

RAISING KIDS

in a “You Can Do It!” World

Help for Parents

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IS EVERYONE AWESOME?

From almost every angle (movies, TV, YouTube, school) our kids are receiving the same basic message. They hear that every child is his or her own independent, self-sufficient, self-directed, self-governing person. Like a scratched vinyl record, the world expresses related mantras:

- You're awesome!
- Be who you are on the inside.
- Listen to your heart.
- You can do it!

Instead of helping kids to become confident, stable, and secure—because of humble dependency upon God and His wisdom—

messages like these feed the inborn, natural elevation of self. Awareness of this cultural tension highlights how much we need to approach Christian parenting as intentional discipleship. Like every parent, every child is a depraved sinner whose heart naturally gravitates toward personal autonomy. Therefore (also like their parents), every kid's greatest need is to be redeemed by the grace of God, and renewed according to the image of Jesus Christ.

So how can we help our kids think rightly about themselves and God? How can we train them to see themselves as God's special creatures, while at the same time not lead them to believe they are the masters of their own destiny?

The purpose of this book is to answer these kinds of questions. To simplify matters for you (not that the answer or the application is simple!) I will draw a basic road map for parenting in today's world, with eight road signs marking the landmark truths our kids need to understand. I will assume that you, the parent, are driving (or at least you want to) the car that carries your kids down this road. I trust that you want to say to them, "Listen, my son, to your father's

instruction and do not forsake your mother's teaching" (Prov. 1:8).

Therefore, I want to come alongside you to provide you with biblical guidance. This book is not aimed at your kids; it's aimed at you, it's aimed at me. That being said, however, at the end of the book you will find age-appropriate questions to help you discuss the truths you learn with your children.

What are the most important signs to read and follow? Fasten your seatbelt. Here we go.

SIGNPOST 1

TEST YOUR OWN FAITH

To lead our children toward a God-centered view of life, we must begin at the beginning. That is, before we get too gung-ho about directing our children to follow Jesus, we should take careful inventory of our own relationship with God.

Are you saved? Have you experienced conversion? Are you seriously following Jesus as a committed disciple? Are you growing in the grace and knowledge of Christ, or are you content to possess superficial faith? Are you moving away from loving the world, or are you tiptoeing as close to the edge as you can?

In other words, what *you as a parent* believe about God, sin, and salvation—the gospel—

and how you live out these beliefs day by day impacts your children.

Beware of three common errors

When it comes to teaching children the gospel, there are mistakes which are often made by Christian parents. I'll mention three.

1. Fatalism

Some parents become so enamored by the beauty of God's sovereignty in salvation (and we *should* be enamored by His sovereign grace!) that they take a hands-off approach to evangelizing their children. "After all," they might think, "if God plans to save my kids, then He will do it with or without me." However, the biblical view of God's sovereign grace never minimizes our responsibility to obey the gospel or share it with others. Therefore, what every child really needs is regular instruction from Scripture concerning God's holy character, man's sinful nature, and God's provision for salvation through Jesus Christ. This instruction will naturally lead to conversations in which we may gently help our children to see their own

need for the Savior, and call them to personal faith. For example, the apostle Paul writes how Timothy had “known the Holy Scriptures” from infancy because of the faithful instruction of his mother and grandmother. As a result, the Spirit used Scripture to make him “wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus” (2 Tim. 1:5; 3:15).

2. “Easy Decisionism”

In a sincere effort to make the gospel easy to understand, and heaven easy to attain, parents may unknowingly offer salvation as a low-priced transaction between a sinner and God: “You don’t want to go to hell when you die, do you? Then just pray this simple prayer.” Or, “Do you want to go to heaven someday? Just ask Jesus into your heart.” However, what every child really needs is to be regularly confronted by two costs: (1) the cost God paid to make salvation free for sinners, and (2) the cost of discipleship. First, remember that salvation is free for us, but it was not free for God! The price was the blood of His only Son (1 Pet. 1:19). But second, let’s also teach our children that the call of Jesus to enter the kingdom of God requires walking through the