

## Parenting in the Promises

# A Culture of Grace at Home

Ephesians 5:1-2

In His great grace, God doesn't just love us, He adopts us into His family as dear children (2 Cor. 6:18). He then tells us to imitate Him as we love another. As we talk about parenting, we are talking about the gospel. If we are not biological parents, we are still fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters in the church (1 Tim. 5:1-2; 1 Cor. 4:15). So even though we have a lot of kids in the church, this sermon series is for everyone.

### ***God's Garden***

Conscientious parents want to know what to do. The Bible is intensely practical and gives us things to do, but it also describes the way we should do them. We are to self-consciously imitate God and walk in love as Christ loved us (vv1-2). This is the fundamental way we learn. Jesus' love for us is a sweet aroma to the Father, and we should want the same when we love one another, especially at home. Henry Van Til defined culture as religion externalized. What we believe about God works its way out into everything we do and make. Our *cultus*, worship, creates our culture whether we worship God or something else (Ps. 115:3-8). If we want to imitate God as parents, we have to start worship Him and see Him in His Word. What was the garden of Eden like for Adam and Eve? It was beautiful, filled with blessing, gifts, authority, opportunity, work, potential, approval and praise (Gen. 1:26-31). The world is a gift to man. In a world of grace there's one law, one prohibition (2:16-17). We live after the fall, but when second Adam rose from the dead, Mary Magdalene mistook Him for a gardener (Jn. 20:15). We've changed but God remains the same. Jesus loves us with such a joyful and self-sacrificial love that we can't wait to see Him face to face (1 Cor. 13:12). This is what the culture of Eden was like and how our homes should be.

### ***The Delight of God***

The thing that drives a culture of grace is God's love, and it is expressed as delight. The Father loved the Son before the foundation of the world, and Jesus wants that same love declared about us (Jn. 17:24, 26). God was very pleased with all of creation but especially mankind (Gen. 1:31). The first thing the Father says to Jesus during His ministry is "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3:17). It's easy to see why the Father would delight in Jesus, which is why we need to remember the way Christ loves us (v2). It was for the joy that was set before Him—the delight He had in us and our salvation—that Jesus endured the cross and despised the shame. This is the sacrificial love we are required to imitate. We don't replace the sacrifice of Jesus, but when we love God and sacrifice for our children, He blesses to a thousand generations (Dt. 5:8-10; Eph. 6:4). When Jesus loved us sacrificially, He suffered for our sin on the cross. When we imitate Him, we suffer for our children. This costs. When God saves you, He rejoices over you with gladness, quiets you with His love, and rejoices over you with singing (Zech. 3:17). This is how we get to deal with our children.

### ***Stewards for God***

Children don't exist first for parents' pleasure, but for God's. He entrusts them to us for a time. We celebrate this at baptisms when parents swear to raise their children not just as biological sons and daughters, but as brothers and sisters in the Lord. This is a solemn privilege. Jesus warns His disciples not to stumble little children (Matt. 18:6). He requires us to imitate their faith and humility even as we bring them to maturity (Matt. 18:2-6). As we do so we are preparing them to leave. They should be eager to go out to work and honor the Lord in the world, but not because they can't wait to get away from us. They should know this is the trajectory, and they should see us serving and depending on the Lord as we serve them. We don't own our children; we don't even own our stuff. God has entrusted all of it to us to use for His glory. Why does He do it this way? It appears He wants us to know Him and enjoy like Him. He made man a little lower than the angels in order to eventually crown him with glory and honor (Heb. 2:5-8). Our kids are one of His way of growing us up into Christ.

## NOTES FOR LITTLE SAINTS

### Today's Passage: Ephesians 5:1-2

*Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. 2 And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.*

1. What does Paul say we should do in verse one, and how?
2. In verse two, who offering Himself as a sacrifice to, and how did it smell?
3. Your parents are told to be an example of what God is like. But just like you sin, they do also, which is why God loved us in Christ—so we can forgive and be forgiven. This is how life should be in our homes, full of joy and forgiveness. What can you in your house to make it like this?
4. Draw a picture of Jesus playing a fun game with a group of kids.

### Memory Verse to Recite Next Week:

*Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. —Ephesians 5:1*