

life groups' sermon guide

the secret ingredient

colossians 1:28-2:5



LIFE GROUPS

doing life together

Small groups exist at Kingsway to provide authentic relationships for the life application of the CORE 4 elements of worship, grow, serve, and share

“I just want my kids to love who they are, live happy lives and find something they want to do and make peace with that. Your job as a parent is to give your kids not only the instincts and talents to survive, but to help them enjoy their lives.”

Susan Sarandon

“If you raise your children to feel that they can accomplish any goal or task they decide upon, you will have succeeded as a parent and you will have given your children the greatest of all blessings.”

Brian Tracey

“These [10] commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.”

Deuteronomy 6: 6-9

The Job of Parenting

Parenting is a full-time job. But, unlike a job, as a parent you don't punch in and out, you have very few vacation days, you can't resign, and you even have to go in on weekends. It is hard work. Period. Like a job, we want to do it well.

Success by whose definition? That is what comes to my mind when I read the three quotes above. All of them talk about a Hallmark of Success of some sort in the parenting arena. When our kids were very little they were also very difficult. My wife and I often said at the time that our measure of parenting success was having made it another year without killing somebody. We all want to be successful parents – but what does that look like?

Q: Compare, contrast and comment on the quotes above.

Ms. Sarandon talked about what your job is as a parent, and Mr. Tracey talked about how to know you've succeeded as a parent. Assuming they might have missed the mark – and in light of the passage in Deut. 6 – discuss the following:

Q: What is your “job” as a parent – and how do you measure how successful you are at it?

Q: What else does culture tell are marks of good parenting?

Q: How have your own experiences with your parents influenced how you parent – for better or for worse?

Q: Talk about the role and importance of grandparents in parenting.

A Hostile Workplace

As parents – and as grandparents who want to be a strong, positive and godly influence on their grandchildren – we have our work cut out for us. We live in a world bursting at the seams with distractions of every shape, size and sort. Distractions that compete for the hearts and minds of our children. We have unprecedented access to any number of things to fill in every nook and cranny of our free-time. We can be completely “plugged in” – and yet disconnected from each other and the pursuit of those things that might actually help us achieve our goals of raising Christian kids. Take electronic media, for example. Computers are no longer just big boxes sitting on the floor in your office or home. Our daughter can carry the entirety of the internet in her pocket via her iPod Touch. While the internet can be a great resource for research and information, connecting with friends via social media, fun and games, etc., it can also be a minefield – and a spiritual battlefield. Consider these statistics:

- 9 out of 10 children between the ages of 8 and 16 have viewed pornography on the Internet¹
- Average age of first Internet exposure to pornography: 11 years old²
- Adult industry says traffic is 20-30% children (NRC Report 2002, 3.3)³
- Largest consumer of Internet pornography: 12 - 17 year-old age group⁴

No wonder the U.S. Department of Justice reported in 1996 that: “Never before in the history of telecommunications media in the United States has so much indecent (and obscene) material been so easily accessible by so many minors in so many American homes with so few restrictions.” And they said this in 1996 – 14 years ago, which is like 75 in internet years.

Our children are growing up in a time where the world’s moral compass looks like Jack Sparrow’s device from the Pirates of the Caribbean movies (if you haven’t seen it, the thing spun every which way, giving no clear sense of direction). A 2008 study by the Barna Group on immoral behaviors revealed a new moral code taking shape in America. George Barna says this:

“We are witnessing the development and acceptance of a new moral code in America. Mosaics [young adults 18-24] have had little exposure to traditional moral teaching and limited accountability for such behavior. The moral code began to disintegrate when the generation before them - the Baby Busters - pushed the limits that had been challenged by their parents - the Baby Boomers. The result is that without much fanfare or visible leadership, the U.S. has created a moral system based on convenience, feelings, and selfishness.

“The consistent deterioration of the Bible as the source of moral truth has led to a nation where people have become independent judges of right and wrong, basing their choices on feelings and circumstances. It is not likely that America will return to a more traditional moral code until the nation experiences significant pain from its moral choices.”

Q: What evidence of this new moral code do we see in how people are parenting? What are the real-world consequences?

Q: What **else** does Scripture have to say about how we are to parent?

Q: How has having more choices and options for filling our time complicated our jobs as parents?

Q: What are some of the other challenges facing parents who are trying to raise Christian children?

Q: Read the passage from Deut. 6 again. What are some real-world practical ways to apply that in our life?

Q: Look at Deut. 6 again – Notice the one crucial thing that has to happen before we begin teaching these commandments to our children. They must be on OUR hearts **first**. In what ways can we tangibly demonstrate to our kids the importance of a life of faith?

Time to Roll Up Our Sleeves

I told a client of mine recently who had just had their first child that being a parent was the most wonderful thing – and the absolute hardest thing – they would ever do. The job of parenting in 2010 is not for the faint-of-heart. The problem is that it can be so very easy to do what we might do at work – and even in our relationship with God: put things on auto-pilot. As we struggle to simplify our own lives, tame our schedules, navigate the relationship to our spouse and struggle to make time to read the Bible and spend time alone with God – by the time we get to parenting we're probably feeling the need to put *something* on auto-pilot.

Writer Massimo Lorenzini says that your primary goal as a parent is to be their primary evangelist. He writes

A parent makes the best evangelist for a child. How can you accomplish this goal? Recognize that evangelizing your child is not an event, but a lifestyle.

If we are not careful, we may fall short in the same way that the church sometimes does: in discipleship. We get our kids to the cross, they confess Christ and are baptized – then we fail to teach them how to be disciples and followers of Christ.

Q: How is evangelizing our children a lifestyle and not an event – and why is that distinction important?

I really like what John MacArthur writes in *Successful Christian Parenting*:

Christian parents today are begging for more detailed programs, step-by-step methodologies, and meticulously delineated instructions. Parenting gurus happily oblige. They offer detailed plans for feeding infants *God's Way*; *Christian* methods for toilet-training toddlers; extensive lists of do's and don'ts governing preschoolers' social lives; and similar catalogs of rules for every stage of life up to marriage. ...

Many parents live in terror that something they do wrong might mar their child's otherwise virtuous character in some irreparable way. They think if something goes wrong in childhood, the child might drift spiritually or wander morally. But the truth is that our children are already marred by sin from the moment they are conceived. The drive to sin is embedded in their very natures. All that is required for the tragic harvest is that children be allowed to give unrestrained expression to those evil desires.

In other words, children do not go bad because of something their parents do. They are born sinful, and that sinfulness manifests itself because of what their parents do *not* do. ...

Q: Being overly busy can make it difficult to make Christ front and center in our life. How do we bring our relationship to Christ more into the chaos, instead of waiting for the whirlwind of activity to settle and life to be all laid-back and simple to make it easier?

Q: The last part of the excerpt from MacArthur reminds me of James MacDonald's definition of sin in his book *Downpour*. MacDonald says that sin is not just the evil that is done, but it is the "good left undone". How does the good left undone in our parenting impact our children?

Q: Conversely, Chuck Swindoll cautions against being so deeply entrenched in spiritualizing everything with our kids that we end up giving them something to rebel against when they get older. Is there truth in this idea as well? If so, how do we strike a good balance?

Conclusion:

I have working through Deuteronomy in my personal devotional time and have found SO much great instruction there. I have heard that it is the most quoted book of the Old Testament by Christ Himself. Like any parent repeats things to their children that they want to make sure they don't miss, I have noticed God, as my divine parent, repeating something over and over in the early parts of Deuteronomy. If He is repeating something SO much, it is probably something He wants to make sure we don't miss. Follow me on this. Read these passages in Deuteronomy:

4:6

4:9

4:15

5:32

6:3

6:12

6:25

7:11

8:1

8:11

The message seems very clear. Be **careful** to do these things. I find it interesting that the instruction to parents in Deut. 6 falls squarely in the midst of all this admonishment to be careful. I think God tells us this because He knows how care-less His children can be. If we are not intentional in our parenting, then we will be careless and lazy at best – or haphazard at worst. With such an important responsibility before us, let's pray this week for God to show us where we need to take greater care to follow His lead in parenting the lives for which He has made us stewards.

footnotes:

1. London School of Economics January 2002. 2. Internet Filter Review 3. NRC Report 2002, 3.3 4. various sources as of 2007