

The Evangelistic Power of a Christian Family

3 John 1-14

Introduction

- In 3 John 4, the apostle, writing to a man named Gaius, says, “I have no greater joy than this: to hear that my children are walking in the truth.” It is likely that this indicates John had led Gaius to Christ. John was fathering spiritual children into the Kingdom of God and Gaius was a child of his and one in whom he took great delight. Spurgeon knew the importance of this pastoral calling, but he also believed it was appropriate to make specific application to the home and the evangelistic calling of parents. His words are direct and to the point:

It is very grievous to see how some professedly Christian parents are satisfied so long as their children display cleverness in learning, or sharpness in business, although they show no signs of a renewed nature. If they pass their examinations and promise to be well fitted for the world's battle, their parents forget that there is a superior conflict, involving a higher crown, for which the child will need to be fitted by divine grace, and armed with the whole armor of God. Many who ought to know better think themselves superlatively blessed in their children if they become rich, if they marry well, if they strike out into profitable enterprises in trade, or if they attain eminence in the profession which they have espoused. Their parents will go to their beds rejoicing, and awake perfectly satisfied, though their boys are hastening down to hell, if they are also making money by the bushel. They have no greater joy than that their children are

having their portion in this life, and laying up treasure where rust corrupts it. Though neither their sons nor daughters show any signs of the new birth, give no evidence of being rich towards God, manifest no traces of electing love or redeeming grace, or the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit, yet there are parents who are content with their condition. Now, I can only say of such professing parents that they have need to question whether they be Christians at all, and if they will not question it themselves, they must give some of us leave to hold it in serious debate. When a man's heart is really right with God, and he himself has been saved from the wrath to come, and is living in the light of his heavenly Father's countenance, it is certain that he is anxious about his children's souls, prizes their immortal natures, and feels that nothing could give him greater joy than to hear that his children walk in truth. Judge yourselves, then, beloved, by the gentle but searching test of the text. If you are professing Christians, but cannot say that you have no greater joy than the conversion of your children, you have reason to question whether you ought to have made such a profession at all.

- For mothers and fathers, grandmothers and grandfathers, personal evangelism and obedience to the Great Commission should begin in the home, though it should certainly not end here. Obedience to the Great Commission should begin in the home because it is strategic. After all, good theology and good missiology is more caught than taught, though it certainly involves both. The vital role a father and mother (grandparents included) play in conveying and modeling a missional life for their children cannot be too strongly emphasized. It is crucial and in many instances decisive. Most children look up to, admire, and follow in their parent's footsteps. What you

love they will love. What you value they will value. What you have a passion for they will have a passion for. Afterall, you are their heroes!

- So, the question before us is clear: What do we do to embed the Great Commission into the DNA of our children that they may have a lifelong passion for that which is the passion of King Jesus? 7 quick suggestions.

1) Be incarnational in your parenting. (2 Cor. 8:9; Phil 2:5-11)

- David Livingston said, “This generation can only reach this generation. But will we raise our children to effectively impact their generation for Jesus Christ?”
- The incarnation was a manifestation and evidence of God’s redemptive love for His world.
- Our incarnational love for our children models God’s love and communicates our love for our children.
- To know and love them well you have to be with them, working hard to see life as they see life. You have to have to invade their world like Jesus invaded ours.

2) Love well your mate. (Eph. 5:25; Titus 2:4)

- In a letter to his wife Ann, Adoniram Judson wrote, “If such exquisite delights as we have enjoyed...with one another, are allowed to sinful creatures on earth, what must the joys of heaven be?” (*EGT*, 92)

- Children should learn about God’s love for the nations by the way they see their parents love one another. They should see the gospel and the atoning work of Christ put on glorious display in an Ephesians 5 kind of way.

3) Spend time with your children (Deut. 6:7-9)

- In addressing the importance of childhood, the parents of Hudson Taylor said, “At no [other] time is there greater capacity for devotion, or more pure, uncalculating ambition in the service of God” (quoted in *The Mission-Minded Child* by Ann Dunagan, preface). Apparently Hudson Taylor’s parents took the time, early in his life, to instill such devotion in Hudson. At the tender age of 5, Hudson declared, “When I am a man, I mean to be a missionary to China” (Ibid). And, we all know the rest of the story!
- Fathers, what kind of projection of the perfectly heavenly Father are you giving to your children in terms of the time you invest in them?

4) Learn to listen to your children (James 1:19)

- Ann Dunagan rightly notes, “Often an adult may ask a child, “What do you want to be when you grow up?” But as mission-minded parents and teachers, our typical question could have the potential of directing a child toward total obedience to God and complete surrender to His purposes. We should say, “Oh, I wonder what exciting plans God has prepared for your

life? When you grow up, will you do whatever God wants you to do?” (p. 1). Hearing your children’s heart on this level may happen in regular, normal and casual conversations, but there should be nothing casual about your listening! You need to zoom in:

- Eye to eye, ear to ear, heart to heart!

5) Read missionary biographies to your children (Hebrews 11)

- There is power and inspiration in story. One of my son’s named his son Judson, after Adoniram Judson. Another named his son Micah Elliot, honoring missionary Jim Elliot.
- Missionary heroes should be a regular staple of the spiritual diet of your children. Let them draw inspiration from the heroes of the faith.

6) Expose your children to missionaries and their lives by having them in your home, sharing a meal with them, listening to their stories.

- John Stam, missionary martyr in China, had parents who ran “Star of Hope Mission” in Paterson, NJ. Betty Stam, also martyred, was born into a missionary family. Her other 4 siblings all became missionaries. In fact Betty once wrote, “All five of us children expected... to return to China as missionaries. Our parents never urged it, but it seemed the natural and right thing to do” (*Ten*, 143). Their story could be multiplied a thousand times

over. Our lives are impacted and shaped by the people we meet. They are molded by the people we get to know and grow to admire.

7) Model missional living as a life priority before your children (Matt. 28:18-20)

- David Shibley, Founder of Global Advance, well says, “God is not calling us to win the world and, in the process, lose our families. But I have known those who so enshrined family life and were so protective of “quality time” that the children never saw in their parents the kind of consuming love that made their parent’s faith attractive to them. Some have lost their children, not because they weren’t at their soccer games or didn’t take family vacations, but because they never transmitted a loyalty to Jesus that went deep enough to interrupt personal preferences.” (*EGT*, 91).

6 concluding questions to consider:

- Are you a member of a Great Commission church?
- How often do you go on national and international missions?
- Do you pray that your children and grandchildren would become overseas missionaries?
- Do you personally give annually to missions? Do you give sacrificially?
Do you share this information with your children?
- Do you have a missions savings account set up for your children and grandchildren?

- Do you have a Great Commission ministry in your will and estate planning so that you will continue to play a vital role in reaching the nations after you are dead and gone?

The Great Commission is not an option to consider. It is a command to obey. Let our obedience begin but not end with those closest and dearest to us. Let it begin in our homes.