



SESSION ONE The Goal of Parenting

As we begin our parenting seminar, I would like to touch two introductory matters. Number one, the state of parenting in our society. You know what it's like out there? *Do you know what the state of the parenting process is in American society?* Are you aware of what American society *thinks* of children and how they are handled in the parenting process? As far as I can gather, in our society, children and the parenting process come very low in the matter of priority. And yet those who understand something about the parenting process say that it *must* be top priority. May I quote a couple of them? One recent author who understands deeply what's involved in the parenting process has written this. Listen. "When a man and a woman decide to become parents, they have by virtue of that decision appointed themselves trustees of the future." Did you hear it? "*Trustees of the future.*" The *future* is in the hands of the parents. He continues: "The emotional well-being of your child, and to that extent the well-being of all other people he or she will interact with during her lifetime is largely dependent on your capacity to steer her lovingly to her full maturity." You're a trustee of the future. And yet our society says it's not worth that. That's the problem.

St. Augustine said, "Give me other parents and I will give you another world." Our society says, "It's nothing." If you understand it, it *must* take top priority. I'm not surprised that in a society that gives low priority to the parenting process, I'm not surprised that your society gives you no training *whatever* in parenting. Some of you young parents who have young children have *hit* it, and you've landed in the awful responsibility of parenting, and you have had *no* training whatever. Our society gives no training for the parenting process.

One other who is deeply involved in it writes, "There is hardly a job, no matter how lowly or menial, that does not require proof of capability, experience, training, character references, *something to certify the applicant's credentials.* But for parenthood, one of the most important, demanding, and complicating long-range tasks known to human society, there are no requirements whatever. Even to get a *driver's* license you have to drive a car. To be a parent," he continues, "in fact, no application is necessary." No training. For the most *important* process in human society, we give *no* training.

Do you understand the state of the process of parenting in your society? And into that vacuum has come in the last 10-15 years a literal *flood* of books on parenthood. On all levels, the authorities are speaking, and they're *not* in agreement. One of them says, "*This is what you need,*" and another one says, "*This is what you need.*" And they are *poles* apart. It comes on down to the lay level and there are all kind of books, and now the Church is into it, and Christian *writers* are writing. And one writer says, "*This is what you ought to have,*" and "*This is what you ought to have.*" And I looked in our bookstore just before leaving Columbia, and there was a new book I hadn't seen—an encyclopedia of parenting by 10 or 15 Christian authors. And you're flooded with books and they're *all* telling you all *kinds* of things. *That is the state of the parenting process in your society.* It's a problem. Some of you have hit it—and reality.

We're gathered here this weekend for parenting—*another* parenting seminar. Into that mess—excuse me for calling it that—into *that* mess we're having a seminar. And I owe it to you now, the second matter of introduction, to *tell* you, and to make it as *clear* as I can, my approach in these hours.

What would you like to *know* about parenting? That's not what I'm going to do! To get this before us quickly, I would like to read a quotation. And when I first read this, I almost *shouted!* I'm a Presbyterian, and I'm not supposed to shout. But when I read it, with what I'm going to do *to* it, I shouted because I *found* some answers. And this is my approach. With deep respect for the author of this quotation, she is one of the authorities in the parenting field. If you listed five or six of the great writers or authorities in the parenting field today, she would surely be listed among them. I *deeply* respect her; I've gotten a lot out of her writing. And if she were here, I would apologize for the way I'm going to use her quotation. But listen. She says it better than I. Listen to it: "In our search for guidelines,

we parents have turned to many books available on child rearing.” How many have *you* read? “But here we find the important issues facing us treated, on the whole, as separate, isolated topics. We have not been given a cohesive, basic framework into which we may place each facet of living with children.” May I read that again? “We have not been given,” she says, “a basic framework—a *basic framework*—into which we may place every facet of living with children.” Then she says, “This book”—that she has then written—“*this* book gives such a framework.”

With a respect and appreciation for the author, I would like to take her words and disagree with them. What I’m going to give you, by the grace of God, is just that. Now, watch it. I *read* her book, and I deeply appreciate what she is setting forth as a cohesive, basic framework so that that will cover every issue you ever face in child rearing. Every theory, every issue, you can put it into that framework. I appreciate that, but I’ll have to tell her respectfully, “You don’t do it.”

Now, watch it.” I want to tell you, her book doesn’t, but this Book does. I want to say it *again*. She says *her* book gives a *basic framework* into which you may place *every* theory, *every* facet, *every* question of child rearing. No, but I want to tell you, this Book does.

My approach with you in these hours is not to give you answers to *how* to do *this*. “If your child does this, *how*...” No, because there’s no end to it. What I’d like to give you from *this* Book is a cohesive, basic framework of principles into which—I *challenge you*—into which you may place every theory, everything you read, every problem you face. You can *run* to that, and you can put it into that. And you’ll have a basic framework of principles into which you can place *every* facet of the parenting process.

I’ve been through it theoretically, and I’m overwhelmed with the wonder of this Book. I will call it with you, “God’s Blueprint for Parenting.” *God’s Blueprint of Parenting!* I will not be telling you how, whether or not to let your child suck his thumb. All of mine did, so it *must* be right. I will not go into the issue of when you should start discipline, or I will not go into the question of what age you let them date. I’m not going to go into such; I’m going to give you a basic framework of principles into which you may place *all* of the questions.

If you go to the encyclopedia and you take the specific answer and it doesn’t work with *your* child, then *you’re* a problem. But if you’ve got some principles, then you say, “Well, I’ll put it in the present and then maybe there’s a different application to him.” And you can run with it. I’m overwhelmed with the wonder of *God’s* blueprint for parenting. So let’s turn to *this* Book, not hers. I have hers and I respect it. We’ll turn to *this* Book and not hers.

Alright, get your blueprint before you. Your great architectural Manual for parenting is the Word of God! And it gives you *all* that is essential for the parenting process. Alright, now when I say, “blueprint” what does that remind you of? When I say, “blueprint,” that’s the function of what vocation? That’s the operation of a—say it—that’s an operation of an architect. Architects draw *blueprints*. Well, if you go to an architect and you say, “Sir, I would like to hire your services,” he would delight to hear you say that. He would invite you in and then you’d turn to him and say, “I would like for you to draw me plans for a building.” Now you tell me altogether, what would be his first question? “*I want you to draw me plans for a building.*” He *must* ask the first question, and some parents never ask it. And before you understand God’s blueprint, *you* must ask this question. What question would the architect ask you? You have come and said, “Draw me a plan for a *building*.” What’s his first question? He will always ask you what? Right! “What is the building to be *used* for? What’s the *function* of the building? Tell me what you want. Is it to be a residence? Is it to be a factory? Is it to be a gymnasium? What do you *want* it for? *Then* I can draw the blueprint!”

The first question you must ask—or you *cannot* understand God’s blueprint for parenting—the first question you ask is, “What do you want your children to be?” Do you follow the analogy? The architect is *lost* to draw a blueprint if he doesn’t know what it’s for! I’ll tell you frankly, if a parent doesn’t know what he wants his children to be... Listen, if you don’t know where you want them to go—to *become*—you’re liable to wake up and find yourself somewhere else and not even realize it. There’s no *way* you can draw a parenting blueprint if you *do not* understand what you want your children to be. I would like to ask you parents who have—especially you who have *young* children—what do you want your children to be? Well, it’s not what I want; it’s what’s in the Book.

Turn with me to 1 Samuel, chapter 1. We will be working in our first four sessions in some detail in 1 Samuel 1-3. It’s amazing to me how much is given here about parenting, about children. There seems to be a steady emphasis on it. I know it’s not the *main* function of the section in the overall scheme of Scripture. I *think* I understand that. But in the process, God gives us some *awful, awful* guidelines for the parenting process here. Follow me there in chapter one and we’ll see there are two sets of parents, and you’ll begin to see them with two different *styles* of parenting and

you'll watch the children and they come out *different*. Now watch carefully. I'm going to set the children before you.

Chapter 1, verse 2. See, there's a man named Elkanah in verse 2 “. . . and he had two wives and the name of one was Hannah and the name of the other Peninnah [and] Peninnah had children but Hannah had no children.” Now, there's the first situation you see. Elkanah and *his* wives and *his* children, and *eventually* Samuel.

In the last part of verse 3 you see *another* set of parents. “*And the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, priests unto Jehovah, were there.*” Now if that's the only reference I wouldn't stop here, but all through these three chapters of 1 Samuel, there's a constant reference to Samuel and these sons of Eli. Now watch *carefully* so that you may understand it more clearly. I'd like to draw you their picture. One of my many gifts is *art*. Now there's—I don't know why you laugh!—there's Samuel. I want you to watch him. Now here are the two sons of *Eli*. Now the spotlight is on *them*. The contrast is studied. They're *entirely* different. Now I'm going to use these not to prove it, [but] to illustrate it! The Bible is *filled* with it.

I ask you again, what do you want your children to be? The Bible *seems* to present that God's blueprint is designed to produce children like *this*, and not children like *this*. And thus, the Bible is setting before us the ultimate goal of *all* parenting is to bring your child to be like Samuel—and not like the sons of Eli. I'm using this as an illustration. Now, if this is all I had in Scripture, I wouldn't *touch* it.

Now watch. Let's get closer to these boys. They're different. Now what's the difference? What's the difference between Samuel over here, and the sons of Eli? Alright, here's one difference; it's obvious. Turn to chapter 3, verse 20 and we will see something about Samuel. 1 Samuel chapter 3, verse 20: “And all Israel from Dan even to Bethsheba *knew* that Samuel was established to be a *prophet* of Jehovah” (emphasis Buck Hatch). Samuel was a *prophet*. Do you know what these two boys were? We read it in the opening chapter—chapter 1, verse 3. They were what? Tell me. They were *priests* unto Jehovah. These were *priests*. Now, that's an obvious difference.

Now keep before you—keep in mind—what we're after. What do you want your children to *be*? Now, if they're going to be like Samuel they're going to be what? A *prophet*—not a priest. How many of you want your children to be a prophet? Don't raise your hand. Think with me. How many of you *really* want your children to be a prophet? *To speak for God!* Think with me. Do you know what that has to do with? That has to do with what your culture is *strong* on! And if I could get a *free* response from you to that first question I asked—“What do you want your children to be?”—I don't know whether you, maybe you're more well taught than the average. No question, no doubt you are. Many would respond as my father *always* responded. Now, American society's full of it. This has to do with what? Whether or not you're a prophet or a priest has to do with what area of his life? That has to do with what? That has to do with his *vocation*.

Now I say this with deep respect and love. My father, in American society, in my day surely—the counter revolution changed it temporarily; now we're back into it—but when I was coming up, the only thing my father wanted—. He didn't have much education, and he said he wanted his boy—he wanted me—to be a doctor. And he said “Buck, I'll send you to Europe. You'll be the greatest doctor America's ever known.” That's all he wanted. “I want you to be a doctor.”

That's great! I want to tell you, there is not one word in all Scripture that I can find where God says anything vocationally as far as the responsibility of parents. That is not the issue. It is *not* vocation. *Not* vocation. When my four boys were coming along, I think I can tell you the truth. Please don't misunderstand me. I did not really want—top priority—that *any* of them be preachers. Now, don't misunderstand me—*or missionaries. That's what God does for them!* And I've seen God now lay His hand on them and make them all different, see, *vocationally*.

And I'm setting before you what I believe the Bible teaches clearly—that vocational issue is not what you're after; it's this: Now let me move on to this quickly. There's some *other* difference between these boys. Turn with me back to chapter 2 and I want to show you something about these boys. The sons of Eli, they were priests. That's *vocation*. Listen to what it says in verse 17 of chapter 2. “*And the sin of the young men were very great before Jehovah.*” Now he's dealing with another area. Listen to this: “. . . for the men despised the offering of Jehovah.” Do you know what that's saying? Here's what that's saying: They were priests. Do you know what they did? They had that awful responsibility to stand before a holy God, and take a sinner, and to take his sacrifice and bring it before that holy God so that that God and that sinner could be reconciled. And here's a priest who said, “I don't care a snap of my finger about that. *This* is what I want.” And he was telling—that paragraph will *tell* you about it—“When you boil the meat, don't give me that boiled meat. Give me the raw meat because I like barbecued meat.” Do you know what that says? “I

don't care anything about the cares of God! I want *my* meat!"

Drop down to verse 22, something you can hardly read sometimes in the audience. Verse 22 of chapter 2, "Now Eli was very old and he heard all that his sons did unto all Israel and how they lay with the women that did service at the door of the Temple of Meeting." Do you know what they did? They were priests. Do you know what it means? *These priests* were taking the women who were serving God out somehow on the side of the temple and were committing adultery in the house of God.

Do you know what it says about Samuel? Go back to chapter 1, verse 27. I want to read these verses quickly. Follow me as I read quickly chapter 1. The last verse of chapter 1, second part of verse 28, talking about a little Samuel as a little boy, ". . . and he worshipped Jehovah there." Verse 11, ". . . and the child did minister unto Jehovah before Eli the priest." Chapter 2, verse 26, ". . . and the child Samuel grew on and increased in favor both with Jehovah and also with men."

Now, put all of that together, and more that we'll see as we go along. Now here's what you see. Do you know what these boys were doing? *They were watching!* "Don't give me that *boiled* meat! I want my meat *raw* so I—!" What's wrong with *that*? Well, you can see what's wrong with this: "Give me that woman. I want that woman."

Do you know what Samuel was doing? Samuel worshipped God. As I read these chapters and these verses, try to *touch it* in reality! I can't see a little boy going through an empty form. I see a little boy, but then a young man, and then a man all of his *life!* You know what he did? He lived under *God*. He worshipped *God*. Say it with me in your heart: He was living under *God!*

Do you know what these were doing? They were living under *themselves*. Back in my day, in our culture, we wouldn't *think* of, you know, outwardly living with another man's wife or living without married. Now, everybody *does* it, *same*. Back in my day, same thing. We did what *we* wanted. We didn't *want* to get drunk. We didn't *want* to commit adultery. What would people *think* of us? Living for *yourself*. And do you know what he's doing? *Living under God*.

May I suggest to you—and I want to say it pointedly—I'm *telling* you—I was just using this to illustrate, not to prove it. As far as I can see in Scripture, the Bible never says to me as parent, "Be *sure* your sons are preachers." That is not my prerogative, that's *God's*. But the Bible is filled with *this*. There is almost, as far as I see the content of Scripture, *more* in the Bible about *this* than there is on any other topic—maybe with the exception about God Himself. This is what all Scripture is talking about. I'm going to set it before you as the goal of all parenting.

If this is what God wants me to do as a parent—to bring my child to the place. . . Now, listen to the way I'm going to say it. It's your child. I'm going to use a word and I'm going to underscore it. I'm going to *say* it as many times as I can *get* it across! *God* wants your child to be normal in every sense of the word! *Normal in its real meaning*. Now, you saw some of those words that talked about Samuel. "And he grew. . ." Is that normal for a child to grow? Yes or no? I'm sure your children get tired of hearing your grandparents say, "Oh, how you've grown!" It's *normal* to grow. *Samuel* grew. *Jesus* grew. Do you want your children to be normal physically? Yes or no? Sure you do! I think that's included! *Samuel* grew. *Jesus* grew. *My boys* grew. Most of them are taller than I am! I want my children to be *normal*. That's normal! I want my children to be normal as persons—no hang-ups.

I'm going to share with you in some more of these sessions; I was loaded with hang-ups. And I know it's where my *burdens* come from. One thing I cried unto God; I didn't care if they were never preachers or missionaries. I wanted them to be normal as people. But especially, and I would underscore that you're not normal until you're no longer living unto yourself, but living unto *God!* *That* is what it means to be normal. *That is a normal child*. To bring this child to the place where he is normal, physically? Sure. Normal in his person? Yes. But *especially* normal in this regard: that he's *free*, that he's living unto *God*, he's worshipping *God*. *God* is his life. As our singer was singing, God has his life—his hands, his feet—*everything*. And then if He wants to put him anywhere vocationally, He can put him there.

Now as we close this session, *this* is where we are. Listen. According to the blueprint of God, the goal of *all* parenting, child rearing, is to bring *every* child to the place where he normally, physically, personally is living no longer unto himself but unto Him who for his sake died and rose again. And the Bible is *full* of that. Everything we are going to study from now on will be the blueprint of *how* to get a child to that place. *That's the goal of the parenting process*.