

# Releasing Your Children to the Lord

THREE Rs of PARENTING #3 - Pastor Gary Combs - July 30, 2023 - 1 Thessalonians 2:7-12

**INTRO:** Good morning church! We are continuing our series entitled, “The Three ‘R’s of Parenting.” You might remember the three R’s of learning, Reading, wRiting, and aRithmetic. So it is similar with Parenting, Receive, Raise up, and Release. Today, we’re going to talk about the third “R,” “Releasing Your Children to the Lord.”

Having a good sense of humor often feels like the only way to survive parenting. Here are some funny parenting memes that we found online:



But the truth is, parenting is no laughing matter. Raising kids is one of the most profoundly important jobs in all of life! But how do we parent? Parents have questions...

**Need:** Practical questions like: How and when should I discipline my child? How do I get them potty trained? And spiritual questions like: When is my child old enough to confess faith in Christ? What about baptism and the Lord’s Supper? How can I be sure that they are saved? In answering these questions, we have God’s Word as our guide, but we must also take into account the child’s level of maturity. Have you noticed that every child is unique? No two are the same. And as they grow, they change. So the parenting style that seemed effective when they were small, doesn’t work when they’re older. These differences need different parenting styles.

**Trans:** Godly parents recognize their call to be leaders who make disciples. If we want to be effective, we have to match our parenting style to every child’s situation.

**BODY:** In his first letter to the Thessalonians, the apostle Paul told them that he had disciplined them like a parent according to their situation, sometimes gentle and affectionate like a mother and sometimes strong like a father in order to release them to live up to God’s calling. We can parent our children following God’s Word to match our child’s situation with a goal of releasing them to the Lord. How can we follow God’s Word to release our children to the Lord? The text gives three parenting styles that we can follow in releasing our children to the Lord.

**Read text:** **1 Thessalonians 2:7-12 (ESV)** <sup>7</sup> But we were gentle among you, like a nursing mother taking care of her own children. <sup>8</sup> So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us. <sup>9</sup> For you remember, brothers, our labor and toil: we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, while we proclaimed to you the gospel of God. <sup>10</sup> You are witnesses, and God also, how holy and righteous and blameless was our conduct toward you believers. <sup>11</sup> For you know how, like a father with his children, <sup>12</sup> we exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you to walk in a manner worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory.

## How to Release Your Child to the Lord:

### 1. Show and Tell when they are young.

**EXP:** (7-9, 12) Look at v. 12. Notice the three verbs (“exhorted, encouraged, charged”)? Paul had three tools in his parenting toolbox that he used to raise up and release them to “walk worthy of God.” Circle “exhorted.”

**“Exhorted”** (12) (παρακαλοῦντες, *parakalountes* - Pres. Act. Part.) - beseech, admonish, exhort. Literally, “calling alongside.” In other words, “show and tell.” When is this parenting style most needed? When your children are young.

(7-9) This describes parenting the young (“gentle, nursing mother, affection, share, own selves” [*psuche* - souls]). This is a season of much “labor” for the parent (“night and day”).

**ARG:** **Show them by example:**

Philippians 3:17 (NLT) ...pattern your lives after mine, and learn from those who follow our example.

**Tell them by love and discipline.**

1 Corinthians 4:21 (ESV) What do you wish? Shall I come to you with a rod, or with love in a spirit of gentleness?

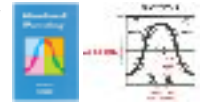
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**ILL:** Parenting is affected by your child's age (maturity), or ability (mental and physical) and his heart (will). As children grow, their mental understanding moves from concrete to abstract. We must first give them something concrete to believe. Show & Tell.



Parenting according to your child's unique need is the basis for a book entitled *Situational Parenting*, by Ron Campbell. Look at this diagram from the book. I have added my thoughts in red. Remember what we learned last week from Eph. 6:1-4 about teaching your child to obey and honor?



Ephesians 6:1-2 (ESV) Children, **obey** your parents in the Lord... **"Honor** your father and mother"

"Set the standard of obedience. We should expect instant obedience from our children. Teach them that God wants them to obey all the way, right away and with a happy heart." - Ginger Plowman, *Don't Make Me Count to Three*

## When is your child old enough for discipline?

"When your child is old enough to resist your directives, he is old enough to be disciplined." - Dr. Tedd Tripp, *Shepherding Your Child's Heart*

**APP:** Parents, your job for young children (0-6) is show and tell. You are God's representative, His steward. Show and tell your child the way of healthy obedience. And always point them to Jesus for forgiveness.

## 2. Coach and Encourage as they grow.

**EXP:** (10-12) Circle the second verb in v. 12, "encouraged."

**"Encouraged"** (12) (παραμυθέομαι, *paramutheomai*) - to comfort, encourage, console, or admonish. This tool is a little different from the first. It is another "para" word, so it's very relational. But instead of come alongside and do as I say, it is more of a "you can do it" or "here's how you might do it better." This moves you into a coaching role where the child is willing, but is still developing the skill-set to do the task well.

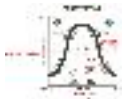
(10-11) <sup>10</sup> You are **witnesses**, and God also, how holy and righteous and blameless was our conduct toward you believers. <sup>11</sup> For you know how, **like a father** with his children...

As his spiritual children grew in the Lord, Paul switched to a coaching and encouraging style. He reminded them that they were "witnesses" of his example. He was both mother and father to them. We need both parents to do the job God's way.

**ARG:** Colossians 3:21 (ESV) Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.

Hebrews 10:24 (GW) We must also consider how to encourage each other to show love and to do good things.

**ILL:** Let's look at the Situational Parenting chart again. Notice the shift from "guiding and directing" in S1 to "explaining and persuading" in S2. Children in the 7-12 age group are moving from concrete to more abstract thinking. They are the most receptive spiritually at this time.



**APP:** Parents who ask, "When is my child old enough to confess Christ and be baptized?" should be on alert now. You have taught them the "right standard to obey" when they were younger. Now, begin to ask them questions about their relationship to God. Do they understand that they are sinners in need of a Savior? Are they ready to place their faith in Christ? Do not push, but pull them towards faith. Coach and Encourage.

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## 3. Charge and Send as they mature.

**EXP:** (12) Circle the third verb in v. 12 “charged.”

“**Charged**” (12) (μαρτυρέω, *martureō*) - to bear witness, to testify, charge. Paul pulled out his final tool that is perhaps the boldest and strongest. He is now reflecting on verse 10 that the people were witnesses of him and now he is charging them to be witnesses to others.

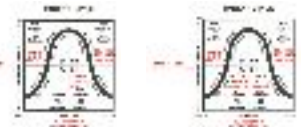
“**Calls**” (12) (καλοῦντος, *kalountos*) - the parent charges the child to live for God who calls them to Himself.

**ARG:** Just as Jesus was sent and then sent His disciples, parents are to charge and send their kids.

John 20:21 (ESV) Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.”

**ILL:** I remember teaching our kids to ride a bike and then later to drive a car. Each progressive stage required less authority and more influence. We moved from show/encourage/send. I used to send them out saying, “Remember who you are and whose you are!”

Looking at the Situational Parenting chart again. These are the teenage years. We often make ourselves and our teens miserable during this phase because we use the skill set from S1 instead of S3 here. We do this usually because we were too lax in the early years and now we try to make up for it.



Ideally, this should be the years that we are releasing them. Like a countdown to a launch.

**APP:** If we'll parent our children as the Word teaches, we'll aim at releasing them to the Lord. In this way, we move from direct authority to influential authority. We become their mentors and friends.

**CONCLUSION:** Remember our text for the first sermon in this series:

**Psalm 127:1-5 (ESV)** <sup>1</sup> Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain... <sup>3</sup> Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb a reward. <sup>4</sup> Like arrows in the hand of a warrior are the children of one's youth. <sup>5</sup> Blessed is the man who fills his quiver with them! ...

We must ask God to build our house! We need His wisdom to receive, raise up and release our children to Him. He wants us to aim our children “like arrows” at Jesus. This is to be our highest priority as parents. That our children would grow up to “walk worthy” of God’s calling to be Christ-followers.



Will you ask for God’s help in building your house? Depending on His power and wisdom, will you aim at releasing your children to the Lord by appropriately exhorting, encouraging and charging them to follow Jesus?

Let’s pray.