


Principled Parenting in the Real World

2 Timothy 2:15-26

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A publication of  , the adult discipleship ministry of Triangle Community Church.

2017.10.29



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**?

- What did your parents do to "launch" you into adulthood? How effective was it?

What do you think would have improved your transition to adulthood?

- From 2 Timothy 2:15-26, consider the following questions:

(v. 15) As a parent (or, influencer of others), **how accurately** do you think you handle God's Word?

What habits do you have that contribute to, or detract from, a growing skill in using God's Word?

Verse 16 refers to "chatter". Look this verse up in several translations and summarize what this sort of speech is like. How much of the conversation in your workplace or home fits this description?

(v. 16) Describe a time when you observed worldly and empty chatter **leading to** further ungodliness.

The sermon refers to "hating sin" (v. 19) and modelling humility to others. When was the last time you told your child or friend about a way that you had sinned against them, and asked their forgiveness?

In v. 21-22, the primary way to influence our children is described: by walking with the Lord ourselves. In what area do you currently see the Lord working to change you?

We are to cooperate with God in our own growth and change ("cleanse ourselves", v. 21).

What practices do you find most helpful in "cleansing yourself" from worldliness?

- From everything you've discussed today, choose "one small concrete step" you'll take this week.

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



Sermon Summary

When we read 2 Timothy 2:15, it's easy to assume that it applies only to pastors, but if our teenagers don't understand the Bible correctly and read it regularly, they have no hope for a godly life or a life directed by the Lord. In his excellent book, *Shepherding a Child's Heart*, Ted Tripp says that the best thing he did as a parent was simply to read one-third of a chapter of Proverbs to his kids before school each day. Proverbs presents every aspect of true spirituality. As a teen I started reading the Bible, and I was stunned at what I learned. I ate it up. That Bible is literally in tatters today. It was my lifeline for a solid decade. Are your teens reading the Bible? I think everyone needs, in fact, three Bibles: [1] They need a good study Bible. Probably the best one is the ESV Student Study Bible. It's excellent. [2] You also need a little portable Bible (often called a "thinline" or "compact" Bible). [3] I recommend the Bible on your phone. (the entire ESV translation is free, or you can upgrade to the ESV Study Bible – even more content than the student study Bible – for \$18). You and your children need to own and love their Bible. As you read it, it draws you in.

In 2 Timothy 2:16-18 we see that false teachers will mix the Bible and culture, and that completely corrupts their faith. The world is pushing in just as hard on our kids now. As stupid as the theory of Evolution is, and how it's been thoroughly disproven by the discovery of intelligent design, the fossil record, and the laws of physics, it persists. Not because it makes sense but because people are committed to vehemently resist the truth about God and human sin. And the pace at which entertainment is becoming debauched is literally breathtaking. I haven't seen *Game of Thrones*, but check it out at IMDB.com. While you're at it, you can evaluate the movie, just in time for Halloween, called *Happy Death Day*. And teach your kids to research IMDB.com and make wise decisions. There's an ocean of entertainment out there. They don't need to experience the trash.

And now, our culture is all about gay and gender rights. Google "When women become men at Wellesley" and you'll get an idea of the confusion non-believers are experiencing. And it goes beyond mere confusion: Miguel Martinez, who identifies as "Michelle", is a transgender man who was just convicted of raping a 10 year old girl in a public restroom. It's a confusing world for our kids today, and as we see in 2 Timothy 2:18 reveals, it was the same for Timothy back then too. Paul's response to that confusion is insightful. He simply says "God knows those who are his." (v. 19). True believers depart from iniquity. It's by their fruit that we know them. He gives advice for us today too (v. 20-21). I still remember, as a young believer, hearing a more mature student praying, "God help me to hate sin." Christians must hate sin (Jerry Bridges' *Pursuit of Holiness and Respectable Sins* ought to be required reading if you're serious about living purely before God). Confession of sin is an essential part of Christian living, and we need to cultivate this practice at home. The next time you raise your voice at your kids, the next time you're selfish or rude, this is what you do: You look them in the eyes, own your sin, and ask them, "Will you please forgive me?" You must model humility and sincere repentance, that's called spiritual leadership. And according to v. 21, that's what prepares us "for every good work". That's your job—to get them ready. But if you don't have a deep, abiding relationship with the Lord, don't expect your kids to. So v. 22 says that the most important thing you could do if you're concerned for your kids, is begin to walk with the Lord more closely yourself.

Paul Tripp, in his book, *Age of Opportunity*, identifies the teenage years as an unprecedented opportunity to coach, inspire, love, and correct our kids and disciples into true usefulness for God. Consider this helpful chart:

THEME	DEFINITION	FRUIT IN TEENS	BIBLICAL ALTERNATIVE
RELATIVISM	No absolute standards; each person determines right and wrong	No convictions; no internal restraints; easily influenced; dislike of rules	TRUTH Willing submission and obedience to the principles and commands of Scripture
INDIVIDUALISM	No higher goal than one's own happiness and pleasure	Selfishness; self-centeredness; laziness; irresponsibility; grumbling	TWO GREAT COMMANDS A life shaped by loving God and neighbor
EMOTIONALISM	Feelings as personal guidance system	Moved by what feels right; craves the approval of others	BIBLICAL FAITH A commitment to test everything by Scripture
PRESENTISM	Living for the moment	"Got to have it now"; no sense of consequences	ETERNITY Living with an eye toward the reality of eternity
MATERIALISM	Ignore spiritual world and focus on what is seen	No independent pursuit of the Lord; no focus on character. Focus is clothing, beauty, and things.	SPIRITUALITY A life shaped by seriousness about issues of the heart and relationship with God
AUTONOMY	No responsibility to a higher authority	Rebellion to authority; no God-ward focus; Correction viewed negatively	CREATUREHOOD A life guided by a recognition of the Creator and living to His glory
VICTIMISM	No sense of personal responsibility; "My experience made me what I am."	Regular blame-shifting; rationalizes behavior; defensiveness	SIN Humble recognition of struggle with sin and thankfulness for the forgiveness of Christ

If you want to learn a lot more about how to love and parent your teenagers well, *Age of Opportunity* is must reading!

Verse 22 ends with this helpful phrase: "along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart". In order to glorify God, we need the help of genuine Christian community (also see Proverbs 13:20 and 18:1). This is a huge issue for teenagers and all of us. Good relationship decisions are life-shaping decisions. Our kids don't need to be tentative. They don't need to be insecure. All the answers to all the questions in the world are found in Christ. All the solutions to all the problems in the world are found in Christ. As they grow in Christ, they will literally find the answers for our broken world. And God will start to use them. As we grow in our walks with Christ, we can't help it. We'll influence the world for Him (v. 24-26).

It's true—we never stop being a parent! So, how do we launch our older children into adulthood?

What skills, attitudes, and commitments will they need to fulfill their God-given purpose of glorifying God and enjoying him?

Monday—“Is it *that* time already?!”

- List some challenges you're facing with your young adult kids.
- What do the following passages teach about children being “of age”, such that they are responsible for their own actions?
John 2:1-5
John 9:1-38 (note v. 21 & 23)
Numbers 26:2 & 1 Chronicles 23:24
What's your response to those passages and the concept of being “of age”?
- When we launch our final child, we're often called “empty nesters”—but it's **not** empty: **you're still there!**
Is your marriage so “child-centered” that when they're gone, the center will be gone from your relationship?
What can you do now to make sure that your marriage flourishes in all of its stages?
- Has a struggle with a wayward child affected your marriage relationship? If so, how?
What can you do now to help your marriage truly “sing”?

Tuesday— “Your kids aren't ready to walk out the door until you've made sure that you...”

1. **Teach your children the love of God, in Christ Jesus.** Aside from the gospel, nothing else really matters. No charts, stickers, earned privileges, 4.0's, astronomical SAT scores, or scholarships will matter when our children stand before God and are asked one simple question: “Who will pay for your sins?” What are you doing **now** to prepare your children for **that** day?
2. **Teach your children to fear God and to live for his glory.** Read Deuteronomy 6:5; Proverbs 1:7; and Matthew 22:37.
3. **Show your children how to put others ahead of themselves.** Apart from the work of the Holy Spirit, we're **all** self-centered. The world reinforces this immature self-focus with its emphasis upon self-love and self-esteem (2 Timothy 3:2). Sociologist Jeffrey Arnett notes: “...delayed adulthood is a new social phenomenon, which allows self-centered Americans even more time to focus on themselves while not being responsible for anything else or to anything else...” (*Time* magazine, January 16, 2005).
4. **Help your children learn how to communicate with wisdom and humility.** How many problems would be avoided if we **carefully obeyed** Ephesians 4:29? What are you doing now to help them communicate with wisdom and humility?
5. **Teach your children God's design for sex and marriage.** Make sure that your children understand and embrace the wisdom found in Proverbs 2:16-19; 5:1-23; 6:20-35; 7:1-27.
6. **Teach your children to choose their friends carefully.** How have you seen the wisdom of 1 Corinthians 15:33 to be true in your own experience? Do your children still naively think that they're immune to the effects of others? How good are your children at choosing friends?
7. **Let your children practice making the choices of adulthood.** Are you giving them the privilege of making mistakes—and learning from them—in the controlled safety of your watchful care?
8. **Teach your children the value of hard work and money.** Study Proverbs 10:4; 12:24; and 22:29 together with your children. Do they **believe** what Jesus said in Matthew 6:24 and Acts 20:35b? **Do you?**

Wednesday— “How to get your kids ready to walk out the door.”

- Review the eight lessons covered in Tuesday's study, then ask yourself:
- What do you believe about the gospel? Is it really good news to your soul? If so, do you hesitate to share it with them?
Would your children say that Christianity is a vital relationship with God or a set of moral rules to follow?
- What work remains in order to prepare your children to leave home? What's your strategy for finishing the job?
- If you're not confident that your child is ready for launch, begin keeping a journal of your prayers for wisdom. Record what you've been praying about and how God seems to be guiding you. Remember, God will never guide us to disobey his Word!

Thursday— “What to think of the ‘boomerang kid’—back in your home again!”

- How do you feel about saying “good-bye”? If something stops you from doing so, what is it? Have you sought your pastor's advice?
- What are some **good** reasons for allowing your child to remain home for a season? Do any of those reasons apply to your situation?
If not, have you formulated a plan for launching your child?
- Do you observe any destructive tendencies in your adult child? If so, how have you inadvertently reinforced the selfishness and narcissism of our age?
- Have you bought your adult child a car? Should you have (support your answer biblically)? What other goodies have you purchased for your adult-but-still-dependent child which he would not have been able to afford himself?

Friday—Read 1 Samuel 2:12-36.

- Do you see **any** similarities between Eli's story and your own? If so, what are they?
Why do you think Eli allowed his sons to act as they did?
- The Lord said that Eli honored his sons above him. What does that mean?
In what ways might you be guilty of honoring your children above the Lord? What changes do you need to make?
- What would a truly loving action look like in the life of your child?
Ask God to give you the grace you need in order to love your child more than you love having him around, being at peace with him, or even being able to provide for him.

Saturday—Read “12 Ways to Love Your Wayward Child” at www.DesiringGod.org

- Which of those suggestions surprised you—and why?
- Which two or three of those suggestions do you most need to put into action?
- How could gathering with others TCCers in a similar situation help you persevere in loving your wayward child.
What will it take to make these steps a reality for you?