

April 27th, 2008
“Raising Responsible Children, Part 3”
Reverend Darryl R. Curtis

John 19:25-27

25 Now there stood by the cross of Jesus His mother, and His mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.

26 When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing by, He said to His mother, “Woman, behold your son!**”**

27 Then He said to the disciple, “Behold your mother!**” And from that hour that disciple took her to his own home.**

Thank you very much for coming to hear the message for today. Before we begin our next lesson, let us reiterate our reason for attending Church.

We attend Church to obtain the mind of Christ, meaning, to have the Bible illuminated in our minds so that we can clearly understand the principles that Jesus taught and base our daily personal decisions on those principles.

We come to Church because we want to be obedient to the Bible, which is the doctrine of Jesus Christ, in an informed, insightful and intelligent manner.

Our continuing subject has to do with the academic achievement gap between children in our community and those in the majority community. We are discussing methods of preparing our children to bridge this achievement gap, bringing our academic achievement level up to par with that of the larger culture.

My first point, which I have made at length during the previous two sermons, is that children actually need two parents, one male and one female, in a hand-on relationship, and children are best served if the two parents are actually married to one another. Children being raised in divorced or single parent families have a structural familial deficiency that makes it more difficult for them to successfully develop from childhood into adulthood. I previously quoted the statistic that eighty percent of the men in prison in this country come from single parent homes.

In our last lesson, I made the point that infants and toddlers children do best with a hands-on supervisory parent.

Infants and toddlers intuitively find it distressing to have their care relegated to an institutional day-care center, even one run in the most benevolent fashion possible. Children younger than school age are simply not emotionally prepared to participate in an institutional setting; the design of God is that a child be raised by a hands-on parent that can devote his or her, generally her, primary attention to the child when attention is needed. That is why mothers have breasts to feed infants and comfort children. God makes the point rhetorically, in **Isaiah 49:15**, in which God tells us:

15 “Can a woman forget her nursing child, And not have compassion on the son of her womb? Surely they may forget, Yet I will not forget you.

Some may disagree with my assertion that children actually need the care of their mother rather than that of an institutional caregiver, but, if you look at the situation from the point of view of the child, you will recognize that putting a child in day care is actually abandonment.

Suppose for a moment, that God gave you a chance to do your life over with the wisdom that you have accrued over the years, and you reverted back to being a baby. Knowing what you know about life, would you make the choice to have your mother put you in day-care, or would you prefer to have your mother take care of you herself?

If that seems to be too abstract of a decision for you to consider, here is a more concrete parallel. A counselor was questioned by a client about a chronically ill spouse. The client said, “My spouse is in the nursing home with a terminal illness, in constant pain, on a significant amount of medication. It is emotionally very difficult for me to spend my time watching my spouse deteriorate. I’m lonely, and I met someone at work who is very interested in me. I want to know whether or not it would be okay for me to date. I’ll make sure that the nursing home bills are paid, but I feel that I have to consider my own need for companionship. What do you think I should do?”

Put yourself in the position of the spouse in the nursing home.

Would you want your care to be delegated to the employees of the institution so that your spouse could get on with his or her life, or would you rather have your spouse to minister to you personally? If your spouse decides to start dating someone healthy rather than caring for you, would you call it abandonment?

I recently listened to a caregiver for Alzheimer’s patients, who explained her observation of the interesting phenomena that the memory of the person afflicted with Alzheimer’s is not destroyed, but, rather, the person’s ability to access memory is compromised. People with Alzheimer’s occasionally have periods of lucidity, in which their memories return briefly. When the person is lucid, they very much want contact with their loved ones, however brief their period of lucidity may be.

My analysis of the Scripture indicates that personal emotional care and companionship for elders is extremely important to God. **Deuteronomy 5:16** says:

16 ‘Honor your father and your mother, as the LORD your God has commanded you, that your days may be long, and that it may be well with you in the land which the LORD your God is giving you.

I find the positioning of this commandment in the list of commandments to be instructive.

The prior four commandments, reverencing no one before God, making no images to worship, not taking God’s name in vain, and hallowing God’s Sabbath, instruct us as to how we ought relate to God.

The latter five commandments, which prohibit murder, adultery, theft, perjury and covetousness, instruct us as to how we ought relate to one another.

The center commandment, which I quoted in **Deuteronomy 5:16**, defines the central relationship between parents and children, and is in the center, because parents have a central role in life, the role of teaching child how to relate to God and to their fellow man.

The relationship between parent and child is Scripturally sacred, because of the self-sacrificial nature of the role. The parent is charged with the care and training of the child while the child is helpless, and the child is charged with the care of the parent when the tables turn, as they almost inevitably will. The parent and child role and subsequent role reversal is one of the reasons that barrenness was thought to be a curse in Old Testament times.

Even parents that abandon their children to the care of institutions will, later in life, probably want the personal care of their children. Since we intuitively understand the need for loving, hands-on care when we want it, I am led to the conclusion that most people don't make the decision to abandon loved ones on the basis of the loved one's needs, but on the basis of their own. By the same token, parents don't institutionalize their children on the basis of their children's needs or feelings; children are institutionalized because of their parent's selfishness.

I doubt seriously that any rational parent can make a case that a day-care center can nurture their child as well as or better than they can personally; parents delegate the care of children to day-care centers so that they, the parents, can get on with their lives, just as the person with the chronically ill spouse wanted permission to date.

Parents may rationalize that they are creating a better life for their child by amassing possessions, but parents actually know this is not really true; children actually need the love and nurturing of a hands-on parent much more than they need things. After all, Jesus tells us, in **Matthew 16:26**:

26 For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?

Let me briefly change our focus. Because many people see this question from a highly subjective emotional position, I want to discuss the concepts of objective and subjective thinking to make my point more understandable. Objective and subjective thinking are two different perspectives of thought, two different ways of looking at the concept of truth.

To illustrate the difference between objective and subjective, let us look at a question about running a mile. The question is; "Is a mile a long way to run?"

Well, if you ask me, a mile is certainly a long way to run. However, to a fellow that runs the marathon for the Kenyan National Olympic team, one who regularly runs 26 mile marathons, a mile is not very far at all. The question "Is a mile a long way to run?" is a subjective question, meaning that the question does not have a single correct answer; the answer to a subjective question depends on the point of view of the person answering the question.

Now, an objective question about the length of a mile would be, "How long is a mile?" Any knowledgeable person could answer 5,280 feet. The length of a mile is not subjective; the length of a mile is not different in Michigan than it is in California. The length of a mile is based upon an objective measurement; a mile is 5,280 feet regardless of who is doing the measuring.

Hopefully this example clearly defines the difference between objective and subjective. Something objective is factually measurable; objectivity is the recognition of a fact. Something subjective depends on the points of view of the people discussing the issue; subjectivity is the recognition of a feeling or an opinion.

When we first are born, we see life from a totally subjective perspective. We perceive life as though every event is specifically happening personally to us, and our feelings, to us, are the

center of the universe. As we grow and gain maturity, we develop the understanding that most things in the world are objective; they are not happening to us or because of us, but are happening in spite of or irrespective of us.

Maturity is the ability to look at life from an objective point of view; the more mature that we are, the less we define our reality by our feelings.

However, since none of us are totally mature, all of us see life subjectively to some degree. The more subjective that we are, the more we make decisions based upon our feelings, because our feelings describe how things look to us subjectively. To the immature, their subjective focus is reality.

The first example of subjectivity in history has to do with the perception of God's objective statement by His human creation. The episode begins in **Genesis 2:15-17**, which says: **15 Then the LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it.**

16 And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat;

17 but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."

The main point that we need to understand is that God, the Creator of Heaven and Earth, always speaks the objective truth. The definition of belief in God is trusting that He is omniscient, meaning that He knows everything, that He is omnipotent, meaning that He is in total control of everything, and that everything which He tells us is the objective truth. **Numbers 23:19** tells us:

19 "God is not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man, that He should repent. Has He said, and will He not do? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?"

Genesis 2:17 is an objective statement of fact by God. It says:

17 but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."

Since God's Word is objectively true, it is not open to negotiation, debate or discussion. We may subjectively dislike the conclusions to which God's Word leads us, but just as, objectively, a mile is 5,280 feet whether we consider that to be a long way or not. God's Word is always objectively correct, whether we like the conclusion to which His Word leads us or not. God tells us, in **2Timothy 2:15**:

15 Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

God's Word is the truth, and we choose to ignore God at our own peril. However, in Genesis, the woman is faced with a competing perspective to that of God. **Genesis 3:1-5** tells us: **1 Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?"**

2 And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; 3 but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.' "

4 Then the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die.

5 For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

These five verses represent the totality of the evil influence of the serpent. The serpent presents no danger to the woman; he is no threat to her, nor can he coerce her in any way to do anything as the result of their interaction. All that the serpent can do is to simply offer the woman an alternate subjective opinion to contradict the objective truth of the Word of God. The serpent does not sneak up on the woman with a complex set of syllogisms to deceive the woman into an incorrect conclusion; he gives no alliterative argument to entice the woman’s sensibilities; he provides no rhythmic rhyme or catchy colloquialism to draw the woman’s attention away from the facts.

The serpent simply contradicts God directly, calling God a liar. The serpent says, “You will not surely die, God knows it, and God is deceiving you.”

This situation is not unique. The author of the book of the Kings describes the situation perfectly as he describes the challenge of Elijah to Israelites as to whether they should worship God or Baal. The “A” portion of **1Kings 18:21** says:

21 And Elijah came to all the people, and said, “How long will you falter between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him.”

The “B” portion of **1Kings 18:21** says:

21 But the people answered him not a word.

Why did the people not answer? Because they had not come to a decision as to whom they were going to choose to follow.

We all, at some point, have to make a personal decision as to whether we are going to believe that the Word of God is objective truth and follow that which it says or not. We may choose to follow Baal rather than God because the word of Baal appeals to our subjective immaturity by promising us something that we want. Baal, that old serpent, which we also call the devil, stimulates our subjective feelings by telling us lies. That is easy for him, as Jesus warns the men whose minds were captured by the devil in **John 8:44**:

44 You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him.

When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.

So, the two in the Garden had the responsibility to compare the objective truth of the Word of God with the attractive lies of the devil. The result of their decision is presented in **Genesis 3:6**:

6 So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.

How could the woman see that the poisoned fruit of the tree was good for food when it clearly, according to God’s own objective testimony, was poison? The woman was not looking at objective reality, but was seeing what she subjectively wanted to see. The tree was pleasant to the woman’s eye because she wanted it. The woman found the tree desirable for obtaining wisdom because she wanted to experience knowing good and evil. The simple truth is that the

woman had a feeling and she decided to ignore the objective reality of the Word of God in order to indulge her subjective feeling.

God calls the indulgence caused by this type of subjective thinking foolishness. This episode in the Garden is the best example in the Scripture of **Proverbs 14:1**, which says:

1 The wise woman builds her house, But the foolish pulls it down with her hands.

When we ignore the objective truth of the Word of God in order to indulge our desires, we are pulling down our own house with our own hands.

The Apostle Paul postulated, correctly, that many women will outlive their husbands and find themselves dependent upon their children for companionship and care in their later years, and defines this care as the repayment of the debt that the adult child owes his or her mother for her tender care during their childhood. Paul says, in **1Timothy 5:3-4**:

3 Honor widows who are really widows.

4 But if any widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show piety at home and to repay their parents; for this is good and acceptable before God.

Paul then goes on to define the qualifications for a widow to be taken into the number to be cared for by the church, in **1Timothy 5:9-10**:

9 Do not let a widow under sixty years old be taken into the number, and not unless she has been the wife of one man,

10 well reported for good works: if she has brought up children, if she has lodged strangers, if she has washed the saints' feet, if she has relieved the afflicted, if she has diligently followed every good work.

Many people are deceived into thinking that their financial investments will take care of them in their old age. Of course, we all need money for our senior years. However, my paternal grandfather had financial resources sufficient to sustain him in a care facility, but when he became ill in his early eighties, his preference was to be cared for by his children, and he was blessed to live out his last year in my father's house under the care of my parents, who were comforting him when he breathed his last.

I'm sure that you all remember the story of the young man, who had a young wife and a five year old son. He received a call from one of his father's neighbors one day, who told him that his father was acting strangely. The young man went to investigate, and discovered that his father had begun to lose some of his cognitive ability. The young man brought his father home to take care of him.

When dinnertime came, the young man sat his father at the table, and since the father's mental capacity was diminishing, the father was not able to eat properly, and made a mess at the table.

The young man's wife was offended by the father's lack of table manners, and began to object to her husband, who could not really do anything about the situation. After a few days of this problem, the wife told the husband, "I'm sick of watching your father making a mess at my table. He should eat at a table by himself."

The young man wanted to please his wife, and so he set up a card table off to the side of the dining room table for his father, but after a few more days, even this accommodation did not please his wife. "I'm tired of cleaning up after your father because he eats like a pig", she said, "so make him a trough to eat from."

The young man, being handy with tools, made a trough from which his father could eat, and the wife put the father's food in the trough like slop.

The next day, as the young man was coming home from work, his wife met him at the doorway. As they were greeting one another, their five year old son came running up to the door. "Daddy", the boy said excitedly, "guess what I did today!"

"What did you do?" asked his father.

"I made a trough for you and mom to eat from when you get old", said the boy.

The young man looked at his wife, and she looked at him. They said nothing, but that evening the young man's father was back at the table eating with the family.

There is an old saying, "what goes around, comes around".

The end of our sojourn here on planet earth is much like the beginning.

We need the hands-on care of a dedicated parent during the beginning of our lives, and we will probably desire to have the hands-on care of our children at the end of our lives. Our children, whom we have provided for and who will provide for their children, in turn, are obligated to provide for us, and so the cycle of life goes on.

Jesus Christ, the sinless son of God, needed no biological parents to enter the world. God, however, sent Jesus through the womb of a virgin who was engaged to be married, and then assured the virgin's fiancé that his intended had not been unfaithful, but had conceived Jesus through an immaculate conception. It was God's plan for Jesus to grow up as a child in an intact, two-parent family, with a human mother to take care of Him during His nursing and toddler years, and a human father to train Him in the way that He should go as a boy, and into becoming a man.

When Jesus turned twelve, He decided to take His call into the ministry. **Luke 2:42-49** records:

42 And when [Jesus] was twelve years old, [His family] went up to Jerusalem according to the custom of the feast.

43 When they had finished the days, as they returned, the Boy Jesus lingered behind in Jerusalem. And [His father] Joseph and His mother did not know it;

44 but supposing Him to have been in the company, they went a day's journey, and sought [Jesus] among their relatives and acquaintances.

45 So when they did not find Him, they returned to Jerusalem, seeking Him.

46 Now so it was that after three days they found [Jesus] in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions.

47 And all who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers.

48 So when they saw [Jesus], they were amazed; and His mother said to Him, "Son, why have You done this to us? Look, Your father and I have sought You anxiously."

49 And [Jesus] said to them, "Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?"

Jesus recognized, because of the care of His parents, that although He was intellectually and spiritually ready for the ministry, the time was not right. **Luke 2:51-52** records:

51 Then [Jesus] went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them, but

His mother kept all these things in her heart.

52 And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.

Although Jesus was God's divine son, God sent Jesus to be part of a normal human family, with brothers and sisters. Jesus followed in his human father's footsteps, becoming a carpenter by trade before beginning His ministry. **Matthew 13:54-55 and Mark 6:3** records:

54 When He had come to His own country, He taught them in their synagogue, so that they were astonished and said, "Where did this Man get this wisdom and these mighty works?

55 Is this not the carpenter's son?

Mark 6:3 Is this not the carpenter, the Son of Mary, and brother of James, Joses, Judas, and Simon? And are not His sisters here with us?

Jesus needed the support of a human family less than anyone that ever walked the face of the earth. Jesus received His divine nature directly from God, and could have done without positive human familial influences as easily as God Himself, but God sent His Son to not only be a sacrifice, but to be an exhibit for us as to how we should then live. God sent Jesus to Mary and Joseph as a baby, and they cared for Him in the way that any good parents would care for their child. They did this although Jesus was not just any child, but was God Himself, who came to be a sacrifice to pay the penalty that we owe for the sins that we have committed.

After the completion of His miracle ministry and the training of His disciples, Jesus found Himself on the Cross of Calvary, with the responsibility of dying, of giving His very life as a payment for our sins. While Jesus was in agony on the Cross, He asked His Father to forgive us of our sins because of our ignorance of that which we were doing, and then Jesus granted absolution to the repentant thief on the cross next to Him that God blessed to recognize whom Jesus was.

Just before the sun darkened and the great transaction of Jesus' agony for our forgiveness was to begin in its' most intense earnestness, Jesus looked down from the Cross into the face of the woman that had cared for Him from His birth. Out text, **John 19:25-27** records:

25 Now there stood by the cross of Jesus His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.

26 When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing by, He said to His mother, "Woman, behold your son!"

27 Then He said to the disciple, "Behold your mother!" And from that hour that disciple took her to his own home.

From the Cross, Jesus took care of the human responsibility of which I have been speaking during this sermon. He made provisions for His mother in the home of the one disciple that was not to be executed for the preaching of the Gospel. All of the other disciples died various torturous deaths, by crucifixion, by stoning, by being beaten to death or by being beheaded, in the defense of the Gospel, but John, the disciple that Jesus loved, was given the responsibility of taking care of Jesus' mother and was able to live out the rest of his life. He was persecuted, even as were the other disciples, but not executed.

Even Jesus Himself repaid the debt of love that He owed to His mother, because she took care of Him when He was a child. There can be no question that the Scripture teaches that a child needs the hands-on care of a parent rather than the institutional administration of a day care

center. Let me conclude this exposition with a testimony from a parent that has seen the light. He writes:

Our family has changed drastically in a very good way. Today is day 1 in our new direction of having my wife staying home to raise our son. When we had our child last fall, I stayed home with him while my wife returned to her near six figure job after maternity leave. She was not happy about this, and neither was I. During this time, I knew that things would not be right until we had switched it around, with my wife staying home with our son while I supported the family. So, while I was staying at home with him and she was working, I searched diligently for a good job. Last month I found that job and was hired, Three weeks ago, my wife submitted her resignation, and Friday was her last day. We're going to take a cut in pay, but we're both so happy with the new situation that I honestly do not think that we will mind.

I know that my son's future relies on us doing the right thing by him. I know that he is already a happier, healthier, smarter, better adjusted, loving young child because we have been there with him 24/7 to take care of him.

The point is brought home to me daily at my new job. My current office is across the hall from a day care center. On a daily basis, I hear children crying and begging for their parents. Some of the small children that we see from the hallway are barely two months old, and they already look sad and glassy-eyed. I can see this because of the difference between them and my own son's appearance. I will never, God willing, let this happen to my son.

Now, concerning my wife; she is like a new woman. After only one day off from work, she is more peaceful, loving and at ease than I have ever seen her. She was working for her employer when I met her and I credit her with seeing the wisdom of and going along with the decision for her to give up her job to stay home. I pray that she will continue to grow in her confidence in this decision and that she will continue to be more contented at home taking care of me and our son than she was working in her workplace career.

I know that now we are right on track as a family.

Let us endeavor to change the paradigm in our families and in our country, that we might be able to meet the objective stated in our topic for this lesson, to train up our children in the way that they should go, so that when they get old they will not depart from it. If we do so, we may find ourselves the beneficiaries of our obedience to the Word of God.

Reverend Darryl R. Curtis
Family Life Baptist Church