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## Dedicated Parenting

**Intro:** This being Mother's Day and a Child Dedication Sunday, we're going to be looking at what it means to be a dedicated parent. It's certainly not what I used to do after our first daughter was born. Explain how we decided who was going to get up - playing Rock / Scissors / Paper.

- What does it mean to be a dedicated parent? What does it mean to dedicate my children to the Lord? Using the word DEDICATE as an acronym, let's define it.

### I. D: Determination

*Ps. 76:11 "Make vows to the Lord your God, and fulfill them..." (NLT)*

- Today we have some families that are doing just that. It takes a tremendous amount of determination to fulfill your vows to the Lord to raise your kids in a godly manner. This is NOT an easy task in our culture.

*II Thess. 3:13 "Don't grow weary in doing good..." (NASB)*

- Weariness and parenting go hand in hand. (You can tell who the young parents are – they have that sleep deprivation look to them!) It's easy to allow our weariness to compromise our parenting; to compromise what we said we would do. Compromise what is best for our kids.
- Determination is that quality that presses on doing what is right regardless of how you feel or how convenient it is. (I didn't always feel like reading to my kids / praying with them at bedtime / playing dress up / Barbie's / volunteering in their classroom / being consistent in discipline - BUT, we did anyway!
- To be a dedicated parent is to be a determined parent.

### II. E: Encouraging

*Eph. 6:4 "And now a word to you fathers. Don't make them angry by the way you treat them..." (NLT)*

*Eph. 4:29 "Let everything you say be good and helpful, so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them." (NLT)*

- Will we be dedicated to being the greatest source of encouragement to our kids or their greatest source of discouragement? Will our words inspire them and build them up, OR discourage them / anger them / and tear them down?

- Are we telling our kids who they are or focusing on telling them what they're not? Think about how you talk to your kids? Think about your words / your tones of voice / your body language / - What are you communicating to your children?
- Over 10 years as a youth pastor, I was constantly appalled at how parents talked to their kids. "Well you should hear how they talk to me." Yes, this is true...but guess where they learned it. Determine to be an encourager!
- When was the last time you told your children what you love about them? What unique qualities you see that God put within them? – This is our job!

### III. D: Discipline

*Prov. 19:18 "Discipline your children while there is hope. If you don't, you will ruin their lives." (NLT)*

- We live in a culture that no longer believes in discipline and we have the results to prove it. Parents who fail to properly discipline their children ruin their lives. They will grow up with a distorted perspective of right and wrong / of behavior and consequences / of fairness and justice / personal responsibility / The most unloving thing you can do as a parent is to not discipline your kids!
- Most studies indicate that parents have about the first 5 years of a child's life to gain control and have that child respect authority. After this, it's very difficult to re-educate. This is why Prov. says, "while there is hope". There is a window!
- When it comes to motivating behavior with our children, it is NOT the severity of the discipline that matters it is the inevitability of it. Consistency is the key!
- Therefore, it is imperative that both parents are on the same page when it comes to discipline / same strategy / same principals / same tactics / otherwise, our kids will pit one parent against the other – If that happens, they are now in charge.
- Our children will naturally test the limits and sometimes act in defiance. Anytime our children defiantly cross a line that we have drawn they are challenging you to battle. As parents, we best not disappoint them!

### IV. I: Integrity

*Deut. 6:6-9 "You must commit yourselves wholeheartedly to these commands I am giving you today. Repeat them again and again to your children. Talk about them when you are at home and when you are away on a journey, when you are lying down and when you are getting up... Write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates." (NLT)*

- Our integrity as parents will be one of the greatest influential elements in raising our children. Integrity means that I am the same person in every context. I live a consistent life / a non-hypocritical life / My faith is integrated into every facet of my life – Deut. 6

- I mentioned this last Sunday. I believe this is the #1 hindrance for why our faith does not transfer to our children. Why our children walk away from the faith. They witnessed a compartmentalized life / compartmentalized faith. – Explain
- If our faith doesn't impact real life, why have it? This is the conclusion of our kids. It was this type of integrated faith that impacted my life as a 12 year old boy going deer hunting with my grandfather. Explain
- This is also what impacted me in a negative way as a teenager as I looked around at other Christians in my life and saw the hypocrisy. This is why integrity is not just important for the parents but for us as a church. Their kids are watching!

## V. C: Courage

*Josh. 1:9 I command you – be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid or discouraged. For the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.” (NLT)*

- Being a parent just creates fear! We worry about our kids in so many different ways it's impossible to describe it all. When our first daughter was born, I can't tell you how many times I checked to make sure she was still breathing.
- It's as if each stage requires a new level of courage. The older they get the more courage is required. Takes a lot of courage from birth to 5 / Courage to let them go to school / courage to ride a bus – Jessica 1<sup>st</sup> day hit boy over the head with backpack / courage to play sports / courage to teach them how to drive / courage to let them date boys / courage to let them make mistakes / courage to let them become adults.
- Parenting is not for the faint of heart. It requires a tremendous amount of courage. Parenting has driven me to God to find the courage for each challenge.

## VI. A: Available

*Prov. 22:6 “Teach your children to choose the right path, and when they are older, they will remain upon it.” (NLT)*

- The way we teach our children so that it influences them when they are older is by being available for them. It's by spending so much time with them that our presence with them rubs off. (Not lectures!)
- More is CAUGHT than TAUGHT. As we are available for our children, they catch our values / our priorities / our relational skills / see how we handle our emotions / they watch us handle stress / they see our marriage and they know how to treat their spouse someday. It's all caught.
- If you want to teach your kids / have influence in your kid's lives – spend significant time with them. Your life is their greatest influence and your time is the greatest gift. Your life is the greatest teacher.

- Be intentional - Some examples: Have family nights / Have fun together – plan activities together / do day trips / go camping / take family vacations / If you do this when they are young, they will still love being with you when they’re older.
  - Last Sunday afternoon Rachael and I up the river
  - Last Tuesday night Jessica and I watched the Lion King together
- My daughters on vacation: “We don’t have to share you with anyone”. There are times when our kids shouldn’t have to share us with anyone or anything.

## VII. T: Trust

*I Sam. 1:28 “So I have dedicated him to the Lord; as long as he lives he is dedicated to the Lord.” (NLT)* Explain context.

- When we dedicate our children to the Lord, we have to trust Him with our kids. We trust that God will work in their lives spiritually / emotionally / relationally / physically – protecting them – growing them
- This doesn’t mean that nothing bad or challenging happens to them. Trusting God doesn’t mean He places your kids in a bubble. It does mean that I will trust, and despite what happens, He is going to work / provide / strengthen / do something good.
- Over the years we’ve experienced sick kids / hospital visits / broken bones / broken hearts / sports accidents / car accidents / school frustrations / We’ve had to trust God enough to allow our kids to learn from their mistakes.
- The best way I know how to demonstrate trust is to commit to pray for your kids. To embrace a lifetime commitment.
- Lisa and I have been praying daily for our kids since they were born. We will pray for them until we die. This is our job. This empowers us to trust.

## VIII. E: Expectations

*Eph. 2:10 “For we are God’s masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so that we can do the good things He planned for us long ago.” (NLT)*

- We all have expectations about what we want our children to become, but can we embrace God’s expectations for them? Can we sow into the lives of our children the truths of this verse?
- They are God’s masterpiece. If there was ever a message our kids need to hear today it is this. They are a priceless work in progress / They are a Rembrandt – Thomas Kinkaid / God created them unique / special / unlike anyone else on the planet. The mold was broken after they were born!
- Since before creation, God knew they would be born and He has good things planned for them to discover. He has a plan and purpose for their lives to discover.

- We need to be telling our kids more than just, “What do you want to be?” We need to also be saying to them, “Discover what God wants you to be.” We need to be raising a generation of people who embrace their godly destinies.
- Imagine the change in this world if a generation of kids grew up believing Eph. 2:10!

Can we as parents let go of some of our expectations on our kids so they can embrace God’s purposes for their lives? This is what it means to be a dedicated parent. This is what these families are committing to today.