

Making Your Home a Field of Dreams Part 2 Dugouts and Dropouts – Intentional Faith Builds Families With Future

Guiding Kids To A Life in the Faith of Christ

This is sermon **two** of five sermons in the series:

1. **Every Team Needs a Coach**
Encouraging Fathers to Step Up to the Plate
2. **Dugouts and Dropouts**
Preventing Kids from Leaving the Faith
3. **Errors and Strikeouts**
Surviving Setbacks
4. **Scorebooks and Scoreboards**
Drowning in the Details
5. **7th Inning Stretch**
Making Worship A Priority

Introduction: Last week I talked a little about the dugout and this message, we will consider dugouts. Dugouts are an important part of the baseball experience. It is a place to **rest**, to **develop instruction for growth**, and to **gain focus to win**. They are much like our **homes** and much like our **church**. In the dugout, the important thing to know more than anything else is the win!

Almost half of the scriptures found in Proverbs 17 can be directly applied to the family. Here is the win according to verse 6, when it is all said and done, you love the heritage, the children you have, and they love you back. Maintaining love, unity and spiritual matters in the home are three of the most challenging things you will ever do in any family.

So what is the win?

“Children's children are a crown to the aged, and parents are the pride of their children.”
Proverbs 17:6

Basically, Solomon says here that the win in the family is a mutual admiration between three generations, grand children are a crown to the grand parents and the parents are the pride of the their children.

Road Blocks in Families With a Future

1. **When Strife Is The Main Environment**

“Better a dry crust with peace and quiet than a house full of feasting, with strife.”
Proverbs 17:1

Why would our children go to less, “dry crust” living when a full meal is at the table? “Strife!”

A) **There Is An Environment Where Crisis Is The Main Forum**

- It's all that is talked about
- It is all that is important

B) **There Is A Person Where Crisis Is The Main Forum**

- They love a good fight
- Being still and peaceful is uncomfortable and feels wrong

C) **There Is A Thought Where Crisis Is The Main Forum**

“For, 'Whoever would love life and see good days must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from deceitful speech. He must turn from evil and do good; he must seek peace and pursue it.’”

I Peter 3:10-11

Three Charges To Love Life and See Good Days

1. Keep tongue from evil and lips from deceitful speech
2. Turn from evil and do good
3. Seek peace and pursue it.

- **Intentional Faith Builds Families With Future**

“For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.”

I Peter 3:12

Paul Admonishes Timothy

*“Flee the evil desires of youth, and **pursue** righteousness, faith, love and **peace**, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.”*

2 Timothy 2:22

Peace Is A Continual Effort

*“**Make every effort** to live in **peace** with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord.”*

Hebrews 12:14

*“Peacemakers who sow in **peace** raise a harvest of righteousness.”*

James 3:18

Road Blocks in Families With a Future

1. **When Strife Is The Main Environment**
2. **When Failures Are The Constant Theme**

“He who covers over an offense promotes love, but whoever repeats the matter separates close friends.”

Proverbs 17:9

There will never be closeness within a family or in relationships until there is an environment that can promote love. **One who is able to cover over an offense...not a sin...is one who promotes love. There are many families who have skeletons in their closet, they are sins that were covered, not offenses!**

- Covers- kakah {kaw-saw'} 3680- **to cover, conceal, hide**

The greatest division in a home, church or in any other social realm is when people continue to repeat other peoples offenses.

Road Blocks in Families With a Future

- 1. When Strife Is The Main Environment**
- 2. When Failures Are The Constant Theme**
- 3. When Kindness Is Rejected Because of Pride or Fear**

“If a man pays back evil for good, evil will never leave his house.”

Proverbs 17:13

- **Pride** says that I can't let you help me because I'm better than you. I have to keep my act up. I have to pretend everything is going fine. This is one of the main reasons that people have a hard time getting involved in a LIFE Group, they have too much pride to be vulnerable.
- **Fear** always thinks that someone is after them. It makes them take advantage of others because they believe the lie that everyone has it better than them. They hurt those who do the most for them. Your house will never be at peace.

Road Blocks in Families With a Future

- 1. When Strife Is The Main Environment**
- 2. When Failures Are The Constant Theme**
- 3. When Kindness Is Rejected Because of Pride or Fear**
- 4. When Being Right Is More Important Than Relationship**

“Starting a quarrel is like breaching a dam; so drop the matter before a dispute breaks out.”

Proverbs 17:14

If I were to ask you how many of you would like to have a home where the peace of God rests and the power of God rules, undoubtedly, the majority would raise their hands. One of the greatest challenges of parenting is keeping your children interested and active in spiritual matters. **Why is this so important and such a**

difficult thing to do? Because of our sin nature. This sin nature always wants to activate itself and it wants to act according to its nature.

Numerous families have experienced the heartache of children who have left the dugout and dropped out of the game. They have dropped out of their home, out of church and drifted from their God given heritage of faith and family.

“Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; The rod of correction will drive it far from him.”
Proverbs 22:15 (NKJV)

This may sound a little harsh, especially in our day and time when Super Nanny on TV is disciplining a whole new generation of parenting. But to expect a child to respond to Biblical patterns before they have ever had the ability to invite Jesus Christ into their heart or allow the Holy Spirit to engage in their interaction is asking for trouble.

- ***Discipline on a person develops discipline in a person. The Bible calls this “self-control”.***

In **Christianity Today** it was stated that **“Christians no longer have the home-field advantage. We are the visiting team. The United States is now ‘the greatest mission field in the Western hemisphere.’”** (George G. Hunter III, “Can the West Be Won?” Christianity Today, 12-16-91, pg. 43)

Author Tom Bisset wrote a book entitled Why Christian Kids Leave the Faith. Though extensive research, Bisset identifies four major reasons why “Christian kids” become dropouts. (p. 20-21.)

1. **Intellectual Skeptics** leave because of unanswered questions about faith. These skeptics doubt the simplicity of the gospel to address the tough questions of life.
2. **Disillusioned Disciples** leave because their faith doesn’t seem to work. The grand promises of love, joy, and peace do not match their actual experience. Unmet expectations produce doubt and departure.
3. **Pursuers of Pleasure** leave because the lure of the worldly pleasure and material possessions consume their life. This group was described in the parable of the seed and the soils where the weeds of the world choked out the seed (Matt. 13).
4. **Clones** leave because they were never converted. These individuals never possessed authentic faith. They know the facts of the gospel. Church attendance was part of their childhood experience, but they never personally embraced the claims of Christ.

Parenting

On a survey of **thirty-five thousand parents** taken by James Dobson, concluded that more than **30% of parents** basically said, **“I am a failure as a parent!”** and **“I simply can’t cope with my kids.”**

Stress

One of the questions asked during the survey was to rate the amount of stress that was created by their children's temperaments: Compliant Children vs. Strong-Willed Children. (Parenting Isn't For Cowards, Dr. James Dobson, 1987, pg. 46)

	<i>Total Joy</i>	<i>Generally Pleasant</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>Generally Difficult</i>	<i>Unpleasant</i>
Parents of compliant children	44%	51%	4%	1%	0%
Parents of very strong-willed children	1%	10%	17%	55%	17%

One of the questions was stated this way, "Is the temperament of the child inherited from the parents? The answer: Yes! There does seem to be a tendency for the temperaments of the parents to be reproduced in their children. Perhaps the environment has influenced the findings but it does seem that genetics plays a dominate role.

Eli's Son's

**"Eli's sons were wicked men' they had no regard for the Lord."
I Samuel 2:12**

- Eli had accepted ritual behavior in place of relational behavior.
- God recognized there ritual behavior as "wicked"
- Reverence Toward God Is Greater Than Religious Behavior

I. Intentional Faith Will Establish Internal Purpose

We can stay faithful and pass on the faith to future generation by pursuing faith intentionally. **There is something called, "The home field advantage"**. **In any game we play, we make a conscious effort to create a home field advantage, and so we should in our homes.** Too often we have built relationships with the other team. We have them over for dinner, stay up late with them and allow them to determine our thought process. I'm basically talking about our observation of TV and entertainment and then wonder why our kids are not winning or caring to win or walk in the sight of God. The "home field advantage", it's familiarity of the field, the larger crowd support and the routine of sights and sounds all contribute to the home field advantage, but are we losing the home?

- RINGWOOD, N.J., June 22, 2006 /PRNewswire/- Over 26 million Hispanic adults are watching TV in an average week in the U.S. Virtually all Hispanics watch prime time TV (91% of Hispanic males and 93% of Hispanic females). Hispanic females are more likely than Hispanic males to watch morning and daytime hours. Daytime soaps account for twice as much of Hispanic females' time spent viewing when compared to non-Hispanic females' viewing (11% vs. 5%).

According to the Total TV Audience Monitor (T-TAM)'s newly released report, Understanding The Hispanic TV Audience, Hispanic TV viewing habits are different from non-Hispanics'. Hispanic females watch the most TV: 32.4 hours per week on average (compared to 28.6 hours per week among non-Hispanic females). Hispanic males on the other hand watch 4.2 fewer hours of TV than non-Hispanic males (22.3 hours per week compared to 26.5 among non-Hispanic males).

Illustration: While vacationing in Hawaii I had my first experience with the ocean current. I was snorkeling around a coral reef as the waves raised and lowered my body in the sea. I was so intrigued with all the beautiful fish and my desire to see more that I kept my head in the water vigorously searching, hoping to miss nothing. After about ten minutes, I looked for Carol, my wife, on the beach, but she was not where she was supposed to be. Instead of being in front of me, she had moved about a hundred yards down the beach. Of course the reality of that experience was that Carol did not move, but the current of the ocean had pulled me out and away from my wife.

Surveys have found that the average youth spends more than six hours a day under media exposure, most of it TV programs and videos. More than two-thirds of children, including one-third of all children younger than 6, have a television set in their bedroom.

Millions of parents allow strangers to enter their kids' bedrooms every day, showing sons and daughters the apparent norms of violence, sex, drug use and consumer purchasing. And parents probably don't notice. To them, it's just television.

Children now devour so much media that, for many, screens and earbuds have become as influential as parents and teachers. Some experts have even given these kids a name: Generation M.

"The media have become the leading sex educator and the leading drug educator in the United States," says Dr. Victor Strasburger of the University of New Mexico School of Medicine, and an expert on media influence on child health.

Research suggests that sexual scenes on television have doubled in number since 1998, and are now contained in 70 percent of shows; a typical hour of children's programming portrays about 14 violent incidents.

"What happens is that kids are influenced when they're younger and then act out when they're teenagers," Dr. Strasburger says.

Decades of research have examined the lessons gleaned from television. Among them:

- **Two recent studies** found the more sexual content young teenagers were exposed to in the media, the earlier they first engage in sexual activity.
- **Almost 50 years of investigation** has established a link between violent media and violent behavior in children almost as strong as the link between smoking and lung cancer.
- **Research following adolescents and young teenagers** has found that the more kids watch sympathetic movie characters smoke, the more they are inclined to try tobacco themselves. In fact, more than 20 studies have found that children and teens exposed to cigarette ads and promotions are more likely to become smokers.

"When these behaviors are portrayed as normative behavior, done by attractive people we want to be like, and done without repercussion, kids learn that's what we want to do," says Dr. Michael Rich, director of the Center on Media and Child Health at Children's Hospital Boston.

(A Steady Media Diet: Gulp, **By LAURA BEIL / The Dallas Morning News**)

"The devil is throwing everything he's got- billions of dollars, the best talent he can find, and the most attractive packages he can create- to win this generation. If this generation is lost, it won't be because he's more powerful than we are or has something better to offer. It will be because we didn't show up. We won't lose by fighting. We will lose by forfeit." (The Battle for A Generation, Ron Hutchcraft, Moody Press, Chicago, 1996, pg. 13)

The development of faith is not accidental, you did not come to know Jesus Christ outside the effort of man and the inspiration of God, and neither will your children. A person's faith it is transferable and intentional.

When we fail to live intentionally, we will drift with a culture that is opposed to the gospel. Our world does not pursue what is true, honorable, just, excellent, and praiseworthy, it is endowed to the flesh, it can only do what it's nature tells it to do.

Orphaned Families

When a family is not lead, especially by a God fearing man, it leaves the opportunity of an orphaned family. Determine to lead your family with moral excellence. **The best path marked is the path best traveled.** Choose a wise path to follow, and clearly mark the path for future generations. You can have two parents and still have the spirit of an orphan, especially if your parents were bad parents, or just plain didn't know how to parent.

- Absolom had a father and mother but became rebellious toward his father.
- Esther who was a true orphan, but didn't have the spirit of an orphan because of Mordecai.

12 signs of the spirit of an orphan

1. **Rebellion against authority**-resistant attitude, unteachable. Unable to determine the difference in a leader and a rebellious person. One builds while the other divides.
2. **Loneliness**-powerful emotion that brings suicidal thoughts, you feel estranged, cut off

Faculty members with University of Chicago Behavioral Science Department did a study on thousands of teenagers a few years ago. They gave each teenager a signaling device. When it signaled them, they were supposed to write down what they were thinking or feeling at that time. The teenagers were “signaled” during the day, during the night, while they were at school, while they were alone. One of the researchers' primary conclusions was that today's teenagers appear to be almost terrified of being alone. For when they are alone, it is almost as if they do not exist. The reason the minute kids come home from school or activities, they are on the phone or computer or have the music blasting away to support a sense of existence.

3. **Inability to bond with people**-such as spiritual fathers/mothers, God
4. **Problem with trust**-fear is the child of mistrust
5. **Loner, independent**- like a cave, emotionally/psychologically

In 1975, a seventeen-year-old redhead suddenly appeared on every front page of America. Her name was Lynette “Squeaky” Fromme. Squeaky was involved in an assassination attempt on President Gerald Ford by the orders of mass murder Charles Manson, and she may be in prison the rest of her life. After the an interviewer asked Squeaky why she had committed herself to Charles Manson. She answered, “When I was about 14 years old, I realized I was a misfit. I was a misfit at home and at school, so I left home. I ran across the country, ending up sitting on a curb in Whittier, California. A man came up to me, put his hand on my head and said, 'Come with me and I will take care of you.' And I believed him, so I followed him. His name was Charles Manson.” She said, “I would still die

for him.” Verbalizing what most teenagers feel today, she said, “I decided when I was 14 years old that whoever loved me first could have my life.” (Newsweek, 1975)

Being entertained or occupied is not the same as being connected. Because of our culture, most kids grow up alone. They go home to an empty house, where they are raised by the TV. They spend hours and hours alone in the little kingdoms called bedrooms.

Loneliness is an open door through which counterfeit love can come, and it is also the door through which Christ's love can enter. The parent who wants to attract and affect young people must first provide an atmosphere in which they feel loved. If you love them, they almost don't care what you believe.

6. **Rejection**-for any reason. I believe that rejection often comes because parents are trying to raise “super kids.” So they push their children into cheerleading, activities, sports, clubs- and into an adult agenda.

Without knowing it, many parents attach their ego to their child's performance, “He gets an 'A'; I get an 'A'.” “She wins; I win.” This explains the little league games where parents have to be sedated to attend.

Magazines find the perfect model on an unhealthy diet who spend several hours taking hundred of continuous-frame photos of her. They pick the best picture, airbrush it, take all the imperfections out and then a teenage girl will look at it and say, “I don't look like that.” Neither does the model.

“For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.”

Psalm 139:13-14

“For by him all things were created; thing in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him.”

Colossians 1:16

7. **Wanderer**-always moving, never feeling settled
8. **Can't commit**-either receive or give a commitment, abandonment

Making a commitment is simply making a decision. “Are you coming over on Friday night?” The response today is often, “I don't know, let me think about it.” Why? Because something else better may come up. That sounds simple, but the problem is, they are always looking for something better to come up instead of connecting and enjoying the moment.

One man was asked, “Do you have a hard time making decisions?” He said, “Yes and no.” That is the ramification of an orphan child. The

struggle with commitment affects everything from what they are doing this evening to their relationship with God. There is a difficulty in making any long-term commitment to anything, even to the things you want the most, ie. Friends, marriages and God.

9. **Problem with intimacy**-If you haven't been close with a parent, it's hard to be close to anyone including God
10. **Mad all the time**-volatile, it's an embedded anger, rage, sometimes scares people
11. **Identity problem**-not sure who you are, or how to find yourself in the Lord. No one ever told you who you were, not much affirmation
12. **Self absorbed**-can't get their full attention, they are a victim and always thinking of themselves. Often the martyr in any situation.

II. Intentional Faith Will Establish External Example

Our children need intentional instruction, and they need application. Many people today have a difficulty in being connected with God because of the example of their parents. Their behavior became their children's excuse.

"Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me- put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you."

Philippians 4:9

I remember studying this scripture out one time and I read it thinking, "How dare you Paul, making a statement like that. If you do what I do, you will experience the peace of God. Can you say that as a parent? You sure can, if you have found Christ as the center of your life and He is your peace.

One of the key reasons for **dropouts** identified by **Bisset** was that "**church kids**" **never owned their faith. They never "put into the practice" the things they had learned. They attended church, but they never contended for Christ.**

Illustration: Imagine your ten-year-old son playing little league baseball. On the first day of practice, the coach shares about his love for baseball and his passion for the game. He allows the kids to share about their lives and their desires for the season. They talk about favorite teams and what positions they want to play. At the second practice, the coach describes the fundamentals of fielding ground balls and fly balls. The kids go home after the discussion. After two practices, the kids have not thrown, caught, or hit a baseball. The third practice consists of a lecture of the numerous philosophies of hitting. The coach describes the advantages and disadvantages of different batting stances. He issues a fill-in-the-blank journal to teach the vocabulary of hitting. Important terms like "weight transfer, throwing your hands, and hip rotation" appear in the journal. After the one-hour discussion, the children are dismissed. How long do you think your

child will desire to continue attending if he never gets a chance to “put into practice” the things he is learning?

As absurd as the above illustration is, this is how we approach the spiritual training of our children. Moses instructed parents to teach their children when they get up, when they go along the way, and when they sit down (Deut. 6: 4-9). The emphasis of Moses’ exhortation is to help children apply biblical teaching to everyday experiences. Discipleship is not a twelve-week study course; it is following Christ on a daily basis. Consider a mission project for a family vacation instead of going to the beach every year. Sponsor a needy child for Christmas. Look for opportunities that allow your children to be doers of the word not just hearers only.

III. Intentional Faith Will Establish Exceptional Friends

Another important strategy for keeping your kids in the dugout of faith is to equip your children to build positive relationships. If your kids friends are a team, would you consider them a “winning team?” We need to help our kids partner with others to effectively follow Christ.

A wise youth leader once said, “A hungry man wants to know if there is food in heaven. A teenager wants to know if there are friends in heaven.” Often people drop out when relationships breakdown. Church Growth expert, Elmer Towns, has been teaching for years that people join churches for various reasons, but relationships serve as the glue that keeps people involved in church. The Bible contains numerous warnings about the dangers of negative relationships and the blessings of friends.

“Perfume and incense bring joy to the heart, and the pleasantness of one’s friend springs from his earnest counsel.”

Proverbs 27:9

Basically Solomon is instructing his son to avoid fools that lead to destruction and develop friendships that bring joy and wise counsel (Proverbs. 27: 9).

Paul warns the Timothy to avoid those who have not prioritized their **faith** and stayed **accountable** in having a **clear conscience**. As a parent your kids can pull the guilt card out and try to make you look like you are “judging” others. Paul says that because those refused to prioritize their faith and keep a clear conscience they, “...have rejected these and so have shipwrecked their faith” (1Tim. 1: 19).

“Do not be misled; “Bad company corrupts good character (morals).”

I Corinthians 15:33

“Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up!”

IV. Intentional Faith Will Establish Expected Action

At least three-fourths of all those who ever accept Jesus Christ do so by the age of eighteen. (George Barna, Generation Next, Venture, Calif; Regal, 1996, pg.77) The church of Jesus Christ has nothing more urgent to do than reach people before their lives turn hard- while they are young. The parent of little children have nothing more urgent than to bring their children to the knowledge of Jesus Christ.

The final strategy revealed in this passage is to pray for the conversion of your children. Ultimately, we need God to do for our children what we can not do. Jesus is the one who can seek and save the lost. Verse six says, "Don't worry about anything, but in everything, through prayer and petition, let your requests be made known to God." Most parents worry about their children, but Paul offers a better option. Turn your worry into prayer and petition. Trust almighty God to call your children to repentance and faith.

1. Pray for me, your pastor, as I preach the Word of God. Pray for your child's Equipping Class teachers to teach with passion.
2. Pray for your child's heart to be sensitive to the call of God while attending youth or kids camp or involved in ministries here at Cornerstone.
3. Pray for your child's protection from the traps of evil and activate the hard process of changing the home field advantage back in your favor.
 - Monitor the media and activities of your child.
 - Check attitudes and friends.
4. Pray for godly friends to influence your child to live for the glory of God. Foolish behavior is the lack of wisdom. The inexperience of life's traps are always more attractive. Example: When a child is given a shiny coin or a crumpled up dollar bill.
5. Pray, pray, pray!

Conclusion: In closing, I return to the research provided in the book, Why Christian Kids Leave the Faith. After all the reasons and strategies have been examined, only one question rally matters. What have you decided about the person and work of Jesus Christ? Bisset states, **"If one day you hear that Tom Bisset gave up on Christianity, rejected his faith and wandered far from God, you will know, after all the talking and analyzing is finished, that somewhere, somehow, Tom Bisset turned his eyes from Jesus Christ and began depending on something else for his Christian life."** (Bissett, p. 217)