

Shepherding the heart of a child

Introduction: Who we are, ages of our kids.

Most of what we will be sharing today comes from a very valuable source: a book called: “Shepherding a child’s heart by Tedd Tripp.

We will add some of our own experiences and things we have learned on our journey as parents. But we also share from an imperfect platform. We are very aware of all our failures as parents and we are also faced with 2 by no means perfect children! Believe us, so please do not think we got it all right.

With all that we are facing as parents today, I do believe it is possible to raise your children in a Godly way in the 21st century. The Word of God presents us with an accurate and comprehensive picture of children, parents, family life, values, training, nurture and discipline – all we need for the task of parenting. God’s ways have not proved inadequate; they are simply untried.

Personally, I must say I never thought the task of parenting is so hard and challenging.

Before we had children we would visit couples with young children and we would say to one another, when we have kids we will talk once and we will make sure they listen. WELL it is just not as easy as that.

I thought I was a patient person before I had kids, believe me I had no idea what patience means. I thought I new what self-sacrifice means..... I thought I had perseverance...

So I do think when you become a parent it creates a wonderful opportunity for spiritual growth and character building.

I must also add. I think when you become a parent it is a gift because you gain such a greater understanding of the Father heart of God. If I as a wicked heart human being will give up anything for my child, how much more intense is the love our heavenly Father?

What does it mean to shepherd your child’s heart?

In short it means to get to the heart of behaviour.

Luke 6:45 “ The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For out of the overflow of the heart, the mouth speaks. The heart determines behaviour.

A change in behaviour that does not stem from a change in heart is not commendable, it is condemnable.

This must point them already to the way God handles us through the gospel. God works on the heart that flows into actions. If we only focus on behaviour and want to change it without the heart – Then we are raising Pharisees!

Let’s take a familiar example.

Zion and Abigail stands on the toilet to brush their teeth. Now it is forever a fight and there is space for both of them, but they push one another of and it is a verbal battlefield in die Bere se huis. Now we could solve the problem and focus on who was there first, but this response misses the heart issue. “Who was there first” is a justice issue and operates in favour of the child who was quicker, who is normally the older one. But actually there are 2 offenders; both children are displaying a hardness of heart toward the other. Both are being selfish. Both are saying: “I am only concerned about myself and not about the other person.” I want my happiness, even at your expense.”

There is actually no difference about this heart attitude in an adult executive in a company who are willing to downplay his colleague in order for him to get promotion.

We will say something like this. “ Zion dink jy nou net aan jouself of dink jy aan jou sussie en Abigail dink jy nou net aan jouself of ook aan jou boetie. Dit is ‘n lelike selfsugtige hartjie as ons net aan ons self dink, nou staan julle mooi saam op die toilet en julle maak plek vir mekaar” – **Repeat in English.**

As parents we need to unmask our child’s sin and it underscores a need for a saviour. So parenting needs to be concerned with the heart, you must learn to work from the behaviour you see, back to the heart, exposing the

heart issues.

Correcting with a central focus on redemption.

Discipline exposes your child's inability to love his sister from his heart or to prefer others before himself. Discipline leads to the cross where sinful people are forgiven. Sinners who come to Jesus in repentance and faith find grace and mercy. Jesus' redemptive work entails forgiveness, internal transformation and empowerment to live new lives. It is only in Christ that the child who has strayed and has experienced conviction of sin may find hope, forgiveness, salvation, and power to live.

Two important components that shapes your child's life and behaviour:

- 1) Your child 's relationship to the shaping influences of life (external issues)
- 2) Your child's relationship to God (internal issues).

Shaping Influences can be like:

*The structure of family life: for instance are there other children what is the birth order, are both parents living together etc.

*Family values: What is worth a fuss and what passes without notice? Spoken and unspoken rules of the family. Where does God fit into family life?

*Family Roles: Is the father present and involved, who pay the bills, what are the roles of the children in the house?

*Family conflict resolution: Does the family know how to talk about its problems. Do family members resolve things or walk away?

*Family Response to failure: Anger, Resentment and slander or Perseverance and Creativity?

*Family History: how many times you have moved, enough money, good health, etc.

Now as parents we try extremely hard to manage the shaping influences of our children's lives. But whatever the shaping influences of life, it is the child's relationship to God or Godward orientation that determines his response to those shaping influences – verduidelik mooi!!

Pro 9:7 Whoever corrects a scoffer gets himself abuse, and he who reprove a wicked man incurs injury.

Pro 9:8 Do not reprove a scoffer, or he will hate you; reprove a wise man, and he will love you.

Pro 9:9 Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be still wiser; teach a righteous man, and he will increase in learning.

Pro 9:10 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight.

Look at the mocker's and the wise man's response to rebuke and instruction

Verse 10 helps us understand that it is the fear of the Lord that makes one wise and it is that wisdom that determines how he responds to the correction.

All of us are created to worship, so either your child will worship our King Jesus or he will worship idols..and himself.

Parenting is not just providing good input. It is not just creating a constructive home atmosphere and positive interaction between a child and his parent. There is another dimension. **The child is interacting with the living God. He is either worshiping and serving and growing in understanding of the implications of who God is, or he is seeking to make sense of life without a relationship with God.**

We need to be pointing our children and mentoring our children towards God – not just “hope” they will find their way. We need to be purposeful in our upbringing.

Authority

One important issue we want to deal with is the Authority structures in our childrens lives.

God calls us to live under authority. And as a parent you exercise authority as God's agent.

The culture we live in today does not have a Biblical understanding of authority. Our culture has no notion of intelligent, thinking persons willingly placing themselves under authority. When we allow our children to become independent decision makers we give them a false idea of liberty and a mistaken notion about freedom.

Gal 5:1 For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.

They need to learn about the freedom in Jesus and under Jesus and about the yoke of slavery that results when you serve and worship only yourself and want to stand only under your own authority.

Ps 119:45 | I will walk about in freedom, for I have sought out your precepts.

Freedom is found in obedience!

If you are unsure about the nature and the extent of your authority, your children will suffer greatly.

As a parent, you have authority because God calls you to be an authority in your child's life. You have the authority to act on behalf of God. You may not try to shape the lives of your children as pleases you, but as pleases Him!

The purpose for your authority in the lives of your children is not to hold them under your power, but to empower them to be self-controlled people living freely under the authority of God. Jesus is a great example of this. In John 13, Jesus who knew that the Father had put all things under his authority, put on a towel and washed the disciples' feet.

Eph 6:4 Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

Eph 6:4 commands you to bring your children up in the training and instruction of the Lord.

Deut 6 shows us that God wants one generation to follow another in His ways. God accomplishes this objective through the agency of parental instruction.

Deu 6:6 And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart.

Deu 6:7 You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.

Deu 6:8 You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes.

Deu 6:9 You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

If your child does not learn to respond to your authority, how will he learn to willingly surrender to God? It is God who is not being obeyed when you are disobeyed and it is God who is not being honoured when you are not honoured.

Pro 6:23 For the commandment is a lamp and the teaching a light, and the reproofs of discipline are the way of life,

You come with the correction of discipline that is the way of life.

Most of us as parents don't understand the necessity of being in charge. And we give our children far too many choices, for instance few of us are willing to say "I have prepared oatmeal for your breakfast. It is good nutritious food and I want you to eat it. Maybe other morning we will have some other cereal.

Most of us will leave the choice to the child: "what would you like to eat for breakfast? And this scenario is repeated in clothing choices, schedule choices, TV- time and free-time choices. Unfortunately the child is learning that he is the

decision maker. **This misses the most important issue. Children will be good decision makers as they observe faithful parents modelling and instructing wise direction and decision making on their behalf. They don't learn good decision making abilities through "experience" – they must be "shown" and "mentored" – This of course changes with the age of a child – they get more freedom of choice as they grow older.**

We pander to our children's desires and wishes. We teach them to find their soul's delight in going places and doing things. We attempt to satisfy their lust for excitement. We fill their young lives with distractions from God. We give them material things and take delight in their delight in possessions. Then we hope that somewhere down the line they will see that a life worth living is found only in knowing and serving God!

Training and correcting our Children through Communication

Part of authority is to Train up your child through good communication.

Luk 6:45 of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.

Your first objective in correction must not be to tell your children how you feel about what they have done or said. You must try to understand what is going on inside of them. Look at the WHY of what has been done or said.

Remember it is out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaks. You must peel away the behaviour and discern the inner world of your child's motivation in this situation.

Let's take an example:

Abigail often gets frustrated with her brother and then hits him. Now from what I have learned, I'll have a conversation with Abigail.

It is not very helpful just to say stop hitting your brother, or why did you hit your brother. And give her a smack.

I'll ask

Abigail does daddy and mommy teach you to hit other people? Do you like it when others hit you? What did Zion do to make you mad? Did hitting him make it better? In what other ways could you have responded?

Even if Zion was wrong in what he was doing, hitting is not the answer.

Allow us to share some practical, creative ways we have adopted in our communication to train our children!

If there is a value that we want to teach for instance, Zion is struggling with telling the truth, then we will use story time to reinforce this value. For example I will tell a story about Mr. Spike a funny character who did something really wrong and he wanted to lie about it, but he was very brave and he chose to tell the truth although it was hard and how it made him feel free.

- Discern motives behind questions and use it as entry points to communicate values and truth based on Jesus. – Zion and traffic rules and value of God's creation by not killing all living things.

Team work in communication

Gerhard and myself will even tell a story where he starts, then he'll say "en wat gebeur toe...." Then I continue and then him again and we'll tackle something like always wanting the best for yourself and choosing the best, biggest things for yourself.

You think these things go in and out of their ears, but somewhere along the line we do realise, something does stuck.

I'll also use travelling time in the car and real situations of what happened during their day to get things across.

I read in a book of a guy that took his kids and gave them 2 tubes of toothpaste and said they can squash all the toothpaste out to create a piece of artwork. They thoroughly enjoyed it, the next task was to try and get as much of the toothpaste back into the tube. Obviously that was not as easy. The moral of the story, we must think before we say things that hurt others. It is easy for the words to roll out of your mouth but we cannot take the words back!

The more you talk with your children, helping them to understand themselves, their temptations, fears and doubts, the more you prepare them to understand life in the world.

The cost is GREAT! It requires being available and fully engaged in parenting and if you are a family with two parents then both play equal roles in the family. **Parenting is a team effort. – We put our kids to bed together etc.**

Parenting is your primary calling!

The bible says that if you aspire to greater responsibility in the kingdom of God, then you start with your family. How can you preach the gospel to someone else if you can't live the gospel in your own home?

1Ti 3:4 He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive,
1Ti 3:5 for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church?

If you have done GREAT THINGS for the Lord and you helped thousands of people in your life and you fail in this area, you fail period. Parenting will mean that you can't do all the things that you could otherwise do. It will affect your golf handicap. It may mean that your home does not look like a picture from House and Home. It will impact your career and ascent on the corporate ladder. It will affect the kind of friendships you will be available to pursue. It will modify the amount of time you have for bowling, hunting, TV or how many books you read.

Parenting is great sacrifice with great reward!

Circle of blessing

God has drawn a circle of great blessing in Eph 6:1-3. Children are to live within the circle of submission to parental authority. Submission to parents means HONORING AND OBEYING

Show picture

The disobedient child has moved outside the circle of blessing. The parent must quickly restore the child to the proper relationship with God and the parent.

Your child is in danger if he is rebellious and disobedient. You must move swiftly to return him to the circle of protection and safety.

Circle of blessing and the gospel – how God puts us in Jesus in a blessed place and how God is our authority and Father and how he speaks and communicate to us through Jesus.