

Teach Them that God Loves Them

1 John 4:7-12

PROPOSITION: All children need to understand that God loves them. This is something important that their parents must teach them.

INTRODUCTION:

1. Thank God for children! “Behold children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb a reward” (Psa. 127:3).
2. Skeptics will sometimes ask: “Why did God make man?”
 - a. A lot may be said in answer to that, but a fact is, man is more like God than he is unlike God, and God made man because He is a social being – the God of love.
 - b. He desired to have beings possessing His own likeness – intellect and freedom of choice – on whom He could bestow blessings.
 - c. Within this frame of likeness to God, the husband and wife desire to have children upon whom they can bestow their love.
3. Thank God for children! When there are children in the home, ...
 - a. Their parents learn to give of themselves. They learn to put others before themselves.
 - b. They learn tenderness.
 - c. They learn the great depths of love.
 - d. They are richly rewarded by the love and adoration which they receive in return from those children.
 - e. Parents will do well to reflect on their attitude toward their children. When is the last time you have offered thanks to God for your children?
4. Parents should not only love their children, but also show that love.
 - a. To do that, they must have time for their children. Children often interpret a lack of time for them as a lack of love for them.
 - b. In a well regulated home, the family will plan for time to work together, to play together, and to pray together.
 - c. The ethic of honesty, of fair play, of work, and of the social graces should be continually and consistently stressed within the home circle.
 - d. Parents should demonstrate their love for their children by word, by conduct, and by physical contact – a hug, a kiss, an arm around the shoulder, a pat or slap on the back, a hearty handshake.
 - e. Children should be recognized and praised for their accomplishments, and corrected for their misconduct.
5. Parents should not only love their children, but they should also – first and foremost – love each other.
 - a. Children are very sensitive to nagging, fussing, and word battles – and sometimes even physical encounters – between their parents.
 - b. They desire very much that their parents love each other.
6. Thank God for children! They remind us of who we are and what we should be!

- a. Parents, those children God gave you are your greatest treasure in the world.
 - b. They need you very much, but you need them just as much as they need you.
7. Because of all that has just been said, we are embarking on a lengthy study of a particular subject in God’s word. This is a study of what the Bible says about parenting. The general theme of the study is, “Teach Your Children.”
- a. Decades ago, Graham Nash wrote, “Teach Your Children.”

Chorus:

Teach your children well.
Their father’s hell
Did slowly go by,
And feed them on your dreams.
The one they pick’s
The one you’ll know by.
Don’t ever ask them why.
If they told you, you would die.
So just look at them and sigh,
And know they love you.

- b. I don’t understand much of what Nash said in this song, but some things are suggested that I do understand and that I wish to emphasize.
 - 1) “Teach your children well.” This is a Bible theme.
 - 2) “Feed them on your dreams,” if your dream is to go to heaven and take your family with you.
 - 3) “Know they love you.”
 - 4) Therefore, I will name of this series, “Teach Your Children Well.”
8. The first lesson in the series is, “Teach Them that God Loves Them.” Reference to STPO.¹

DISCUSSION:

I. Yes, Virginia, there is a God.

- A. Dr. Philip O’Hanlon’s daughter, Virginia, had begun to doubt there is a Santa Claus, because her friends were telling her there is no Santa Claus.
 1. She asked her dad who quickly “passed the buck” and suggested she write a letter to the New York Sun newspaper.
 2. The answer written by editor, Francis Church, was published on September 21, 1897, and it has been an annual staple ever since.
 3. In that letter, Church affirmed some things that ought to be affirmed about Jehovah God.
 - a. He is more real than anything.
 - b. He is as real as love, generosity, and devotion.
 - c. How dreary would be this world without God.
 - d. Without God there is no goodness, for all goodness comes from God.

¹ The topics for this series, many of the ideas, and some of the material used comes from *The Spiritual Sword* (Memphis, TN: Getwell Church of Christ), Vol. 15, No. 4, July 1984. Theme of the Issue: “According to the Bible, Parents Should....”

- e. Those who doubt Him today have been affected by the skepticism of a skeptical age.
 - f. The skeptics do not believe unless they see. They think that nothing can be which is not comprehensible by their little minds.
 - g. Compared to God, all minds are little.
 - h. The most real things in the world are those that neither children nor men can see. Paul said, “For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal” (2 Cor. 4:18).
 - i. Yes, Virginia, there is a God.
- B. Teach your children that God is.
1. The writer to the Hebrews said, “...whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him” (Heb. 11:6).
 2. Admire beautiful sunsets with your children and tell them of the awesome power of God Who brought such things into existence by merely speaking (cf. Gen. 1).
 - a. “...the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God” (2 Pet. 3:5).
 - b. “The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork” (Psa. 19:1).
 - c. Help your children hear those declarations and proclamations.
 3. When you take your son or daughter to the zoo and as you marvel at the elephant and giraffe, explain that “God gives it a body as he has chosen, and to each kind of seed its own body” (1 Cor. 15:38).
 4. As a father would teach a child, God asked Job, “Has the rain a father, or who has begotten the drops of dew? From whose womb did the ice come forth and who has given birth to the frost of heaven?” (Job 38:28, 29).
 5. Yes, son there is a God.

II. Jesus loves you.

- A. In the night He was betrayed, Jesus spoke to His disciples – fishermen, tax collectors, politicians – as “little children” and said, “I love you” (John 13:33, 34). In John 14:13, He explained, “Greater love has no one that this, that someone lays down his life for his friends.” Our children need to know about that love, so we sing the song, “Jesus loves you.”
- B. When the children of Israel assembled on the plains of Moab (Deut. 1:5) to hear the repeating of the law God had given them almost forty years before, Moses reminded them that while they were facing problems in the wilderness of wandering the Israelites had falsely concluded that God hated them.
 1. “And you murmured in your tents and said, ‘Because the Lord hated us he has brought us out of the land of Egypt, to give us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us’” (Deut. 1:27).
 2. Moses contradicted them and illustrated to them that in reality, God loved them.
 - a. God had brought them “out of the iron furnace, out of Egypt” (Deut. 4:20).
 - b. God had chosen them to be His people, “because he loved your fathers and chose their offspring after them and brought you out of Egypt with his own presence, by his great power” (Deut. 4:37).

- c. God drove out from before Israel “nations greater and mightier than yourselves, to bring you in, to give you their land for an inheritance, as it is this day” (Deut. 4:38).
3. It was important for Israel’s children to be reminded of God’s great love and what that love had done for them.
4. The knowledge of God’s love for them made them stronger and more faithful to Him.
- C. Those who know of God’s love for them have a basis for loving Him in return.
 1. It is as John said, “We love because he first loved us” (1 John 4:19).
 2. Moses instructed Israel’s children to teach their children to love God with all the heart, soul, and might (Deut. 6:4-7).
 3. Jesus said that was the greatest commandment given to Israel (Matt. 22:34-40).
- D. From Old Testament Scripture, we learn some great lessons on life (cf. Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 10:6, 11) one of which is, parents should teach their children that God loves them as much as He did Israel.

III. I have made it my own.

- A. Laurene Highfield’s great song begins, “Since the love of God has shed priceless blessings on my head, I have made it my own....” affirming the fact of God’s love and our claim to it.
- B. Man, the special part of God’s creation (Gen. 1:27), is the special object of God’s love.
 1. The so-called “Golden Text” of the Bible declares God’s love for “the world” (John 3:16).
 2. As surely as God proved or manifested His love to and for Israel of old, so He has demonstrated His love for us today.
 3. An inspired apostle wrote, “God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8).
- C. Some people may feel unloved because they are ignorant of the fact that God loves them so much – the very reason we should teach our children that God loves them.
 1. Psychiatrists will say that every person has two fundamental needs.
 - a. To love and to be loved
 - b. To feel his/her own sense of worth
 2. It is crucial to a child in the formative first five years of life to feel his/her value. What better way to create within a child that sense of self worth than by teaching the child that God, the sovereign Creator, loves them.
 3. Why would a child who feels good about himself – who is comfortable with who he is – need to experiment with drugs, illicit sex, or any other form of escapism?
 4. On the other hand, a child who knows that God loves him will anticipate a study of God’s word, singing to and about God, and being with other people who love the Lord as well.
 5. The importance of teaching children that God loves them can have a direct bearing on the physical, emotional, and spiritual health of a child.

IV. We His glory must reflect.

- A. The third stanza of Laurene Highfield’s good song continues, “We His glory must reflect, lest our dimness and neglect keep some soul from his God” (*The Love of God*, 1916).

- B. How do we instruct our children with their simple minds and tender hearts on a subject that is bigger than all the world? What a magnificent, profound thought that the Creator of all things loves every little human speck on earth!
- C. Here is a simple point concerning that complicated matter: Children tend to transfer their view of their parents, especially the father, to their concept of God. If the father is harsh and critical, or if the father is indulgent, or if the father is detached and not involved, the child may view God as being the same way.
- D. I must strive, as father and mother, to give my sons and daughters a tangible demonstration of love, i.e., something they can see and appreciate.
 - 1. I must show them that God’s love for me comes through in my love for them.
 - 2. The discipline, both positive and negative, should be a revelation of the God Who “disciplines the one he loves” (Heb. 12:6).
 - 3. Loving restrictions placed on children are not repressive acts. The physical and spiritual welfare of a child may be dependent on setting certain boundaries for actions.
 - 4. Furthermore, negative discipline, which may come in the form of spankings for running into the street or other danger, or the denial of privileges for misconduct at school, in Bible class, or in worship assembly, may be an effective way to discipline a child and thereby show love for him.
- E. Love is more than a word. It is something you do – a demonstration. A parent who loves a child could no more abuse that child than could a loving God.
- F. We may teach our children the love of God by reading to them Biblical passages about God’s love, e.g., 1 John (cf. 4:7-12).
- G. We may teach our children the love of God in songs.
 - 1. The first song many of us learned is the beautifully simple and simply beautiful, “Jesus loves me this I know for the Bible tells me so.”
 - 2. We can reinforce the power of songs by talking to our children about those songs.
- H. There is another crucial area that must be considered as we seek to teach our children that God loves them. This matter has to do with their little friends who suffer serious physical injuries, or those who develop life-threatening illnesses, or those who have handicaps.
 - 1. Teach your children about Joseph and all the reverses in life that he experienced. Still, God in His wonderful providence loved him and worked all things together for good (cf. Rom. 8:28).
 - 2. Our children must be taught that God loves us even when Satan causes us to suffer (cf. 1 Pet. 5:8, 9).

CONCLUSION:

- 1. It would be impossible to exaggerate the importance of teaching our children that God loves them if we want them to grow up to love God.
- 2. Surely every parent who loves God wants his/her children to love God also.