

## How You Describe Your Kids Determines How You Parent Them

### I. The Temptation to Describe our Kids Incorrectly

- **We're tempted to define our kids out of fear.**
  - Kids do scary things. But when we view situations and people through the lens of fear, we're going to parent wrong every time.
  - In I Samuel 17, Israelite army viewed Goliath as an unbeatable champion and giant whose taunts made them "dismayed and greatly afraid" (I Samuel 17:11, 24). Their description of the situation was terrifyingly hopeless. Their prescription was to do *nothing* for 40 days.
  - However, David didn't see Goliath as a superhuman threat, but as an enemy of the Lord who was defying "the armies of the living God" (I Samuel 17:26, 45). He saw the battle as a divine contest, not a fair fight, and that's why his prescription was to confidently approach the giant with no armor, no sword, only a sling and five smooth stones.
- **We're tempted to define our kids superficially.**
  - Sometimes we're tempted to reduce our kids to nothing more than the sum of their behaviors. This is where the temptation to parent as behavioral modifiers crushes us.
  - In Luke 15:11–32, the older brother labeled his returning sibling as a son who had "devoured [his father's] property with . . . riotous living" and used that as an excuse to resent him and ignore his repentance—a return to home and to a relationship with his father. However, the father described his son not as a permanent prodigal, but twice like this: "*this son of mine was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.*" (Luke 15:24, 32). For this reason, the father embraced his son, welcomed him home, clothed him, and fed him.
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  - Even if our children's behavior doesn't scare us, we can still reduce them to their worst actions. The key to this temptation will be to understand how God sees our kids. Yes, they sinned. Yes, they're sinners. But in God's economy, they're so much more. Our parenting needs to take into account the totality of who they are, not just a superficial slice.
- **We're tempted to define our kids using poor theology.**
  - Consider John 9:2 where the disciples assumed the blind man's malady stemmed from sin, asking Jesus, "*Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?*" The Pharisees later labeled the healed man a "sinner" and deceiver, absolutely rejecting the miracle out of hand.
  - But Jesus reframed the situation for them as neither punitive nor accidental, but purposeful. John 9:3 says, "*Neither this man nor his parents sinned... but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him.*"
  - Far too often our theology is twisted or completely false. We believe that "people never change" is more true than "God changes sinners." We don't believe that God wants to use this current season of struggle in the child's life as well as our own. We believe the religion of the world that says that all misbehavior grows from biological issues. We have a let-go-and-let-God approach where we imagine they'll find Him on their own. We don't believe what the Lord has to say about suffering and trials. We even ignore certain sins and actually allow other sins because it's "not that big of a deal."
  - Our failure philosophies and poor theology blind us to the real need, and then we can't help but parent at odds with God's perfect plan for us and our kids.

## II. The Necessity to Describe Our Kids Biblically

- **They are sinners God wants to change.**
  - Yes, Romans 3:23 reveals that they, like us, *“have sinned and [fallen] short of the glory of God.”* But John 3:16 helps us see that it’s this truth that causes the Lord’s love for us to shine. *“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.”* That’s why Ephesians 6:4 commands us to, *“bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.”*
  - God’s correct description of them . . . they are sinners in need of a saving relationship with their Creator, Savior, and King, lead Him to die for them and require that we surround them with His truth in love.
- **They always need God’s Word applied to their lives.**
  - The truths of Ephesians 6 are rooted in all the truth that went before it. That means that the spiritual blessings God has prepared for His children, the grace through faith He gives us to be born again unto good works, this mystery in Christ that unifies us so that we would help each other put off sin, renew our minds, and put on the new man and be imitators of Christ, are all necessary descriptions that will lead to parenting that focuses on the nurture and admonition of the Lord.
  - We are required by God to be His ambassadors to our children. In order to do that, we absolutely need to be using His Word which was given to us to teach, reprove, correct, and train. And all spiritual maturity grows from what we learn about God in the Bible.
  - Our kids are sinners who need a Savior, and when they come to Him in faith and follow Him, they’re sinners in need of sanctification. This means that the prescription—every single time—is the Gospel.
  - Yes, they do wrong. Yes, their sin is scary, but they’re not lost causes. They need the Word of God and the love of God and the power of God.
  - When we describe our kids as creations of God who need to better know, understand, love, and submit to God, then our prescription for all of their daily issues and choices is going to be Scriptural truth for the glory of God and good of our kids.

Parent.

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