

“When Children Become An Idol”

The first words of the Ten Commandments are: “You shall have no other gods before me.” The Lord makes it clear there is nothing which should be more important to us than Him. What we might miss is that anything we have—even gifts from God--can become an idol.

No where is this more evident than with our children, who are a present from God (Ps. 127:3). Yet, when we make them more important to us than God this is nothing less than idolatry.

Consider 1 Samuel 2. Here we find that the sons of Eli the priest were corrupt and did not know the LORD (2:12). As priests, they took advantage of their position, abused the sacrifices, and committed sexual sin (cf. 2:13-17, 22). In response, God sent a prophet to Eli who asked him (2:29): “Why then do you scorn my sacrifices and my offerings that I commanded, and *honor your sons above me...*?” (emphasis added)

This question haunts me. Even though we are to love our children, nevertheless, we cannot elevate them above our Savior. The moment we do this we have abandoned any hope that we will parent well. After all, we will be unwilling to hear all God says about parenting and priorities. Most likely we will lack the willingness to exercise tough love, to challenge them to love God above all else, and to call them to do hard things.

What will it look like if we honor our sons and daughters above God? First, we will not want to hear what God says about the importance of teaching them about Him, His salvation, and His will (cf. Dt. 6:6-9; Prov. 22:6; Eph. 6:4). We will discover that our children excelling at everything else is more important since godliness is not all that prized among our peers and it will scarcely bring community pats on the back as good parents.

Additionally, since we value their approval over His, we will not want to follow God’s directives to discipline and correct children when wrong (cf. Prov. 13:24; 19:18).

One Baptist pastor offers a helpful corrective in a poem written for his son calling him to love his bride more by loving her less...less than Jesus Christ. He reminded his son the greatest love a husband can have for his wife is a love that puts Jesus first. This puts him in the right frame-of-mind to do the hard things which stout love demands. The same is true of parents and their children. Are you ready to love your children by loving them less...than you love Jesus?

Then and only then will our children not be our idol; will their walk with Christ be more important to us than all other things; will we understand that accomplished school, music, drama, and sports involvement are all wonderful tools along the way, but none of them comprise their chief purpose. Then and only then will we bear great and lasting fruit in their lives (cf. John 15:16).

Joyfully following and loving as a parent to His glory along with you,

Pastor Tom