

The Prattmont Church of Christ is just what the name suggests, a church that belongs to Christ. We are not a denomination; we are simply a group of Christians trying very hard to practice the teachings of our Head, Jesus Christ. The New Testament offers a complete pattern for what each local church should be like—its organization, its worship, its work, etc. We are committed to following that pattern. We cordially invite you to attend our services. We would also welcome any comments or questions about this bulletin.

TIMES OF SERVICES:

Sunday

Bible Study..... 9:00 A.M.
 Worship 10:00 A.M.
 Training Class5:00 P.M.
 Worship.....6:00 P.M.

Wednesday:

Bible Study 7:00 P.M.



Weekly Bulletin
 June 14, 2020

Are Young Children Sinners?

by Joshua Carter

Young children are fools, not sinners.

Katie and I have been reading a few different parenting books written from Biblical perspectives, and while they have contained some helpful strategies, I’ve been really bothered by the premise most mainstream Christian parenting books are built on.

These are actual quotes from one book. “Your child is born sinful.” “Sin is bound in the heart of your child.” Another book states, “Remember, it’s the sin inside them that messes everything up.”

Is that actually true? Do the Scriptures teach that the problem with your defiant 2-year-old is that he was born in total depravity and completely lost in sin? Please consider some counterpoints.

Why would Jesus use children as an example for his disciples to model, saying, “Unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 18:3b, 4)?

Why would Solomon write that “God made men upright, but they have sought out many schemes”? (Ecclesiastes 7:29)?

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Why would Paul refer to his time before understanding the law of God as being “alive,” but then say when he knew the commands of God, “sin came alive and I died” (Romans 7:9)?

It’s because sin is a willful choice to choose something evil over something good. Infants don’t make any choices in how they behave. Young children aren’t capable of comprehending such complexity. Until a child’s conscience has awoken to the point that he can experience things like malice or guilt, he’s simply not capable of sinning. The Bible is plain that the way in which we’ve all become guilty of the sin of Adam is “because all sinned” (Romans 5:12; cf. 3:23).

Now with all of that being said, what does the Bible say is the problem with our young children that we are tasked with correcting?

“Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline drives it far from him” (Proverbs 22:15).

The same distinction is clear in Paul’s appeal to the saints in Corinth. “Brothers, do not be children in your thinking. Be infants in evil, but in your thinking be mature” (1 Corinthians 14:20).

Foolishness is a very different problem than sinfulness! The reason why your little bundle of joy has become a raging hurricane of terror sometimes is not because he is consciously rebelling against God and his righteousness. It’s because he is acting impulsively in ways that seem reasonable to him, but he doesn’t yet understand the foolishness of his actions. And so, while we have young children, our job as parents is to impart wisdom through training and discipline.

“The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child left to himself brings shame to his mother” (Proverbs 29:15).

“Whoever spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is diligent to discipline him” (Proverbs 13:24).

“For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it” (Hebrews 12:11).

Interestingly, one book compared parenting young children to house-training a puppy. The author was illustrating the point that training must involve both discipline and instruction. However, the same author failed to see a young child who misbehaves is no more sinful than a puppy who uses the bathroom inside. The problem is not sin, but foolishness. The solution is providing discipline and instruction with that understanding. The goal is to help your child (or puppy) understand and appreciate a wiser path.

Now here’s what that accomplishes. Our children will learn the principles of considering the consequences for their actions. They’ll learn to be more mindful of the effects their choices have on their own well-being and the well-being of others. They’ll learn the virtues of respect for authority, self-control, and pleasing others. All of those are wisdom principles.

At some point, older children do become mature enough to be capable of sin. When that time comes, how much more prepared for that struggle will they be if we’ve been giving them these principles along the way? As they’ve learned to make the right decisions regarding wisdom and foolishness, they will have been trained to make the right decisions regarding righteousness and sin.

So, fellow parents of young children, take heart. They do make some days difficult (like, really, really difficult) because they’re foolish. But they’re not sinful. Teach them about God’s wisdom and God’s righteousness. As they learn to accept the former, we are preparing them to one day accept the latter.

[Disclaimer: I am by no means a parenting expert, and you might very legitimately question both my credentials and ability. So, take this for what it’s worth and let God’s word be your guide always.]