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**Talk** together about the glory of God's kingdom. —Psalm 145:11  
Love the Lord your God and **walk** in all his ways. —Joshua 22:5

## Questions for Reflection

- What from Sunday's message interested you? ...made sense to you? ...confused you?  
...intrigued you? ...upset you? ...encouraged you? ...and **why**?
- Pastor Doug noted that with our kids every interaction is either "opening windows to their souls—or building walls".  
When was a time when you observed your kids "opening up" to you? What had just happened?  
When was a time when you observed your kids "shutting down" to you? What had just happened?  
What can you learn from your spouse regarding getting your kids to open up? What must you stop doing?
- Are you better at giving well-reasoned answers, or at building strong relationships with your kids?  
Which one is your spouse better at? How can you "tag team" your strengths, and minimize your weaknesses?
- Read 1 Thessalonians 2:7-12. **To what degree** do you and your spouse **appreciate both** the "gentleness of a nursing mother" **as well as the** "exhorting, encouraging, and imploring of a father"?  
How well do you support each other in your role—or do you undercut your spouse's approach to parenting?
- From what harmful influences do you need to protect your children...at school? ...in the neighborhood?  
...in the media?

## Application-Challenge

- Practice what you preach.
- Build strong relationships with your children.
- Give a well-reasoned basis for the values you are trying to impart.
- Pray without ceasing! God can do what we cannot.

*Need help learning to love your kids?  
For free hope and help, write to:  
[counseling@tcc.org](mailto:counseling@tcc.org)*

**Take One Step:** What is one small, concrete step of obedience you will put into practice this week?



# Sermon Summary

If you want to pass down to your children a genuine, life-changing Biblical faith, if you want them to grow in Christ-likeness, then you must build engaged, loving relationships with them. With each day comes the opportunity to build loving, emotional bonds with your children that will increase the likelihood that your values will be transferred to them unchallenged. Children embrace their parent's faith and values much more readily when they have a strong, loving relationship with them. I try to think of it like this. I am trying to build windows into my children's souls through which godly influence can pass. And so, to me, every interaction with my kids is important. It is either opening windows or building walls. I want to have the kind of loving and engaged relationship that will open windows so that my values will transfer to them unchallenged, or at least unopposed. You can challenge something without opposing it. It is ok to ask the question "Why?"

How can we build engaged, loving relationships with our children? This is critically important, because there is virtually no limit to the number of factors that will try to pull you and your children apart. Peers can drive a wedge between you, as can media influences, cultural trends, and temptations of various kinds. Again, the stronger your relationship, the greater the probability your children will embrace the faith and values you hold so dear. The Apostle Paul provides some practical parenting instruction in a letter that he wrote to the first century church of Thessalonica. It is obvious that he felt a strong parental-like responsibility towards them. In v. 7-8, he expresses the maternal side of parenting. He writes, "But we proved to be gentle among you, as a nursing mother tenderly cares for her own children. Having so fond an affection for you, we were well-pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives, because you had become very dear to us." In other words, Paul expressed gentleness, tender care, and fond affection toward the Thessalonians because they had become very dear to him. Paul did not stop with sharing the gospel with them. No, he shared his life with them. This is a divine description of how mothers should love their children. This is how you go about building an engaged, loving relationship with them. But ideally, parenting involves two engaged parents.

Paul goes on to describe the paternal or fatherly role of parenting. He says, "...just as you know how we were exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you as a father would his own children, so that you would walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory" (1 Thessalonians 2:11-12). Dads should exhort, encourage, and implore their children to walk in a manner worthy of the God we love and serve. Both sides of parenting are necessary: the tender side and the tough side. That kind of tender and tough relational parenting is incredibly powerful when administered by parents who are walking their talk. Paul did. He practiced what he preached, and so must we, if we want our children to embrace our values. I want to go back for just a moment and examine three key words Paul used to describe a father's role in parenting. We see them in verse 11 of 1 Thessalonians 2: "...just as you know how we were exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you as a father would his own children..."

The first word is "exhorting." The picture behind the Greek word is that of a cheerleader—urging your children on, expressing confidence in them. You should be your children's biggest cheerleader. The second word Paul uses to describe a father's influence is the word "encouraging." It means to console or comfort. It is the tender side of fatherhood. He uses this same word in 1 Thessalonians 5:14. Sometimes in parenting our kids need a figurative kick in the rear, but probably more often, they need an encouraging arm around their shoulders. The third word Paul uses here is a strong one. It is word "implore". It conveys the idea of a dad drawing a line in the sand and reminding their child of the consequences for crossing that line. It's not discipline for disciplines sake, rather it's a statement that says, "I love you too much to tolerate that behavior." Having those hard conversations with your children is the tough side of parenting. It is the side that says, "I love you too much to allow you to pursue a course of action that may be destructive." But it is a critical side of parenting. To fail to have them is to fail to parent biblically. It is your responsibility to protect your children from harmful influences. At times like these, your children may not like you very much, but if you have a strong relationship with them, they will respect your decisions, and their life and yours will be better for it!

The truth is, even if you do everything right, your child may reject your values. The converse is also true. You could do nearly everything wrong and your child may grow up to be a godly man or woman.

## Digging Deeper in Your Daily Quiet Time

*Love is powerful—but practically speaking, what should we **do** to love our children?*

**Monday**—Mothers: Don't overprotect your children.

- Read about the butterfly's struggle at: <paulocoelhoblog.com/2007/12/10/the-lesson-of-the-butterfly/> What parallels do you see to your parenting?
- What admirable traits do each of the following passages commend?  
1 Corinthians 10:13; 1 Thessalonians 2:14
- Look back at last Tuesday's "Digging Deeper" (Hannah and Samuel). Review what you learned. How do you see the principle of **not** overprotecting our children being put into practice?

**Tuesday**—Fathers: Don't exasperate your children.

- Read Colossians 3:21. **Why** are we not to exasperate our children?
- Read Ephesians 6:4. What is the alternative to exasperating our children?
- Read Hebrews 12:1-11. Will our children **appreciate** loving, fatherly discipline?
- Review what you learned in last Monday's "Digging Deeper" (regarding Jacob's treatment of his boys). What did Jacob do that exasperated ten of his twelve sons?  
Although **not excusing** their sinful choices, what **resulted from** Joseph's brothers' resentment?

**Wednesday**—Parents: Spend focused time with each child, giving them undivided attention.

- Read Proverbs 27:8. What **do you** think of a bird who neglects her own chicks in the nest?
- Review what you learned in last Wednesday's "Digging Deeper" (regarding Eli's neglect of his sons). Eli was **aware** of what his sons were doing—**why** do you think Eli **ignored** his sons' behavior?  
What resulted from this: for Eli? for Eli's sons? for worshipers in Israel? for the nation of Israel?

**Thursday**—Parents: Maintain on-going communication with your children.

- Read 1 Kings 1:5-6. How does this passage show King David's neglect of his son?
- Read 2 Samuel 14:23-24. How does this passage show King David's neglect of his son?
- Read 2 Samuel 12:10-11. How do each of the following passages illustrate this outcome?  
2 Samuel 13:1-14; 2 Samuel 13:28-29; 2 Samuel 15:1-12
- And yet, how is David described in Acts 13:22?  
How does God's mercy and grace give you hope in your parenting?

**Friday**—Parents: Be vulnerable about your own struggles.

In each of the following passages, how does Paul share his struggles with his spiritual children?

2 Corinthians 1:6-11; 2 Corinthians 4:6-10; Galatians 1:13-14; 1 Timothy 1:12-17

- If you shared your own struggles as openly as Paul did, how do you think your children would respond?

**Saturday**—Parents: Have fun with your children. Depending on their ages, you could try...

Building an obstacle Course; Scavenger Hunt; Water Balloons; Collect Bugs; Study a spider web; 3-legged races; Stargazing; Camp in the backyard; Look for 4-leaf clovers; Build a bird house or feeder; Decorate a T-shirt; Make your own Play-doh; Make a necklace out of beads or pasta; Jump Ropes; Rearrange your bedroom; Have a PJ Party; Create a movie or play; Make up a story; Illustrate it; Have a talent show in your backyard; Practice tongue twisters; Learn to juggle; Create a house of cards; Bob for apples; Hopscotch; Freeze Tag; Hide and Seek; Red Light Green Light; Dodge Ball; Learn a YoYo trick; Play H-O-R-S-E; Egg Toss; Make shadow puppets; Play with Shaving Cream & food coloring; Have a picnic on the living room floor; Play cards (Crazy 8s, War, Rummy); Build a fort; Fly a Kite; Go for a hike; Build a toothpick bridge or building; Bake some treats for your neighbors; Play charades; Have a bubble-blowing contest; Climb a tree; Do blind taste tests with various drinks and food; Make a Diet Coke and Mentos eruption; Make a time capsule; Learn how to read a map; Have breakfast for dinner; Make homemade pizza; Have thumb wars; Give each other crazy or fancy hair dos; Play "I Spy"; Put together a puzzle; Play "20 questions"; Make a fort or car out of a large appliance box; Have a staring contest; Speak Pig Latin; Create a secret code and send each other messages.