

## *Shepherding A Child's Heart*

### **Week 6: Examining Your Goals**

#### **Main Idea:**

Life is full of an unending list of things to do with and for our children, as well as countless material things for them to delight in. What governs and guides our engagement in these things? Why do we (or don't we) participate in certain activities? Why do we or don't we provide certain things? With respect to activities and possessions, the cultural assumption can simply be "the more, the better". In that environment, a parent may allow their task to be reduced to the role of activity director while they work to prevent their children from ever feeling bored, or to simply delight in their delight in possessions.

However, successful parenting isn't simply filling our children's lives with activities and possessions. We must remember that "the chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever" and allow this goal to govern and guide our choices regarding what we have and what we do. Godly parents and godly churches will either say "yes" or "no" to activities and possessions, in order to teach our children to live in reference to God and reinforce the fundamental reality that only in Him will our souls be truly satisfied.

#### **Warm-Up:**

1. Activities and possessions are not inherently bad... In fact, what might be the risk of extreme minimalism and/or self-denial with respect to activities and possessions?
2. What are some of the benefits of things like sports or other extracurricular activities?
3. But... what are the risks associated with the never-ending list of activities available to our youth?
4. Why is it important for us to have clear, biblical goals that govern and guide us in this area?

#### **Video** (notes below)

#### **1. Examples of unbiblical goals**

- a. Developing special skills
  - i. Special skills are not bad in themselves; they have a place in your child's development
  - ii. What must be sacrificed to achieve these goals?
  - iii. What are the parent's motivations?
  - iv. What are the values that will be taught by the leaders of these activities?
- b. Psychological adjustment
  - i. Where does the Bible encourage a psychologized way of looking at ourselves?
  - ii. Are children taught to have a biblical view of competition and how to return good for evil?
- c. Saved children
  - i. Temptation to think that if my child gets saved, it will be easy to work with him
  - ii. Take note of the important cautions in this section
  - iii. We can't save our kids
- d. Family worship
  - i. Family worship is a means to an end, it is not the end in itself

- e. Well-behaved children
  - i. Well-behaved kids are a *secondary benefit* of biblical child rearing.
  - ii. This is not a primary goal
  - iii. Emphasis on well-behaved children can obscure dealing with heart issues
  - iv. The importance of manners is properly rooted in Philippians 2 - preferring others above yourself
- f. Good education
  - i. Are good grades a biblical objective?
  - ii. Grades don't reflect how much effort and hard work have been done
  - iii. A better gauge: what will produce character strength in adulthood?
- g. Control
  - i. Goal is to manage kids—this is not a biblical goal

## 2. What is our goal for our children?

- a. Best summed up in the first question of the Westminster Shorter Catechism
  - i. "The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy him forever"
  - ii. This is where parents need to start with their kids

## 3. What if our kids are not Christians?

- a. Even if your kids don't know God they are still commanded to obey God
- b. There is, of course, a tension here. Our kids are called to do something they cannot do without grace
- c. This tension shows how profoundly we need the grace and power of the gospel.

## Q&A

### Reflection:

1. Humans, including young ones, were made for God – to be in relationship with Him and satisfied in Him. True life for those made in God's image is found in the delightful pleasures of knowing and loving God.
  - a. What are some of the ways that a parent might unwittingly offer alternate pleasures that distract their children from knowing God and finding their identity and significance in Him?
    - i. How can this be done even when they are very young?
  - b. What are some of the ways that a parent might allow a good (but lesser) goal take precedence over this important over-arching goal?
2. How can developing special skills and preparing children to be fruitful/successful be part of a biblical goal?
  - a. Why does this fall short of being a sufficient goal on its own?
3. In the video, Tedd Tripp warned against being influenced by the standards and practices of the culture. Consider Deuteronomy 18:9-10...
  - a. In what areas are we most likely to struggle with conforming to worldly standards?