

Introduction:

Do you have more sleepless nights from concern over your own salvation or over the salvation of your children? If you're like me, it is the latter. No doubt, as we put God at the beginning of our families, we want to put God in the beginning of the lives of our children. And when I ask the question, "Is there hope for my family?" I am not asking will my family always have a place to live or is there hope that we will always have bread on the table. I am specifically asking will my kids be saved? Is there a hope that my family will be together around God's throne in eternity?

The answer to our question is shocking and counter-intuitive. But by the time we are done, we are going to know the answer. Please be aware that the answer I'm presenting today is not coming from my successes or my failures. While my older three children have been baptized for the remission of their sins, just like my wife and I have been, their salvation is not a "done deal." I cannot come to you as a person who has succeeded and is now giving you the plan. I'm coming to you as a Bible student who has faith in what God has revealed in His Word. Sadly, I have to admit I don't like the answers I'm giving to you today. They go against my very nature. These answers are not how I'm wired. I push against them all the time. However, I believe they are the Bible answers.

Discussion:

I. You can't save your children, only Jesus can do that.

- A. We start with the question, "How can I save my children?" The shocking answer, "You can't." Sadly, I have to admit that perhaps my greatest failure as a parent comes from asking the wrong question. It doesn't surprise me that this is the question I want to ask. I spend too much time thinking everything revolves around me. How can I save my family? How can I grow this church? How can I save that prospect? How can I fix my marriage? How can I fix your marriage? How can I comfort you in your loss? Do you see the common denominator in these kinds of questions? I. And the resounding answer to all of these questions is "I can't."
- B. Paul's words in **I Corinthians 1:13** haunt my parenting. Was Edwin crucified for you? Were you baptized in the name of Edwin? No. Why? Because I can't save anyone, not even my own children. I am too often like Moses in **Acts 7:25**. I suppose that my children will know God is giving them salvation by my hand. Perhaps that is why I am too often met with a similar resistance as Moses.
- C. There is only one Savior: Jesus Christ. God is the one who gives the growth according to **I Corinthians 3:5-7**. Israel was not saved from Egypt by the hand of Moses, but by the hand of the Lord (**Acts 7:35**). When Moses realized he could not save Egypt, but only God could, that was when God could use him to save his family from Egypt.
- D. I cannot give you some kind of insert plan A into problem B parenting model that will save your kids. Sadly, this mistake is made by all kinds of parents, good ones, bad ones, parents with good kids, parents with bad kids. Parents with spiritually strong kids give advice as if they saved their kids. "Have this study; follow this habit; pursue these disciplines and your kids will be saved." And yet, I've seen lost kids of parents who did all these things and saved kids of parents who did none of these things. I've seen the same family with some lost kids and some saved kids. And then I see us parents beat ourselves up trying to figure out what we did wrong. And then coming to some conclusion that we advise other parents: "Don't do this like I did; don't do that like I did." But it is the same mistake, thinking we save our kids. We don't. As **Romans 5:6-10** explains, Jesus saves. And as **Acts 4:12** clarifies, no one else can.

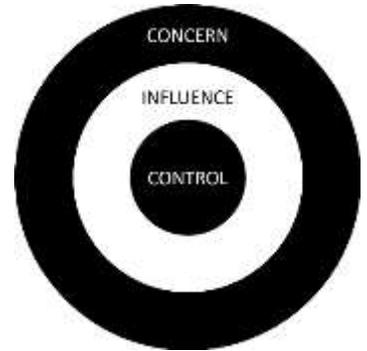
II. You can't save yourself by saving your children, only Jesus can do that.

- A. "But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (**Ephesians 2:4-6**, ESV). I can't save my kids, and I can't save me. Only Jesus can save me. I can't save my kids and my kids can't save me. Only Jesus can save me. I am saved by His grace and mercy, not by my parenting.
- B. That means two things for me.
 1. I must not become personally confident when my children are saved.
 2. I must not give in to despair when my children are not saved.

- C. Don't get me wrong. I'm not saying Christians don't have parenting responsibilities. We do. **Ephesians 6:4** and **Colossians 3:21** demonstrate that. We've all heard sermons on **Deuteronomy 6:4-9** to remind us that we are to teach our children. Certainly, it may be that neglecting our responsibilities as parents is one of the sins we need Jesus to save us from. But Jesus is the only one who can save us from that. Having saved kids won't save us from our sins (even sins connected with our parenting). And having unsaved kids will not keep us from having forgiveness (even from sins connected with our parenting).

III. Surrender your life to the saving lordship of Jesus.

- A. So where does this leave us? Do we throw up our hands and say we can't save our kids, so quit being concerned about it? No. Rather it drives us to remember a very simple concept. Though it is a simple biblical concept, I saw it best illustrated in The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People by Steven Covey. He presented a series of concentric circles similar to the one to the right.
- B. There are a lot of things we are concerned about, but only a few things we have control over. In between, there are things we have concerns about, but can't control, but we can exert influence. Rather than throwing up our hands, let's begin where we have control.
- C. We cannot control our children, at least not as they grow up and need to turn to the Lord for their salvation themselves. However, we can control ourselves. We cannot control whether our children will surrender to the Lordship of Jesus and be saved, but we can control whether we can.
- D. In **Acts 2:21**, Peter, quoting **Joel 2:32**, says, "Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (ESV). Would you be saved? Then call on the name of the Lord.
1. This is not simply calling out His name, but calling on Him and His authority. We see in **Romans 10:9-13** this is actually confessing Jesus as Lord. Because we often apply this to merely taking a confession in a baptistery, we miss the significance of this.
 2. This is not merely mouthing the words "Jesus is Lord." In the New Testament context, this was a contrast to the declaration that "Caesar is Lord." Consider the declaration of the Jews in **John 19:12-15** when they wanted Jesus crucified. Then consider the declaration of the Jews when they wanted to attack Paul but could only find Jason in **Acts 17:6-7**. In both cases, the declaration was the only king is Caesar. Caesar was their lord. In contrast to that, the saved declare not only is there another king than Caesar, there is no king but Jesus. They confess that Jesus, and Jesus alone, is Lord.
 3. Imagine, if you will, during the days of the Roman Empire a neighboring city-state that knows Rome is sending its legions against it. There is only one way to be saved from the destruction that is coming. They must swear allegiance to Caesar. The king and counsel of leaders comes to the emperor. They take off their crowns and regalia. They cast them before the emperor and confess, "Caesar is lord."
 4. That is the picture of this confession. Except, we cast off our crowns and confess "Jesus is Lord."
 5. Additionally, the New Testament is clear that for us, this ceremony is not merely one of words. It is also one of action. In **Acts 22:16**, we understand that we call on the name of the Lord when we are baptized, washing our sins away. In fact, we started in **Acts 2:21** as Peter mentioned this promise, and on that day about 3000 of the Jews responded declaring that they did in fact have a different king than Caesar as they repented and were baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of their sins (**Acts 2:38, 41**).
- E. Of course, you may be asking why anyone would want to confess allegiance to Jesus as Lord. Wouldn't we rather be free from anyone's Lordship? I mean, if we are just talking about someone delivering us and saving us, that is one thing, but kneeling before a King and giving our lives to His service? That sounds a little stifling. I think I'd really rather just go my own way and be my own king and lord.
1. The problem with this is that you misunderstand your options. Your choices are not between the Lordship of Jesus or the lordship of self. Your choices are the Lordship of Jesus and the lordship of sin and death. **Romans 6:16-23** demonstrates our choices. When we think we are simply following our own freedom, we find out we are actually submitting in slavery to sin, which leads to death.
 2. **I Corinthians 15:54-58** gives us our choice. Either death is our king or Jesus is our king. When anything or anyone but Jesus is your lord, then actually death is your lord. When Jesus is your Lord, death is swallowed up in victory.
- F. You can't control if your children will do that. But you can control if you will.



IV. Live your relationship with your Savior Jesus before and with your children.

- A. While you can't control whether your children will surrender to the saving Lordship of Jesus, you can influence them. And there is really only one thing you can do to influence them. Follow **Galatians 2:20**. "I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (**Galatians 2:20**, ESV).
- B. That is, don't just let your confession be a one-time event that you hope will save you. Let it be a life-changing beginning. Don't just declare Jesus as Lord, live with Him as Lord. And shine that light before your children. Isn't this what **Matthew 5:14-16** teaches us? Let your light shine before your children so that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven.
- C. No doubt, part of that includes teaching them. As **Ephesians 6:4** says, you should bring your children up in the Lord's discipline and instruction. And as **Deuteronomy 6:4-9** taught the parents under the Mosaic covenant, we should talk about the Lord our God to our children when we sit in the house, when we walk by the way, when we lie down, and when we rise up. However, have you ever noticed the basis of these discussions? These are not attempts to control your children into obedience and salvation. Rather, they are the overflow of loving the Lord with all your heart, soul, and mind and having His words written on your heart. In fact, when we love the Lord like that and His Word fills our hearts, how can we do anything but talk about Him and His Word?
- D. I can't promise you how your children will respond to your influence. But I can promise you this, if you are not living out the Lordship of Jesus, you are not influencing your children to His Lordship. And I can promise you this, if your influence is not toward the Lordship of Jesus, it is away from it. There is no neutral influence. Your children may reject your influence, but there is no neutral influence.
- E. So, let me ask. What direction is your influence pointing them?

Conclusion:

As I said, this isn't the answer I want to give or hear. I'd really rather be able to give you the 12-step plan for saving your kids. On the other hand, this is actually the exact answer I want to hear. After all, I know me. If my children's salvation depended on me perfectly accomplishing some 12-step plan (or any number you want to choose) they would be out of luck. And so would I. However, my children do not have to rely on me to save them. Jesus is the one who does that. So, I invite my children and all of you to turn to Jesus. Repent and be converted. Let the Lord create in you a clean heart and renew in you a right Spirit. You can't save anyone else. You can't control anyone else into salvation. But you can control whether you will bow your knee before Jesus, cast off your crown and rule, and confess Jesus as your Lord, calling on His name in baptism for the remission of your sins so God will wash your sins away. Are you ready to confess Jesus? If so, let us help you right now.