

Children's Most Important Spiritual Influences

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- [0 : 00] My favorite TV show is Blue Bloods. Anybody like that? Tom Selleck? He is Police Commissioner Frank Reagan on the show.
- Commissioner of the New York City Police Department. Blue Bloods is a show about a family of three generations of New York City policemen.
- In every episode, no matter what's going on, in every episode, there's always a scene when all of the family gather around the table for Sunday dinner.
- There's a grandfather, the father, Tom Selleck, Frank Reagan, three adult children. One of them has a wife and grandchildren.
- Sometimes, and many times, over the course of that meal, the conversation gets heated.
- [1 : 02] It gets intense. But before it gets just completely out of hand, either the grandfather or the father will interrupt and say, Hey, let's keep it civil.
- Let's keep it civil. In today's culture, where there is so much division, anger, conflict, we need more level-headed people to step up and say, Let's keep it civil.
- I heard a public school official recently, not in Pickens County, but a public school official was giving a talk to a group of administrators, teachers.
- And he made the point that public school administrators and teachers are on the front line of today's culture.
- And he was talking about how divided, angry, chaotic it was. But he was talking about how today's administrators and teachers, they're on the front lines.
- [2 : 16] And they need to be teaching and modeling for their students how to keep things civil. I thought that was a great point.
- Teachers, coaches, administrators, people who are with our children at public school, 180 days a year. We need to hope and pray that they can instill in our students, young people today, a sense of being able to live in this world and interact with people who are different from you.
- And you don't have to agree. We'll never agree with everyone. But you know, there's another group of influencers who have the responsibility of teaching and training children before they ever get to the front line of today's culture.
- And that's parents. God has assigned parents the primary responsibility for leading their children to live in this world in a way that far exceeds just being civil.
- You know, as Christians, our goal is to be far more than just as we interact with people, just to be civil. Just not to explode.
- [3 : 48] Our goal is to be more than just to not react. We're called as Christians to be in this world being salt and light, influencing, preserving, but also demonstrating Christ-like character, which is far, far more than just civility.
- Since today is Mother's Day and the parent-child dedication, I'm going to interrupt our study of Philippians and focus on our responsibility.

Listen to this. Not just as Christian parents, but as grandparents, as aunts and uncles, older siblings sometimes, teachers here at church, out in schools.

Our responsibility to teach our children the truth of God's word and help them to know how it applies to living life in this world.

Living life wherever they go. Now, when I say children this morning, I'm talking about children from birth to high school. I'm talking about children who live at home with their parents or just one parent or with grandparents or whoever it is that you live with.

[5 : 08] But the fact is, if we want to influence children who are in high school or even in middle school, we've got to start while they're in preschool, don't we? That's where it begins.

I want us to look at two passages of Scripture that emphasize our responsibility. What we're going to do is look at a little bit more than what we read during the parent-child dedication from Deuteronomy chapter 6.

And then we're just going to go to that one verse that I read from Ephesians chapter 6, verse 4. But look with me. It'll be on the screen. The people of Israel.

In the book of Deuteronomy, Moses is preparing them to enter the promised land. And God inspired him, led him to emphasize the things that he did.

And this is one of the major emphases. You as parents, you have got to pass the faith down to your children. Look at how he says it.

[6 : 13] Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your might.

And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children. And shall talk of them when you sit in your house.

When you walk by the way. And when you lie down. And when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand. And they shall be as frontlets between your eyes.

You shall write them on the doorposts of your house. And on your gates. You see, God was just emphasizing to them. You've got to know me.

Love me. Know my word. And you are going to be the one, the primary channel through whom I work to communicate who I am. Who you are and how to relate to me.

[7 : 11] God's going to speak through the parents. The home. Now look at Ephesians 6, 4. Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger. But bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

These two passages are clear that God intends for the home. Be the primary, not the only, but the primary training ground of children. Now both parents are responsible.

But in Ephesians, the emphasis is on fathers need to lead the way. I want to make clear that God expects men to lead their home in the right kind of way.

Lovingly. Not provoking your children to anger. But in the right kind of way. A servant leader. And lead the way in teaching your children.

Now in many homes, there are other people who are spiritual influencers. Even if parents are there.

[8 : 17] My home was that way. When I was growing up, both my parents, I lived with them. But about 150 yards away or so, my grandparents, their last names were Williams, my mother's parents.

I was with them every day growing up. They were as strongly influencers in my life as my parents. I had another set of grandparents that I was involved with them.

They lived a little bit further away, so I didn't see them as much. But they were also influencers. I had one aunt and uncle. They were there and everything that ever happened in our lives.

They were committed Christians. I stayed in their home some. I fished and hunted with my uncle some. He was a strong influence in my life. I had an older brother. Seven and a half years older than me.

He was a real influence in my life as I was growing up. Some of you in this room, a lot of you, you have that same experience. There were people, your parents, an extended family, maybe some just close family friends, that they were always there.

[9 : 26] They had an influence on you, the way you grew up, the way you look at life. Not just your spiritual development, but your whole world view. Now, as we go through this message, the emphasis is going to be on parents teaching and training their children.

But you keep in mind, parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles, family friends, older siblings, God uses you often to influence children spiritually.

So, you apply it where you can about who you are and your place in the home. Let's look first. How can parents best influence their children spiritually?

Well, the passage of Deuteronomy tells us clearly. Number one, parents must know and love the Lord. Look at verse five. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind.

We're to love God. Jesus said this is the greatest commandment. And the point is, with just everything that's within you, your whole heart, soul, mind, strength. Love God.

[10 : 43] Seek to know Him and to love Him. This passage is stressing the importance of parents loving God. But we won't really love God unless we have a relationship with Him, will we?

You know, there's people in your life that you like, and you may say you love them as a Christian brother. What you mean by that is, you want the best for them. You'll try to meet their needs if you know what they are.

But the people that you truly love, have a bond with. You do it because you have a relationship with them. And it took time to build that relationship.

Now, I know there's people sitting here and you're thinking, you say, well, what about love at first sight? You say, well, I first saw my wife or my husband. It was love at first sight. Here's my thought. It was probably lust at first sight.

But as you got to know them, there was the building of that relationship, that bond, and that kind of love. But it takes time.

[11 : 49] It takes a relationship to truly love someone. And so we've got to know and love the Lord to be the right kind of parents to lead our children. And that's what I'm going to talk about.

That means we've got to have a relationship with Him. A parent must have a loving relationship with God before they can teach their children to have one. You can't teach your children about God if you don't know Him. No one can.

You won't teach your children about God if you don't love Him. And have a meaningful relationship with Him that you want to share. That you can talk about. If you're serious about being a godly parent.

Doing what's best for your child. Then seek to grow in your own relationship with the Lord. I'm serious.

You can't lead your child where you've never been. If you want to be a true Christian model influence in your child's life. First, major on your own personal relationship with the Lord.

[12 : 52] It's something a little bit different. But if you really want to have a good, healthy, stable home for your children. Make your relationship with your spouse the first relationship in your life.

Your children need to learn from you, men. Your son needs to learn how to love his wife by watching you love his mother. Ladies, your daughter needs to learn how to love her husband by watching you love your husband, her father.

It's all about relationships. You can't introduce your child to someone that you do not know. But there's something else we see in both of these passages that's a prerequisite to teaching your children about the things of God.

Parents must know God's Word. I want you to just look at it if you would. Both of these passages and these words that I command you today. That's what we read.

That's Scripture. The Word of God. Shall be on your heart. You know it. It's something that you have.

[14 : 03] You believe it. You've embraced it. Fathers, look next. Do not provoke your children in anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

Last year, we looked at Colossians chapter 3, that whole section. And we came to something very similar to this.

Colossians chapter 3, about verse 21 or so. And we emphasized at that time the first part. Fathers, do not provoke your children in anger. It is important that we as men, we lead in our home.

It is right to be an authority figure, regardless of what our culture says today about being anti-authority. But we need to be the right kind of authority.

Not a stiff-arming kind of authority. Not one that promotes anger and bitterness and rage and resentment in our children. We need to be people who discipline in love, who lead in love.

[15 : 10] That's what he's talking about there. But it does not, no matter what, we've got to teach them. Bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. Both passages are pointing out here the importance of parents knowing God's Word.

Now, no one understands everything about the Bible. This does not mean, imply or anything, that you've got to be a Bible scholar to teach your children. Don't be intimidated about what you do not know.

No one knows everything the Bible teaches. So there's just some things you need to know or focus on first, we'll say. You need to understand the Gospel.

As a parent, as a Sunday school teacher, you need to really understand the Gospel. You need to be able to explain to your child something about who God is.

He's our Creator. He is good. He created everything good. But something happened. There was a fall. There was sin entered the world. And we, you, my son, my daughter, you're a sinner.

[16 : 15] That's why you disobey me sometimes. That's why you fight with your brother and sister sometimes. That's why you lie sometimes. You need to know enough of the Bible to explain something about who God is. About how we are sinners.

We've failed God. We've lived life our way instead of His way. We've broken His rules, His laws. And you've got to be able to explain. That's the bad news of the Bible. But the good news is that God loves us.

And He sent Jesus, His Son, into this world to save us. And the way that Jesus did that, He died on the cross to pay the penalty for our sin. And He paid that penalty in full. And He arose from the grave.

And He's alive now. And He wants to be your Savior. If you'll admit that you are a sinner and you are separated from God. And if you're sorry you've sinned. That you don't want to sin against God and be that way.

If you'll trust Jesus that He died for you. Paid the penalty for your sins. If you'll ask Him to be your Savior, He will. That's the kind of thing, first, the gospel. That you need to know as a parent.

[17 : 12] You can explain it anyway. But make sure you are biblically right. And explain it in a way on a level that your child can understand.

You also need to teach your child, when they become a Christian, how to live like a follower of Jesus every day. A lot of times children think in terms of being a Christian, being a follower of Jesus. That's what we are.

Jesus called His disciples, some of them, and said, follow me. Teach them to live like a Christian. To be able to put into practice the things they read and learn from the Bible.

Teach your children to obey God by obeying you. Obeying their teachers. Teach your children you don't lie.

And when you do lie, that's when the discipline hits hard. Because you can't tolerate lying. I've always told my children and grandchildren, you're never more like the devil than when you lie.

[18 : 15] Lying is never okay. Inexcusable. Teach that to your children. But you'll never be able to teach your children the most important lessons of life unless you're studying God's Word yourself.

You need to be able to teach them important things all through life. You want to teach them, when they're little, how to read. You want to teach them how to work.

How to handle money. You want to teach them how to have good manners. Teachers. I've always taught mine. I love sports. Teach them how to play ball. There's a lot of things in this world that you need to teach your children.

That you want to teach your children. And some of it's fun to teach your children. But don't neglect the most important thing. Which is to know, love, and serve Jesus.

If we don't do that as parents, Christian parents here. If we don't do that as parents and grandparents and aunts and uncles who are Christians, who know. Then we have failed to teach our children the most important lesson of life.

[19 : 31] Note what else parents must do to carry out their responsibility. Parents must live out their faith as they go through life. And explain to their children why they live like they do. Look at this from Deuteronomy.

You shall teach them diligently to your children. That's talking about the truth of God. And shall talk of them when you sit in your house. When you walk by the way. And when you lie down.

And when you rise. There's more to teaching children about the things of God than just reading them the Bible. Or even reading a Bible story. Children need to know from us, adults.

How God is involved in our lives. And what Moses is saying here is. Parents, grandparents, aunts, and uncles.

Look for ways to talk to your children about God and the things of God. It's just a normal part of life. When you ride down the road. On the way to school. When you're out in the woods.

[20 : 28] If you hunt. Just look at it. Talk of them. Things of God. When you sit in your house. When you walk by the way.

Think about it this way. Help your children to develop a Christian worldview. You're not probably going to use that word. If they're little. They won't understand that. But help your children develop a Christian way of looking at life.

And living life. But talking about the issues of today. From a Christian perspective. You know where your child, grandchild.

Nephews, nieces. You know where they are in life. What grade they're in. The kind of things they're being exposed to at school. With their friends. If they watch TV. Watch. Know anything about what's going on in the world.

Well explain to your children. What's happening. In a way they can understand. Let them know. What God's word.

[21 : 30] What the Bible. Teaches about. This particular issue. That particular situation. And you can say to them.

A lot of people don't believe this. And they don't live this way. But God says we should live this way. And it's wrong. It's sinful when we do not. I think it's important.

To go back to what I started. We've got to do this in a civil way. Don't get angry. And red faced. And cuss. And rant. And rave. About everything that's going wrong in life.

And tell them. If you do this. I'll kill you. Some people do that with children. But you're just teaching them. To be a moron.

A jerk. To add gasoline to the fire. If that's what. If that's how you do it. That serves no good purpose. And we're being terrible witnesses.

[22 : 32] When we do it that way. We need to teach our children. What's going on. What's wrong. What is right. But then teach them to speak.

And live the truth in love. I mean in love. Controlled. Being better than just civil.

In today's culture. We need to be the most positive witnesses. We can be. In order to have the best effect on people.

That we can have. We need to ask God. To help us to. Be a part of the process. Of restoring. Civility. Being able to.

Talk about things. We disagree with. Without being. Angry about it. And shouting somebody down. You know.

[23 : 31] We can summarize. What Deuteronomy 6. Is saying. About the way. Children learn. From their parents. With two phrases. Children learn. What is taught. Listening.

What their parents teach. But children learn. More. From what is caught. Watching. What parents. Do. It's convicting.

Isn't it? It's the hardest part. But it's vitally important. For us to model. What we teach. And when we blow it.

We admit it to them. We don't just confess. Our sin to God. We confess it to those. That we've been. Terrible witnesses to. Now. How can the church. Help parents.

Let's do this quickly. How can church. The church. Help parents. If it's the children. Spiritually. We need to understand. That. We're not called. To live. Like lone ranger.

[24 : 28] Christians. We're not supposed. To be. Rugged individualists. As Christians. We're part of a. Community of faith. Called the church. People of Israel.

They were part of. God's chosen people. A nation. Well today. We're a part of. God's church. We're a family. Here at our church.

We try to help parents. In a variety of ways. We try to help you. As parents. To grow spiritually. That's what the teaching here. On Sunday mornings. Is about. A lot of things. We're doing in Sunday school.

And other times. Trying to help parents. Grow spiritually. We also try to teach. Youth and children. The truth of scripture. In age appropriate. Ways. We have.

Sunday school classes. First and second graders. We have Sunday classes. For. You know. High schoolers. We're trying to teach. The truth of God's word. In age appropriate. Ways.

[25 : 23] We also. Keep in mind. Everything we do here. We're trying to do. In cooperation. With parents. You know.

We want to be partners. With parents. In doing this. But at the same time. We know that all parents. Aren't. Even involved. Or not even in the home. And so. We as a church.

We want to fill the gaps. For children. Who are just on their own. Basically. We do want to do that. But three here. We try to influence. Our youth and children. In a variety of ways.

Including fun stuff. It was in the news. I think it was in the news. There this week. Mike talked about it. Last week. Some fun things. They're going to do this summer. You know.

Water park. First week in June. Or second week in June. We do things throughout the year. With. Before COVID. With children and youth. That's a part of building fellowship.

[26 : 16] That can draw other kids. That's not going to church. But I want you to understand. Our purpose is not to entertain. And we certainly aren't trying to be babysitters.

We aren't here just to keep them off the streets. Our purpose as a church. With children and adults. Is to make disciples. That's what we're called to do. That's what the scripture says we're to do.

But I want to make this clear. We can't do anything to help parents. If you parents. Don't have your children here. On a regular basis.

I want to be real honest with you. This period of time. Not anything to do with COVID. But now.

This is the most difficult time. In my 40 years of being involved in church ministry. Because of the just. Widespread lack of commitment. A lot of you.

[27 : 18] Let me rephrase that. Some of you. You aren't committed to this. To serving God. In and through this church. You decide on Sunday morning. According to how you feel.

Whether you're going to come. And you won't make a commitment. To be involved. Because you don't want to make long term commitments. That's a part of your DNA today. I don't make long term commitments. And sometimes.

We have parents. Who let. The children run the show. At home. The children make the decision. About. What church we'll be involved in.

Or how often we'll be involved in church. And if you're that kind of parent. You are a failure. As a spiritual leader. In your home. You are supposed to be.

The parent. The boss. The authority figures. In your home. And yes. Until Jesus comes back. Authority is right.

[28 : 17] Before God. There should be authority. In every realm of life. And we should respect authority. We should respect law enforcement people.

Especially today. We should respect the authorities. In the school. At church. And you the parents. You're the authorities at home. And you need to seize control.

If you're not in control now. And you need to make the decision. That we're going to be as a family. Involved in this church. I don't like everything that happens.

Everybody doesn't treat me. With a warm smile and hug. Every time I see them. And if you've got to be treated. With a kid gloves. Warm smile and hug.

Every time you're seen at church. Or anywhere you go. You got a problem. You know that don't you? Everything can't always go your way.

[29 : 17] So. Commit yourself to the Lord. To his church. Get involved. Use your gifts, talents and abilities.

Have your teacher children. Use their gifts, talents and abilities. And everything don't go to suit you. So what? Nothing in life. All goes to suit you.

A lot of you young people in here. You play sports. Boys and girls. There are coaches.

Let's just be honest. There are coaches who have chewed you out. And cussed you out. And you didn't like it. And it hurt your feelings. But you didn't quit. You were committed to the team.

To the sport. And you hung in there. You even still love the coach. But if you come to church. Somebody looks at you wrong. You're going to have your little feelings hurt. And walk off.

[30 : 12] You're a weak. Spineless wonder. If that's who you are. And if parents. If you reinforce that. You are teaching them to be weak.

Spineless wonders. Some of you are thinking. I'm glad he's retiring. So what? I said these kind of things.

The first year I was here. You can verify that. But this is. I'm saying this. If the shoe doesn't fit.

Then so be it. It doesn't fit. But if the shoe fits. Hear it. Change. Most likely.

Your grandparents. And your parents. They did run the show. In their home. And your home. And it helped you. To turn out to be a better human being.

[31 : 12] And maybe a better. Faithful Christian. It was time for you to grow up. As somebody said one time. Ladies.

Put your big girl panties on. Guys. Suck it up. Be a man. And love your children.

But lead your children. And if it has to be some force involved. At times. Use force. The right way. Not an abusive way.

And you know. Your children are not going to hate you for that. I got two boys here somewhere this morning. I wore them out. We had some battles in our house.

When that. You know. The. Testosterone was beginning to flow. There were times.

[32 : 09] That I'm sure. They hated my guts. But I wasn't trying. To win a popularity contest. There are times. That I went too far.

Too harsh. And I have apologized to them. Asked their forgiveness. Told them I was. Wrong before God. Wrong before them. But we have a.

And have had a good relationship. A close relationship. We eat lunch together. Just like the Reagans. Every Sunday. We do things together. We do things together. But they always knew.

That daddy and mama. Were running the show. They were in charge. And it just worked out. In the long run. And it will for you.

By God's grace. If you'll. Be the parent. Take control. Be committed. And be that consistently.

[33 : 06] We want to be a church. That has great impact. On the spiritual lives. Of teenagers and children. We put a lot of time. Energy and money. Into that. But no matter what we do.

We can't take the. Take the place. Of parents. You've got to be involved. Now. I want to wind up like this.

Parents. Parents. Who have an interest. In things of God. And share that. With their children. Are far more likely. To see. Their children. Develop those interests.

And their children. To follow Jesus. And be involved. In church. But I want to make. This real clear. At some point.

Between childhood. And adulthood. Every person. Must decide. For themselves. Whether they will make. Their parents. Faith. Their own. Faith. Faith. There are some.

[34 : 04] Faithful men and women. Who were godly parents. Who did things right. But their children. Walked away. From Jesus. And the church.

At an early age. And never came back. That's between the children. And God. There are some parents. Who just. Were not Christians.

Certainly. Everything. Everything. But a good influence. And their children. By the grace of God. Came to know Jesus. And serve him faithfully. Some of you may be here.

And that's your story. Right now. We have no control. Of what's going to happen. Down the road. All we can control. Is now. Who we are. And how we parent.

But young people. Listen to this. We're about to wind this up. Young people. On judgment day. You and you alone. Will stand before God. And give an account.

[35 : 02] Of what you have been. What you have done. With the truth. Of God's word. And the model. Of godly parents. What you've done with it. When all is said and done.

It's just going to be. You standing before God. On judgment day. And you will give an account. What you've done. What you've been taught. And the model. That's gone before you. Christian parents.

Grandparents. Aunts and uncles. Son of school teachers. Anyone else. Who's a primary influencer. Of children. God has given us. The job. Of being vitally important.

Spiritual. Influencers. In our children's lives. Let's be faithful. To just do what we can.

By God's grace. Let's pray together. Dear God. We pray now. That you will help us to see. In light of. Love. The message.

[36 : 00] What you've said. Through your word and spirit. Help us to see. How we should respond. Adults in this room. Who influence children. And children in this room.

How they should respond. To what they have seen. And heard. Let's just. In attitude of prayer. Listen to the Lord. And respond to him.