

GPS Class
“Shepherding Children’s Hearts”
The Romans Approach to Training Children
Lesson 1: Godward Orientation

Introduction: Godward Orientation?

- “The direction of the sailboat is not determined by the direction of the breeze, but by the trim of the sail.”
- In a sense, Godward Orientation is like the set of the sail in a child’s life. Whatever the shaping influences of life, it is the child’s Godward Orientation that determines his responses to those shaping influences.

In addition to external influences, we talked about 3 “Bents” of Children:

- Toward the “image of God” (Gen. 1:26-27)
- Toward their “sinful nature” (flesh sarx Romans)
- Toward their “inherited traits.”
- We want to influence our child to sail in the direction of God
- Proverbs 9:7-10 “Whoever corrects a mocker invites insult; whoever rebukes a wicked man incurs abuse. Do not rebuke a mocker or he will hate you; rebuke a wise man and he will love you. Instruct a wise man and he will be wiser still; teach a righteous man and he will add to his learning. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.”
- Verse 10 helps us see what ultimately determines whether a child responds as a mocker or a wise man. It is the fear of the Lord that makes one wise and it is that wisdom that determines how he responds to the correction.

The Book of Romans provides some great insight into providing that influence.

- Although Paul’s letter to the Romans was written to address a sinner’s response to the Gospel, it applies to a children responding to parental influences toward to a Godward Direction.
- Romans Applied to Influencing a Child’s Direction
 1. God – aware, seek, worship
 2. Morality – strong sense of right and wrong
 3. Sin – we all sin, and we should make right choices
 4. Faith – personal sense of desire for relationship with Lord
 5. Grace – forgiveness given in relationship
 6. Obedience – driven by sense of relationship
 7. Freedom – breaking the chain of sinful nature
 8. Spirit – to live under the control of the Holy Spirit

Chapter 1: We are all influenced by God!

- Romans 1:18-19 “The wrath of God is being revealed from even against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them.”
- We are all influenced by God, but we may suppress the truth he reveals. If we respond to God in faith, we find fulfillment in knowing and serving God.
- If we suppress God’s influence, we will ultimately worship and serve the creation (idolatry) rather than the Creator. Choosing Between Two Ways
 - The figure on the left perceives the influence of God as good, kind, holy and beneficial and responds to God in worship and service that is developed in goodness, kindness, holiness and of benefit to others.

- The figure on the right suppresses the influence of God and finds creation, himself and the world around him, as the most important influences in his life. He responds to those influences in worship and service that is developed in a pattern of the impact of those influences, often self serving and selfish and very negative to others.
- We cannot be neutral! Even as a child we begin worshiping and serving God or Idols.

Application Questions

1. What do you think is the Godward Orientation of your children? Are their lives organized around God as Father, Shepherd, Lord, Sovereign, and King? Or do you see them living for some sort of pleasure, approval, acceptance, or some other false god?
2. How can you design ways of challenging the idolatry you may see within your child in a way that will win their heart?
3. How can you make your focus in correction the deeper issues of Godward orientation? How can you help your child see how he is investing himself in things that cannot satisfy?
4. God is using you to direct your child's heart. Are you letting God shape you in a way that will give Godward Direction? Specifically what are you doing to have a Godward influence on a child?