

Learning to Lead: Leading in the Home

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 03 June 2012

Preacher: Jonny Grant

[0 : 00] Well, we've been looking at a series, Learning to Lead. We've looked at leading within the church, leading within marriage, and this morning we're looking at leaders in the home in particular, how that is for parents and their children. But before we do, let's pray.

Father, thank you so much for the gift of children. We thank you for all that they bring to us as families and all that they give to us every day, the joy, the happiness. And we also recognise that raising children is not easy, it is hard, and therefore we need your wisdom and your help, and above all, the work of your Spirit in our lives to be the kind of parents that you call us to be. So please help us to learn from this, and to understand what it is to be good parents for our children.

In Jesus' name. Amen. Now before we actually start, I should say that while this is directed at parents, those who have children, or those who are thinking of having children, I think it does apply to us all because we all have a responsibility towards the children within the family of the church. And I think what we look at here, there are principles here that apply to those who are teaching or helping at Sunday school, or those who are involved in creche, or are crusaders, and so on. So I hope that whatever stage of life we are at, that we can draw something from this. But nonetheless, this is directed primarily towards those who are parents. So, gift or curse? The chairman of the association of non-parents, that's a group that are deliberately against having children, and yes, such a group does exist. This is what the chairman says.

I have never wanted to be a parent. I have never wanted that sort of responsibility. It is the fact that child-rearing goes on every day for so long. I just do not want to devote myself, in this way, to children. What do you think of that? Well, many couples agree. They have a lifestyle to enjoy, and careers to pursue, and having children just gets in the way. It's reflected throughout our society. Married people are having less children than before, simply because they take up too much time, and too much money. Those who do have children seem to have them later in life, after they've finished exploring life. Abortion is also an increasing option, as children, they say, interfere with, and complicates, an adult's life. So, to many, children are nothing more than a curse.

[3 : 21] But the Bible has a much more positive view on our children. Rather than a curse, children, all children, are a gift to be celebrated. Listen to this from Psalm 127, verse 3. It says, Sons and daughters are a heritage from the Lord. Children are a reward from Him. Or in Proverbs 17, 6, children's children are a crown to the aged. Grandchildren are wonderful.

So, children are a wonderful gift from God, and have a special place in the purposes of God. They are a blessing and a reward, a joy and a treasure. So, rather than think our thoughts about children, children, we need to be people who think God's thoughts about children. We need to see that leading in our home, that's parenting, is not a chore to endure, but a privilege to enjoy.

And we're going to look at three areas that Christian parents are to lead in their homes and families. First, we are to lead children to Christ. That's the primary role, responsibility of parents, to lead their children to Christ. So, look, Ephesians chapter 6, verse 1.

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. And what are they to obey? Well, look at verse 4. For fathers, do not exasperate your children. Instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.

So, children are to obey their parents in all things. Parents don't obey the children. Children, obey your parents in all things. In particular, they are to obey the teaching, that's the spiritual formation that the parents bring and give to their children. So, what does that look like? Well, negatively, verse 4 again, fathers, do not exasperate your children. Don't make them angry.

[5 : 43] Or as my wife often says to me, Johnny, will you stop annoying your children? Leave them alone. Do not be making harsh demands on them. Do this. Do that. Don't abuse your authority.

They're not your slaves.

Do not be unfair, constantly nagging, putting them down and comparing. I wish you weren't like this. I wish you were like them. Do not believe. Instead, look at verse 4. Bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.

Make sure your child learns about Jesus from you. Paul has already given an example of this back in chapter 4.

Here he is reminding the church of how they had become followers of Jesus. Look at chapter 4, verse 21. He reminds them, surely you heard of him, you heard of Jesus, and you were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus.

He says, You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which had been corrupted by its deceitful desires, to be made new in the attitude of your minds, and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

[7 : 07] You are to teach them Christ just as you were taught about Christ. Somebody, your parents or someone, taught you Christ and encouraged you in Christ.

They helped you grow in Christ. So we are not to put on demand and say, do this, do that and do the other. That's legalism. We are to bring them. We are to bring them up in Christ and to show them what it is to take off and to put on what it is to grow in Christ every day.

Now, before we move on, did you notice the specific commands? Now, this, it seems, is part of God's good order and design for his people. It starts back in chapter 5, verse 21, where it says, Submit to submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. So God has this order, this design for life, for family.

So husbands and wives are to submit to God. Wives are to submit to husbands. Children are to submit to their parents.

Submission to God's order for family life. And God, within that order, has called fathers to be the primary teacher of the children, to be responsible for the spiritual input into their little lives.

[8 : 53] As we saw the other week, fathers and men in general have a habit of abdicating our authority. Well, God has given us children. He has entrusted us with children to teach them about Christ.

That is our role and responsibility. We're not to assume that mum's going to do it, or that the church will do it, or somebody in Sunday school's going to do it. Fathers, you, I, we are to do it.

And as fathers, we love to see our children learn new skills. We get excited when they take their first step. When they get out a toy drill and hammer and start trying to fix something.

Or when they draw something and create something wonderful. In fact, we spend time teaching them these things. That's all good and crucial to their development.

But it must never, never take the place of opening up the Bible with your son and daughter, sitting down with them and teaching them about Jesus.

[10 : 06] It doesn't get any better than that. The question is not, did you teach your son how to kick a football?

Or did you teach your daughter how to work the computer? But did you bring your children up in the training and instruction of the Lord?

Will you be remembered as parents? Will you be remembered as a father who brought your child up in the way of God?

Not, are they Christians? Because that's God's job and we can never make our children Christians. But did you teach them? And did you pray for them?

Well, that's the fathers. What about the mothers? What do they do? Well, mothers play a crucial part in this too. In Genesis chapter 2 verse 20, right at the beginning, we are told that God made, and here's the word, a suitable helper for Adam.

[11 : 18] And that helper we know was Eve, Adam's wife. And when we think helper, we don't mean a go-for, we are to think partnership.

Tim Keller in his book *The Meaning of Marriage* puts it like this. To help someone is to make up what is lacking in them with your strength.

To help someone does not imply the helper is stronger or the helped is weaker, simply that the husband's strength is inadequate by itself.

Now, I think that helps understand what this role is for a mother to help the father. So, mothers who are here, the father of your children needs your support and help.

This is not a task that they can do on their own. Yes, they are to be primarily responsible for all of this, but they are inadequate. They are lacking in strength.

[12:25] So, God has called you, the mum, the wife, not anybody else, to support your husband in their role.

So, motherhood is not a second-rate role. Mothers are not second-class citizens, as if leaving their career and becoming a mother is kind of taking a lower position.

It isn't. It is a high calling. It is a great calling. It is a wonderful gift from God. It is to be protected, to be valued, and it is to be treasured.

So, mums, encourage your husbands as they lead their children to Christ. So, first, we are to lead children to Christ.

Second, we are to lead children on mission. Look back to Genesis chapter 1 a minute. Genesis chapter 1 and verse 26.

[13:36] Let's read verse 26. Then God said, Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.

So God created man in his own image. In the image of God he created them, male and female he created them. And God blessed them and said to them, Be fruitful and increase in number.

Fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, and over every living creature that moves on the ground. Here we have the first command of the Bible, which is given to the first husband and wife.

And here it is, to rule over the earth. And the way to rule over the earth is to have children. Look at verse 28. God said to them, Be fruitful and increase in number.

Fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over it. In other words, children are an integral part of God's mission.

[15:01] God's mission, his end goal, his plan, where it's all heading towards, is to have people from every nation living under his rule and authority.

Ultimately, that is living under Jesus, who is God's promised king. This is what is best for us, for you, for me, and what is best for our world. Now, our job as parents is to lead children on this mission.

We are to raise our children to live under the rule of Jesus so that they grow up themselves, they have families, so that they also live under the rule of Jesus.

Look at Psalm 78. Psalm 78.

Pick it up in verse 3.

[16:12] What we have heard and known, what our fathers have told us. We will not hide them from their children.

We will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord, his power, and the wonders he has done. Verse 6.

You see, children are to be raised up, to be taught about Christ, who in turn tell their children about Christ and tell those who are yet to be born about Christ.

This is all part of God's mission. Christopher Ash in his book Married for God says this, The Creator entrusts to married couples the awesome privilege and responsibility of procreating potential disciples to join his team.

We are to work, teach, discipline, and pray that they will grow into disciples who learn to love God and care for his world.

[17:42] Of course, as parents, we all have different plans and dreams for our children, not least a good education and a great career.

In fact, parents make great sacrifices. They spend a lot of money to ensure their children are given the best opportunity in life to succeed. But parents, never let career and education be the driving motivation in your child's life.

Instead, let the grand mission of God shape, mould, and drive your child's future. Don't limit the vision of your child to a philosophy of, well, son, just work hard, get a job, find a wife, get a mortgage, and settle down.

Give them a vision of God's mission. That Jesus Christ has reconciled all things to himself through the cross, and that one day Jesus Christ is going to come again, and he's going to renew and restore this broken and suffering world, and one day every human being is going to bow before his

rule.

That is the mission. That is the vision. That is what we are to be raising our children up to and being involved in. So whatever your job, or whatever job or career your child should choose, pray that they will do it motivated by God's mission.

[19 : 23] That they will live and work under God's rule. That they would use their gifts and their resources to see that the mission of God is worked out in their workplaces and within their homes.

Pray that your child would even take their career and their work and go amongst a people who do not yet know Christ.

Pray that your child would be willing to go and risk their life, even that they would be willing to lay down their life for Christ in a place that is hostile to the mission of God.

Will you dare to do that for your children? If God has given you children, he has given you the awesome privilege and responsibility of leading your family on mission.

So first, we are to lead our children to Christ. Second, we are to lead children on mission. And third, we are to lead children with grace. Yes, children need grace.

[20 : 54] parents. But I want to apply this particularly to parents. Parents, we need lots of grace.

I watched a documentary recently about an Olympian. For 12 years, she was at the top of her game, finishing in the medals year after year, training six days a week, running, going to the weights gym, working on the technique.

every aspect of her sport was strengthened and paid attention to. Now she's retired and she recently had a baby.

And on reflection, she said this as she was sitting on the floor surrounded by toys and a little toddler sitting on her knee. And this is what she said. Being an Olympian is much easier than being a mum. So all the mums out there, you are an Olympian. You deserve a gold medal. In fact, what I want all the dads to do is to go home and to build one of these little boxes with one, two and three on it.

[22 : 13] A little podium. I want you to put it outside and every evening mums, you're to go outside and you're to stand in number one position.

And one by one your children are going to walk by and hang gold medals around your neck because you are an Olympian and you deserve it. Being a mum, being a parent, is hard work physically, emotionally and spiritually.

And because it's so hard, we often feel a failure, don't we? We feel like we're coming last in the race, crawling over the line rather than finishing first and doing a lap of honour.

Maybe it's because your child is not interested in Christ or has turned away from Christ and you feel a failure. Perhaps you're struggling with the changing demands of your child and what they want and what they need and you just feel too weak.

Perhaps you can't even manage your own self, never mind the needs and the demands of your children and you feel inadequate. That's why we need to rest in the abundant, overflowing grace of God.

[23 : 35] Now there's no particular passages or verses that are speaking directly to parents in this but I think there are principles that we can draw out from Scripture for parents in regards to the need for God's grace in parenting.

So three things. First, grace for our failures. Romans chapter 5. Grace for our failures.

Go to Romans chapter 5. As parents we often fail.

We say the wrong things and we do the wrong things. And hardly a day goes past and we get to the end and we think I wish we could start the day again.

I wish I hadn't said I wish I hadn't done it that way. You see it's hard work isn't it? There are no practice runs and as a result we mess up big time.

[24 : 47] But the good news is no matter how great our failures God's grace is greater. Look at Romans 5 verse 17.

Here it's talking about the consequences the knock on effects of our sin. It says verse 17 for if by the trespass of the one man death reign through that one man how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through that one man Jesus Christ.

In other words he's saying look if your failures are great. How much more greater is God's grace to you?

If our failures make a mess how much more does God's grace redeem and restore that mess and all that failure and turn it into something beautiful.

The chapter 5 verse 20 the second part but where sin increased grace increased all the more. We can put our hands up and admit that we fail.

[26 : 11] There's nothing wrong with saying that we fail because it's only as we admit our failures that we can receive the abundant grace of God to redeem and restore our mess and turn it into something beautiful.

As parents we're not to keep a record of the past. We're not to wake up each day and think I wish I could start again or I wish I should have done this or I could have done that.

God's grace covers the past. He gives us grace for today and his grace is going to take care of the future.

So first grace for our failures. Second grace in our weaknesses. Look at 2 Corinthians chapter 12. 2 Corinthians chapter 12. As parents we often feel very weak. The demands and pressures of babies and teenagers is draining.

[27 : 23] Parents, listen to this. You are full-time carers and counsellors. You're relationship advisors and law enforcers. You're a taxi driver, a lending agency, you're peacemakers and a party organiser.

You're a personal assistant, a guidance counsellor, you're a doctor, you're a nurse, the list goes on and on. You're qualified for all of these tasks. And you love to do it.

You love to play that role. Why? Because these are your children. You love them. You want to give to them. them. But as parents, there are times we just feel inadequate and unable.

The task is just too big and we're too weak and it all becomes overwhelming and we just sit down and cry.

But parenting is not something to do in our own strength. Yes, if God has blessed the family home in such a way that there's a mother and a father, there is that support.

[28 : 33] But we don't rely upon each other. We rely upon the grace of God. Look at 2 Corinthians 12, verse 9. This is talking here about Paul's pressures, the demands upon him, his sense of feeling weak, and God's grace to strengthen him.

Verse 9, God said to me, my grace is sufficient for you. My power is made perfect in weakness.

Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties, for when I am weak, then I am strong.

Did you catch it? My grace is sufficient for you. Rather than battle on on our own, we are to throw ourselves in our dependence on God, in our complete weakness, throw ourselves on God's grace, who strengthens us, and equips us, and will enable us for the task of parenting.

My grace is sufficient for you. My power is made perfect in your weakness. So, grace for our failures, grace in our weakness.

[30 : 23] And then the last one is grace to our children. You see, when we draw on God's grace in our failures and in our weaknesses, we are in a position to give God's grace to our children.

It's only when we are filled with God's grace, that we in turn are able to give God's grace. Look at 2 Corinthians 9, back a couple of pages, 2 Corinthians 9, verse 8.

The context here is about financial giving. As God has given us so much and blessed us so much by his grace, so we are people who are to overflow of giving to those around us.

But listen to this, chapter 2 Corinthians 9, verse 8. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things, at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. do you see the promise here from God? That we will have all the grace that we need to parent our children.

[31 : 52] Every circumstance, every day, every incident, every demand, every pressure, whatever stage of life our children are at, whatever, anything that happens in their life.

God is able to make all grace abound to you, in all things, at all times, having all that you need. God pours his grace into our lives, so that we, in turn, can fill our children's lives with the grace of Jesus Christ.

We need to swim, we need to jump in, into the overwhelming abundance of God's grace.

Every day, in our failures, and in our weaknesses, to draw upon it, to drink it in, so that we can give his grace to our children.

The grace to lead them to Christ, and the grace to lead them on mission. Let's pray.

[33 : 19] Our Father God, we recognise that the gift of children is an amazing privilege. It's a wonderful joy, but we also recognise that there is a great responsibility.

The task is huge. We feel weak, we feel inadequate, we so often fail, but yet we come again to receive afresh your amazing grace.

And I pray for each parent here, that you would fill them with your grace, that you would remind them that their past is forgiven, and that you will take care of the future, that you will equip every home with all that they need to raise their children to follow you.

And we pray for every child represented here, for children who are yet to be born within the family of this church, that they will learn about Christ.

And we ask you, Father, in your mercy and in your grace, that they will follow you, and that they will love you. And we pray that every child will grow up, and in God's goodness that they too would have families that will walk in the mission of God.

[35 : 05] We pray that children here will be those who go with their careers and their work to places and to people who do not yet know Christ, whether that's locally or whether that's far away.

But we pray that you would use us as families, and we pray your blessing upon parents. we thank you for your grace.

In Jesus' name we all pray. Amen.