children. You must remember that God desires the salvation of your children even more than you do (2 Pet 3:9). You can be assured that God is faithful and He will do His part – you just need to concentrate all of your efforts on faithfully doing *your* part.

In reality, you can have about as much of a role in the conversion of your children as you can have in making a plant grow. You can sow the seed, water, fertilize, and pull weeds from the soil, but only God can make the plant grow and produce fruit (1 Cor 3:7). What follows are four ways that the godly parent can Biblically prepare the soil of their child's heart for salvation.

#1: Sow Good Seed into the Soil

If a plant is ever going to grow and bear fruit, necessity dictates that seed must be sown. *From a Biblical standpoint, the seed is the Word of God* (Luke 8:11). God has ordained that He will save individuals through His Word (James 1:18, 1 Pet 1:23-25). It is the Gospel of Jesus Christ that is "the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth" (Rom 1:16). If you desire the salvation of your children, you must diligently teach them the Word of God (2 Tim 3:15).

The mandate to teach children the Word of God has been given to parents (Read Deut 6:6-7). This passage shows that the focus of this teaching is on *thoroughness*. Don't just teach your children that Jonah was swallowed by a big fish and that Daniel was thrown into a lion's den. Teach them the vital truths and applications from these accounts. Teach them about who God is, God's law, our sin and need for a Savior, God's judgment, what happened on the cross, the significance of the resurrection, and the necessity of true repentance and saving faith. Look for opportunities throughout the day to teach your children Scriptural truth. Then, set aside a special time each day dedicated to this purpose. For my family, we have incorporated "Bible Time" into our bedtime ritual. I teach them the Word of God and pray with them each night before bed. They cherish and look forward to this time. *(Note: For practical tips on teaching your children the Bible, visit www.SowingtheWord.org.)*

Perhaps you are a little fearful and nervous about teaching your children spiritual truths. Well, it is true that this responsibility does make it necessary for the parent to dedicate themselves to personally learn and grow in God's Word. The bottom-line is this: If you are truly seeking the salvation of your children, you must teach them the Word of God. It is hypocritical for you to pray for God to save them if you are blatantly rebelling against the means through which God uses to

work salvation. The truth is you *can* do it. The teaching doesn't have to be fancy or long. Children love spending time with their parents. Plus, remember, all of the Bible stories are new to them. It is very exciting!

#2: Fertilize and Water the Soil

The best way to encourage the growth of any seed is to ensure that the soil is properly fertilized and watered. *From a Biblical standpoint, we fertilize and water the Gospel seed through godly living and prayer.*

Fertilize the soil of your child's heart through godly living. The parent's goal should be for their children to believe and receive the Scriptural truths they are teaching. The key to getting your children to respect what you say is for them to respect the one saying it. As you daily teach them the Word of God, they have the unique opportunity to observe whether or not you truly believe and act upon what you are teaching. When there is a consistency between what parents teach and what they do, the impact is profound. On the other hand, nothing will dissipate respect more than hypocrisy. If you desire for your children to love Jesus and to live a life surrendered to Him, then that is the life you need to live before them. Your children will equate Christianity to whatever they see you do. Your priorities in life, your devotion to Christ, the things you do, the things you don't do, the things you say, and the things you watch on TV will either substantiate or negate the Biblical truths you teach your children.

Water the soil of your child's heart through persistent intercessory prayer. God desires for us to pray for the salvation of others (1 Tim 2:1-4). The Apostle Paul prayed for the salvation of souls (Rom 10:1). We are told that we can pray with great confidence when we pray in the will of God (1 Jn 5:14-15), and the salvation of souls is certainly in the will of God (1 Tim 2:4, 2 Pet 3:9, Luke 19:10). How much more fitting is it for parents to pray for the salvation of their own children whom God has specially placed in their care? Begin praying daily for the salvation of your children and never stop until they come to Christ and you see their life transformed and bearing fruit through an enduring love for Jesus.

#3: Address Soils Issues As They Are Spotted

Any good gardener will address soil issues when they see them. *From a Biblical standpoint we address soil issues through properly disciplining our children.* The world seeks to provide alternative methods to replace discipline; however, the fruit of their methods is easily identified. An undisciplined child is without exception an overtly selfish and rebellious child. The Bible says, "He that spareth his rod *hateth* his son: but he that *loveth* him chasteneth him promptly" (Prov 13:24). Discipline teaches children a proper perspective on accountability, authority, the reality and effects of sin, and the evil of self. If you do not teach them the proper perspective, they will naturally develop a wrong perspective on these vital topics. The effect is that you are working against, not towards, the goal of seeking their eternal salvation. The Bible says, "Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell" (Prov 23:13-14). That goal is precisely the topic of this series. Discipline your children with love and for the purpose of instruction, but do not withhold discipline from them. See also Prov 22:15; 29:15.

#4: Eliminate the Weeds

Once a plant begins to take root, one of the greatest dangers for the plant is weeds. Weeds are deadly. They will choke a plant and will steal the moisture and nutrients from the soil. Weeds must

be eliminated. *From a Biblical standpoint we eliminate weeds through removing the false and evil influences from our child's life.* These deadly influences can be either worldly or religious.

Be sure to eliminate the weeds of the world. If you allow the weeds of the world to have a place in your home, damage will be done. Be aware of the friends your children hang out with (Prov 13:20). Be aware of what your children are being taught in school. *You* are responsible for their instruction and upbringing (Eph 6:4). Be aware of what your children are allowed to see. Would you let people have sex in front of your children? Would you let people tempt your children sexually? Certainly not! Yet, that is exactly what you will get through most television shows and movies. Even if you closely monitor what shows they watch, the advertisements are still filled with sexuality, immorality, materialism, and the promotion of self-centeredness. The Bible instructs us to remove evil from our eyes (Pslm 101:3). Be sure that the influences you allow to enter your home can stand the test of Phil 4:8. If you truly want to see your children come to Christ, do not stop at any measure in ensuring that you cultivate the soil of their heart to the best of your ability.

Be sure to eliminate the weeds of false religion. There is nothing more powerful and deadly than a religious lie. The Devil operates in the realm of false religion (2 Cor 11:13-15). Do not even allow your family to be exposed to religious teaching that compromises the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ in any way (Gal 1:6-9). For example:

1. Be sure that you faithfully bring your children to a church where Jesus is taught as both Savior and Lord, that He is God become flesh, lived a perfect life, fulfilled all prophecies of the promised Christ, died a sin atoning death, rose victoriously, ascended to Heaven, and is coming again.
2. Be sure you bring them to a church where sin is exposed as sin and the judgment of God is assured. Be sure that our sin and the righteous judgment of God is clearly given as the motive for sinners to repent and come to Jesus, as opposed to unbiblical motives such as happiness, better life, etc.
3. Be sure you bring them to a church that does not downplay the Gospel commands of repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ by urging individuals to simply "ask Jesus into their heart". The former is the example of Jesus and the Apostles, the later is not found in the Scriptures at all.
4. Be sure that you bring them to a church that teaches assurance of salvation on the basis of Biblical evidence in a person's present life rather than on the basis of a time of decision (2 Cor 13:5). Such unbiblical practices are clear evidence that the leaders and teachers in the church do not understand the Biblical Gospel. Their false teaching serves only to console false converts and then confuse them when they are truly convicted and seek answers.

As a parent, you must do everything you can to ensure that the conversion of your child is genuine. Your children will place great confidence in the teaching they receive from religious leaders. It is paramount that you ensure your children receive the complete truth from these leaders. One of the most vital things you can do to protect your children from false conversion is to eliminate their exposure to the weeds of false religion.

Closing Remarks

I appreciate you taking time to review these Biblical principles for ministering to the heart of your children. In the next portion of "Your Child's Salvation" we will discuss "The ABC's of Child Evangelism". In that teaching, we will review some of the finer details of evangelizing your children.

