



SESSION THREE When God Works

Our approach to this study of the parenting process is simply this: not to give you an encyclopedia of answers as to *what* to do when your child does *this*, but rather to give you, in the words of that Authority, a cohesive framework of principles—cohesive in the sense that it fits together and makes *sense*. Framework? It covers everything, so that you can fit *all* of your problems, *all* the theories. It's a framework of *principles*.

That's the way God does. He doesn't tell me whether I ought to smoke or not; He gives me principles and then promises *wisdom* as I *apply* those principles. So our approach is to give you a *system* of *principles* for the parenting process. And as we began to look at "God's Blueprint for Parenting"—which *is* that system—we started by seeing the goal of *all* parenting, and that is to make your child—and I say it again and underscore it—to make your child *normal* in every sense. Normal in his *physical* development, especially normal in his *personal* development so he does not have those hang-ups that will hinder him in his walk with God. But then finally, to make him normal, and he's not *normal* until he is no longer *living* unto himself, but unto *God*. It is not vocational, it is personal. Now that's what we want for *all* children without exception.

Now how do you get that? The only style of parenting that will produce that *must* be this. We begin, and *all* the way through it is this; this is my thesis: It is not the environment; it is not the temperament; it is not primarily the parents. I cannot *do* that for my child. There's only One who can, and it's *God*. *I'm serious*. God must be involved in the parenting process. Only *He* can do it, only *He* can make this child what He planned him to be—and especially unto Himself. Only God can do it.

Now the question for you today as I present to you my thesis, the question is, "*How* does God do that?" I invite your *careful* attention. This is *my* thesis. I gather it from *some* study of this Book, and some observation of what men have seen in natural creation—*all* the sciences. Now, I invite your careful consideration. I think all of you will agree with me that it's not biblical—and I don't think any of you will even *think* the thought—it is not biblical for any of you to say, "Oh, well *God* will do it. I can run off and leave my children and let *God* do it." Any of you say that? You know that's not good. Well then, what is it? How does God *work* to bring these children—*my* children—to the place that when we are through, they're normal, physically in their growth and development, *personally* without hang-ups, and free and normal, and *unto* God? How does God do that?

I'd like to set before you now my thesis and then we'll develop it in the other sessions, and I'll set the thesis before you twice. I'll show you how it worked for Samuel. Then in the next session this morning I'll show you the *same* thesis as it worked or *did* not work in the sons of Eli. I'll set it before you as my thesis. Listen *carefully*. When God does this, He *begins* His work this way: Now here's Samuel. Standing beside Samuel were his father and his mother and the Scripture tells us a lot about him. Now watch. *This* is my thesis. When God begins to work in this situation for Samuel—now let's keep our eyes on Samuel—we want to see what process brought Samuel to that *brilliant* life! I say this is where he begins, now watch. God comes and works *first*. Now listen to me carefully. He works first—in the parents. Let me say it again so you'll hear it. He works first *in* the parents, not through. *In* the parents. In *both* parents.

One of the tragedies, of course, is where there's conflict here—and I'll show you that—where there's a single parent or whatever it is. But now here, God works *in*. Now, I don't want to bore you. I'm going to keep that until you *see* it. God works *in* this parent and God works *in* this parent.

Look at 1 Samuel, and we've seen some of this already, but I want to get it before you again what God worked in the father of Samuel. But I'm not concerned about his *life*. Now, I'm not studying his *life*. I could study that life and give you a lesson on how to live for God. That's not my concern there. My concern is how does God reach Samuel? *How does God reach Samuel?* He first works something *in* his father. *Then* he works something *in* his mother. But

what does that have to do with Samuel?

Let's turn to 1 Samuel, chapter 1, and I want to remind you about some of the things that God worked *in* the father of Samuel. Well, Samuel's father was not *born* this way. We've seen this before. Verse 3: "This man"—that's his father—"went up out of his city from *year to year* to *worship* and to sacrifice unto Jehovah of hosts in Shiloh." *Every* year he went up, and as I see that I don't see him going up, "Oh, I've got to go up again and go to *church!*" Here's a man who's going up to worship *God!* Do you know where that came from? Was he born that way? Was that one of his instincts? I'll tell you again, now watch it: *God* worked that in him! Now, let me ask you the critical question: What does it do to Samuel, as a little child, to see his father worshipping God? Every time I go through this, this thing grips me. Do you know what it does to a little child when he sees his father worshipping God? Where did he get—? *God* worked that in him. It wouldn't come natural anymore for *him* than it would for *us*—natural.

Then He comes and works in *Hannah*. Now watch! And we've seen that in chapter 2: "And she exalted Him . . ." "My heart will exalt . . ." "My heart exalteth in Jehovah . . ." "My horn is *exalted* in Jehovah . . ." "My mouth is *enlarged* over my enemy because I rejoice in *Thy* salvation." Why, look! And He's worked that in *Hannah!* Do you *know* what it does to a child to not only see his *father* worshipping God, but then he sees his *mother* doing the *same*?

Now, I don't want to make light. See, he looks both ways and he sees what? The same thing. Do you know what that does to a child? Do you know, do you have *any idea* what it does to a child if they're different? I know. I've been through it. Some of you don't. You don't have the foggiest *idea* what it does to a child.

Now watch my thesis. The first part of my thesis, God works in the parent *first!* He works in *her*. *That* is the beginning of the parenting process!

Now let's pick up a couple of other things about this father and this mother that *God* had worked in them. Drop down to verse 4. "And when the day came that Elkanah sacrificed . . ." Now he's going up to the temple, you know, every year. "When the day came, he gave to Penninah his wife and to all her sons and her daughters portions." I don't want to draw things that are not here, but here's little Samuel and do you know what he sees? He sees his father. And he comes, and when it's time to go up, what does he do? He gives them portions to take to Him. Do you know what his father's doing? He's providing for them. Do you know what it does to—? He always does that! Do you know what it does to Samuel? Read on. "But unto Hannah he gave a double portion, *for he loved Hannah.*" I don't want to get too far afield on this, because we're going to develop it in *detail* down the road, but listen. Do you know what it does to a child when he sees his father love his mother? Unless you've been through the opposite, you don't have the slightest *idea* what it means. I do. Do you hear me?

The thesis is God works *in them* first. Let me show you one more thing. We could spend *longer* time. You can study this, and pick up other things about these parents that you *must* admit—if you understand human nature—you *must* admit in some sense God worked it in them.

Drop down to verse 21 of chapter 1. "And the man Elkanah, and all his house, went up to offer unto Jehovah the yearly sacrifice." Now, this is another *occasion*. Now, listen to *this*: "And he went up there to offer his sacrifice and his vow." He had made a commitment to *God* and he was going to *do* it! What does that do to Samuel? He hears his father say, and he sees his father following *through* on his vow.

Read on: "But Hannah went not up, for she said unto her husband, 'I will not go up until the child be weaned and then I will bring him, that he may appear before Jehovah and there abide forever.'" And Elkanah, her husband, said, "I don't care about weaning. Now, you come on! We've got to go to church. *I'm* the head of this [family]." I don't want to go to preaching. Read it: "And Elkanah her husband said unto her, 'Do what seemeth thee good; tarry until thou hast weaned him; only Jehovah establish His word.'" Do you know what you see? You see here's a man who has great respect for his wife. He says, "Whatever *you* see. If that's what you think, may the *Lord* be honored and we'll stand with you." Do you know what that does to this child?

And then you turn over here and you see Hannah and she says, "Look, I'm going to nurse my baby until he's old enough to be weaned." Probably three or four years old. Now, I don't want to be fanciful, but all I know is, when a mother nurses her child, do you know what it does to that child? And in some sense, I *still* don't want to get fanciful, but psychologically and physiologically, there's some sense in which a mother cannot nurse her child unless things are right. I'm just saying here's a mother—and you here who are mothers know—that it's time consuming and a limitation to nurse your child. So she said, "I'll stay home and I'll nurse my child until he's weaned."

Now I'm going to have to stop because we've got to finish the thesis. Now watch. God has worked in *him* and God has worked in *her*. Now here's my thesis—listen carefully. And I've *seen* this so often and sometimes I get weary, you *understand* me. I'm not going to quit, but I get weary in hearing the students at Columbia Bible College tell me about this. *Now, watch it!* My thesis is this: The first way in which *God* works, He works *in* the parents. And what God works *in* those parents in their behavior has a natural effect upon that child. And *that* is demonstrable in a *thousand* different ways! I can't get over the significance of this for *your* understanding. Now let me say it again. God works *supernaturally* in the parents, or *no* parent can ever *begin* to be what God expects him to be. *God* must do it! *You* know that. Do you understand anything of the demands of the Scriptures? *God* must work in me.

But now here's where *sometimes* we don't catch it. Look, when God works in me and I love my wife, *that* has a natural—not supernatural—a *natural* effect on that child. It's a natural law. It's inescapable, just like the law of gravity. And I'll tell you, *God* made it, and *God* made it to work that way, so don't be surprised if it works that way. It's a natural effect. That's the reason sometimes you can see parents who do *some* things right that are not believers and it has a good effect. You see, that's a natural effect. See, it's a natural effect.

Now watch. *This* is where the sciences of child psychology, sociology and even anthropology come to bear. And the scientists—they have observed these. They can *prove* it to you. See, there's no *question* about it. I was reading two great authorities in the parenting process and they were saying, "We don't feel comfortable in telling, *guaranteeing*, that you can produce—that we'll tell you *how* you can produce—a normal child. But we can tell you *without failing* how to produce a disturbed child." They know it. There's a natural effect. If this takes place up here, it *always* has a natural effect on a child. That's obvious!

Now, I have dabbled a little in psychology and anthropology, sociology. I've tried to put it together with the Word of God and this is my attempt to do it as a thesis. And I can't get over the significance of it. My thesis is [this]: The first way God works, He works *in* the parents and this has a natural effect on these children. These are natural *laws*. They'll *always* work. Just like this. Do you have any question it will not jump out there? It'll always go which way? Right. And your child will *always*—given certain things here—it'll always affect him. It's a natural effect. I can't get over the significance of that. I see it all the time. I watch the students at Columbia Bible College, and you who are familiar with that work, they are select students. They're select in the sense that they're not just the general run of the college population. They're those who are not only Believers, but those who feel in some sense God's called them into Christian service. So it's a very select group. But I watch them over and over again and I see a student come and he's just—. He's open to God and he just moves on with God without any disturbance. And then I talk to him and I ask him about his parents. Do you know what you find? This: God worked in them, and in them, it's produced the kind of person that is just out of this world.

And then they come to me—those who are having serious problems. And they're struggling. They'll have all kinds of hang-ups. I could tell you case after case after case. Sometimes it's depression. Sometimes it's, "I don't think I'm any good." I always ask them to tell me about mom and dad. It's always the same story. God hadn't done His work in them.

I don't want to bore you or lay a heavy load, but I'll tell you that this is the way God works. He works. *He* does it, not you. *God* does it, see. You can't do it. God works *in* the parent. And that's good news! My hope is in the mercy of God—that *God* will make me the kind of father, and the kind of mother, the kind of husband, the kind of wife, I need to be. *God* will do it. *That's good news!* But I want to add to that, when God does that, it has a natural effect on this child, making *him* a normal person. Now we are going to *develop* this. We are going to see what's involved with it.

All right, that's not the whole picture. The other side of the thesis is this: God works first—say it with me in your mind at least—God works first where? *In* the parent. I'm not talking about through you now. I'm not talking about you, you know, when you have that *wonderful* privilege of speaking to your child about Jesus Christ and God uses you and works through you to bring [him to Christ]. I'm not talking about that. I'm talking about God working in you—*period*. As a *parent*. And *that* has a natural effect on your child.

Now we turn to the second part of the thesis. It's this: God works in *another* way, and I wouldn't take *anything* for this. I don't believe I could share these things with you if I didn't have, be at *rest* in myself in some of these matters. And I'm getting excited about it, and I want to get it out, and I want to get it out *to* you and *through* you out there where it's needed. So you're a select group. You already have *learned* some of this. Now watch, the *second* way in which God works. It doesn't—. Now, excuse me, I won't say it that way. Apart from *this* process, God

then comes and works directly *in* that child to make *him* what He wants him to be. Now watch Samuel. Apart from this, you see, if he had only this, do you know what he would have been? He would have been—and I’ve known some people like this, and for some of us Christians it’s disturbing at first. To me, a human being who’s not a Christian, who is a wonderful person, who doesn’t have any hang-ups, he’s always thinking about other people, he’s not, you know, conceited, he’s not tied up with himself. No, he’s outgoing and *maybe* he even wants to go to the *mission* field! He’s a good person. He’s free. He’s outgoing. I know somebody like that, that will do that. But if that’s *all* he has, he will still then be living unto himself—though he will be doing it in a very nice way.

The other part of my thesis: God then comes to this child and works in *him*. Let me give you the picture, a little understanding of what God did for Samuel. I’m not saying this is the *time*, but I’ll tell you this. There’s something about Samuel that responded to *God’s* operation in his own life. Now I’ll give you one brilliant example of it. Do you remember? It’s in chapter 3, I told you in the last session that when it says, “And Samuel did not yet know Jehovah,” does not mean that he doesn’t know God. He’s not—as we would say today in New Testament terminology—not saved. He knows *God*, but he has never had a direct communication from God. And so one day God began to speak to Samuel as he has never spoken directly to me. He has spoken to me *always* through the Bible. And I wouldn’t take anything for that privilege of God speaking to me through His Word day after day. But God came and spoke directly to Samuel, and he heard a voice. “Samuel, Samuel.” And he ran to Eli and said, “I thought... you spoke.” Eli said, “No, that wasn’t me. Go back to bed.” And He came again, “Samuel.” And he went back. Eli began to realize, “That’s *God* speaking. And the next time He speaks, “Say this,” and Samuel said it. Look: “Speak Lord, for Your servant is ready to obey.”

I’m telling you that is not the first time Samuel ever said that. From the little I understand of Samuel’s life in these chapters, you see it in the early life when he worshipped God. Do you know what he’s doing? He’s saying, “Yes Lord, yes Lord, I’m Yours—all the way, anything You want, I’m Your servant. I’m Your slave.” Now watch. Samuel said “yes” to God and God came and supernaturally—. Look! This is a natural effect; God comes now and works supernaturally in response to his commitment. *God* works *in* that child and *transforms* him to make him *increasingly* like Jesus Christ. *God* works *in* him. I cannot explain Samuels’ life any other way.

Let me read you F.B. Myer’s description of this life. It’s a *rare* picture of a human life in the Bible! F.B. Myer describes Samuel’s life something like this: “His life seems to have been one unbroken record of blameless purity, integrity and righteousness. One purpose ran through all his years, threading them together in an unbroken series. There were no gaps, no breaks, no lapses into sensuality or selfishness. No lawless deeds in that wild, lawless age. There’s a great man of God.” How do you explain it? I’m going to tell you, if you understand anything about the Scriptures or of human nature, Samuel has the same human nature I have. He had it. How do you explain that life? Tell me. *God* worked in him! And God came in response to that, and *God* changed that life.

I’ll tell you, one of the greatest joys my wife and I have had, one of our boys told us recently because we were in Wheaton and he had been to the Billy Graham center there. And he went to one of the picture frames where it had Billy Graham’s campaign in Columbia, South Carolina. And he told us, he said, “It reminded me again that it was there, under the ministry of Billy Graham, that God came and saved me.” And God has begun to work, continued to work, in that boy as he’s done in the others and changed them. And He *is* changing them, and we praise God.

Now let me ask you a question as we close. *Even* with parents like this, producing a wonderful person, could Samuel have said “no”? I’ll not ask you to answer that. I am convinced, and I’ll try to show you as we go along, that’s the situation. Do you know what would have happened if Samuel had said “no” with all of that? Then he would have been like some, you know, who’ve had a good family, godly parents, but have turned away from God. This is my thesis, do you understand it? Now we are going to develop it in detail, you see. But I tell you—I’ll tell you *again*—it brings such satisfaction to me, in my heart, in my mind, as I see the various issues, as I see the teaching of Scripture, as I try to watch what the scientists observe, that God works in two ways. First He works *in* the parents and that has a natural effect on the child making him a good person—but *not a spiritual person!* Listen, I *cannot*—. That will not do it. You don’t *inherit* it. You don’t pick it up! God comes in and touches that child directly, supernaturally, and makes him a man of God. That’s my thesis.

I set that before you as a cohesive system of principles, as I develop it, into which you may place *every* facet of living with your children. That’s my thesis. In the next session, I want to show you how it did *not* work with the sons of Eli. That’s a heavy thing. But I must share it with you; it will help us to understand the thesis in reverse. May I say it once more in closing? My thesis is God works in two ways: First He works in the parents and that has a natural effect on the child. And then when that child becomes a little older, God comes and works *in* him to make