The Most Important Question in Developing Good Character

Intro

In our Ontrack Devotions this past month we were asked the question, “Is your character determined by who your parents are?”

In other words, “Will you grow up to be a godly person if your parents are godly?”

What do you think? How would you answer that question?

Let’s take a look at two different kings and see what we learn about their parents and then see if we can determine what leads to developing godly convictions.

Read 2 Kings 18:1-7a

I. King Hezekiah was a godly king who “did what was right in the eyes of the Lord.”

A. As a matter of fact, it says in 18:5, “Hezekiah trusted in the Lord, the God of Israel. There was no one like him among all the kings of Judah, either before him or after him.”

B. What would you suspect was true of his Dad?

II. What do we know of Hezekiah’s father- King Ahaz?

Read 2 Kings 16:1-4

A. “He did not do what was right in the eyes of God”

B. So Hezekiah’s dad did evil and yet Hezekiah followed God.

C. So it is not a given that just because your parents don’t follow God that you can’t

III. What do you think was true of Hezekiah’s son- King Manasseh, who followed after him?  
 Read 2 Kings 21:1-3

A. It says that King Manasseh “did not walk with God or follow his Dad’s ways.”

B. Summary

King Hezekiah has a Dad (King Ahaz) who does evil and while he does good.

King Manasseh has a Dad (King Hezekiah) who does good and while he does evil.

What makes the difference? What determines what your personal convictions will be?

Certainly, the environment you grow up in influences your spiritual condition but it does not determine it.

IV. Definition of Convictions

What is a conviction?  
 A. In a court of law, the jury listens to testimony and examines the evidence, and if they think the person is guilty beyond a reasonable doubt, they hand down a conviction.

B. A conviction is a strong belief, based on examined evidence that guides your life.

V. Starting point for Developing Convictions.

A. Somehow it is not enough to just know the facts or even to witness others who have given testimony to the truth in how they have lived their lives.

B. King Manasseh before he became king ruled along side of his Dad, King Hezekiah as a co-regent. In spite of his father’s training and example he still chose to do evil.

C. So what makes the difference?

D. The starting point for developing Godly convictions has to be a desire to live for God’s glory.

Read Romans 12:1-2

1. These verses begin with a conditional statement. “If” you offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God, “then” you will be able to approve what Gods’ will is.

2. When we are developing personal convictions, we are seeking to develop a strong belief that this is what is pleasing to God in this situation. This is about what God would desire- His will.

3. If we don’t care if we please the Lord or not, it will be impossible for us to develop godly convictions.

4. Notice these verses start, “Therefore, I urge you brothers, in view of God’s mercy.” What does that mean? What are God’s mercies?

a. Mercy- means God doesn’t give us what we deserve.

b. What do we deserve? Hell, punishment for our rebellion against God.

c. Paul is saying that in light of God’s love for you and as a result of all that is true because of the gospel, I urge you to be willing to surrender yourself to God.

d. What is true because of the gospel?

Rebellious sinners can be forgiven because Jesus took the death penalty that we deserved and in exchange gave us his perfect record.

e. The starting point for developing godly convictions is that you desire to practice what will be pleasing to God. You willingly surrender your life to God because you are overwhelmed by His love demonstrated by His sacrificial death for you.

f. If you don’t have a desire to be pleasing to God, you may obey because it is easier to get along with your parents by not rocking the boat but when you leave home the minute someone pushes on their values you will probably cave because you haven’t developed those beliefs for yourself.

For example, let’s say you are staying overnight at a friend’s house, and they want to watch a movie that you know your parents wouldn’t approve of and your friends press you about what you think about it, what will you tell them?

You might be able to get away with “My parent’s wouldn’t approve” right now. But what about when you are on your own. And what if your parents did approve of it but God wouldn’t approve of it, then what?

5. Read Heb. 4:2

a. This verse says they heard the gospel, but it was of no value to them. Why? Because they did not combine it with faith.

b. What is faith?

Faith is knowing the truth and purposing to apply it to your life.

E. Some of you have questions about what you believe and why. That is ok.

1. learning to ask questions of your faith is important. Why?

a. it helps you figure out what you believe, which strengthens your faith.

b. it helps you to be able to defend your faith when skeptics ask.

F. But the starting point, the most important question you need to ask yourself is, “Do you want to be pleasing to God? Do you want to follow God with your life? Do you want to bring glory to God with your life?” In view of what Jesus has done for you by dying on the cross are you willing to give Him your life to live for Him?”

That is the starting point.

Conclusion

Your convictions are not ultimately dependent upon what your parents do or don’t believe.

Your convictions will ultimately be determined by whether you want to please God with your life.

I say that because you can know all the right things to do but if you don’t want to do them then your convictions- your strong beliefs that guide your life will not fall in line with what God says. Because God says, you need to be willing to be “living sacrifices.” That is, you need to be willing to surrender your life to God for whatever He wants.

When you realize how much God loves you and the fact that you wouldn’t have a life if it weren’t for the cross, it helps to put that sacrifice in perspective.

Application

Is the greatest desire of your heart to be pleasing to the Lord?

Do you want to live your life for God, or do you want to be in charge and do whatever you want to do?

If it is the desire of your heart to live for God, I want you to stand in just a moment.

By standing, you aren’t saying that you always know what to do, or that you always do right, but that the desire of your heart is to glorify God with your life.

There is a big difference between someone who messes up but is really trying to please God versus someone who doesn’t care if they are pleasing to God or not.

If the desire of your heart is to glorify God with your life, you want to please God, then stand.

If you are struggling to stand, what is it that is holding you back?

Pray

FSM is all about helping you learn how to grow in living a life that glorifies God.