

Shepherding A Child's Heart

Week 4: A Child's Development – Godward Orientation

Main Idea:

Two things contribute to the development of a child: the shaping influences of life *and the Godward orientation of their heart*. Parents and communities of faith must be concerned with both. You must be concerned with how you structure the shaping influences of life that are under your control. You must also actively shepherd the Godward orientation of your children.

Children are not neutral in this process. They are not merely the sum total of what you put into them. They interact with your shaping efforts *according to the Godward commitment of their hearts*. Children are responders. They are active in what they become.

Review:

1. Last week, we considered God's concern for shaping influences and the imperative for parents and communities of faith to take responsibility for and structure those influences in a faithful manner.
 - a. Why should Christians ultimately be concerned with shaping influences?
2. What are the assumptions behind the two unbiblical responses to shaping influences: *denial* and *determinism*.
3. Which is more important, the shaping influences of life, or how a person interacts with them?

Video (notes below)

1. Children interpret the shaping influences of their lives through the Godward orientation of their hearts

2. Your children are designed for worship

- a. They will either respond with praise to God or they will bow before idols
- b. Our children are instinctively and compulsively worshipping people
- c. See Romans Chapter 1

3. Why do children fail to worship the God they are made to worship?

- a. They do not cease being worshippers
- b. They end up worshipping and serving created things rather than the creator
- c. They exchange the truth of God for a lie
 - i. This is what happens with all children, they will worship God or idols
 - ii. Your children are dazzled by God or they make the great exchange and worship created things rather than the Creator

4. These idols are not statues, but the subtle idols of the heart

- a. Note the graphic depicting the Idols of the Heart
- b. Examples
 - i. Power and influence
 - ii. Pride and performance
 - iii. Possessions
 - iv. Pleasure and sensuality
 - v. The fear of man or the desire for the approval of others
- c. All of these things are indications of worshipping the wrong things

5. Showing our kids the wonder and glory of who God is

- a. One of the most important callings God has given us
- b. We want to show them that God is the one true object of worship

6. The one truth that will help your children respond well to shaping influences is to have the true maturity of understanding who God is

- a. Therefore we must help them to see the wonder of who God is
- b. Psalm 145
 - i. No one can fathom the greatness of God
 - ii. “One generation will commend your works to another” — *This is parenting*
 - iii. The acts and attributes of God
 - iv. This psalm is a job description of parenting and how to worship God
- c. Remember that your children’s worship will tell them how to interpret life
- d. You must give your children a vision for God and for God’s glory

7. Note the brief survey of the Psalms that talk about the wonder of God

- a. Psalm 4:6-8 “You have filled my heart with joy.”
- b. Psalm 16:11 “You have made known to me the pleasures of life.”
- c. Psalm 27 “I want to dwell in the house of the Lord.”—Knowing God is the greatest deliverance
- d. Psalm 36—Drink deeply of God’s river of life
- e. Psalm 63 “You are my God, earnestly I seek you, my soul thirsts for you.”
- f. Psalm 73 “Whom have I in heaven but you?”
- g. Psalm 81 “You will be satisfied.”

8. The Kingdom parable in Matthew 13

- a. The man gives all he has to acquire the precious treasure — this is what the kingdom of heaven is like
- b. Your children must come to the place where they say, “I must have God.”
- c. Your most important calling as a parent is to show them the glory of God
- d. If you want your children to have a reason to sing on Sunday, you must present to them a glorious God
- e. Only the worthiness of God will keep your children from the allure of mainstream entertainment

9. Why is this so important?

- a. What we do with God determines how we interpret life
- b. Solid and lasting joys are found in knowing God
- c. Rather than helping kids see the glories of God, many parents are feeding the idols
 - i. We fill our kids’ lives with stuff
 - ii. We take joy in seeing their joy in stuff
 - iii. We fill their lives with busyness and activities that relegate God to a place of almost irrelevance in their lives

10. If you are going to show your kids the wonder of God, you must be dazzled by God yourself

- a. You can’t give away something you don’t have
- b. Your children can see and embrace the glory of God!
 - i. Reference the note from one of Tedd’s children. Your kids can get it
- c. You must be dazzled by God’s glory so you can bring that to your children
- d. Do not focus on your failings, but on your desire to know God’s goodness and glory

Q&A

Reflection:

1. Humans are designed for worship and will either worship God or idols... How do we see this even early on in the lives of children?
2. How does understanding that children are instinctively and compulsively worshippers shape the way we think about the shaping influences of their lives?
3. Humans, including children, either respond to life's circumstances and shaping influences out of the grace of God and in reference to God, or they respond with some form of idolatry (pride, performance, power, influence, pleasure, sensuality, love of possessions, fear of man, people-pleasing, anger, resentment).
 - a. How can these various responses be used as opportunities to direct their hearts to worship the Lord?
4. As we think about shepherding the Godward orientation of the heart of a child, why is it so important that we show them the worthiness and wonder of God?
5. Discuss the statement: "If you are going to show your kids the wonder of God, you must be dazzled by God yourself... you can't give something you don't have"
 - a. How might this be misunderstood or over-applied?
6. Regarding shaping influences, the primary tasks of a parent are 1) To ensure that the shaping influences in a child's life (that they can control) are consistently biblical, and 2) To help their children respond to all influences with a Godward orientation.
 - a. Are there any ways the shaping influences of life under your control should be changed?
 - b. How can you use the influences that are out of your control to teach your children God's ways and help them respond in faith?