

Following God's Example

17 June 2018 PM – Ephesians 5:1 – Mentor Kids – Scott Childs

- 4) Make the need for improvement a serious matter of prayer every day. Beg God to show you what you need to change in order to improve. Search the scriptures for God's wisdom and help.
- 5) Seek to follow God's example.
- 6) Later we will see that we flesh-out our character in our daily lives before our children. If our character is not what it should be, it will show up in the daily activities of life that influence our children's hearts.

3. We must turn our hearts to our child

a. Receiving your child's heart is a serious matter

- 1) Put your heart into this pursuit. Seek God's help. (Malachi 4:6) *"And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse."*
- 2) Your heart must be right with God so that you can receive the heart of your child.
- 3) Then the spiritual life of your children must be a **priority**.

b. Begin by following God's example

- 1) Develop a flourishing relationship with God.
- 2) Allow God to build His character qualities in your life.
- 3) Let these godly character qualities overflow into every area of your influence on your child.
- 4) Baptist family counsellor Terry Coomer states, *"The church will always have a difficult time resurrecting what the home is putting to death. Poor spiritual decisions by parents are the major cause of childhood rebellion. I cannot expect good results if I make poor spiritual decisions."*

Conclusion: Are your character traits like flowers drawing your child's heart near you and opening it to you? God's character qualities do that for us and we need to follow His example. We are far from perfect. Each of us has work to do. I believe we must begin our child mentoring by working to develop God-like character qualities in our own lives. It will take work, but with God's help, we can do it.

Song: Teach Me Thy Way, O Lord – 337

Introduction: When I asked many of you for character qualities that you want in a close friend, I got answers like caring, reliable, encouraging, loyal, dependable, godly, faithful supportive, generous, kind, positive, uplifting, Christian, and rebuker. **Those are good qualities!**

However, when it comes to an example to follow, you will never find a better example than that of God himself. (Ephesians 5:1) *"Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children;"* God's character qualities give us every **reason to want to give our hearts to Him**, not just in salvation but also in total trust and dependence on Him. Our children need to see these character qualities in our lives so they will want to be our close friends and give us their hearts.

Transition: As we consider God's character qualities, I want us to note two important facts about them that will help us mentor our children.

1. God's Character Draws our Hearts

a. What is God's character like? He is...

- 1) **Always available** – He always has time for us. We can talk to him 24/7 (Ps 139:8)
- 2) **Comforting** – He comforts the hurting (2Co 1:3)
- 3) **Consistent** – He never changes. We never need to wonder how He will respond the next time (Mal 3:6; He 13:8).
- 4) **Empathetic** – He understands how you feel (He 4:15)
- 5) **Encouraging** – His word lifts us up when we are down.
- 6) **Fair** – He always does what is right and fair. He is able to do this perfectly because He is all-knowing.
- 7) **Faithful** – We can depend upon Him (1Jn 1:9)
- 8) **Forgiving** – He is always ready to forgive (Ps 86:5)
- 9) **Gracious** – He gives what we don't deserve (Ps 145:8)
- 10) **Justly disciplines sin, but never in sinful anger** – (He 12:6)
- 11) **Kind** – He is never harsh (Lu 6:35)
- 12) **Listens attentively** – He will listen lovingly (Ps 34:15)
- 13) **Longsuffering** – He is very patient when we sin (2Pe 3:9)
- 14) **Loving** – Even when we were yet sinners (Ro 5:8)
- 15) **Merciful** – He holds back bad we deserve (Ps 86:5)

- 16) **Never laughs at us** – This is precious (Jas 1:5)
- 17) **Sacrificial** – He gives Himself to meet our needs
- 18) **Truthful** – God cannot lie (Tit 1:2)
- 19) **Wise** – He always has the right answer for us (Jude 1:25)

b. How do God's character qualities draw us?

- 1) God has placed something in the human heart that longs to have a perfect friend like God. Only **He** can fulfil that longing of the heart.
- 2) God's qualities are the perfect qualities of a friend. Our children need to see these qualities in us so they will want to be our friends and give us their hearts.
- 3) Because God is perfect and never sins, His character qualities never vary.
- 4) We have no excuse for not giving God our heart. **How do we give Him our heart? It is obeying Him entirely, trusting Him completely, loving Him wholeheartedly, walking with Him faithfully, sharing with Him transparently, seeking His guidance continually, and depending on Him constantly.**
- 5) I believe that is what Solomon was seeking when he begged his son, (Proverbs 23:26) *"My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways."*
 - a) If we struggle to give God our hearts, how much more difficult it must be for our children to give us their hearts since we are far from perfect!
 - b) **Flowers draw us to them by their beauty and perfume. Thorn bushes turn us away from them by the sharpness and pain they cause.**
 - c) We are going to have to make changes in our character so that it becomes like a flower drawing our child's heart to us rather than like thorn bush turning his heart away.

2. God's Character is our Perfect Example

a. We must seek to pattern our character after God's

- 1) While we are not perfect like God, He created us in His image and we can still strive to develop His character qualities in our lives.
- 2) Look at that list of God's character qualities again. **Be**

honest, how many of them do your children see in your life? Look at yourself from their perspective.

- 3) If these qualities are lacking in your life, what will it do to your child's heart?
 - a) He may not trust you.
 - b) He may be upset that you are unfair, unkind, unforgiving, unavailable, untruthful, or unjust.
 - c) He may have no desire to communicate with you or ask personal questions.
 - d) He may claim that you do not understand him, and he may be right.
 - e) He may refuse to seek your wisdom.
- 4) Because every child longs for a friend with character like God, if he does not see it in his parent, he may turn away from the parent and away from God. He will seek friends that share his frustration and rebellion. This leads him to even more heartache.

b. We must work at improving our character

- 1) Improvement begins when we admit our deficiency.
 - a) A parent who has a rebellious child and places the blame on the child without looking in the mirror himself is adding to the problem.
 - b) Yes, every child chooses whether to give you his heart just as you choose whether to give God your heart. **It is a choice.** But if that child's parent lacks many of the character qualities of a good friend, is it any wonder that he refuses to give his parent his heart?
- 2) Mark the character qualities that you must work on improving.
 - a) Ask your spouse to evaluate your list.
 - b) Ask your child to evaluate your list. If he knows you sincerely desire to improve your character, he will give you an honest evaluation.
- 3) Apologize to your child or children for your failures. Assure them that you are going to make a sincere effort with God's help to improve. Ask them to pray for you.