

**Shepherding a Child's Heart**  
**Ephesians 6:1-4**

Delivered by Dr. Daniel Kitinoja at Calvary Baptist Church, Tilton, IL  
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Well, good morning.

February is family month here at Calvary.

And along with that, we always have one sermon that I actually usually begin with, and it has to do with a biblical perspective on parenting.

And the truth is, we as Christians need that because we live in a country, in a culture, in a world that is confused about the purpose of parenting.

And as Christians, we will labor to be biblical in our parenting, but we still are sort of bombarded by these messages as to what parenting is about.

And even as I get moved into this sermon today, I was reminded as I was sitting on the front pew from a recent study I came across, that in our area, we have a high concentration of grandparents who are functioning as parents.

So this would be good information for everyone.

And also even as we go along, we're going to learn some things that even if you're not currently raising children, it will help you understand exactly what God is doing in our hearts and lives.

But our culture is confused about what our job is as parents.

And so sometimes we might, I think lately it seems like the purpose of parenting is to make sure our kids get the best.

What do I mean?

The best shoes, the best clothes, get into the best college.

We must be our child's best friend.

And those things are not bad, but that is not the purpose of parenting.

And we have a country that's kind of confused about parenting, about our authority as parents.

Are the parents in authority or are we not?

And sometimes we think we are, but then sometimes it seems like maybe the school system or the government has more authority.

You say, are you sure about that?

Well, in the last decade, I've heard of reports repeatedly, actually, of children having abortions and the parents were not notified, children deciding to change their gender, but the parents were kept in the dark by the school system.

My question is, would somebody do that if they didn't think the parents were actually ultimately in authority?

And so there's confusion in the culture, but there's confusion in the church.

And so we need to hear from the voice of God.

And so parents, I want you to know, here's what God's Word is going to teach us.

According to God's Word, you have been given authority to shepherd your child's heart.

When we do this well, we will be empowering them to be self-controlled people living under the authority of God.

When we do this well, when we use the authority we have from God to shepherd the hearts of our children, we will be empowering them to be self-controlled people living under the authority of God.

We see that this morning beginning in Ephesians 6.

So go ahead and turn to Ephesians 6.

While you're turning there, I'll give you the big picture of the book.

The Apostle Paul has gone to Ephesus.

He has preached the Gospel.

People believe the Gospel, that Jesus Christ died on the cross to pay for our sins and rose again.

They believe it, receive it, they get saved and a church is formed.

Some time has gone on, he has left and gone to other churches, preached the Gospel, started other churches.

Well, now he's in prison.

It's been seven years since he's been in Ephesus and he writes a letter and he's teaching them some instructions.

And here's what he, in the first three chapters, he says, God has done this amazing thing by sending Jesus Christ.

He has executed his plan to bring salvation to the nations and now we are saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, not of works.

This was the plan from the foundation of the earth.

And then he gets in the chapter four, he says, because of what Jesus did, here's how I want you to start living.

Be a person who brings unity in your church.

I want you to serve one another.

God's given you a spiritual gift, use that to serve other people.

And then he goes on and he gets into chapter five and he says, hey, you're children of God, so live like it.

Here's how I want you to live when you're interacting with people outside of the church who don't know Jesus.

And then he says, and here's how I want you to function in your families.

Husbands, this is how you're to treat your wives.

Wives desire to respond to your husband's leadership.

And now in chapter six, he starts to speak to the fathers and the children.

And basically what he's going to tell them is, dad, and in our culture, you've got unmatched authority in the home, as the father of that home.

But here's what I want you to know.

You are a man under authority.

You are under Christ's authority.

And kids, listen, most people weren't addressing children at that time, but he says, children, because you come to Christ, here's how I want you to respond to that God-given authority.

And so here's what we read in Ephesians chapter six, verse one to four.

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.

Honor your father and mother.

This is the first commandment with a promise that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.

Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the instruction of the Lord.

Let's pray.

Father in heaven, we thank you that you have given us a sure word on every topic in a time where we are very confused about right and wrong and truth and purpose and beauty.

I pray, Father, that as we look at the Word of God today, you would encourage us as parents and grandparents who are shepherding children.

I pray for our kids, that you'd bless them, let them come to Jesus for salvation, and learn to follow Him.

It's in Jesus' name we pray.

Amen.

That section concludes with a statement, and hey, Dad, here's how you are to function as a father and at home.

Don't exasperate your children.

There's a lot of ways the dad can exasperate children.

There's two basic ways that I've seen repeated over and over.

One is to completely be disengaged from the lives of your children, and the other is to be overbearing and such in the life of your children.

This tends to exasperate the kids, but he says, here's what I want you to do.

Don't exasperate your kids, but do raise them in the fear of the Lord.

Teach them how to follow Jesus Christ, because dad, God has placed you in authority over your children.

Mom, God has placed you over in authority over your children.

And dad, mom, you have authority in the home, but you are a person who functions under the

authority of Christ.

Both parent and child must understand that we are under God's authority.

A few weeks back, one of the kids said, hey, if we read the same passage, one of the kids got the point.

And the point was this.

You as a kid can't obey God if you're not obeying your parents.

Spot on theology.

And so this is what Paul is getting at here.

And so parents, we must use our authority to shepherd our child's heart.

Now that gives me to a question.

I read that and I said, that word shepherd, I'm a pastor, so I kind of know what we're getting at here.

What do we mean when we say shepherd?

We're talking about leading, guiding, and protecting the heart of the child.

Leading, guiding, protecting the heart of a child.

As parents, we of course know we're going to try to put clothes on the back and food on the table and all those things.

And if an intruder breaks in, well, good luck, right?

They're going to be dealt with.

But when we're talking about shepherding the heart of a child, we're talking about leading, guiding, and protecting them.

There's a lot of influences in our world that are not always, they don't always have the child's best interest at heart.

And so as parents, we need to be on the lookout and do what we can to protect.

As grandparents, the same is true.

But why guard the heart?

Well, according to God's word, our behavior is produced by our heart.

Our pretty, our behavior is produced by heart.

It doesn't mean that muscle that pumps blood.

It's talking about your inner person, your character.

As Ted Tripp calls it, the control center of the human life.

That's the heart.

Proverbs 423 speaks of this.

Keep your heart or guard your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life.

Years ago, Chrissy and I, she just brought this up yesterday.

We used to be in our youth ministry.

We partnered with other youth ministries to collect money from students and they bought wells for Africa.

I think that was actually the title of the ministry.

Why?

Well, because in Africa and some places like Africa and other countries around the world, the difference between life and death or a quality of life boils down to healthy, clean water.

And so we would collect our money.

We'd buy these, this group would buy these water filtration systems and send them overseas.

I imagine the water tasted better, but it removed things like dysentery and other things which made them get sick and sometimes die too young.

So think that image.

And now when he says, guard your heart with all vigilance.

Remember, toxic things that make its way into our hearts can affect, they affect everything we do.

They affect everything we do.

Our words, our actions, our decision making.

And it's true for us as adults and it's true for our children.

And so as parents, we're trying to guard our hearts against these things.

Jesus himself spoke of this as well.

Listen to what he says in Mark 7, verse 20 to 23.

He said, What comes out of a person is what defiles him.

He's saying, it's not the food you eat.

So if you had pork chops last night, you're fine.

Verse 21, For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness.

All these things come from within, and they defile a person.

What Adrian Rogers said, he said, Well, what's down in the well comes up in the bucket.

What's down in the well of our heart comes up in our words, our actions, our decisions.

And that's why as parents, we want to guide, protect, and guard the hearts of our children.

And we're even also looking to shape our children.

What difference does this make?

Well, we must understand that heart attitudes direct behavior.

The core personality is what directs behavior.

So the heart is the issue, not just the behavior.

So where does the rubber meet the road?

Well, you know, parents, sometimes our kids say and do things that are kind of annoying.

But as parents, when we discipline, it can't be because they are annoying to us today.

It has to be for their good and the glory of God.

And so when we discipline as parents, we have to understand while the behavior is the symptom, there's something going on in the root.

There's a fruit and there's a root.

The root is in the heart.

And the fruit is the behavior, that tendency to listen, if your kids don't like to share, I don't know if, I don't know how many kids are like that, but it seems like a lot of them, they don't want to share.

That's a heart issue.

If they're willing to lie to mom and dad, that's a heart issue.

If they don't think they have to obey the authority of mom and dad, that's a heart issue.

If they think they don't have to pay attention at school or can disobey and dishonor the parents and the principal, the teachers and the principals, that's a heart issue.

And so the behavior was what presents, but what's going on in the heart is the ultimate issue.

So understanding that the heart drives the behavior changes the purpose of discipline.

Usually a lot of times anyway, we spank or ground or take a cell phone away or whatever it is, because we're trying to get them to conform to a behavioral pattern.

That's not all wrong, but I want you to understand that the bigger picture is God's heart, their heart towards God and other people, their heart towards God and other people, because as parents, watch this.

Our goal is to help them to become self-controlled people living under the authority of God.

And that is a heart issue.

So this issue of what's in our heart results in behavior is a powerful truth.

I saw this lived out in a very unforgettable way years ago.

I worked at a behavioral rehab facility.

I actually worked at two different ones with teens and kids.

And whenever a kid would get out of, well, start misbehaving, they all kind of did, but there were some behaviors that were more noteworthy.



If a child would get to where they were hurting themselves, other people or property, they would call what's called a code green.

And you'd hear code green on 2 North.

And so all available staff would show up on the unit, and there was a show of force.

And hopefully the show of force would get the kid to kind of get himself together.

But sometimes even with the show of force, that still didn't work.

And they would have a therapeutic crisis intervention, which meant we tackled them and gave them medicine.

Sometimes they took it willingly by the pill form, and other times they just got a shot.

And you say, that sounds awful.

Yeah.

One, because I was lit big and I was good at tackling kids.

Eventually, I got sick of doing it though.

So one day there was code green on 2 North, and I looked at one of the staff coworkers and said, can you just go do that one?

And so they went, and then they called the nurses station.

Can you send Mr.

Dan, please?

I'm like, come on, people.

Well, I walk onto the unit and I hear King Kong slamming the time.

We had this 10 by 10 room called the timeout room, and it was reinforced walls and it had a two inch thick metal door.

And this giant of a kid, really a man who's still maturing, physically a man, six foot three to five, somewhere in there, about 300 pounds, looks like an NFL lineman.

He is slapping the walls, pounding the walls of this timeout room.

Plaster is falling off.

He is in so much anger, he has kicked a metal door and bent it outwards.

Two inch thick metal door.

And the nurse looks at me and goes, you got to formulate a plan and like call the police, get some tasers.

When he's down, then we will give him Thorazine, okay?

So I said, hey, has anybody tried talking to him?

Because, and she said, well, yeah, we've tried that.

Now we got to go restrain him, formulate a plan.

I said, can I talk to him before I die?

Because a 10 by 10 room with a six foot five, 300 pound man child, my head's going to bounce off of this wall.

So I just kind of knock on the wall, hey buddy, can I come in?

So you kind of indicated yeah.

And I started asking questions and I did what we called the Colombo routine, which is where you knew it was going on, but acted like you didn't.

And I kind of was like, what's going on buddy?

And finally, he just says, nobody loves me.

And then he slouched down on the floor and started bawling.

Then all my brave coworkers came in and started to talk to him and give him Thorazine and as they were talking to him, he was just wailing.

Was the behavior okay?

Of course not.

But I'm going to suggest to you that what was down in the well came up in the bucket.

And that bucket was violence.

Well, not everybody is going to have that extreme of a case, of course, but disrespect,

disobedience, all of those things are ultimately the poison in the well coming up in the bucket.

And as parents, that is what we are at work to try to resolve.

Grandparents, that's what we're trying to resolve.

So we must help our children not only as we're trying to shape them, but we must also help them see how sin reveals a heart that has strayed from God.

Sin reveals a heart that has moved away from God, has betrayed God.

And see, when they do that, then you can share the gospel.

I've had parents call me, I'm, hey, my kid's ready to get saved.

Can you come over?

I'm like, you know the gospel, don't you?

Jesus Christ died to pay for our sins and rose again.

Tell them that and tell them to respond.

Invite them to respond.

But this, when they realize, hey, I've sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, then you can say, come to Jesus for hope, for forgiveness, for salvation.

But see, what we're talking about, the heart, God's word shows that our behavior is produced by our heart.

And the heart then is the wellspring of life.

Therefore, parenting is concerned with shepherding the heart, child of the child's heart.

Because the heart is the wellspring of life, parenting is concerned with shepherding the heart.

So we need to understand that there are shaping influences in our kids' life and how they respond to those influences or what's going to shape them.

What are the two, there's two categories.

Number one, there is their relationship to the shaping influences of life, and we're going to talk about those.

And number two, their relationship to God.

And by the way, the PowerPoint is available.

The slides are all available on the church Facebook page and on our website.

Okay, because there's going to be a lot of material.

Let's take a look at these shaping influences.

The first one is the structure of family life.

Structure of family life.

So what are we talking about?

Well, some basic questions.

Are both parents still alive?

Are both parents involved in their life?

How are they involved?

Do they ever get to see their grandparents?

That's a shaping influence.

What about siblings?

How many do they have?

What's the birth order?

I can tell you, as the third child, I'm the youngest, there was a difference in the way my life experience was versus the way my brother Bill's was.

They've even studied this out.

The first child typically in the family tends to be a little more, go farther in life sometimes.

It's a common theme.

Birth order affects the way I see all the first-borns are kind of flitting their chests out.

Hey, this because you're born first doesn't mean that's going to work out, okay?

But there is a tendency.

I'm going to guess it's because here's a hunch based on experience.

It's because the expectations of the first-born seem to be higher than those of the youngest will move forward.

But these things, by the way, as we go forward, this is something we should point out.

These things may or may not be problems.

So they shouldn't necessarily be understood as problems, but we should understand that our kids need us to guide them through this.

Okay?

So we have family structure of family life.

Second thing we have is family values.

Family values.

What's important to the parents?

What's important to the parents?

If having the best clothes is always important to mom, you can put it down to how the kids dress is going to be very important to the kids.

It's a good chance anyway.

What about the philosophy of life?

And most of you are probably thinking, I'm not a philosopher.

What are you talking about?

Well, we all have a philosophy of life even if we never thought about it.

Years ago, I met a young man.

He said, he got into fights a lot.

He said, my dad told me, don't ever be anybody's welcome mat.

So any slight real or imagined was fight and talk.

And he got into a lot of fights.

And he got into a lot of trouble.

We have a philosophy of life.

I have my own philosophy that I've sort of intentionally teach my kids from time to time.

A long time ago, I figured out whatever my kids do, I guess it doesn't much matter what job they end up in, whether it's some high prestige job or something that has less prestige.

I said, you know what, whatever they do, I just want them to do the best they can at it.

And so now my philosophy of life, how do I teach it to them?

Whether you play basketball, lift weights, play soccer, play the flute, I don't care, whatever you do, give it your best.

You don't have to play soccer, but you do have to give it your best if you make us pay for you to sign up.

You have to go to church and you have to go to school, but you don't have to play an instrument.

But if you're going to sign up, you're going to give it your best.

Why?

Because we do all things that we do to the glory of God.

And the truth of the matter is, I have from observation in life, when we do all things to the glory of God, we tend to do very well at something.

And I don't particularly care much what it is, as long as it honors God.

Where does God fit into family life?

Is he an hour on Sunday?

Is he always a part of the week?

Family values have a shaping influence on our children and grandchildren.

What about family roles?

Is dad involved or is he busy and distant?

And I thought about this.

Truckers, soldiers, and pastors need to care and thoughtfully help their kids navigate these shaping influence.

One of the things that's not talked about very often, but a lot of times there's a thing called PK syndrome, pastors kids, because pastors tend to be very busy and there's never a shortage of things to do and people to visit in sermons to come up with.

And pastors have historically sometimes neglected their kids.

Pastoring is a busy job.

Truck driver, busy job, keeps you away from home a lot.

This is an honorable profession.

But as a dad, as a parent, we have to help shepherd our kids through these things.

Soldiers, I thought about soldiers.

Man, are they important to us?

Well, that family has to sacrifice a lot when that soldier goes off to do the business of our country.

I would never tell you not to be a soldier, but understand something as parents, we have to help shepherd our children through this.

Recently, some of you guys may or may not do this.

I'm sort of a recovering pro wrestling fan.

One of the things I like to do is hear what's going on with the wrestlers I used to watch back in the day.

I saw an interview with a guy named Rick Steiner.

You might know him, but he was a wrestler.

He said he was in this interview.

He said he was in Japan, called home to talk to his son, who's also a professional wrestler now.

His son goes, Dad, are you going to be able to see my game?

Son was 10.

He said, no, I'm in on this tour.

He said, Dad, don't you like seeing me play?

He determined that moment, he was going to retire from pro wrestling.

He came home and now he sells insurance or something.

But I say that to simply say, these things are not necessarily bad things, but as parents, as grandparents, sometimes we need to help shepherd our kids through this experience.

All right.

Subtle things, who pays the bills, who makes the doctor's appointments.

I don't mind to tell you, Chrissy does those things because she's more organized than I am.

But those subtle things will affect, it's part of the shaping experience.

You say, is that really true?

Yeah, I found this out a long time ago.

I worked with a really godly Christian man and he married a wonderful, sweet, godly Christian woman.

But he came to me, he was a little frustrated.

Long story short, after talking to him, I realized the problem.

And I said, bro, you didn't marry your mom.

Mom was a stay-at-home wife.

There was a lot more time spent on cleaning and cooking and all of those things because she didn't work 40 hours a week.

Well, guess what?

You're a bride.

You've married a career woman.



So you could get mad at her or you could help her with the cooking and cleaning because you're hungry too, aren't you?

You see, the shaping influences, and they're not all bad things, but they're things that we need to think through and help our kids think through.

Oh yes.

Do the kids have roles?

I got permission from my oldest to talk about him.

He said, as long as you don't make me look bad, don't worry, I won't make you look bad.

Do they all have the same role?

So here's the fun thing.

My son at 13, he's pretty smart kid, and he's also closer to third grade than Chrissy and I, right?

So I help our other kids with their homework, and then I go, Kenny, will you double check my work?

And he catches stuff that I missed.

And then the other day, they're on their way to school, and Kenny was quizzing Trinity on her spelling homework.

That's a role difference.

As the youngest child, I don't know that she's going to be quizzing anybody.

I wouldn't have quizzed anybody.

And so there's family roles, and this isn't good or bad.

It's just think through these things.

These are things that we shepherd our kids through.

Then there's family responses to failure.

I love this quote from Ted Tripp in his book, *Shepherding the Heart of the Child*.

By the way, I don't copy Ted Tripp, but I borrow extensively from his book, *Shepherding a Child's Heart*.

I recommend it.

I think we even have a DVD curriculum in the library on it.

But he says, Childhood is filled with awkward attempts and failed efforts.

Immature children, and they're all immature, so let's just get that out of the way.

Immature children learning to master the skills of living in a sophisticated world inevitably make mistakes.

As soon as I read that, I said, I know that's right because I'm 48 and I still do awkward things in this sophisticated world.

And so with that, your kid is going to say and do awkward things.

And so we have a process of shepherding them through it, help them think through.

Like, I remember the time at my teams, my family is kind of a politically involved family and we had guess over and I talked like I always do.

And then afterwards, like we always do.

And I could tell my parents were like, and they told me afterwards, like, yeah, don't talk about politics when there's guess over.

And awkward, right?

When the child makes a mistake, are they mocked and made to feel foolish?

And I saw this and it broke my heart one day, a little, I was about eight years old as a boy was playing and he was by himself and he was just talking to his imaginary friend, I guess.

And all of a sudden one of the adults says, hey buddy, who are you talking to?

Made him look foolish and embarrassed and my heart broke for this kid.

When they do something that's, by the way, I don't know that it's really a bad thing if they have imaginary friends, it's not the first time in the world that's happened.

But when the child makes a mistake or are they mocked or they were shepherded through it?

Is the child praised even if it was obvious that they failed?

That's another thing.

How was failure handled in the family?

That's a shaping influence.

Family history, have they experienced social stability or instability?

Years ago, before we moved to Calvary, I have a friend named Tim and his family moved him a lot.

I think his dad was either in the military or was a contractor working for the military.

So they moved a lot and we were thinking about moving to Calvary, and I was concerned, how is this going to affect my kids?

And so I asked him and he said, well, it wasn't really that hard when I was young, but when I was in high school, the move when we were in high school was a lot harder on me.

And I don't know that that's true for everybody, but that is just one of those things.

We had to shepherd our children through the move experience.

Right?

Those are the types of things.

Have they experienced social stability or instability?

Have they been able to form roots into a community?

Years ago, I had a girl in the youth group and their family moved a lot.

And they had a very close-knit family, but I'm not sure they were able to form roots in a community.

In fact, she once joked about how much they moved.

She said, we just bought a U-Haul because it's cheaper than renting at this point.

Another teenager.

These are shaping influences.

And this isn't a, hey, mom and dad, you're dumb and a bad parent for moving.

It's a pause and think about the effect and help your kid shepherd your kid through this.

And those kids have all grown up to be great kids, great adults, but that was part of their life-shaping experience.

Is the family built around a disease in the family?

I've known people, it's a good thing to take in their aging parents, but then the grandchildren watch the parent age and then go home to meet the Lord.

This is something that a child needs shepherded through.

It's a shaping influence.

And then you've got a family conflict resolution.

When there's a problem, do the people just throw up their hands and then don't talk about it anymore and just kind of act like it never happened?

Or do they talk about their problems?

And if they do, is it a productive conversation?

Those are shaping influences.

And as a guy who's...

Well, I'll just tell you, this probably isn't a shocker for you.

But the way conflict was resolved in your childhood home, there's a good chance that's how you're gonna try to resolve conflict when you get married.

So these are shaping influence.

And as parents and grandparents, our goal is to help shape the hearts of our children so they can become adults who have freedom to function effectively under God's authority, right?

So as parents, we must shepherd their responses to these shaping influences and also to their response to God.

Children are worshipers.

They either worship God or they worship idols.

They are never neutral.

They are never neutral.

Idols can include the fear of man, evil desires, lusts, pride, conformity to the world, embracing earthly mindsets, and setting our affections on things below.

John Calvin once said that the human heart is a factory of idols.

And when you think about that, you say, well, is that true?

I've heard some things about Calvin.

Maybe it's true.

Maybe it's not.

We have a tendency to take things that are good gifts from God and turn them into the ultimate thing.

Football, I like football.

At one point, I even loved football.

It hurts a lot more now, right?

So I don't quite love it.

But you could make football into an idol.

You can make academics into an idol.

You could make, I've got a work ethic and I'm going to work hard, and that can become a prideful idol in your heart.

And so as parents, one of the things that we wrestle through, because as adults, hey, we all wrestle with this tendency to make idols out of things.

Well, your children are not immune to that either.

And so we must shepherd the heart of our children so that they not turn good things into ultimate things.

Sports, academics, good looks, hey, those are nice things to have.

Being popular, those are all good things.

But if they become the thing that is the ultimate source of joy and satisfaction, they have become an idol.

God is the ultimate source of joy and satisfaction.

As it would turn out, rightly relating to God puts everything else into its proper perspective.

Sports has its right perspective.

The car that you're trying to remodel and make new again, that has its right perspective and under the authority and glory of God.

So as parents, we are trying to shepherd our hearts, the hearts of our children, so that they relate rightly to God and the things of this world.

So parents, we must shepherd the hearts of our children to glorify God.

So let's review.

What are we talking about here?

This kind of attempt was to put everything of parenting into sort of a big picture.

Shepherding the hearts of our children.

Number one, we do this when we focus on the heart more than the behavior.

So that means we can't just spank our kid because they're being annoying today.

There has to be a focus on what's going on under the hood of their hearts.

Sometimes as parents then, when we sit down, listen, I thought about this and I said, does this sound like psychobabble to people?

When you sit down with your kid and start asking questions, why did you do this?

What were you thinking?

Just think of it as looking under the hood of a car to figure out what's going on.

Looking under the hood of the child's heart to figure out why they're doing what they're doing.

Ultimately, parenting, you want to come specifically to discipline, has to do with correcting the heart of a child.

And sometimes it's not just discipline.

Sometimes it's just, hey, why are you thinking and feeling that way?

Why are you gravitating?

And I had friends that did this.

They started gravitating towards all the dark things of the world.

They weren't necessarily going around punching people and starting fights, but they were clearly in this dark frame of mind.

What's going on in your heart that you've gotten there?

And so when we start looking under the hood of the car, what we're really into the heart, we're getting at to what's going on in the child's heart.

What are they thinking?

What are they feeling?

What shaping influence has caused this?

Second thing, understand and manage the shaping influences that are in our control.

Understand and manage the shaping influences that are in our control.

Guess what?

There's a lot of, there's some things that are within our control, some things that are not.

I was shocked to hear parents who kind of operated like they could not take the cell phone away from their kid.

It's like, you're the one that bought it, aren't you?

You pay for the monthly bill.

You can deactivate that, right?

There are some things, there are people that you can choose to let in, but then there's some that you don't have the ability to have control over that.

What are some examples?

Sometimes couples start out together and then they get divorced, and sometimes you don't have much control over that.

Then sometimes they remarry other people or they have a boyfriend or a girlfriend, and now they're in your child's life and you don't exactly have the ability to not control that or to control that.

But what you can do is to start helping your child navigate through that.

Shepherding is ultimately about helping them navigate the shaping influences of life.

In the people, we have what we control, we can control, and then shepherd where we can shepherd.

The children then must understand that they are responsible for how they respond to parenting.

Years ago, it was about three years ago, we had taken the kids to the Creation Museum in Kentucky, or actually it was still, I'm not sure if it was Ohio or Kentucky.

It's right there on the border.

And we went to the Creation Museum, we went back to the hotel, and we didn't turn the TV on, which is a good thing.

Kids aren't always sure of that, but we were sure it was a good thing.

And we just had a talk.

We talk a lot as family, and I just said, you know kids, your mom and I are going to do everything we can to make sure you know, love and follow Jesus.

But you are going to have to choose how you respond.

It was three years ago.

Kenny was 10, Austin was about six or seven, and Trinity, I don't know, she's probably three, and Carter was probably about five, maybe six.

The boys definitely got it.

You could see the headlights turn on in their eyeballs like, oh, I have a responsibility to respond.

See, I can't make them believe in Jesus.

I can't make them follow Jesus.

But by God's design, they are responsible for how they respond to that parenting.

And how are they going to know that if we don't tell them that?



In fact, a few months ago, a few weeks back, I was talking with one of my children about salvation and baptism.

And Chrissy asked a really great question, and you could tell the child didn't know the answer.

And I think they were a little embarrassed, but they shouldn't have been embarrassed, because it's my responsibility to teach them that.

How are they going to know about salvation if I don't tell them?

How are they going to know about baptism and its meaning if I, as the father, don't tell them?

And see, ultimately, there was no reason for that child to be embarrassed.

And similarly, how will a child know that he's responsible or she's responsible before God for how they respond to parents unless they are told?

And as it would turn out from my experience, even at six years old, five years old, they can understand this.

And it was heavy on them.

In fact, a month later, two months later, I don't know, I ended up talking about it again with Kenny and then Austin in the other room goes, Isn't that the day we talked about beer?

Because we said we had a good conversation about why we don't drink beer at our house.

Even then, he remembered it months later.

See, kids remember they're capable of learning God has made them smart.

And ultimately, as parents, then we are separating our children.

Finally, parents and children are both under God's authority.

As Chad and the praise team come to play one more song, I want to conclude by simply praying for everybody who's parenting and raising children and for the kids.

But if you want to speak to me specifically, whether it's about anything in family or perhaps you need to come to Jesus for salvation, I'll be up front.

But let's pray.

Blessing God, our Father.

First of all, I sure am thankful for my parents.

I pray that you bless them today.

I pray for all the parents today and those who perhaps are stepping in and taking on the role of parents for children that are not biologically their own children.

I pray that you give them peace, wisdom, and joy.

As parents, I know there's days where it seems like you're not getting through, but pray that you'd help them to see fruit from the efforts.

There's a lot of mixed messages that come to us as parents.

I pray you'd help us to put everything in the right perspective and understand what it is you've called us as parents to do.

We pray for our children.

We don't know what the world is going to be like when they become adults.

But we do know what you're going to be like.

We pray that our children would not only believe in you for salvation, but grow to know you and to become more like you, Jesus.

Pray this week for a hedge of protection around the hearts and lives of our children.

We pray that they would learn to honor those in authority over them.

Because you have said in your word that you bless children who honor their parents.

So in Jesus' name we pray.

Amen.

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