



Spiritual Parenting: From Fear to Freedom

APPETIZER: Redefining Family

When it comes to parenting, what's your greatest fear?

Matthew 12:46-50

Backstory: Jesus' family is afraid and embarrassed because he's bringing dishonour on the family. Mark 3:21

Significance of family in first century Judaism:

- Bar-, Bat-, and Ben-
- Honour your mom and dad (Exodus 20:12)
- Stoning the rebellious (Deuteronomy 21:18-21)

Who is my mother? Who are my brothers?

- Jesus redefines family
- Seeing one another as family

Spiritual Parenting: When the community takes responsibility for the spiritual nurturing and development of the children in our spiritual family.

DINE IN: Van Down by the River

Cultural Script: What we follow to ensure safety, security, comfort, and future happiness for our children and ourselves.

Secular Salvation Promise:

- *Secular* because it doesn't include God.
- *Salvation* because it ensures our peace of mind.
- *Promise* because it seems true enough to seem plausible. This is not necessarily bad, but can become bad when necessary for peace, contentment, and joy.

If/Then Statements: Watch for these as conditions for your peace of mind, contentment, joy, and hope.

- The Gospel of Jesus means that our sense of hope and joy is not dependent on our circumstances. This means we can move from fearful living (parenting) to freedom.

The Most Important Thing is not that we try and be happy, secure, and comfortable, but that we (and our children) find true enjoyment in laying down our lives to be loved by Jesus as we offer our gifts, talents, skills, and education to love God and love others.

TAKE OUT:

1. **If you're feeling a bit like a kid yourself**, latch onto a family. Become a "big spiritual brother" or "big spiritual sister" to a kid in this community that you're a part of. Volunteer in Kidmax to invest more in kids spiritually. Ask them questions about God. Listen to them. Commit to pray for someone else's child.
2. **If you are a single adult, (and maybe not super into kids.)** Adopt a family with kids. Find one you like, and invest into them spiritually. Pray that God would help you to see kids as spiritual family. Challenge God to lead you to someone that you could share your story with. Volunteer in Kidmax or The Underground.
3. **If you are empty nesters**, are there any single parents in your community? They need you. They need you to be spiritual grandparents and spiritual parents: to offer your time, your home, your prayers, and your wisdom; to offer to clean their bathroom or cut their lawn; to be paying attention to their lives.
4. **If you are a single parent**, be open to receiving. Make your needs known. Allow others to help you and pray for you. Allow the church to be your family in some way. Can you trust that you are not alone?
5. **If you are a relatively busy family**, *breathe*. Ask yourselves: what is the most important thing? Be open to making shifts in your priorities as you answer this. Commit to being intentional in your own relationship with Jesus. What if you shared your family with someone who needs a family?

Home Church Questions

HANGOUT [Warming Up to the Topic – in one Large Group]

1. Review Sunday's message. Talk about what most encouraged, convicted, or puzzled you. There is a lot to cover here. Take your time with this, look up Bible passages, and enjoy some rich discussion.
2. What has been your experience of having been spiritually parented? What does a spiritual family mean to you? Describe your vision or hope for a spiritual family.

HEAR [Listening to God through Scripture – in Discussion Groups]

3. Take some time to read through **Matthew 12:46-50** as Lectio Divina.
 - a) Have one person read **Matthew 12:46-50** aloud while everyone else listens. What word, phrase, or images come to you?
 - b) Read a second time while one person reads and everyone else follows along in their Bibles. What word, phrase or images come to you this time?
 - c) Read a third time individually. What word, phrase, or images come to mind? Who do you identify with most? Why? What else stands out to you from this experience?

HUDDLE [Making It Personal and Praying Together – in Huddles]

4. Review the Secular Salvation Promise idea.
 - a) What is your own internal salvation promise that you hold onto deep down?
 - b) What is the if/then statement that you hold onto? [E.g. IF my kid does well on his report card, he will get into a good post-secondary education, will have a good job, and not end up in a van down by the river THEN I will be free from fear.]
 - c) What is the most important thing for your family? What would the kids in your life say is the most important thing?
5. Review the takeout section. Discuss who you are, what you are, and what your next step could be.
6. Pray and challenge God to stretch you in this area of spiritual family.

Quotes

Early Christians did their best to live as an extended family, caring for each other in the way in which extended families did. They called each other 'brother' and 'sister' and really meant it. They lived and prayed and thought like that: children of the same father, following the same older brother, sharing goods and resources where need arose. When they talked about "love," that's the main thing they meant: living as a single family, a mutually supporting community. The church must never forget that calling.
~ N.T. Wright, *Simply Christian*

Direct your children onto the right path, and when they are older, they will not leave it.
~ Proverbs 22:6

The holy grail for helping youth remain religiously active as young adults has been at home all along: parents. Mothers and fathers who practice what they preach and preach what they practice are far and away the major influence related to adolescents keeping the faith into their 20s, according to new findings from a landmark study of youth and religion.
~ David Briggs, *The Huffington Post*

Raising kids is a walk in the park. Jurassic park.
~ Unknown

Family on mission is for single people, divorced people, single parents, couples with no kids, couples with eight kids, empty nesters, teenagers and college students. We are all called to function as an integral member of some kind of Family on Mission because this is who God is.
~ Mike & Sally Breen, *Family on Mission*