

CITYWEST CHURCH

FAMILY MATTERS PART 2

THE FORMATION OF OUR HOME.

How our families point to God's family.

For every house is built by someone, but He who built all things is God.

Hebrews 3:4 (NKJV)

But if you refuse to serve the LORD, then choose today whom you will serve. Would you prefer the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates? Or will it be the gods of the Amorites in whose land you now live? ***But as for me and my family, we will serve the LORD.***"

Joshua 24:15 (NLT)

Children, obey your parents because you belong to the Lord, for this is the right thing to do. ²"Honour your father and mother." This is the first commandment with a promise: ³If you honour your father and mother, 'things will go well for you, and you will have a long life on the earth.'

⁴Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger by the way you treat them. Rather, bring them up with the discipline and instruction that comes from the Lord.

Ephesians 6:1-4 (NLT)

This not only means that children have the responsibility to obey, but parents have the responsibility to teach their children obedience – one of the most important jobs for a parent.

We don't need to teach our children how to disobey because they have each inherited an inclination to sin from Adam – but obedience must be taught.

This is what all a parent's discipline for a child must come to. Disobedience must be punished, so that obedience can be learned.

This is called formation.

We are not simply raising children; we are forming people.

The question isn't just, *"What will my children achieve?"*

The deeper question is:

"Who are we helping our children become?"

1. CHARACTER AND ACHIEVEMENT

There is nothing wrong with achieving. We should encourage our children to work hard, develop their gifts, and pursue excellence (doing the best with what you have) but we live in a world that will sacrifice character to achieve.

This is not God's way.

God doesn't want us raising children who win trophies, but can't handle how to lose. Or not know how to love.

The scary thing for us christian parents is we can raise children who are successful in the world's eyes but be spiritually empty.

In the gospel of Luke, there is a beautiful picture of Jesus as he was growing up

Jesus grew in wisdom and stature and in favour with God and all the people.

Luke 2:52 (NLT)

Notice Jesus grew in more than one area. Wisdom, Stature, relationship with God and people.

That's a great picture of formation.

We want our children to not simply be smart but wise, not just strong but also courageous, and not just successful but faithful.

Not just knowing what's right, but having the character to do it even if nobody is watching.

It's not just teaching them the right thing to do, but teaching them how you do it matters as well.

The famous parent moment when you tell them to apologise, and they say SSSOOORRRRRYYYYY.

This is an opportunity for formation.

Character is formed not in special moments but in the ordinary moments and choices each day.

2. FORMATION HAPPENS IN THE ORDINARY MOMENTS.

“Listen, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD alone.^[a] ⁵ And you must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your strength. ⁶ And you must commit yourselves wholeheartedly to these commands that I am giving you today. ⁷ Repeat them again and again to your children. Talk about them when you are at home and when you are on the road, when you are going to bed and when you are getting up. ⁸ Tie them to your hands and wear them on your forehead as reminders. ⁹ Write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

Deuteronomy 6:4-9 (NLT)

This is an incredible picture of discipleship and formation for both parents and kids.

Notice where faith is formed:

At home. On the road. At bedtime. In the morning.

IN EVERYDAY LIFE.

You don't have to manufacture spiritual moments.

You need to recognise the spiritual moments already happening.

And this is why our children need to see our faith, not simply hear about it. Before we tell them to pray, they should see us pray. Before we tell them to forgive, they should experience forgiveness from us.

Before we tell them church matters, they should see that church matters to us. Before we tell them Scripture is important, they should see Scripture shaping our lives.

*Because ultimately, **We cannot give our children a faith that we are not living ourselves.***

Our children don't need perfect parents. They need authentic parents.

They need to see what it looks like to follow Jesus when life is difficult.

They need to hear: “I'm sorry. I was wrong.”

They need to hear: “Let's forgive them.”

They need to see: “We don't have all the answers, but we trust God.”

They need to know: “In this family, Jesus isn't just something we talk about on Sunday. Jesus is Lord of our whole life.”

BE KIND TO THEIR POTENTIAL

Be willing to form them now so that their potential can be realised. Don't do what they want, do what's best for them now and best for their future.

They are already God's image-bearers.

They don't have to perform their way into our love. They don't have to achieve their way into our approval.

They don't have to become impressive before we celebrate who God has made them to be.

This is why I love the words of John Wesley.

He described children as:

“Immortal spirits whom God hath for a time entrusted to your care.”

Think about that.

Entrusted. Not owned.

Our children ultimately belong to God. They are gifts before they are responsibilities.

They are souls before they are students.

They are people before they are performers.

So we need to ask ourselves:

“Am I helping my child become who God has called them to be—or am I trying to make them into who I wish they could be?”

Am I comparing them? Am I living my dreams through them? Am I celebrating their gifts? Or am I only celebrating their achievements?

Because every child is different. One may be naturally confident.

Another may be quiet. One may love sport. Another may love books.

One may know exactly what they want to do. Another may take years to discover it.

One may lead from the front. Another may quietly care for everyone in the room.

Don't despise what looks different.

Be curious about who God has made them to be.

Be kind to their potential.

Give them room to grow. Give them room to fail. Give them room to discover. Give them room to become.

*Because **formation takes time.***

3. JESUS FOREVER, NOT US FOREVER.

Direct your children onto the right path, and when they are older, they will not leave it.

Proverbs 22:6 (NLT)

Remain in me, and I will remain in you. For a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and you cannot be fruitful unless you remain in me.

⁵“Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing.

John 15:4-5 (NLT)

This might be one of the most important things we can say about raising children:

Our children need Jesus forever.

They don't need us forever. They need Jesus forever.

There comes a point when your child doesn't need you to make every decision.

They don't need you to solve every problem. They don't need you to organise every detail of their life. They don't need you to protect them from every disappointment.

But they will always need Jesus.

And that changes the goal of parenting.

Because our job isn't to make our children dependent upon us.

Our job is to help them become dependent upon Christ.

We are raising people we will eventually release.

You teach them to walk. Then ride a bike. Then drive. Then make decisions.

Then eventually they make decisions without you.

And that's the goal.

You are raising someone you will eventually release.

So control cannot be the goal. Formation is.

We aren't trying to control their entire future.

We're trying to give them roots deep enough to stand when we aren't there.

Because our children don't just need Jesus while they're living in our house.

They need Jesus when they leave our house.

They need Jesus when they go to university.

Jesus when they face disappointment. Jesus when they have questions.

Jesus when they experience suffering. Jesus when they experience success.

Jesus when they get married. Jesus when they become parents themselves.

Our children need Jesus forever.

And that's why the greatest thing we can give them isn't simply a good childhood.

It's a foundation in Christ.

We don't want to raise children who simply know how to live in our house.

We want to raise disciples who know how to live in God's world.