

General Topics :: Keeping Grace in Place (at home)

Keeping Grace in Place (at home) - posted by moreofHim (), on: 2005/4/24 11:59

I thought this was a very good reminder to me. For those who have children :)

Keeping grace in place in our homes, that is the task. We experience many temptations to leave out the grace and the hope of the gospel when our children require correction and motivation.

How does keeping grace in place look and sound? Your message to your children is this: "People who fail can find hope in the God of grace." Think of it this way, the gospel must be the core of your nurturing interaction with your children. The gospel is more than just the simple plan of salvation. It is all the grace and power of the gospel - forgiveness, cleansing, internal transformation, and empowerment (Ezekiel 36:25-26).

All Christian parents want their children to know, understand, and embrace the gospel of grace, but often we don't direct them to the gospel in their times of greatest need. This is the importance of shepherding the heart. The temptation is to focus on behavioral change. Whenever behavior becomes the goal, you are prey to all the temptations to manipulate behavior.

You might bribe - "If you are really good, I'll..."

You might threaten - "You don't even want to know what will happen if you don't..."

You might shame - "I can't believe that you children are so unkind and mean to each other..."

Each of these examples and many others are simply ways to secure good behavior without addressing the heart or keeping the power of grace before you and your children.

You see, whenever you are simply trying to secure proper behavior, the power of the gospel and grace will never be the heart of your nurture of your children. Behaviorism and the gospel don't mix. They reflect two different and competing approaches to change. Behaviorism seeks to produce change through an appeal to the child's crass self-interest. The gospel produces change that comes through conviction of sin and faith in the power of Christ to forgive, renew, and empower your child to love God and others.

If the grace of the gospel and the need for internal change is not your message, if the heart is not addressed, only behavior, you will miss valuable opportunities to take your children to the cross for repentance, forgiveness, and cleansing.

• You will focus on externals and be less alert to pride, unbelief, idols of the heart, legalism, fear of man, pride in performance, compulsive self-love and other intangible activities of the heart.

• You will not help them understand hidden patterns of sin and unbelief - the secret, sneaky, self-deceptive ways of sin.

• You will tend to produce children who have themselves together outwardly while inwardly they are wracked by pride and unbelief.

• You will miss the whole issue of motivation - good behavior for wrong motives.

Children need help understanding that behind the ways their behavior has strayed is a heart that has strayed. You want to help them to become expert at diagnosing their heart disease.

The Bible bristles with information about the attitudes of heart that lie beneath the things that we say and do, both good and bad. Remember; out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks (Luke 6:45). Sinful attitudes such as pride, self-love, hatred, envy, covetousness, fear of man, desire to be approved by others, rebellion, bitterness, vengeance, and many others lie behind the things children say and do that are wrong. Kindness, love, gentleness, and humility are some of the

the gospel motivations for godly behavior.

Internal issues are the “why” of bad behavior. The external issues are the “what” or “when” of behavior. The need for grace is apparent when one thinks about internal issues. When confronted in kind ways, during discipline and correction, with the ugliness of pride or self-love, your children have no hope but the power of grace. Only the grace, forgiveness, cleansing, and empowerment of the gospel can enable your kids to know internal change. That internal change is the ultimate goal of your nurturing care of your children.

Godly nurture and shepherding must target the heart! You desire from your children not just externally appropriate responses (I hear someone say, “I would be happy for even that” J), but hearts that are changed. You long for them to see that their hearts have strayed from God’s ways like lost sheep, and that Christ came to produce change at the root that would also transform the fruit.

Keeping the gospel central does wonderful things for correction and discipline. It keeps you from hypocrisy and keeps you from missing the gospel of grace. You can identify with a child who is struggling with selfishness, because you understand and how selfishness works in the human heart. You know what it is to be so mired in self love that you will do anything to serve yourself and avoid serving others.

In those times when you can stand along side this child, whose life is stained by self-love, the gospel is the basis for hope. Christ offers himself to fallen humanity as the willing, able, powerful, savior of sinners. There is hope for people whose lives are dyed by compulsive self-love. Christ will forgive, cleanse, transform, and empower. You can share times when you have known freedom from selfishness and fear because of the power and grace of the gospel.

When you know your children are struggling, the gospel will provide hope and help. We observed a wonderful conversation between one of our sons and his three year old son.

“It is hard to trust Daddy and obey isn’t it son?”

“Yes.” His son nodded.

“You know who helps Daddy obey?”

“Jesus?”

“That’s right, Jesus helps me to obey, and he can help you to obey. Let’s pray to Jesus and ask him to help you obey Daddy.”

There is another wonderful benefit of keeping the gospel central. The gospel motivates obedience. In Titus 3, the Apostle Paul recalls the grace of the gospel. He reminds his reader of what he and they were like, “foolish, disobedient, deceived, and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures.” (Titus 3:3). He recalls also the invasion of grace in his life, speaking of the kindness and love of God who appeared with salvation, through washing and renewal and not because of righteousness in them. Then Paul says to Titus, I want for you to stress the power and grace of the gospel, “so that those who have trusted in God may devote themselves to doing what is good.” (Titus 3:8).

Think about that! What motivates doing good? The gospel. The grace, mercy, and power of the gospel is what induces Christians to devote themselves to doing what is good.

May God give you wisdom to keep grace in place as you shepherd the hearts of your children.

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Re: Keeping Grace in Place (at home) - posted by crsschk (), on: 2005/4/24 13:55

This is great stuff here Chanin.

That the effort is toward children is truly wonderful, but that it can also apply to ourselves, *again* in maybe a backdoor kind of way...

Mat 18:3 And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Mat 18:4 Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.