

YOUR PARENTING GOALS ARE TOO SMALL

By Andy Manning

I. INTRODUCTION

- a. **Bill Bright** “Set goals so big that unless God helps you, you will be a miserable failure.”
- b. Today I want to talk to you about your parenting goals, and how they are probably too small.

II. VISION

1. At Church Acadiana our vision is to equip parents to disciple their kids in the home. We want to see parents sitting down with their kids several days a week teaching them to follow Christ. This only has to take a few minutes. If they are little, simply read a Bible story, discuss it, and then pray. As they get older, simply read a chapter of the Bible, discuss it, and then pray.
2. Why are we so passionate about equipping parents to disciple their kids?
 - i. Parents are called to it.
 1. **Ephesians 6:4** “Fathers, don’t stir up anger in your children, but bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.”
 2. Parents should not be dropping the kids off at church so the church can disciple their kids.
 3. The church can help; supplement; support; but the parents need to be discipling their kids.
 - ii. Parents are best at it.
 1. When parents are equipped and passionate about their calling, they are the best at discipling their kids. Why?
 2. They have more time with their kids. The church can spend a few minutes every week, but parents can spend hours every week.
 3. They are the best at communicating with their kids.
 4. Kids love and respect their parents more than anyone else. They are more likely to listen to and believe their parents than anyone else.
3. To help parents disciple their kids, we enable them to do church as a family. Why?
 - i. So you can model your faith. Christianity is more caught than taught. To disciple your kids, you need to set the example for them at church. You can’t do this if everyone in the family splits up at church. But if you stay together, you can model the faith for them. They can watch you sing and worship; they can watch you listen and take notes during the sermon; they can watch you pray; they can watch you fellowship with other believers; they can watch you serve; they can watch you tithe.
 - ii. So you can observe their faith. To effectively coach your kids in the faith, you must observe them. When the family splits up at church, you don’t know what your kids are learning, who is teaching them, whether or not they are listening, comprehending, participating, or goofing off. But if you have them sitting right next to you in church, you can observe them. You know what they are learning, so you can ask them about it. You can see if they are

listening and participating. You can see if they are singing and praying. You can see if they are taking notes. And then you can give them feedback and coaching.

4. Every few months I like to do a sermon to equip parents to disciple their kids. This morning I want to do a message on setting the right goal as a parent.

II. ARE YOUR GOALS BIG ENOUGH?

1. When I played basketball, my senior year was the only year I set a scoring goal – 16 points per game. I figured all I had to do was to score 4 points per quarter; just make two shots per quarter. At the end of the season my scoring average was 16 points. That shows the power of goal-setting. However, what if I had set my goal at 24 points? Could I have done that? All I would have done was to make 3 shots per quarter. I wonder if I set my goal too low! It's possible to set your goals too low. It's also possible to set them too high. But it is better to shoot for the stars and hit a mountain, than to shoot for the mud and hit it on the bull's eye.
2. As Christian parents, we have different goals than non-Christian parents.
 - i. What are some goals that non-Christian parents might have for their kids? For your kid to be popular. For your kid to be rich. For your kid to be happy. For your kid to have all things that you didn't have. For your kid to be famous. For your kid to be a professional athlete. For your kid to go to college. For your kid to be a good person.
 - ii. These are different from the goals of Christian parents, right? What are the goals of a Christian parent?
 1. Salvation.
 2. Full-devotion to Jesus Christ.
3. But are those goals big enough?

III. TEXT: 2 Timothy 2:2

1. Context:
 - i. 2 Timothy was written by Paul.
 - ii. 1 & 2 Timothy, along with Titus, are called the Pastoral Epistles because Paul wrote them to young pastors with instructions about how to lead the church.
 - iii. WRITE THE WORD "EPISTLE"
 - iv. Paul wrote 2 Timothy to Timothy, who was the pastor of the church in Ephesus, or modern-day Turkey.
 - v. SHOW A MAP
 - vi. There are a couple of things that you need to understand about the context of 2 Timothy:
 1. This was a terrible time for Christians. At the time of this writing, about 66-67 A.D., Nero is the emperor of Rome. And Nero was a crazy man. He killed his own mother, his wife, his chief advisers Seneca and Burrus, and many of the nobles so that he could steal their money. He also considered himself to be the savior of the world. But not only was he a madman, he hated Christians because they refused to worship the emperor. In A.D. 64 there was a great fire in Rome that destroyed a large part of the city, and Nero was

suspected of intentionally starting the fire to make room for a new palace, but Nero blamed the Christians. And so began a horrible time of persecution for Christians throughout the Roman Empire. Christians were hated by average citizens; they were thrown in prison; they were tortured; and they were killed. They were crucified. They were fastened to crosses and set on fire to serve as night lights. They were thrown into the coliseum to be eaten alive by wild animals for the purpose of entertainment. So this was a horrible time for Christians.

2. Paul wrote this letter from prison -- the famous Mamertine dungeon in Rome. This dungeon was not like Paul's previous imprisonment. A few years prior to this Paul was arrested and was put on house arrest. He lived in a rented house and was able to have guests, but he was under Roman guard. In the Mamertine dudgeon it was cold, wet, dark, and dirty. And according to tradition, Paul was beheaded just a few months after sending this letter to Timothy. The apostle Peter was also martyred about the same time, crucified upside down because he did not consider himself worthy to die in the same manner as Christ.
 - vii. So, Christians were dying fast; Christian leaders were dying fast. Paul knew that his death was close (2 Tim 4:6). And he probably thought that Timothy wouldn't be around much longer either. With all this in mind, Paul wrote the following.
 2. **2 Timothy 2:2** "What you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, commit to faithful men who will be able to teach others also."
 - i. What was Timothy's assignment? Not just to lead people to Christ; not just to reach a lot of people; not just to make strong disciples; but to equip them to lead others to Christ.
 - ii. Remember, Paul knew that he wasn't going to be around much longer. He knew that Timothy wasn't going to be around much longer. He knew that for the gospel to continue to spread, they had to not only reach people, but train those people to reach others.

IV. EVERY PARENT'S GOAL

1. As a parent, your goal is not simply to reach your kids, but to equip your kids to reach their kids.
2. The goal is bigger than just bringing them to church. The goal is bigger than just getting them saved. The goal is bigger than just getting them baptized. The goal is bigger than just leading them to love Christ. The ultimate goal is to equip them to reach their kids so that the gospel will continue to spread.

V. ILLUSTRATIONS

1. Abraham: When God called Abraham, His goal wasn't merely that Abraham would worship Him. His goal was that Abraham would lead His family to worship God.

- i. **Genesis 18:19** “For I have chosen him so that he will command his children and his house after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing what is right and just. This is how the LORD will fulfill to Abraham what he promised him.”
 - ii. The goal of the Christian parent is not merely that our kids would worship, but that they would go on to lead their families to worship.
2. Jesus: Jesus’ ministry lasted three years, and He spent the majority of His ministry not with the multitudes but with His twelve disciples. What was Jesus’ goal? His goal was not simply to lead them to full devotion, but to prepare them to reach others.

VI. QUESTION

1. “If we lead our kids to Christ, won’t they in turn lead their kids to Christ?”
2. Not necessarily. Look at this next verse, the saddest verse in the Bible.
3. **Judges 2:7-10** “7 The people worshiped the LORD throughout Joshua’s lifetime and during the lifetimes of the elders who outlived Joshua. They had seen all the LORD’s great works he had done for Israel. 8 Joshua son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died at the age of 110. 9 They buried him in the territory of his inheritance, in Timnath-heres, in the hill country of Ephraim, north of Mount Gaash. 10 That whole generation was also gathered to their ancestors. After them another generation rose up who did not know the LORD or the works he had done for Israel.”
 - i. The people were devoted to God under Moses.
 - ii. Then they were devoted to God under Joshua. So, Moses led Joshua not only to be devoted, but to lead others to full devotion.
 - iii. Then the people were devoted to God under the leadership of the elders who outlived Joshua. So, Joshua not only led them to full devotion, but to lead others to devotion.
 - iv. But after that generation died, another generation rose up who was not devoted.
 - v. Where was the breakdown? The elders who outlived Joshua led the people to be devoted, but they did not lead them to pass on the faith to the next generation.
 - vi. Those people were devoted, but they failed to pass on the faith to the next generation.
 - vii. Just because you lead your kids to Christ doesn’t mean they will pass it on to the next generation. You have to intentionally equip your kids to reach their kids.

VII. HOW TO EQUIP YOUR KIDS TO REACH YOUR GRANDKIDS

1. Lead them to full devotion.

- i. They won’t pass on the faith if they don’t have it. You have to start by leading them to full devotion.
- ii. THREE ESSENTIAL ACTIONS FOR EFFECTIVE HOME DISCIPLESHIP
 1. Set a good example.
 - a. Christianity is more caught than taught.
 - b. Illustration: Dog got pregnant, but one day she had both hind legs cut off by the lawnmower. They decided to save her life.

So the vet sewed up and she learned how to walk all over again with her hind legs. She had six puppies, nursed them and weaned them. When they learned how to walk, they walked just like she did.

- c. You need to be the kind of Christian that you want your kids to become. Do you want them to obey God's word, to have a daily quiet time, to make church a priority, to bring their kids to church, to worship with passion, to pay close attention to the sermon? Then you need to do those things.
2. Connect them to the church.
 - a. You don't need to be active in church to go to heaven; but you do need to be active in church to become a fully-devoted follower of Jesus Christ. That's true of you, and it's true of your kids.
 - b. The church is the family of God. What do you call a Christian without a church? An orphan. No child would choose to be an orphan, yet many Christians choose to be spiritual orphans by avoiding church.
 - c. The church is the body of Christ. What do you call a Christian without a church? Amputated. The church can survive without one of its body parts, but a body part cannot survive if it is cut off from the body.
 - d. You need to get your kids in church.
 - e. A THREEFOLD STRATEGY FOR CONNECTING YOUR KIDS TO CHURCH
 - i. Get them in the habit of going.
 1. When I was a kid, Sundays were for God. I can still remember the schedule. 9:45 AM – Sunday School. 11 AM – morning worship. 4:45 PM – Bible Drill or Training Union. 6 PM – evening worship. And we didn't miss church. My parents taught Sunday school and were in the choir. We were never sick. We were never out of town. I was not allowed to spend the night with my friends on Saturday night. If it was Sunday, everyone knew where we'd be. My parents would be the first to tell you that they weren't perfect parents, but they got that one thing right. They taught us the priority of church.
 - ii. Teach them to contribute through serving and giving.
 1. Jesus said that where your treasure is, there your heart will be also (Mt 6:21). This principle works two ways:

- a. You invest in the things that are important to you. If you want to know what a person's priorities are, just look at how he is investing his time and money.
 - b. The things you invest in become important to you. As you invest more time and money into something, it becomes more important to you. When you teach your kids to do the basics of what a church member is to do – attend, give, and serve, then church will become more important to them.
 - 2. You have to remember that our kids are not the church of the future; they are the church today. If we don't encourage them act like the church today – through giving and serving – then they probably won't act like the church in the future.
 - iii. Help them to develop deep relationships.
 - 1. In America today most kids are dropping out of church after high school. Why?
 - 2. In many cases it is because they haven't made deep relationships in the church.
 - 3. For your kids to stick with church, it needs to be like family to them. They need to develop deep, close, familial relationships with other church members.
 - 4. To do this you have to get your kids in Home Group, and volunteering, and you need to stick with one church for a long time, because deep relationships take a long time to form.
 - f. This is where most churches stop. But at Church Acadiana we teach that there is an essential third step.
- 3. Teach them at home.
 - a. I'm all about delegation. I pay someone to change my oil, spray my house for bugs, to fix my roof, to fix my car. And I would delegate a lot more if I could afford it. But there are some things that you can't delegate. I can't hire someone else to love my wife for me. And I can't hire someone to disciple my kids.
 - b. The church can help you teach your kids about God, but it can't do it for you. The church only spends about two hours a week with your kids, and your kids need a lot more than that to become fully-devoted.

- c. Several days a week, you need to be sitting at home with your kids to read the Bible together and pray.

2. Cast the vision of multigenerational faithfulness.

- i. You must teach your kids the following truths that the world isn't teaching them:

1. Marriage is a good thing.

- a. Young people today are either choosing not to get married, or to delay marriage for as long as possible. They have been told that marriage is a ball and chain, or they have seen too many bad marriages and don't want that for themselves.
- b. What does the Bible say?
- c. God created Adam and said, "It is not good for the man to be alone." And he gave him a wife.
- d. **Proverbs 18:22** "A man who finds a wife finds a good thing and obtains favor from the Lord."
- e. Many studies have shown that married people are happier and healthier than unmarried people. A new study has recently discovered a reason why.
- f. Marriage is a wonderful thing.
- g. You don't want to get married until you are spiritually and financially prepared, but it is not something to be put off. It is something to look forward to!

2. Children are a blessing.

- a. If you want to equip your kids to disciple their kids, then you need to convince them to have kids.
- b. Just like marriage, more and more young people today see children as a burden. They are choosing to not have kids or to wait until the last minute.
- c. Rather than having kids young people are choosing to have pets and then they call them their kids.
- d. What does the Bible say?
- e. **Psalms 127:3-5** "Children are a blessing from the Lord; they are a reward from him. Children born to a young man are like arrows in a warrior's hands. How joyful is the man whose quiver is full of them! He will not be put to shame when he confronts his accusers at the city gates."
- f. Children are a blessing, and the more you have the better.
- g. Our world lies to young people and says that having a career is the most important thing you can do, but it's not. Raising children is the most important and the most fulfilling thing you can do with your life. Nothing else comes close.
- h. You can make a lot of money; rise to the top of the ladder in your field; earn the respect of all your peers; but none of that

comes close to the fulfillment and the significance of child-rearing.

- i. There are a couple of ways that Lydia and I tried to instill this in our kids:
 - i. We had a lot of kids. We never used birth control. This shows our kids that we value them, that we value family, that we love being parents. When I was in high school this truth made its way to my heart and I decided that I wanted to have as many kids as God would give me, and that's one of the best decisions I ever made.
 - ii. Lydia has made it her vocation to be a stay-at-home-mother and home-school teacher. She has devoted her life to motherhood; and she intentionally keeps her kids home with her all day. That says to our kids that she love being a mother; she loves having children.
3. Your first job as a parent is to lead your kids to Christ.
 - a. Your kids need to be taught what God expects of them as parents. That the first and most important part of being a parent is to lead them to Christ.
 - b. Your kids need to know that their kids are not theirs; they belong to God; and He has called them to lead their kids to Christ.
 - c. The best way to teach this to your kids is by example. If you will intentionally disciple them, you are teaching them what they need to do, and how to do it.

VIII. CONCLUSION

1. SHOW IMAGE: One of the best ways to equip your kids to reach their kids is to catechize them. Many Christians were not catechized, and they think catechism is a Roman Catholic thing. It's not. Protestants have been catechizing their kids since the Protestant Reformation. When I first started catechizing my kids, I used some of the older catechisms, but I saw the need for a new catechism that was both modern and non-Calvinistic. So I wrote the Home Discipleship Catechism. I have used this book for years to disciple my own kids. It has 51 catechism questions, and my kids have memorized them all. Still to this day, three times a week, we review the catechism. It covers the most important truths in the Bible. One of the last questions is this: "Question: What is God's command to parents? Answer: Children are a gift from the Lord, and parents should teach their kids to be fully devoted to Jesus Christ." Do you see what I did there? In one question I communicated three things: 1) Children are a gift. 2) God has an assignment for parents. 3) Parents should teach their kids to be fully-devoted to Christ.
2. God's goal is not for you to reach your kids, but to equip your kids to reach your grandkids. Are your goals too small?