

Parenting is More Than a Formula

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We have all read and heard the statistic about children raised in Christian homes dropping out of church. We all, whether we are parents, youth pastor or youth pastor who are parents, want to know how to fix it. We want an easy quick formula that is going to guarantee our kids will turn out right and not drop out of church and faith.

Jim Newheiser in his short but insightful book *Parenting is More Than a Formula*, addresses head on the myth that there is a one-size fits all formula for parenting. He instead lays out 4 simple truths and challenges for parents to consider.

1. Exercise Discernment

Biblical parenting is parenting that is based on Biblical truth and discernment. If parents are not in the scriptures they will not be able to discern between anecdotal wisdom and Biblical truth. Often parents while wanting what is best for their children will give into positive peer pressure conforming to legalisms and extra-Biblical solutions. When parents follow man-made rules and personality preferences more than God's infallible word, their formulas no matter how great will fail.

Parents need to learn and exercise discernment, being able to sort out the good human helps from the great Godly truths.

2. Why Do Kids Turn Out The Way They Do?

The Bible teaches there are three primary factors that influence the way children turn out. 1.) *Parental Duties*- parents are responsible to raise their children in the "nurture and admonition of the Lord". God blesses parents who are faithful and warns against parents who are negligent in their duties. 2.) *Each Child is Responsible for the Choices He Makes*- Not all rebellion is a parent's fault. Children like all of us are born with a sinful nature. They are subject to other influences beyond the home. They will make choices on their own and will be responsible for those choices. They must at some point choose whether to follow their parent's instructions or not. 3.) *God's Sovereign Grace is Needed to Save our Kids*- both parents and children need God's grace. Even if a parent is perfect, their child still is born with a sin nature. God works in



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Godly families to bring children to salvation, but ultimately parents do not save their children, God does.

3. Beware of Parental Determinism

Parental determinism is not the Bible's view of raising children. Children are more than a product of parenting and culture. There is a cultural belief that we are the primary shapers and controllers of our children's future. God is the shaper and controller parents must remember that. Parental determinism gives parents an idea that if a child rebels that the parents has failed, further wounding an already hurt parent. We falsely believe that parental faithfulness determines a successful outcome. If that is true than God is also a failed parent. In the end deterministic parenting methods will fail, because they come from a place of pride or guilt.

4. Parenting is About Gospel Grace, Not Extra-Biblical Formulas

Man-made rules, formulas and solutions have the appearance of wisdom but often do not produce holiness. The effort to have good kids has undermined the Biblical mandate to seek to raise Godly kids. If parents are not careful their influence will be reduced down to moralism, seeking God's favor through good works. Godly parenting cannot be made into a formula, because it about the grace of the gospel. While parenting needs to be Gospel-centered it cannot be expected to see immediate transformation. The grace of the gospel in us and in our families is an ongoing daily work of God continuing to draws us back to Him. God is at work in and through our parenting and through us, that is the truth. No quick solution or formula it is a day by day putting our hope back on Christ for ourselves, our kids and our families.