



JOHN 10: PARENTING PRINCIPLES

John 10:1-5 “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice. And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers.”

These verses in *John 10* portray a vivid picture of a Shepherd caring for his sheep. The relationship between the shepherd and the sheep is one of trust and connection. This scripture gives us the model that the sheep follow the shepherd because they trust Him. As parents who have been renewed by the Holy Spirit, we are to grow into a greater and greater likeness of Christ. While we will never be the Good Shepherd in *John 10*, we can take cues from our Shepherd and seek to interact with our children in a similar manner as Christ interacts with us. We do this not merely as an effort to be good parents or to raise good kids but from a desire to grow in our likeness to Christ, point our children toward Christ and demonstrate the Gospel.

The Sheep Hear His Voice

We must talk with our children. While this may seem obvious, it is often very difficult to take time to have meaningful conversations with our children. Children need to hear our voice, so they are given a window into our heart. What we talk about will help our children see what is important to us. How we talk through things will also give them an insight into how we grant forgiveness when hurt, express thankfulness for life’s blessings, acknowledge our own sin, and respect others through disagreements.

- Application: Identify 3-5 messages which you purpose to communicate consistently to your children. Some examples could include: “God is good”, “I am so thankful for Jesus”, “I care about you” or “I am here for you.”

Calleth His Own Sheep By Name

It is amazing to think Jesus knows us by name He knows our strengths and weaknesses and He knows us better than we know ourselves. As parents, we are to know our children. Knowing may include: knowing what is important to them, knowing who they are spending time with, knowing what they enjoy doing, and so on. Knowing also means understanding the gifts and talents God has placed in them and how to nurture those gifts. It is easy as parents to focus on our children’s weaknesses and lose sight of the gifting God has given them. We are not to neglect our children’s weaknesses, but we should not solely focus on them either.

- Application: Take time this week to notice what your child does well and help them see their strengths as gifts from a loving, caring God. Purpose to share at least one affirmation with your child each night. Be willing to address areas where they may need to grow, but surround this with encouragement.

Sheep Follow Him

While many of us realize leading our children is important, it is often difficult to know how this leading looks in day-to-day moments. Leading is outside many of our comfort zones. Desiring to follow rather than lead is not bad, and in many of life's roles we are encouraged to follow. Yet we are called to a position of Biblical leadership with our children. This means taking proactive steps in our homes to establish what will guide the home and the people living in it. It means being willing to hear questions and concerns so meaningful discussions can happen in the home. It means taking the lead in processing through emotions and situations with our children so they can learn from our example and our relationship with Christ. It means modeling a willingness to do what you do not feel like doing because we know it is the right thing to do. This could be anything from getting up in time for church on Sunday morning, expressing thankfulness, or asking for forgiveness after an outburst of anger.

- Application: Around the dinner table or before bedtime, have each family member reflect on one good thing which happened that day and one “not-so-good” thing. Model for your children and help them to be able to understand and identify their emotions, their reactions, and God' love and instruction in the midst of each day.

They Know His Voice

The sheep knowing the shepherd's voice indicates this was not their first interaction with the shepherd. The parenting journey is a wonderful, life-long journey. Lord willing, we will have many opportunities to interact with our children. The sheep knowing the shepherd's voice indicates the deep relationship between the shepherd and sheep which was built over time. We are to interact with our children in a way that gains our child's trust and builds this relationship. They will not always like what we say, what we do, or where we are leading them, but hopefully our interactions with them will show we have their best interest/s in mind. We can all look back and see many times when we have not reflected Christ to our children. And we can all look back and see many times as well where His grace and mercy worked through our weaknesses. Let us step forward, embrace the principles we see in *John 10*, and reflect Christ more fully, so our children might see Him as the Good Shepherd He is.

- Application: Purpose to have a time of reflection as a family where you write down ways you have seen the Lord work in your lives, reasons to be thankful, and encouraging “Ebenezers” you want to hold on to for the future. Holidays, vacations/travel time, or birthdays are a great time to do this.

ACCFS has a host of resources available to encourage parents in their responsibilities. We continue to conduct *Parenting with a Purpose* seminars and other presentations as requested. In addition, we develop and refer to many other helpful resources on our website at www.accounseling.org/parenting. If you have requests or would like more information, please contact ACCFS at (309)263-5536.