

Shepherding A Child's Heart

Week 8: Discarding Unbiblical Methods

Main Idea:

Unbiblical methods tend to have this in common: they are directed toward behavior – curbing behavior you do not want and encouraging behavior you think is good. The problem is that since the heart and behavior are so closely related, whatever modifies behavior inevitably trains the heart. Whatever constrains behavior (bribes, fear, shame, pleasurable rewards, etc.) trains the heart. Therefore, methods are important, and they must focus on shepherding the heart toward understanding how to live as one created by God, for God.

Video (notes below)

1. What are the methods we use to accomplish our goals?

- a. The story of the mother and daughter in the airport

2. We cannot be indifferent to methodology

- a. Biblically, the methods are as important as the objective
- b. God is not only concerned with what we do, but how we do it
- c. If we go to the culture for methods, we open ourselves up to unbiblical influences
- d. Biblical goals require biblical methods

3. Unbiblical methods

- a. "I didn't turn out so bad"
 - i. This parent has unquestioningly accepted the methods his own parents used
 - ii. No biblical assessment is made
- b. Pop psychology
 - i. Whatever works is good, e.g. bribery
 - ii. Superficial.
 - iii. Self-interest is the goal.
 - i. These methods don't address the heart, only behavior
- c. Behavior Modification
 - i. This is the most popular method of child rearing in our culture
 - ii. Reward good behavior; ignore or punish bad behavior.
 - iii. **Don't miss this: Whatever modifies behavior inevitably trains the heart.** In this case, the heart is trained toward greedy self-interest and obtaining rewards.
- d. Emotionalism
 - i. An appeal to pluck the child's heart strings.
 - ii. Example: A pastor told his daughter that her poor behavior would reflect badly on his ministry
 - iii. "The Chair"
- e. Punitive correction
 - i. The idea is to make children pay for what they have done
 - ii. Grounding is the most popular form of punitive correction
 - iii. Does not address heart issues.
 - iv. Not designed to improve character, but to punish behavior.
- f. Erratic eclecticism.
 - i. A catch-all methodology—because parents don't know what to do

4. Where do unbiblical methods take us?

- a. Since the heart determines behavior, these methods all lead to superficial parenting rather than shepherding the hearts of our children
- b. These methods address behavior and miss the point of biblical discipline
- c. The deep needs within the heart are ignored
- d. Unbiblical methods provide children with functional idols to organize his life
- e. These methods train the heart away from Christ
- f. It is impossible to have a preoccupation with behavior and end up at the Cross

5. By focusing on the heart we see that the only hope we have is at the Cross

- a. Our children need transformation from the inside out
- b. We want to see the shepherding of our children bring them to confrontation with God

6. Imagine you are trying to deal with a child's failure to do his homework

- a. Bribery: "Do your work, I'll take you to the ball game."
- b. Emotionalism: "PLEASE, do your work."
- c. Behavior modification: "Everyday you do your work, I'll put your name in a jar."
- d. "I didn't turn out so bad": "I didn't do my work. I got smacked. So I learned to do my work."

7. What do each of these approaches accomplish?

- a. Do any of these approaches lead to the truth that God sent his son into the world to free people from their sin?
- b. These approaches all train the heart away from the Cross
- c. All of these approaches produce distance between parents and children
 - i. The child will eventually resent the attempts at manipulation
 - ii. Depth of relationship will be lost
 - iii. Note the illustration of Tedd's friend from college

8. We need to think of the methods that God has given us to address issues of the heart

Q&A/ Reflection:

1. All training methods do in fact shepherd the heart, but some shepherd the heart in wrong directions. How can we determine if a training method is shepherding the heart in a Godward direction?
2. A critical question for us to consider is "what is the point of appeal in our training method(s)"?

Method Point of Appeal

- | | |
|--|--|
| a. Bribery _____
etc.) _____

_____ | b. Offering prizes (stickers, rewards,
etc.) _____
c. Yelling/Screaming
(PLEASE!)
d. Emotionalism
e. Shaming (what will others think of you?)
f. Contracts
g. Time outs & grounding |
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3. Why are methods of training that simply target behavior attractive?
4. Key questions to ask about training methods:
 - a. Am I speaking merely to the fruit issue? Or am I addressing the fruit issue to get to the root issue?
 - b. What is the point of appeal to the child?
 - c. How will this training, encouragement, or correction move the child to right behavior from right

motives?