

BIBLICAL PARENTING 101

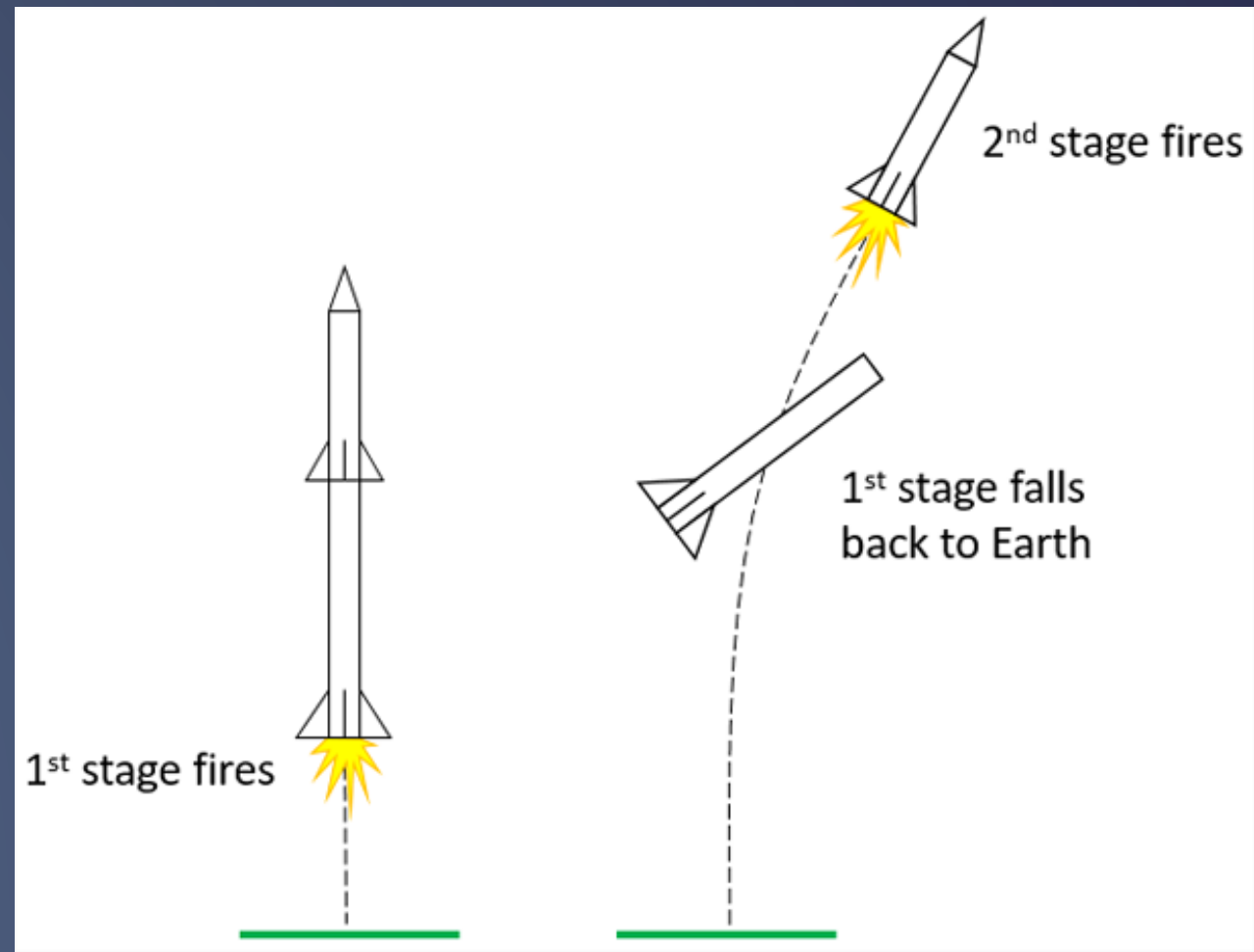
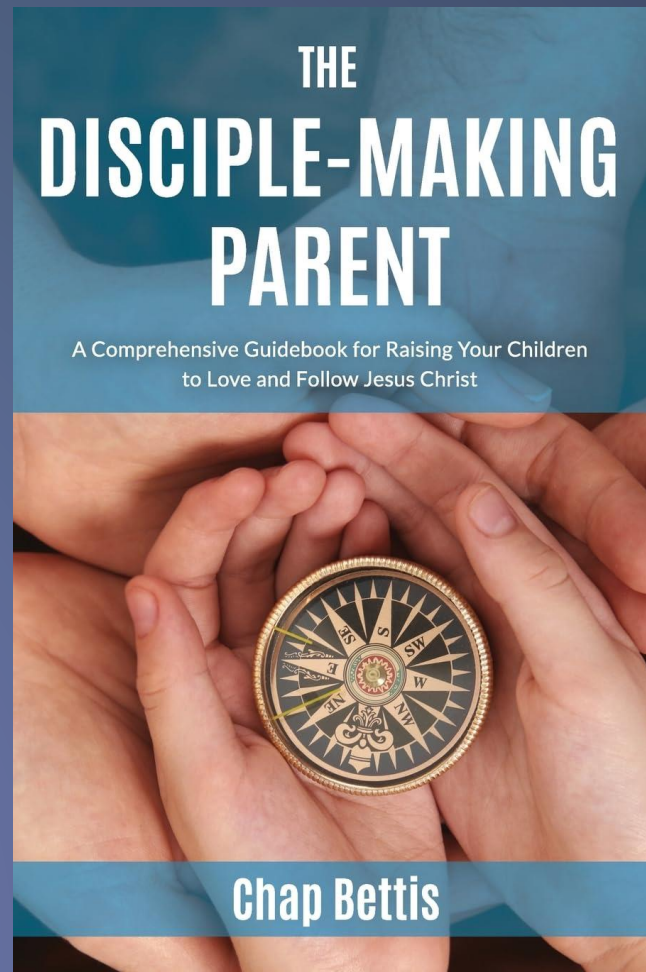


Week 7: Evangelizing Your Children (Part 1)

Two Stage Rocket (see Chap Bettis, *Disciple-Making Parent*, p 26)

Stage 1: Learning stage (age 2-11) – Lifts child into orbit (foundation period)

Stage 2: Convincing Stage (age 12-21) – A young person needs to demonstrate the change necessary to live what he was taught (Prov 22:6).



Ages 2-11, children need instruction. Ages 12-21, young people need more conversation; an atmosphere to ask questions as they are challenged to think through what is true. They need a reasoned defense of the faith and life, not just told what to do. Note Jesus was 12 when he intelligently interacted with the Jewish minds of the day (Luke 2:42-52).

Many Christian parents back-off at the second stage. Other parents start to tighten the controls. They tend to continue in the instruction (lecture) mode (which is still important) but when questions arise, uncertainty about that a child was taught starts to emerge, then these parents move into lecture mode, treating the teenager like a 6-year-old. They aren't prepared to reason intelligibly with their children. We must move from *command* and *control* to *persuading* and *inquiring*. Obedience is still required, but now it must come with reasons and persuasive arguments for why.

At earlier ages, children are completely dependent (*external control*), but as they grow older they move toward independence (*internal control*). As they become more independent, they need to learn to think and discern on their own. They are already doing this, so we need to work with them as they do so. In the first stage (early years), the focus is on building character, example, and knowledge of the Word. They are like sponges that absorb as much as possible. As they move into the second stage (later years), we move more into *coach* and *shepherd* as they internalize that knowledge and grapple with its truthfulness.

Building Convictions at Each Stage of Life (Joel R. Beeke)

Regulation –

Young children who lack discernment and the ability to know right and wrong. They are governed almost entirely by rules.

Participation –

As children get older, they need to know the reasons for your yes and no. Ask them questions to guide them and get them to see why a particular thing is right or wrong.

Integration –

As they move into their teenage, they will start making more and more decisions on their own. They still need to abide by your rules, but soon your authority shifts to more to advice and counsel, especially as the move out of the home.

Supplication –

As they get married and move into adulthood, they are now on their own and you don't have the right to interfere with their decisions. You may offer advice and counsel if they ask. Otherwise, you simply need to pray for them.

Evangelizing Your Children

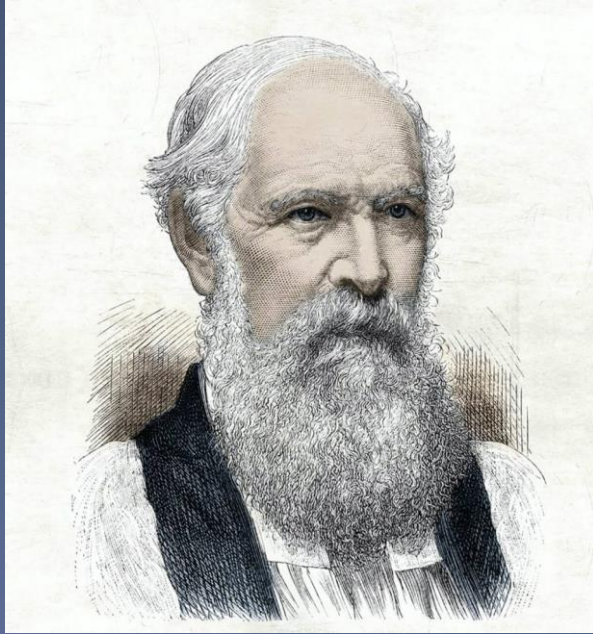
Matt 19:14 “Let the children alone, and do not hinder them from coming to Me; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.”

Matt 18:4-6 “Whoever then humbles himself as this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever receives one such child in My name receives Me; but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him to have a heavy millstone hung around his neck, and to be drowned in the depth of the sea.”

Children are Sinners

- Dead in trespasses and under God’s wrath (Eph. 2:1-3)
- Heart that loves darkness more than light (John 3:19-20)
- Heart inclined to evil from birth (Gen. 8:21; Psa. 58:3)
- On the road to destruction and hell (Prov. 22:27; Matt. 7:13)





J. C. Ryle: “The fairest child, who has entered life this year and become the sunbeam of a family, is not, as his mother perhaps fondly calls him, a little ‘angel’ or a little ‘innocent,’ but a little ‘sinner.’ Alas! As that infant boy or girl lies smiling and crowing in its cradle, that little creature carries in its heart the seeds of every kind of wickedness! Only watch it carefully, as it grows in stature and its mind develops, and you will soon detect in it an incessant tendency to that which is bad, and a backwardness to that which is good.... The first cause of all sin lies in the natural corruption of the boy's own heart, and not in public schools.”

DO NOTS of Evangelism

- **Do not Oversimplify or Distort the Gospel** – DON'T TELL your children to “ask Jesus into their heart” or to pray the sinner’s prayer. Don’t focus on some moment in which a decision was made. Look at the fruit.
- **Do not Force a Response** – Genuine faith and repentance will come naturally from them if you are consistently pointing them to the gospel. Do not put words in their mouth. Do try to get them to say the right thing because they are easily manipulated.

DON'TS of Evangelism

- **Do not Assume that They are Saved** – Many Christian parents assume their children are saved and start treating them that way. If they profess Christ, then give them the benefit of the doubt but continue to emphasize gospel truths. Children tend to be immature (1 Cor, 13:11; 14:20), naïve (Prov. 1:4), foolish (Prov. 22:15) capricious (Isaiah 3:4), inconsistent and fickle (Matt. 11:16-17), and unstable and easily deceived; easily be tossed about from one belief to the next (Eph. 4:14). They think they have understood the ramifications of a given commitment when they have not. Their judgment is shallow. They can't see the implications of their decisions. Despite the best of intentions, they seldom can think far beyond today, nor do they perceive how their choices will affect tomorrow. This makes children more vulnerable to self-deception and being led astray. This makes it more difficult for a parent to discern God's saving work in their hearts. Children are easily influenced/ manipulated/ pressured into doing or saying something of which they have no understanding. They want to please their parents and not disappoint them. They easily trust others without knowing why. Therefore, we cannot take a child's profession at face value. We mistake their sincerity and innocence (naivety) for a genuine profession. Parents are often vulnerable to believing the best of the children without evidence. They are often desperate to believe their child's profession of faith is true.

DON'TS of Evangelism

- **Do not Give False Assurance** – If a child makes a profession, not assume they are saved and there is no longer a need to press the gospel. It is the role of the Holy Spirit to give assurance, not the parent. Wrong reasons for salvation include (*The Faithful Parent*, p 222):
 1. Doing God a favor that is deserving of his grace – "I'm so special."
 2. Only for fire insurance (to avoid hell at death) – "I don't want to suffer forever."
 3. Adding a good and helpful thing to my life – "Why not, it can't hurt?"
 4. So I can go to heaven with my family – "I want to see and be with them."
 5. Wanting to become a better person – "I'm already good, this can make me better."
 6. So Jesus can give me what I want, but I'm still living for my advantage.
 7. Wanting to be saved "in my sin" and not "from my sin."
- **Don't Discourage Signs of Conversion** – Don't openly question if their faith is genuine. The fruit may take some time, even after they leave home. You are an evangelist throughout their growing up years. Hold a balancing act on the tightwire in your mind between affirmation of the signs of true faith and concerns that they are not there yet.
- **Do not Rush to Baptize** – Note the Bar Mitzvah ("son of the commandment") for Jewish boys takes place at age 13; Bat Mitzvah for girls takes place at age 12.