

Concentric Circles
Biblically Prioritizing Our Lives
Circle 3 Part 1: Children - The Blessing, Discipleship, and
Discipline of Children



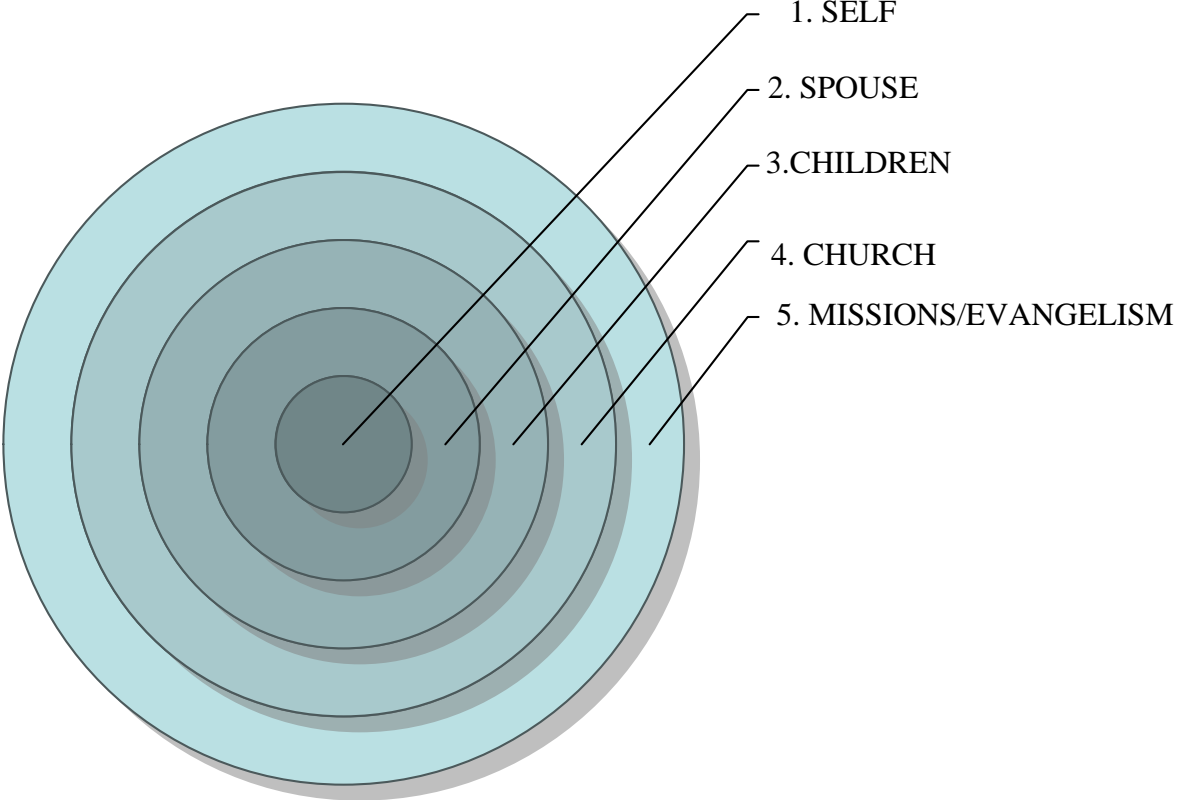
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Concentric Circles Of The Christian Life



- This is about prioritizing our lives in a manner worthy of the gospel:

Ephesians 4:1 *I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called,*

Colossians 1:10 *so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.*

1 Thessalonians 2:12 *we exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you to walk in a manner worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory.*

- The blood of Christ and the Holy Spirit have the power not only to save us for eternity, but to change our lives here and now.

•How do Circles 1 (self) and 2 (spouse) affect Circle 3 (children)?

Your children need more of Christ not more of you.

Your marriage must be gospel-centered and reflect Christ and His Church.

Malachi 2:15 *Did he not make them one, with a portion of the Spirit in their union? And what was the one God seeking? Godly offspring. So guard yourselves in your spirit, and let none of you be faithless to the wife of your youth*

- Keep in mind the difference between:
 - Principles which must be obeyed, and
 - Methods which are based upon wisdom, but must be consistent with the principles.
- Circle 3 (children), just like Circle 2 (spouse) is based upon the providence of God – but all of us need to pay attention (one another's).
- Why are children put as Circle 3 in priority?
 - Biblical stewardship (Matthew 25:14-29)
 - Elder qualifications (**1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9**)
 - 1 Timothy 3:4-5** *He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, 5 for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church?*

Church Distinctives

- 1) The Blessing of Children
- 2) Family Discipleship (Discipline and Discipling, Family Worship, Education)
- 3) Relationships Prior to Marriage

What verses are guarding, guiding and governing your view of children, and your role as a parent?

How much time have you spent studying the Scriptures to understand the Biblical view of children and parenting?

THE BLESSING OF CHILDREN

DISTINCTIVE:

The Blessing of Children

We believe that children are a blessing from the Lord and not an inconvenience or a burden; therefore, we rejoice with those who receive children in abundance, and we mourn with those whose prayerful plea for the blessing of children has gone unanswered. We believe that God is sovereign in all areas of life, and we praise Him whether in plenty or in want.

Psalm 127:3-5 *Behold, children are a heritage (gift) from the Lord, the fruit of the womb a reward. 4 Like arrows in the hand of a warrior are the children of one's youth. 5 Blessed is the man who fills his quiver with them! He shall not be put to shame when he speaks with his enemies in the gate.*

Psalm 128:1-4 *Blessed is everyone who fears the Lord, who walks in his ways! 2 You shall eat the fruit of the labor of your hands; you shall be blessed, and it shall be well with you. 3 Your wife will be like a fruitful vine within your house; your children will be like olive shoots around your table. 4 Behold, thus shall the man be blessed who fears the Lord.*

- Children are a blessing, but not an idol.
- God withholds no good thing from us

Psalms 84:11b *No good thing does he withhold from those who walk uprightly*

- Children are a blessing and reward, but they are sinners.
- The responsibilities of children are difficult.
- We need to have a multi-generational view

Deuteronomy 6:1-2 *"Now this is the commandment, the statutes and the rules that the LORD your God commanded me to teach you, that you may do them in the land to which you are going over, to possess it, 2 - that you may fear the LORD your God, you and your son and your son's son, by keeping all his statutes and his commandments, which I command you, all the days of your life, and that your days may be long.*

Psalms 128:6 *May you see your children's children! Peace be upon Israel!*

GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY OVER THE WOMB

- Genesis 29:31** *When the LORD saw that Leah was hated, he opened her womb, but Rachel was barren.*
- Genesis 30:1-2** *When Rachel saw that she bore Jacob no children, she envied her sister. She said to Jacob, "Give me children, or I shall die!" 2 - Jacob's anger was kindled against Rachel, and he said, "Am I in the place of God, who has withheld from you the fruit of the womb?"*
- Genesis 30:22** *Then God remembered Rachel, and God listened to her and opened her womb.*

We also see God's Sovereignty over the womb shown in the case of Abraham and Sarah in Genesis 18 (Isaac), Elkanah and Hannah in 1 Samuel 1 (Samuel), and Zechariah and Elizabeth in Luke 1 (John the Baptist).

•Children are a blessing and the God is sovereign over the womb, **but this does not mean that we elevate those with children above those without children. What we are striving to have is a biblical view of children.**

•In America, since Roe v. Wade was decided in 1973, there have been over 56 million abortions. During that same time there were about 141 million births. That means that something like 1/4 to 1/3 of the babies in this country over the last 40 years have been killed in the womb – killed by their parents

•“My life for yours” or “your life for mine”?

American Society:

- Average parent spends 19 minutes a day caring for their children, and 16 minutes with their children while doing other things (ex: going to the grocery store).

“Quality time” is a myth. The only way to have quality time with your children is to have a quantity of time with them.

Deuteronomy 6...as you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down and when you rise.

- Over the last two hundred years there has been a staggering decline in the birth rate in the U.S. – in 1800 it was 6 children per family, in 1900 it was 4 and in 2013 it dropped all the way down to 1.8 (2.1 is the birth rate needed just to sustain the population).
- Do we really want to take child training advice from the world?

Example of the Impact of Birthrate

1.8 children per family

200 years (8 generations)

110 descendants per family

x 60 families in congregation =

6,600 descendants

5 children per family

200 years (8 generations)

390,000+ descendants per family

x 60 families in congregation =

23 million+ descendants

What is the impact of your view that God is sovereign over the womb?

–It is NOT the expectation of more children – now or in the future

–It IS joyfully accepting whatever blessings He gives, when He chooses to give them.

Each child, individually, is a blessing and a good thing (**Psalm 84:11**, **Romans 8:28**) and we are to give thanks for each one of them (**Ephesians 5:20**).

FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP

DISTINCTIVE:

Family Discipleship

Parents have the God-given privilege and responsibility for the discipleship and discipline of their children. The church should not usurp the authority of godly parents, nor assume the responsibilities of parents who are lax in their duties. The church should give itself to teaching the biblical principles of parenthood and to holding parents accountable to carry them out in the context of families. Our goal is to strengthen parents in their God-called responsibility to “bring up their children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.”

We encourage and seek to equip families to worship together at home throughout the week, in addition to gathering congregationally every Lord’s Day.

We believe every Christian family should strive to give their children a Christian education.

DISCIPLESHIP AND DISCIPLINE

Ephesians 6:1-4 *Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 2 "Honor your father and mother" (this is the first commandment with a promise), 3 "that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land." 4 Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.*

CHILDREN

v1 *Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.*

- **Why are you to obey?** You are to obey because God has commanded it and it brings Him glory when you obey out of a heart of obedience to Him.
- **When are you to obey?** As long as your parents are not asking you to disobey the clear teaching of God's Word, you **MUST** obey. But if your parents, or anyone else, ever asks you to disobey what God has said, you must **NOT** obey. (**Acts 5:29**)
- **Who are you to obey?** Children, you are commanded to obey your parents. Both of them!

Is obedience really such a big deal?

Romans 1:29-32 *They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, **murder**, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, 30 slanderers, **haters of God**, insolent, haughty, boastful, **inventors of evil, disobedient to parents**, 31 foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. 3 Though they know God's decree that **those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them.***

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO OBEY?

Marks of Obedience:

- **Attentive - forgetful obedience is not obedience.**
- **Complete - partial obedience is not obedience.** Example – Saul and the Amalekites in 1 Samuel 15. Here, Saul’s partial obedience cost him his position as King of Israel.
- **Immediate - delayed obedience is not obedience. Psalm 119:60** *I hasten and do not delay to keep your commandments.*
- **Cheerful – grumbling and complaining obedience is not obedience. Philippians 2:14** *Do all things without grumbling or disputing.*

Obey:

- All the way
- Right away
- With a happy heart.

Children, this is not a call for you to be obedient to be made right with your parents and God.

Children we are not talking about cleaning up the outside of the cup and the inside remaining unclean.

Children, you must repent and believe the gospel. Your parent's faith cannot save you.

PARENTS

What are your top goals for your children?

I propose they should be:

1. Their salvation
2. Their spiritual maturity.

God is sovereign over salvation.

- **Romans 9:15-16** *For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." 16 So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy.*

God works through means to save people:

- **Romans 10:13-15** *For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." 14 How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? **And how are they to hear without someone preaching?** 15 And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!"*
- **1 Corinthians 3:6** *I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth.*

WHAT PRINCIPLES GUIDE OUR GOALS WITH OUR CHILDREN?

Galatians 4:19 *my little children, for whom I am again in the anguish of childbirth until Christ is formed in you!*

Mark 8:36 *For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?*

Colossians 1:28-29 *Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. 29 For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me.*

Parents, we can have a tendency to overcorrect the errors our parents made with us, and in doing so thwart our children's spiritual maturity.

- If you grew up in a poor family, you can be tempted to indulge your children with all that you never had and then wonder why they are becoming self-centered and ungrateful.
- If you grew up in a family where you never got to play or do things with friends, you can be tempted to overindulge your children with sports and recreation and then wonder why they are becoming lazy or preoccupied with themselves and their personal gratification.
- If you grew up in a family where you were never able to share your thoughts, you can be tempted to overcorrect and wonder why your children are becoming sassy and smart-mouthed.
- If you grew up in a family where you were never given any wisdom behind what you were commanded to do, you can be tempted to offer your children full explanations before they are expected to obey and wonder why your children are unable to obey without arguing or debating.

1 Corinthians 13:11 *When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways.*

- Are we considering how to help our children to give up childish ways as they grow older?
- Sociologists traditionally mark the “transition to adulthood” by the milestones of completing school, leaving home, becoming financially independent, marrying, and having a child. In 1960, 77 percent of women and 65 percent of men had passed all five milestones by age 30. **But among 30-year-olds in 2000, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, fewer than half of the women and one-third of the men had done so.**

1 Corinthians 11:1 Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.

- Our children are going to imitate someone.

If someone were to follow you around for a week with a video camera, would they come to the conclusion that your children's salvation and their spiritual maturity were your top priority for them?

- School?
- Evenings and weekends?
- Your prayer life?

DISCIPLINE

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

- Discipline includes education, training, chastisement, instruction and nurture
- Instruction includes admonishing and exhorting.

God has given us principles to guide both the content of our instruction and method of our discipline.

As we teach our children, we need to make clear the differences between God's law and man's rules.

We all have standards of training and discipline with our children

- Do your children obey only after you count to three?
- Do your children obey only after you raise your voice ?
- Do your children obey only after they see you reach for the rod?
- Do your children obey only after you have promised them something?

Are you fostering a spirit of love and fellowship in the home?

- Are you encouraging? (1 Thessalonians 5:11)
- Are you thankful? (Paul's letters)

Discipline vs. training (will vs. skill).

WHAT DO THE SCRIPTURE TEACH ABOUT DISCIPLINE?

Proverbs 13:24 *Whoever spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is diligent to discipline him.*

Proverbs 22:15 *Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline drives it far from him.*

Proverbs 23:13-14 *Do not withhold discipline from a child; if you strike him with a rod, he will not die. If you strike him with the rod, you will save his soul from Sheol.*

Proverbs 29:15 *The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child left to himself brings shame to his mother.*

COMMON OBJECTIONS

- My parents didn't do it this way and I turned out "OK".
- What I am doing is working just fine.
- I tried spanking before, and it didn't work.

STEPS IN DISCIPLINE

1. Identify the sin
2. Administer biblical discipline
3. Encourage your child

STEPS IN DISCIPLINE

IDENTIFY THE SIN

1. Examine yourself first

- irritated or impatient
- raised my voice
- used a harsh tone
- been emotionally or physically out of control
- shown preference or favoritism to siblings or compared him to others
- failed to teach or train him,
- failed to keep my promises
- consistently believed the worst
- neglected him

STEPS IN DISCIPLINE

IDENTIFY THE SIN

2. Use God's Word
3. Get to the heart
4. Make allowances for maturity not morality.
5. Sin has consequences

ADMINISTER BIBLICAL DISCIPLINE

1. Discipline for sin, not children being children.
2. **Diligently and timely** – Proverbs 13:24 *Whoever spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is diligent to discipline him*
3. **Painful** – Hebrews 12:11a *For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant,*
4. **Consistent.**
5. **In proportion to the offense** - Deuteronomy 25:2.
6. **Affectionate** – Hebrews 12:6 *For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives."* Proverbs 3:11-12 *My son, do not despise the LORD's discipline or be weary of his reproof, 12 for the LORD reproves him whom he loves, as a father the son in whom he delights.*

ADMINISTER BIBLICAL DISCIPLINE

7. **Done with sweet and gracious words. Proverbs 16:21** *The wise of heart is called discerning, and sweetness of speech increases persuasiveness. Proverbs 16:24* *Gracious words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the body.*
8. **Done in a spirit of gentleness. Galatians 6:1** *Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.*
9. **Based upon what you know.** (Deuteronomy 19:15)
10. **With an understanding it is to be an example of God's discipline. Hebrews 12:7-9** *It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? 8 If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. 9 Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live?*

ADMINISTER BIBLICAL DISCIPLINE

- 11. Done in private. Matthew 18:15** *"If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother.*
- 12. Has the end in mind** – holiness and the peaceful fruit of righteousness. **Hebrews 12:10-11** *For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. 11 For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.*

ENCOURAGE YOUR CHILD

1. Discipline will not be pleasant.
2. If you do not feel like encouraging, that is a clue **your** heart was not right in disciplining.
3. Answer any questions they may have. Make sure they understand why they received discipline and what God's Word says.
4. Make sure restitution has been made, if needed (Exodus 21-22).
5. Make certain sin has been confessed, forgiveness is sought and nature of forgiveness is clear.
6. Help them see what they should do differently next time. Encourage them to ask God to help them obey.
7. Pray – This is God's means - He should be acknowledged.
8. Point them to Christ. What a great opportunity to preach the gospel!

How do we guard against our children taking the methods we employ and carrying them forward in an unbiblical way?

We have to spend the time to explain the biblical principles to our children not just have them copy our methods.

WHAT NOW?

- Remember that on our best day it is still the blood of Christ that makes us acceptable to God.
- Truth demands a response.
- Purpose to search the Scriptures and commit to conform your life to the principles you find there.
- Talk to your spouse and children about how your parenting lines up with what God's Word says.
- If necessary, confess and repent.
- Be a doer of the word, and not a hearer only, deceiving yourself (James 1:22).