

Praying For Your Children
August 13, 2017

Some of you may be looking at the sermon title this morning and thinking, "This doesn't apply to me. My kids are grown." or, "I don't have any children." I would counter that it does apply to every Christian in our church. Our most important mission field are the children God has brought to Emmanuel Baptist Church.

Every Christian is responsible to be a witness for Jesus to those around them. All of us who are Christians are responsible for teaching and modeling Jesus to all of the children of our church.

In addition, you can have an impact for Jesus on children in your extended family such as grandchildren, nieces and nephews. In fact, it may be that you are the ONLY one who will. Their own parents may not be praying for them. But you can. Their parents may not be modeling the love of Jesus to them. But you can. Their parents may not be sharing the good news of Jesus with them. But you may have an opportunity to do so.

So while I may be addressing parents this morning, I am including the rest of us Christians in that. We all play a part in what God wants to do in the life of the children of this church.

Parents, the task ahead of you is bigger than you can handle. It takes more wisdom than you have. It will take more humility than most of us exhibit. It will require you to live more dependent on God than you have been living. He loves your children more than you do, so lean on Him for all that you need. Pray for them and pray for yourselves.

Now praying for children is not commanded in the Bible. But the following command applies to many things, and certainly parenting is one of them.

Ephesians 6:18 (NIV) And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests.

Certainly praying for the children we know would fall under that command. And while there is no direct command to pray for children, we have the example of Jesus. We read in the gospels that Jesus prayed for children who were brought to him. Let us, then, in prayer, bring our children to Jesus.

So what should we pray for them?

1. Pray for their salvation.

Paul readily admits his concern for all the Jews of his day.

Romans 10:1 (NIV) Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved.

Just as Paul prayed for their salvation, let us pray that our children would be saved. This is the single most important need of your child. While all their physical needs are

important, their most important need is spiritual. They need Jesus as their Savior and Lord. If you love your children, you want what is best for them. The very best that each needs is to end up in heaven for eternity. Nothing else comes close to the importance of that.

While you may hope they go to college, have a family, find success, and make a contribution to the world, they don't need these things. They can miss out on those and be saved. However, what good is it if they grow up to be the most admired person on earth only to miss out on heaven? It would be an eternal tragedy.

The following facts are true, not just for teens and adults, but of children as well.

Romans 3:23 (NIV) "... all have sinned..."

Romans 6:23 (NIV) "... the wages of sin is death..."

Romans 10:13 (NIV) "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

Our children need to understand these truths and their consequences. This is because no child will be automatically saved because you are Christian parents, or because I am their pastor, or because this is their church family. They must each make a personal decision to enter into the Kingdom of God. They must each receive Jesus as Savior and Lord, submitting themselves to Him.

2. Pray that they will have the kinds of experiences that will help them think about life and God.

This is part of the reason you bring them to church. But the church is a supplement to what you can and should do at home in the course of everyday life. God instructed the Israelites, in the Law of Moses, to do this very thing.

Deuteronomy 6:6-7 (NIV) These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.

Everyday teaching, repeating lessons over and over, is the best way to teach our faith to our children. But they need more than to hear it from us. They need to see it in us.

3. Pray that they will see you (us) growing as a Christian.

When Paul, the missionary, sent his protégé, Timothy to Ephesus, he gave him a big job. Yet Timothy was still a young man. We don't know how old, but evidently a bit young for the kind of responsibility Paul had given him. Not too young in Paul's eyes, but maybe too young in the eyes of the adults older than Timothy in the church at Ephesus. So Paul writes the following.

1 Timothy 4:12, 15 (NIV) Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity...

Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress.

That is the kind of example we must set as Christian adults for our children. They need to see us growing more holy in these same areas. To do this, they must hear us share our testimony of what the Holy Spirit is doing in us.

When you share those family stories about crazy uncle Harry, or Aunt so and so's famous recipe, or how you and your spouse met, do you also share the stories of your faith? Do you tell them how you came to believe in Jesus? Do you tell them of your sinful life and how Jesus saved you? Do they see the joy of your forgiveness? Do they hear how Jesus has brought you to victory over temptation? Do they see you growing as follower of Jesus?

Live out your faith visibly and audibly in your home.

Do they see you living out a concern for lost people? Do they hear you pray for their understanding of spiritual truth? Do they hear you pray for other lost people to come to know Jesus? Do they every see and hear you sharing Jesus with others? Do they see you trying to intentionally love people like Jesus? Do they see your concern for missionary work through the special missions offerings? Do you make these offerings a family project, talking about how much to give and thanking God for the ability to do so?

Your prayers for your children must be backed up with actions that go along with the prayers. They need to hear and see how important Jesus is to you. They don't get that just from the fact that you go to church regularly. They need to hear it from you. You need to be a growing witness for Jesus in your home.

4. For those who are saved, pray God to give them a hunger for spiritual truth.

You want to see your children grow physically into mature adults. Sometimes they don't.

When I was a teenager, my pastor told us a story of the church he grew up in. A couple in that church had a baby, but it soon became apparent that something was wrong. After many tests the doctors concluded that the baby was not growing. In fact, the child never aged physically or mentally. For 30 years the child stayed an infant. How tragic for that child.

Another, similar tragedy, is when someone claims to want Jesus as Savior and Lord, gets baptized and never grows spiritually. Their spiritual understanding remains at the level it was when they were baptized. They never grow to spiritual maturity.

Listen, the Christian life is just that, a life. It is a process, a journey. We are to be growing up in our spiritual maturity. Our knowledge and understanding of spiritual truth should grow, and with it, our submission to Jesus. The Word of God is the food for this growth. That is why Peter writes to the new Christians under his care:

1 Peter 2:2 (NIV) Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation,

Parents, you want to see your child grow in mental capacity and social skills. You should not leave spiritual growth for them out of your prayers. Don't stop praying for them when they become Christians and are baptized. In fact they need more prayers then ever before. It is then that Satan doubles his efforts against them.

5. Pray for their spiritual safety.

Children don't often think safety. So we pray for their physical safety. When they start riding a bike or rollerblading, or walk to school on their own, we pray for their physical safety.

One of my first thoughts about any activity planned here at the church is, "Is it safe?" I am a stickler for following the fire code and other safety concerns. They may be overkill at times, but the goal is to save lives and prevent injuries. And that is a good thing. Some people only have their eyes on what might be fun. As your pastor I also have my eyes on what is safe. If you want to do something dangerous, go do it at your house, not here, and not elsewhere as a church event.

We are concerned for the physical well-being of our children. But there is an even more dangerous area of concern. We must be praying for their spiritual safety. We must pray that God keep them safe from the sinful attractions of the world.

In the garden at the beginning of the day that Jesus would die, He told His followers...
Luke 22:40 (NIV) "Pray that you will not fall into temptation."

Pray this for your children. Our world is putting pressure on our children to reject what is right, to reject belief in God, in moral absolutes, and to reject God's standards for sex and marriage. Today there is almost no cultural pressure against drugs, pornography, and sex outside of marriage.

Our children need their eyes to be opened to the sinful values of the world. They need to see how subtle the world's values are being instilled in them in the media, entertainment, and public education. And then they need courage and faith, in the power of the Holy Spirit, to resist those values. So pray for this.

6. Pray for his or her future spouse.

It is never too early to begin praying for this. Catherine Marshal prayed every day for her young son, that God would be working in the heart and soul of the girl he would marry. She prayed that it must be a Christian woman, one who loved God wholeheartedly, more than anyone or anything else. She prayed that only THAT kind of woman would be attractive to her son. That prayer was answered just that way.

Paul warns us about choosing a mismatch spiritually in marriage.
2 Corinthians 6:14 (NIV) Do not be yoked together with unbelievers.

Many of us have seen the heartache of couples who are unequally yoked, who partnered in marriage with someone who did not share their faith in Jesus. As a pastor, I have seen families divide over faith issues. I have seen a Christian, who is married to a

non-Christian, drift from their devotion to Jesus. They are pulled away from devotion to Jesus by the influence of their spouse.

So you, knowing now what you know of the world, of men and women, of marriage, of divorce,... knowing all that, pray for the person your son or daughter will marry. Pray about their dating. Discuss clearly that dating is a time to learn of someone's character.

We all have seen a friend date someone who was not worthy of him or her. But our friend was blinded by romance and did not see what everyone else saw. And often such couples marry and eventually they see, but it is too late. Teach your children to look for a person's character. The world is looking at clothes and hair and makeup and jewelry and what ever is in style this month. Those things change and fade and never bring happiness. Teach your child the

I saw somewhere an article from women to girls that sexy is not what a guy says or wears or struts. A guy who works a real job, who supports himself. THAT is sexy. Our children need to hear those lessons from us. We want our children to look for good character and devotion to Jesus. We must teach them to be such people.

You teens should already have this on your prayer list. God is the most powerful, all-wise, all-knowing being in the universe. If you are willing to hold out for His pick, He can bring to your life a Godly Christian man or woman to be your spouse. Then together you can serve Him in joy. I have known some who have to have a girlfriend or a boyfriend all the time, at whatever cost. I have known others who have dedicated themselves to God, to be single if that was His will, who were willing to wait for just the right person to share life with. God honored that commitment by bringing them such a mate.

And here is a thought.

"Am I intentionally becoming the kind of person I'm looking for?"

If you want someone of above average character, above average intelligence, above average devotion to Jesus, a hard worker, self-sacrificing, wanting to live out God's will for him/her, are you becoming that kind of person? If not, that person won't be looking for you. Ask God to shape you into that kind of person.

Whatever the future holds for your children, the most important matter is their relationship to Jesus. This, more than anything else, is what you should pray about.

The most important matter for all of us is our relationship to Jesus. Jesus is the Lord of all the world. One day Jesus will return to earth and establish His throne. He will rule as king of the earth. He will first destroy all His enemies. Which are you, a faithful follower or an enemy. There is nothing in-between. Today you get to choose.