



Introduction:

It's the hardest job I've ever had. I constantly second-guess myself. I continually seek God's forgiveness for mistakes I've made. I lie awake at night afraid that I'm failing. And it doesn't scare me to death that my failures at this job might cost my soul; it scares me to death that they might cost someone else's. And not just anyone else, it might cost the souls of my kids. If there is anything that scares me more than being eternally separated from God, it is my children being eternally separated from God and finding out it was because of me. I think I'm looking at people who know what I'm talking about. With that in mind, let's talk about the counterintuitive nature of Victorious Parents.

Discussion:

I. A Mistaken View of Victorious Parents

- A. What I'm about to say is counterintuitive. It is shocking. I'm going to say it and many of you are going to think I've lost my marbles. For a moment (I hope only a brief one), the shepherds may consider removing me from the pulpit of this congregation. But I'm going to ask you to hear it and be patient as I show you the biblical nature of this counterintuitive truth about Victorious Parents.
- B. Most of us have a mistaken view of what it means to be Victorious Parents. And we need to dispel the mistake. Are you ready? Most of us think that what makes Victorious Parents is having grown up children who are faithful to the Lord. Brothers and sisters, the shocking truth is that is not the measure of Victorious Parenting.
- C. Don't get me wrong. I know that **Malachi 2:15** says God is seeking godly offspring from us. I know that **Proverbs 22:6** says that in general when we raise up kids in the way they should go, they won't depart from it when they are old. (I also know the debates surrounding what that passage really means.) But neither of these passages change my mind about this. I know it is counterintuitive and I know every one of us wants kids who are faithful to the Lord when they are old. But Victorious Parenting is not measured by faithful children. Allow me to explain.
- D. Consider Adam and Eve. If the measure of Victorious Parenting is faithful children, they had Abel and Seth who were faithful to the Lord. Were they Victorious Parents? But they also had Cain? Were they failed parents? Maybe they were two-thirds Victorious.
- E. Think for a moment about Eli and Samuel. In **I Samuel 2:22-25**, we learn that the sons of the High Priest Eli were blaspheming God and defiling the sacrifices of God and those who were coming to offer sacrifice. In **I Samuel 3:13-14** we hear of the judgment against Eli and his sons. Thought Eli spoke to them, God holds him accountable because he didn't restrain them. We look at him and say clearly he wasn't a Victorious Father, look at how unfaithful his boys were. But what about Samuel? Samuel fulfilled his role faithfully before the Lord. Nothing but good is ever said about Samuel. There is no judgment against him from God like Eli. Yet note that his boys did not fare much better than Eli's (**I Samuel 8:1-3**). The text says they didn't continue in Samuel's ways. Samuel's way was good. We are certain Eli wasn't a Victorious Parent, was Samuel?
- F. Consider the kings.
 1. Consider the contrast of David and King Saul.
 - a) David was a man after God's own heart (**I Samuel 13:14**). I know he had committed some sins, even a couple of doozies, but the overall assessment of David is he was a man after God's own heart that would do everything God wanted. Yet, he fathered Amnon, a son who raped his half-sister. He fathered Absalom, a son who rebelled and tried to steal the kingdom. He fathered Adonijah, a man who tried to steal the king away from his brother Solomon who had been named the rightful heir to the throne. Was David, man after God's own heart, a failure as a parent?
 - b) By contrast consider King Saul, a man that God judged tremendously. He had Jonathan for a son. Jonathan was a great man. He was a man of faith and valor. He knew David would be king instead of him and yet protected David from his father. Jonathan was faithful to the Lord even when it meant he wouldn't be king. Was Saul a Victorious Parent? (If you don't know the story of Jonathan you can read it in **I Samuel 14; 18; 20**)
 2. Consider Jehoshaphat, king of Judah. He was the son of Ahaziah who was a wicked king, judged by God and executed by Jehu (**II Kings 9**). But Jehoshaphat led the people in revival, rebuilding the temple and calling

them back to God. Was Ahaziah a Victorious Parent? But someone will say that Ahaziah died while Jehoash was an infant and he was actually raised by the priest Jehoiada. So Jehoiada was actually the Victorious Parent. Except that in the end, Jehoash abandoned his religious reforms and served the Asherim and other idols (**II Chronicles 24:17-19**). So was Jehoiada then not a Victorious Parent?

3. Ahaz (**II Chronicles 28**) was a wicked king who did not follow the Lord. Yet, his son Hezekiah led Israel on in reform, restoring the temple and the proper worship. He so trusted in God that when Israel fell to Assyria, Hezekiah and Judah were protected and delivered. Was Ahaz a Victorious Parent? Oh, sure, Hezekiah struggled spiritually at the end of his life, does that allow us to safely say that Ahaz was not a Victorious Parent?
 4. But then there is Manasseh the son of Hezekiah. Hezekiah had been mostly a good king, but Manasseh was evil. He sacrificed children. Was Hezekiah then a failed parent? But in the end, Manasseh actually repented and was restored (**II Chronicles 33:10-20**). So was Hezekiah a Victorious Parent after all?
 - G. Finally, consider God. The entirety of mankind are his offspring and yet numerous of us are not faithful to Him. Is He a failed father or a Victorious Parent?
 - H. Here is the point. Children are free to choose how they will respond to the parenting they experienced. Some may experience great parenting, with godly examples, and yet still be ungodly and rebellious. Some may experience terrible parenting and yet grow up to serve the Lord. The reality, most grow up with parenting in between those two extremes and make their choices based on what they decide to believe.
 - I. Now, don't get me wrong. Parents are a great influence on children. I hope we are positive ones. If our children grow up to be faithful, I pray that it is because of us and not in spite of us. If our children grow up to be unfaithful, I pray that it is in spite of us and not because of us. But there are some parents who simply don't need to feel like failures when their children are unfaithful and there are some parents who simply do not need to feel victorious when their children are faithful.
 - J. As such, here is what I can't do for you tonight. I can't provide you parenting tips that will ensure faithful children. I simply can't. There was a time when I thought I could, but my children have grown and I have been disillusioned of that arrogant notion. However, I can tell you what the ideal of Victorious Parenting is so we can strive for it.
- II. Victorious Parenting is Demonstrating Christ and His Church to Your Children in Your Marriage.
- A. I know that some of you are likely tiring of this repeated refrain, especially those of you who aren't yet convinced that I'm right about the meaning of marriage and the victory for husbands and wives. However, if I am right about that, then I'm right about this.
 - B. If we go back to **Genesis 1:28**, we see that Adam and Eve were to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. We noted in an earlier lesson that the meaning of that first marriage was to work and guard the Garden in such a way that it filled the earth. At the same time, they were supposed to populate that earth, presumably with offspring who had seen their demonstration of spreading God's sanctuary throughout the earth.
 - C. As we noted in that earlier lesson, we know that the literal Garden and literal tree of life no longer exist on earth. Yet, that original meaning still impacts the meaning of our marriages and therefore the meaning of our parenting. As they were to raise up children, setting the example of the God-glorifying spread of His sanctuary throughout the world, we are to do the same. After all, God does indeed want godly offspring (cf. **Malachi 2:15**). We recognize, however, that as children grow they are free to choose whether they will walk in our footsteps or not.
 - D. What does this all boil down to? It boils down to Victorious Parenting is simply this: allowing our children to see the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for His church and the church's submission to Christ through the actions of their parents. If we show them that, then we have been Victorious Parents. If they accept it, then they will be Victorious Christians. If they do not accept it, then they are the ones who failed, not us. Of course, if we did not show it to them and they become faithful, we can be very thankful that some other influence led them to Jesus, but we certainly can't claim to be Victorious Parents.
 - E. May I add here that I want to give thanks to God that being a Victorious Parent is not a conditional requirement for your salvation. You may look at your parenting and realize you have failed. Praise the Lord that sin can be forgiven by the blood of Jesus Christ just like every other sin.
- III. Some conclusions that follow from the true nature of Victorious Parenting.
- A. Victorious parents know only one thing is necessary for their kids.
 1. In **Luke 10:38-42**, Jesus rebukes Martha because she is distracted by so many things. She needs to learn only one thing is necessary. What is that thing? It is, as demonstrated by **Philippians 3:8**, knowing Jesus.

Victorious Parents understand that knowing reading, 'riting, and 'rithmetic is important, and is even necessary in our society, but knowing Jesus is necessary for eternity.

2. There will come a day when as a parent you won't care that your child was valedictorian, quarterback of the State Championship team, or President of the United States. You will care if they know Jesus. I'm not saying you are to ignore the other things, I'm simply saying Victorious Parents parent based on eternal principles, not simply temporal success.
 3. Allow me to illustrate with a tale of two Lamechs. In **Genesis 4-5**, there are two Lamech's. There is Lamech the descendent of Cain in **Genesis 4:18-19**, and there is Lamech the descendent of Seth in **Genesis 5:28-30**. These two Lamechs had some great children.
 - a) The children of Cain's Lamech were truly important movers and shakers in that primitive world. Their names were Jubal and Tubal-cain. Have you heard of them? Do you know what they did? Jubal was the father of those who play the lyre and the pipe. You know you're a proud parent if your child becomes a famous musician. Imagine being the parent of the child who invented music? Tubal-cain was the forger of all instruments of bronze and iron. You know you're a proud parent when your child becomes the CEO of Craftsman. Imagine being the parent of the child who invented tools. Can anything top having kids that know and did all of that?
 - b) But then there is the son of Seth's Lamech (**Genesis 4-9**). You might have heard of him. His name was Noah. Did he do anything great? Nothing much. He only found grace in the sight of the Lord allowing mankind to survive the judgment of God and exist beyond the flood.
 - c) Let me ask you out of Jubal, Tubal-cain, and Noah, which would you be more happy to be your son when the judgment comes? In the same way, there will come a day when the jobs, inventions, accomplishments, and awards of your children won't matter to you nearly as much as whether or not they know Jesus. So, Victorious Parents know the most important thing they can do in parenting is demonstrate Jesus Christ and His church to their children.
- B. Victorious parents put God first in their family.
1. **Matthew 6:33** provides a principle that should govern all our lives. It definitely governs parenting. Victorious Parents realize no matter what else happens with their parenting, God needs to be in control. God hasn't given us children in order to raise them however we want. He has given us children to accomplish His goals. Victorious Parents realize this.
 2. **Psalms 127:1-2** demonstrates that Victorious Parents realize without God, nothing else we do matters. We can work all day and all night, but we are simply not being successful if God isn't at the center.
- C. Victorious parents prioritize their marriage.
1. One of the number one things you can do to help your children be secure and confident is focus on your marriage more than you focus on them. Child-centered homes are not Victorious Homes. Please remember that God didn't have you marry simply to raise children. He instituted marriage to demonstrate Christ and the church. Our children need to see that in us.
 2. Further, God never intended the full on parenting role to be lifelong. As **Genesis 2:24** demonstrates, our children are supposed to leave the home. Sure, there is a relationship that is lifelong, but it shifts when they leave and start their own families. Too many people, when that happens, find they are married to strangers or to people they don't even like, because they didn't prioritize their marriage. Brothers and sisters, that is simply not portraying Christ and the church to your children or the world.
 3. Sadly, when the marriage is not prioritized, and emotional turmoil starts happening, fathers tend to prioritize their job, claiming they are justified because their job is to provide for the family, and mothers prioritize the children, claiming they are justified because their job is to nurture the kids. They individually pour all of their extra effort into those avenues and gain all their worth from them. The marriage suffers even more. Then when the kids are gone, they have no reason to stay married. When that happens, the whole point of marriage is destroyed and the children are actually the ones that end up hurt. Which leads to our next point.
- D. Victorious parents stay together.
1. I have no desire to make any parents here who are already divorced feel guilty. I know there are more circumstances and situations and nuances to your situations than I can cover in one lesson on parenting or marriage. I don't want to paint with too broad of a brush. But we do need to understand something. When we recognize the truth presented in **Matthew 19:3-9**, we understand that every divorce is the result of sin. Either 1) it is simply an unlawful divorce or 2) the divorce itself was lawful but someone committed sexual immorality. If you are in the first situation or considering the first situation, may I call

you to pursue Victorious Parenting? If you are in the second may I, on behalf of this congregation, express our sorrow to you that because of your spouse's failure your marriage was unable to fulfill this ultimate goal of a Victorious Marriage and Victorious Parenting. And if you are in that second circumstance and you were the spouse who committed the immorality, I assume because you are here today that you repented, but if not, please, we beg of you repent. Maybe you botched this victory in parenting, but you can still turn to the Lord and have the victory as a Christian.

2. I certainly know there are situations when the putting away is warranted. I'm not saying you can't recover from any of these situations. I'm not saying you can't be forgiven. I'm not saying God can't redeem this situation and your kids grow into great Christians. I'm not saying you can't do great things as parents. All of that can happen. And we are here to help as much as we can in that situation, especially for those who end up being single parents because of this situation.
 3. But we have to understand, if Victorious Parenting means portraying Christ and His church to our children, you simply cannot do that if you don't stay together. And I don't just mean staying together while the children are in the home. I mean staying together for life. So, I speak to those who have abandoned your lawful spouses, cheated on your lawful spouses, or are thinking about doing either of these. Please understand, you aren't just breaking some rule about marriage. You are destroying not only your opportunity to be a Victorious Parent but also your spouse's. You are distorting the image of Christ and His church before your children. You aren't making a decision for an easier life. You are sinning against Christ and His church.
 4. Finally, there is one exception to this. If you are in an unlawful marriage (see **Matthew 19:3-9**), you are committing adultery. No matter how much you love each other, you are not demonstrating Christ and His church to your children because the husband is acting as head over someone who is not his body, and the wife is submitting as the body to someone who is not her head. In this case, I encourage you to dissolve that Christ/church distorting marriage and show your children the true image of Christ and the church by trying to return to your lawful marriage and making it work.
- E. Victorious parents parent together. (In this point, I am, of course, not addressing how single parents can and should act.)
1. But Victorious Parenting is not just about maintaining a residence in the same house. Victorious Parents parent together. That is, they remember that in their roles as parents they maintain their roles as husband and wife. That means they work as a team that is learning to be one flesh (cf. **Genesis 2:23-24**).
 2. Sadly, some men hand off the parenting to their wives. They give a passing nod to **Ephesians 5:4**, but seem to think that the cultural ideal of men bringing home the bacon takes precedence and so they believe they have fulfilled their role by delegating child-rearing to their wives. Not true. This is simply not true. Men, if you are not parenting your children (and that is more than holding down a job that puts a roof over their heads and food on their tables), you are not portraying Christ to them.
 3. On the other hand, some fathers believe that because they are the head of the family, they can summarily and autonomously make parenting decisions without input from their wives. But how silly is that? God gave you your wife as a helper. You can't be helped by someone you don't listen to. As we learned in an earlier lesson, how ridiculous it would be for a head to ignore the input of its body. Men, you aren't fathering properly if you are ignoring the input of your wives.
 4. On the other side of this marriage equation are wives who, in rebellion to this traditional idea of marriage, want to prove that they are just as good at our cultural expectations of men and abandon their motherly duties. In the attempt to demonstrate that they don't have to be "stuck at home," they sadly throw the baby out with the bathwater, not merely getting jobs outside the home (which is not of itself a sin), but ignoring their job in the home. Sisters, if you are not parenting your children (and that is more than simply giving birth to them and adding finances into the family mix), you are not portraying the church to them.
 5. On the other hand there are mothers who, like Eve in the garden, decide to sidestep the authority of their husbands and make life and parenting decisions without submitting to their head. Perhaps they don't feel like their husband is the leader he should be so they just sidestep and make decisions autonomously. Or perhaps he has made decisions they didn't like in the past. In any event, Mothers, when you sidestep your husband's authority and parent on your own, you are not portraying Christ.
 6. Victorious Parents work together. The head leads, but listens to his helper. The helper supports and advises, but ultimately follows the lead of her head/leader.
- F. Victorious parents aren't trying to be victorious over other parents but over themselves.

1. If the victory we are striving for is to demonstrate Christ and His church to our children by the way we live with each other, we recognize that we aren't trying to beat other parents. We are trying to beat the dominion of sin in our lives that leads us to abandon the image of Christ and His church.
2. This is absolutely and utterly important. We are together in this church with numerous other parents who are striving to accomplish this victory. Do you want to know what we don't need? We don't need a lot of side bickering over family choices like home birth or hospital birth, nursing or bottle feeding, attachment parenting or independent parenting, slings or strollers, disposable diapers or cloth diapers, home schooling or public schooling. Everyone else doesn't have to be wrong for our choice to be good for our family. We aren't Victorious Parents when we are better parents than someone else.
3. Further, we need to recognize and communicate to our children that there are some matters of judgment and some issues of drawing lines that families have to decide for themselves and that doesn't make them less of a good and godly family than ours. There may be some books, tv shows, and movies that you allow in your family that I don't and vice versa. There are some words that don't bother me that may not be allowed in your family. There may be some words that you allow in your family that we don't allow in ours. When our children ask why little Johnny is allowed to watch some show or say some word, our response doesn't need to be a diatribe about how heathen little Johnny's Christian family is and how they are what is wrong with the church today.
4. And we don't need to wait around until kids leave the home to see which kids are faithful to see whose parenting was best. You know what I've seen? I've seen that some kids that watched tv, were public schooled, bottle fed, disposable diapered, and pushed around in strollers grew up to be faithful Christians. I've also seen that some of them abandoned the Lord when they were older. You know what else I've seen? I've seen some kids that were restricted from television, home schooled, nursed, cloth diapered, and carried in slings grew up to abandon the Lord. I've also seen that some of them are faithful to Him. Quit competing because the very sad part about this is how many Christians are silently happy that someone else's child is on a path to hell because they think it proves they are a more Victorious Parent.
5. Victorious Parents are concerned about showing Christ and the church to their children, not beating neighboring parents in some parenting game.

IV. To single parents

- A. Regrettably, time does not permit me to unpack for you what we might say about victory in your parenting. There are so many variables in your varying situations that I simply cannot address them all.
- B. Let me first say that I'm very sorry that whether through a spouse's untimely death or through a spouse's treachery that you are obviously not able to demonstrate to your children Christ and the church through marriage in your current situation. The answer to that, however is not to necessarily run and get married. As the single we discussed in our last lesson, victory for you is not getting married. Of course, you are also in the tough spot of not really being able to pursue the victory for the single. Because of your role as parent, you can't have undistracted devotion to the Lord.
- C. Certainly, there are some parallels between what we have discussed for parenting couples and for you as a parenting single. There are, however, some significant differences. None of these differences makes you second class or less than. They just put you in a different situation.
- D. Here is what you can do. You can pursue Victorious Christianity for your children to see. That is your Victory. **Ephesians 5:2** says, "And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God" (ESV). You can demonstrate Christ to your children through that kind of love and leadership.
- E. And we want you to know that we are here to help. We don't always know what help you need. We need you to let us know. But we want to honor you for your desire to show Christ to your children in this very difficult situation. Please let us know how we can help you.

Conclusion:

Parenting: it is the hardest job we have. Precious souls are entrusted to us. We cannot guarantee the choices those souls will make. However, we can control what we present to our children and how we live before them. Give them the very best opportunity they can have to be a Victorious Christian by showing them Victorious Parenting. Show them Christ and the church in your relationship. When you do that, you are Victorious Parents.