

THE PURPOSE OF PARENTING
Raising Champions For Christ – Week 1
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INTRODUCTION

Today we are starting a new sermon series called “Raising Champions for Christ.”

And here’s the big idea for this series. **If our kids are champions on the field but go to hell, then we have failed them.**

In our culture most parents place a huge emphasis on succeeding on the field and in the classroom, but they largely neglect the most important thing – spiritual success.

So, in this sermon series we’re not going to focus on raising champions on the field, or champions in the classroom. We’re going to talk about raising the best kind of champions – champions for Jesus Christ.

We all want to be good parents. In fact, we all want to be great parents. But you can’t be a good parent unless you understand the purpose of parenting. And you can’t be a good parent unless you stay focused on the purpose of parenting.

In order to shoot a basketball effectively, you have to keep your eyes on the front of the rim. If you can’t see the rim, then you’re not going to make the shot.

In order to be a good parent, you have to be able to see the goal, or the purpose of parenting.

When Lydia and I were in college she taught me how to play tennis, and one of the most important aspects of hitting a tennis ball effectively is that you have to keep your eye on the ball. It’s the same with ping pong, and with baseball. If you take your eye off the ball, then you will probably miss it, or not make good contact with it.

To be a good parent, you have to keep your eye on the ball – the purpose of parenting, or the goal of parenting.

If you want to be an effective employee, then you need to know your job description. You need to know what you are being paid to do.

Effective parents know their job description. They know their purpose. They know why God has given them children. They understand the goal.

THE WRONG PURPOSES OF PARENTING

Most parents are very confused about their purpose. They don't understand their job description.

But this doesn't mean that parents don't have a purpose. We are goal-oriented creatures. Every parent has a purpose. Every parent has a goal that they are aiming for with their kids.

The problem is that most parents are shooting at the wrong target. Let's talk about some wrong purposes of parenting.

ONE: TO BE RICH. I don't know any parents who would admit this, or who even realize that this is their goal, but this is truly the goal of many parents.

And you can tell by the way that they parent.

Their priority is on excelling in school, or in athletics, or in the arts, so that their child will grow up to become rich.

That's the wrong goal. Money is not evil. But raising your child with the hopes that they will become wealthy is the wrong goal. Why? Because you can be rich and miserable. You can be rich and cruel. You can be rich and fail at marriage, and at parenting. You can be rich without God. You can be rich and go to hell for all eternity.

TWO: TO BE HAPPY. Many parents just want their kids to be happy. They just want them to have a happy childhood. And they just want them to be happy in adulthood. They just want them to have a happy life. There's nothing wrong with wanting your child to be happy. You should want them to be happy. But that is not a good goal. That is not the purpose of parenting.

Why? For two reasons. Sometimes the best thing you can do is to make your kids very unhappy. Spanking them, rebuking them, punishing them, denying them something that is not good for them, enforcing the rules – these things will make your kids very unhappy. But if you don't do them, then you are setting your kids up for failure.

According to the Bible happiness is a good by-product, but a bad goal. When your child learns to live the right way, then happiness is inevitable. But if their goal is to be happy, then happiness will elude them.

God's goal is not our happiness, it is our holiness. He wants us to be happy, but that is not His goal. His goal is for us to become more like Christ, and He knows that as we get holy, we will get happy.

THREE: TO FULFILL YOUR DREAMS. Many parents are trying to live vicariously through their children. They want their children to do and experience and achieve all the things that they wish they would have done.

So they push their kids to be doctors, or attorneys, or politicians, or professional athletes, or beauty queens.

Why is that the wrong purpose? Because if you push your kids to fulfill your dreams, then you are pushing them to be you instead of them. And they can never be happy and successful by trying to be somebody else.

When you push your kids to fulfill your dreams, then your kids can't fulfill God's dreams. God has a plan for your kids, and His plan is best. God's plan will lead to the most success, the most happiness, the most significance.

FOUR: TO MAKE YOU PROUD. Many parents treat their children as trophies. They see their children as a reflection of them, and so they use their kids to attract attention and praise. They use their kids to show everyone how great they are.

I have a running joke with my kids. Often when we go somewhere together I'll tell the kids before we get out of the car, "Guys, remember, don't embarrass me." My kids know I'm joking because I'm the one who embarrasses them, and I take great pleasure in it.

But that seems to be the goal of many parents. To raise kids that don't embarrass them.

That's not a good goal. Why? Because it is selfish. Your kids will sense it and see that you don't really care about them, but how they make you look. And they will grow to resent you. Your purpose has to be deeper than that.

FIVE: TO BE A GOOD PERSON. Many parents just want their kids to be good people; to be productive citizens.

But there's a really big problem with this. Most people would consider Bill Gates, the founder of Microsoft, to be a good person and a very productive citizen. He is very generous with his wealth. And he has created jobs and products that have benefitted billions of people. Unfortunately, Bill Gates is not a Christian, and if he dies without Christ, then he will spend eternity in hell.

Being a good person is a by-product of being a Christ-follower. But your goal must be more than simply raising your kid to be a good person, or your kids will spend eternity in hell with all the other good people.

SIX: TO BE SUCCESSFUL. Many parents would say, "I don't care what my children grow up to be; I just want them to be successful."

But what definition of success are you using?

Take Katy Perry. Her parents are strong Christians. Her dad was a pastor. And Katy Perry grew up to be very successful – in the eyes of the world. She is one of the most successful pop singers; she makes big bucks. But Katy doesn't sing for Jesus. And she doesn't live for Jesus. Her music celebrates sin, and she dresses like a prostitute. She may be successful in the world's eyes, but not in God's.

Many parents push their kids hard to succeed in athletics, and to succeed in academics, and to succeed in the arts. And it's good to teach your children to do their best at whatever they do. But just remember that if your child is successful in athletics, academics, or the arts, they can still go to hell. They can still miss the purpose of life.

J.C. Ryle was a pastor in the nineteenth century in England, and he observed that many parents made the same mistake even then. “We live in days when there is a mighty zeal for education in every corner of the world. 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, the vast majority of children are not trained in the way they should go, for when they reach adulthood, they do not walk with God.”

FIVE FORGOTTEN FACTS ABOUT YOUR CHILD

The reason that most parents miss the true purpose of parenting is that they don't know their child's true purpose. And that's where we have start, as parents.

To understand your purpose as a parent, you must understand your child's parent.

There are five forgotten facts about your children that you must know and understand in order for you to have the right purpose as a parent.

ONE: YOUR CHILD BELONGS TO GOD. You must first understand that your child does not belong to you. Your child belongs to God. God created your child. Jesus died on the cross to save your child from sin. Your child is His.

Exodus 29:5 “The whole earth is mine.” **Deuteronomy 10:14 (CSB)** “The heavens, indeed the highest heavens, belong to the Lord your God, as does the earth and everything in it.”

If your child belongs to God, then that means that you must raise them for Him. You must raise them according to His goals for them; and according to His purpose for them; and in a way that pleases Him.

God has a plan for your child. And your success is measured by how well you lead your child to follow that plan.

TWO: YOUR CHILD WILL LIVE FOREVER, EITHER IN HEAVEN OR IN HELL.

Matthew 25:46 “And they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

The Bible is very clear that every person will live forever. And there are only two possible destinations. Heaven and hell.

Why does that matter? Because the amount of time that your child spends on this earth is extremely brief compared to eternity. The vast majority of your child’s existence will be after they have died and left this earth.

Therefore, the focus of your parenting must be primarily on the next life, not on this life. On making sure that your child goes to heaven. On making sure that your child stores up as many heavenly rewards as possible.

Sadly, most parents place all of the emphasis on happiness and success in this life, and almost completely neglect to prepare their children for success and happiness in eternity.

Jesus said in **Luke 9:25** (Philipps) “For what is the use of a man gaining the whole world if he loses or forfeits his own soul?”

J.C. Ryle said, “Train them knowing that the soul of your child is most important. Precious, no doubt, are these little ones in your eyes, but if you love them, think often of their souls. No interest should weigh on you so much as their eternal interests. No part of them should be as dear to you as that part which will never die.”

THREE: YOUR CHILD WILL ONLY BE HAPPY IN CHRIST.

Psalm 112:1 “Hallelujah! Happy is the person who fears the Lord, taking great delight in His commands.”

Happiness is not found in riches, but in a rich relationship with Jesus.

Happiness is not found in being successful, but in having a successful relationship with God.

If you really want your child to be happy, then you need to know that all the riches, and success, and honor, and fame, and pleasure, and comfort, and luxury, and adventure in this world will not truly satisfy your child’s heart. Your child was created by God, for God. And they will only find happiness in Christ.

The Puritan **Thomas Watson** said, “The heart is a triangle, which only the Trinity can fill.”

Augustine said, “You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in you.”

FOUR: YOUR CHILD WAS CREATED TO GLORIFY GOD.

1 Corinthians 10:31 “So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God.”

Now we’re getting to the heart of your child’s purpose in life.

The Bible says that people were created in God's image. That means that we were created to reflect, or to display God's image – the image of His character – through our lives. That is what it means to glorify God. To glorify God is to display the greatness of God through your life. Through your actions, your attitude, your sexuality, your finances, your words, your career, your time, your relationships. This is your child's purpose in life.

The **Westminster Shorter Catechism**, written in 1646, puts it like this in the very first question: "What is the chief end of man? Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever."

FIVE: GOD WANTS TO USE YOUR CHILD TO LEAD OTHERS TO CHRIST.

Matthew 28:19 "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations...."

Every human being, like your child, will spend eternity in heaven or hell, and that depends on their relationship with Jesus Christ. There is only one way to be saved, and that is through faith in Jesus Christ (Acts 4:12).

And that's why God has called all Christians to join in the effort to make disciples – to reach the world for Christ.

This doesn't mean that God wants your child to be a preacher or a missionary. Even if your child grows up to be a teacher, or a driver, or a welder, or a mechanic, or a carpenter, God wants your child to use their time, and talents, and treasure to reach other people for Jesus.

David used a stone to defeat Goliath, and then a sword to cut off his head. Your child was created to be a stone in God's pouch; sword in God's sheath.

Your child wasn't created to be rich or famous. They were created to be a mighty tool in the hand of God to lead people to Jesus.

Your child wasn't created to live a safe life; a comfortable life; a luxurious life; a happy life; fun life. Your child was created to be a warrior in God's army, pointing people to Jesus.

THE PURPOSE OF PARENTHOOD

So that brings us to the purpose of parenting. When you know your child's purpose, then your purpose becomes clear.

Your purpose as a parent is to train your child to live for the glory of God and the salvation of men.

That's the goal that we need to aim at. The target that we need to shoot at. The ball that we need to keep our eyes on. In the end, our success as parents will be measured by how well we train our kids to live for the glory of God and the salvation of men.

Pastor Bill Hybels says it like this: "The primary reason for having children is to raise shining, active, young image-bearers who are motivated and trained to carry the torch of authentic Christianity to the next generation. True followers of Jesus Christ don't have children merely for the fellowship factor. Or so they can pass on property and the family name. Or to avoid loneliness in their later years. They view parenting as the opportunity to invest themselves fully in the life of a child who will someday become an irresistible manifestation of God's grace and make a difference by exercising his or her unique talents and gifts. That's our motivation for bearing and raising children – and our challenge."

This changes everything, doesn't it?

If this is your purpose, then it will affect how you speak to your child; how you discipline your child; the activities you place your child in; how your child spends their time; where your child goes to school; what your child wears; what your child watches on TV; what your child listens to; who your child hangs out with; how you advise and counsel your child.

FIVE APPLICATIONS

With the true purpose of parenting in mind, how can we apply this to our daily lives?

ONE: THE TRUE PURPOSE OF PARENTING MUST BE YOUR PRIORITY.

If the ultimate goal of parenting is to train your kids to live for the glory of God and the salvation of men, then everything must be organized and structured around that. This must be the center, the foundation, the focus of all that we do.

Often families schedule everything around the child's athletics, or the child's education, or piano recitals, or any number of activities. And those activities are not bad. But if this is the purpose of parenting, then everything else must take a back seat. And everything else must be organized around it. And nothing must detract from it. Nothing must distract from it. Nothing must compete with it.

If we don't have time and money for this and athletics, then we must sacrifice athletics. If we don't have time and money for this and piano, then we must sacrifice piano.

Nothing is as important as training our children to live for the glory of God and the salvation of men, and our daily and weekly schedule must reflect that.

Voddie Baucham wrote, "Why is it that Christian families think nothing of a lifestyle that demands hours per week traipsing across town, blood, sweat, and tears from our children, and thousands of dollars each year from our bank accounts, but the idea of a twenty minute daily commitment to family worship immediately strikes them as too much to ask?"ⁱ

TWO: THE TRUE PURPOSE OF PARENTING CANNOT BE DELEGATED.

You cannot hope that the preacher, or the youth minister, or the Sunday school teacher, or the Christian school will train your kid to live for the glory of God and the salvation of men. They can assist you. But parents are the primary trainers.

As a parent, you must become actively involved in the spiritual training of your children. You must have regular times of training with your children when you sit down with them and teach them your purpose, and their purpose, and how to fulfill it.

J.C. Ryle wrote about the importance training your kids to live for Christ at home. “Fathers and mothers, you may send your children to the best schools, give them Bibles and prayer books, and fill them with head knowledge, but if all this time there is no regular training at home, I fear it will go hard in the end with your children’s souls. Home is the place where habits are formed; home is the place where the foundations of character are laid; and home gives the bias to our tastes and likings and opinions. Be sure then that there is careful training at home.”

THREE: THE TRUE PURPOSE OF PARENTING IS DIFFICULT.

Biblical parenting is not for the weak. It is not for the faint of heart. It is not for wimps.

There are several forms of resistance that you will face.

ONE: Internal resistance. Your child is a born sinner. Their natural inclination is to sin, not glorify and live for God. Their natural inclination is to live for themselves, not for the salvation of others. Their natural inclination is to pursue their own pleasure and glory, not God’s pleasure and glory. **J.C. Ryle** said, “Children require no schooling to learn to sin.” So you will face resistance from your child.

TWO: External resistance. By external resistance, I am referring to the world and the devil.

This world is an evil place. The current of culture is flowing away from God, not to God. Most parents are not raising their kids for the glory of God and the salvation of men. Most schools are not structured around this purpose. Most ball coaches are not focused on this purpose. Most school teachers are not focused on this

purpose. Most TV shows and movies are not focused on this purpose; in fact they contradict this purpose. Most of the children that your kid plays with will not be raised to pursue this purpose. And so as you are training your child to pursue God, the world will be pulling your child in the opposite direction.

A second form of external resistance is the devil. The devil is real, and he is a very real threat. And you must believe that he is targeting the next generation.

Whoever gets the next generation controls the future.

And this is the sobering thing: Christian parents are losing. The majority of Christian teens, between 70 and 88%, are leaving the church by their second year in college.ⁱⁱ

As you set out to train your kids for God, prepare for resistance. Don't assume the task will be easy.

FOUR: THE TRUE PURPOSE OF PARENTING IS MORE THAN SALVATION.

2 Corinthians 5:15 “And he died for all so that those who live should no longer live for themselves, but for the one who died for them and was raised.”

Why did Jesus die on the cross for our sins? Part of the reason is so that we can be forgiven, and reconciled to God, and go to heaven when we die.

But this verse is a reminder that the reason Christ died for us is not just so that we can go to heaven, but so that we will no longer live for ourselves, but for Christ.

So the purpose of parenting is not merely to get your child to heaven. The purpose is to train them up to live for Christ.

Edward W. Hooker was a pastor in Connecticut in the nineteenth century, and he wrote a book called *Children to be Educated for Christ*. Listen to his words. “Desire the early conversion of your children, that they have the longest possible time in this world to serve Christ.”

Notice that the goal is not to seek the early conversion of your child so you can make sure that they go to heaven; but so that they can have more time to serve Christ.

To be a successful parent, your goal must be more than salvation. It needs to be full devotion to Jesus Christ; a full commitment to live for the glory of God and the salvation of men.

FIVE: YOU WILL BE HELD ACCOUNTABLE.

Ecclesiastes 12:14 “For God will bring every act to judgment, including every hidden thing, whether good or evil.”

God has charged you with the sacred and sobering task of raising His children to live for His glory and the salvation of men.

And one day you will be held accountable for how hard you tried to do that.

When you stand before God to give an account, I don't think He is going to care about their grades, or about the championships their team won, or how rich they grew up to be.

I think the only thing God is going to care about is how well you did at raising His kids to live for Him.

Think of your house as a boarding school. And the Heavenly Father is entrusting some of His kids with you for eighteen years. At the end of those eighteen years He is going to come pick them up. And He wants you to prepare them to be totally committed to Him; to living for Him; to serving Him.

So let me ask you a question. If the Heavenly Father stopped by your house this week to check on your progress, how are you doing? Are you headed in the right direction? Are your priorities in order? Does your schedule reflect the true purpose of parenting? You cannot fully control how your children turn out. But

you can control what you do to train up your kids for Christ. And that's what God will hold you accountable for.

CONCLUSION

Now you might be thinking, "What does this have to do with Easter?"

If Jesus rose from the grave, then that changes everything.

If Jesus rose from the grave, then He is who He says He is. He is the Son of God. The Savior of the world. The way, the truth, and the life. If Jesus rose from the grave, then His teachings are true. There is a God. There is a heaven and hell. God has spoken to us through His word, the Bible. And one day God will judge every person for their actions.

And if Jesus rose from the grave, then that changes the purpose of parenting.

If Jesus rose from the grave, then He is Savior, and so we must lead our children to believe in Him.

He is Lord, and so we must lead our children to obey Him and to live for Him.

He is abundant life, and so we must lead our children to follow Him.

In other words, the true purpose of parenting is to raise our kids to live for the glory of God and the salvation of men, because Christ rose from the grave. If Christ did not rise from the grave, then forget it all. None of this matters. But because Jesus rose from the grave, then He is who He says He is, our kids belong to Him, and our job is to raise them to love and obey and serve Him.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. The big idea of this sermon series is: If our kids are champions on the field but go to hell, then we have failed them. Do you agree with this statement? Explain.

2. Why is it a bad parenting goal for your kids to be rich?
3. Why is it a bad parenting goal for your kids to be happy?
4. Why is it a bad parenting goal for your kids to fulfill your dreams?
5. Why is it a bad parenting goal for your kids to make you proud?
6. Why is it a bad parenting goal for your child to be a good person?
7. Why is it a bad parenting goal for your kids to be successful?
8. The sermon mentioned five forgotten facts about your child. What do you need to know about your child in order to understand the purpose of parenting?
9. What is the true purpose of parenting?
10. In light of the Biblical purpose of parenting, how should this affect the way parents raise their kids?
11. How do you need to adjust in order to better align yourself with God's purpose for parenting?

ⁱ Voddie Baucham Jr. Family Driven Faith, Wheaton, Illinois, Crossway, 2007, p. 139.

ⁱⁱ Ibid, 12.