

## Podcast 279 God Centered Parenting Prayers

On our last three podcasts, we had two on praying, and a session on God-centered parenting. I thought maybe we'd combine those today and have prayers for those that want to be a God-centered parent.

Father, thank You for sunshine, growing grass, puppies, and Your lovingkindness, which is new every morning. I thought of it this morning as I walked up the sidewalk. Thank You for Your unchangeableness. Thank You for Your affection and care that is always emanating towards us. Give us hearts to understand it afresh today. Give us ears to hear what Your Spirit is saying, and give us eyes to understand Your kingdom. In Jesus' name, amen.

As parents, we want to love our children as God has loved us, and we want to be rooted and grounded in love because we can't pass on something we haven't received. I'm going to start with Deuteronomy 6:7, which says, "You shall teach your children diligently when you sit in your house, walk by the way, etc."

The two verses which precede that passage are: "You [parents] shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might" which Jesus quoted in Matthew 22 when asked, "What's the great commandment?"

One of my favorite books in the Bible is Deuteronomy. I have several Scriptures here that capture this concept of loving God. Deuteronomy 10:12, "What does the LORD your God require of you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways, to love Him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul."

Deuteronomy 11:1 "You shall therefore love the LORD your God and keep His charge, His statutes, His rules, and His commandments always." The thirteenth verse says, "If you will indeed obey My commandments that I command you today, to love the LORD your God, and to serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul," things are going to go well with you.

Deuteronomy 11:22, "If you will be careful to do all this commandment that I command you to do, loving the LORD your God, walking in all His ways, and holding fast to Him."

It's clear that when you and I pray according to His will and say, "Father, help me to fear the Lord, love the Lord, serve the Lord with all my heart and all my soul, walk in Your ways, and cleave to You" – that since God is calling us to do in those couple passages that we've read He will hear us and answer us for we know that we're praying according to His will, and we know that when we pray according to His will, we have what we ask of Him.

I like to use the Scriptures to discover His will and to give me faith. "Faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the Word of Christ," it says in Romans 10:17.

Deuteronomy 30:6, "The LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, so that you will love the LORD your God with all your heart and all your soul, that you may live." Wow! And I've prayed "Father, circumcise my heart, circumcise my children's

heart, my grandchildren's heart. Circumcise our hearts. Do such a work inside of us that we will love You with all our heart, that we may live."

Deuteronomy 30:16, "If you obey the commandments of the LORD your God that I command you today, by loving the LORD your God..." and then it goes on, some I've already read, and then, "The LORD your God will bless you in the land that you are entering to take possession of it."

The only reason God encourages us to love Him and obey Him is because that's how we were designed, and if we will do these things, then it will go well with us and with our children. That's the clear message of Deuteronomy. As we're praying for God to help us to love Him, it's because we were designed to love Him, and because He's loveable, and the more we love Him, the more we're in sync with what God designed us way back in the Garden of Eden.

We were designed to love God. We were designed to walk in His ways. He created us to have communion and fellowship with Him. We're being restored to the real us. Now, you and I know that we have the other part of us, the fleshy part, the sinful part, the stubborn part, the thing that doesn't want to love God and do our own way. And that's what we have to fight against.

However we begin by praying and getting God on our team. I like to think of the fact that we've got the flesh and the Spirit, and this war within us is a pretty even battle. We need to have God on our team, so we pray, "Hey, help me! I don't know what to do here. I've got this natural part of me that's stubborn that doesn't want to do Your will, and I pray that You'll turn my heart toward You, that You'll help me to love You, help me to love Your ways."

Then God gets on our team and things change. This is the essence of what I call the first and great commandment. Jesus called it that in Matthew 22. And if we pray that God would turn our heart towards Him and love Him, I know God's going to answer that prayer, and that's been my experience.

I believe God likes to be asked. He encourages us in Luke, when teaching about the widow that went to the unrighteous judge, and He says, "Don't be faint. Don't give up. Keep asking." And He tells us, "Ask, seek, knock." Those words are three different degrees of intensity. Asking is one thing. "Please help me love You."

And if you're not getting enough love flowing, start seeking. Search the Scriptures. "Hey Father, You said in Your Word that if I would love You and if I ask you, that You would help me to love You and You would circumcise my heart and You would circumcise the heart of my children and You would turn my heart."

And if that doesn't work, then you start knocking. You're almost demanding. And it's okay, because God likes that kind of divine chutzpah. Remember when the Gentile woman goes to Jesus, and she says, "Will You heal my child?" And He says, "No, I've got to go to the lost children of Israel first." And she keeps at it, "No, no, I want You to heal my child!" And He

says, "I can't give you the bread." And she says, "Well, then give me the crumbs!" Finally, He said to her, "Oh, woman!" It's almost like He knew and He just needed her to express herself and her intensity. He probably looked at her and smiled, knowing that He was going to do it. He encourages us to ask and to seek and to knock, especially when we're asking according to His will.

Obedience is interwoven with love. There is no way to get around it. I know people don't like to hear it. Let me just put it differently – the Spirit in us likes to hear it, it's just that the flesh does not like that word. In John 15:9, Jesus says, "As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you. Abide in My love." And then He says, "If you keep my commandments, you will abide in My love." There it is. Obedience. Trust and obey.

Then He adds, "Just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love." Boom. He said, "Look, this is how it works. It works for Me. I love Him, I abide in His love by keeping My Father's commandments. And if you want to abide in His love, you've got to do the same thing." When you read Deuteronomy 30:16: "If you obey the commandments of the LORD your God that I command you today, by loving the LORD your God, by walking in His ways, and by keeping His commandments and His statutes and His rules, than you shall live and multiply, and the LORD your God will bless you."

Loving God and obeying God go hand in hand, which leads me to prayer #2. Deuteronomy 6:6 "And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart." So not only is God's love on our heart, but we need to also love His Words. As I was reading missionary biographies way back in the day, I remember thinking, "Wow, these guys really like the Bible." I read it because I was supposed to, and I knew it was good for me, but it was like broccoli. I ate it because I was told that it was good for me, but I didn't look forward to it.

Then I would read Psalm 119. David. "Oh, how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day." This is what he thinks about. And I thought, "You know, these missionaries love God's Word, David loves God's Word. These are people that I aspire to be like." And I ran across this wonderful verse in 2 Thessalonians 2:10 in my dutiful daily Bible reading. It says, "Because they refused to love the truth and so be saved."

The context of that verse in 2 Thessalonians is, because they refused to love the truth and be saved, they're going to be deceived and follow guys from the devil's team in the last days, the Antichrist, etc. Because they refused. There was something in them that says, "I am not going to love the truth." But in the ASV, the American Standard Version, it says, "They received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved."

When I read that, I thought, "Wow. Received. That sounds like something that I could ask for. That sounds like a gift. That almost sounds like grace, because I receive grace. I can't earn it." And I remember stopping and praying after I read that verse, and I said, "Father, give me a love for the truth."

These are two prayers that we can pray if we want to be God-centered parents. If we pray that God will help us to love Him with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, help us to walk in His ways, help us to love His Word, we know that God is going to answer those prayers. Scott: I'm struggling with my own weakness and wondering if this is all dependent on me, you know? Like, I'm looking for the gracious way for God to do all this stuff without me having to work hard.

Steve: You're such a good guy. I remember reading some of these missionary biographies. And I think it was Rees Howells. I remember that God was asking him to do something, and he didn't want to do it. There was a war in his soul, and it was just going back and forth between he wanted to obey, but he didn't want to obey. He wanted to obey because he knew he should, but he didn't want to naturally.

The Holy Spirit put it this way: "Are you willing to be made willing?" And he said, "Yes." And that turned him. If we can just open the door and say, "Father, here's where I am. And You know how You made me, and You know what my thoughts are before I think them, but if You'd be willing to turn my heart towards You and give me a love for You and help me to love Your truth, because this is something that I need, but I don't know if I can manufacture it myself." If we can just crack the door, I think that's enough.

Steve: I'm a part of a prayer meeting. We're going to be meeting tonight, and one of the things that we have noticed is, "In the last days, the love of the many are going to wax cold." (Matthew 24:12) We devoted one whole prayer meeting to praying that our love would not wax cold.

God also says in Hebrews 10:25 that we're supposed to meet together, "and all the more as you see the Day drawing near."

Another prayer is, "Father, help me to have faith when You return. Help me to have a love that's not waxing cold. Help me to have connection with my brothers so that I can be encouraged." Because these things are going to happen, and our faith is going to be tested. Our love is going to be tested, and we're going to need each other and His Word and His Spirit even more. That's what I think.

I think we're really close to those days already, because if I spend too much time anywhere on the computer besides God's Word, I start getting a little discouraged. Even the well-meaning prayer letters that go out from organizations that are fighting the good fight, but they fight the good fight because we support them, and the only way we'll support them is if they tell us how bad everything is. So you have to even be careful how much of that stuff you read. God is God, and He's working all things for His good, even the evil for the day of judgment. I think our twenty minutes are up, so let's pray.

Father, help us to love Your Word. Help us to have some divine chutzpah by Your Spirit, that we'll ask and seek and knock, so that we'll love You with all our heart, soul, mind, and

strength, we'll love Your Word, we'll have faith, we'll want to obey Your Words. We know we not only have our flesh to contend with; we have the world to contend with and we have the devil to contend with, our great enemies. But You are greater still, and Your Spirit is greater still, and we magnify and honor and draw near to You and honor Your Spirit, mighty Holy Spirit, to work deep in our hearts. Plant seeds of love for You and Your Word in Jesus' name. And deliver us from condemnation. Deliver us from the thing that has been beating us up for decades, and give us a little ray, a fresh ray of hope and encouragement today. In Jesus' name, amen.