

## **Anxiety and Child Rearing**

**Big Idea:** God created humans to have impact (rule and subdue) and to be connected (be fruitful and multiply). Because of our sin nature we no longer move toward these things easily and thus experience anxiety. As Parents, with the Lord's help, confront anxiety and control in their own life, they become a bridge children walk across toward the Lord and growth in the same area.

For Christians do not place their hope in their children, but rather their children are a sign of their hope . . . that God has not abandoned this world. Stanley Hauerwas in *A Community of Character: Toward a Constructive Christian Social Ethic*

### **How do you become parents that help children move away from anxiety?**

*Disarm Anxiety in your own life and Grow Perseverance*

Self-reliance tires you out and sabotages perseverance. Parental perseverance is the ability to keep demonstrating steadfast love without a guarantee of any specific earthly outcome and this type of 'consistency' helps a child rest in a parent's love.

Psalm 127 – Psalm of Ascent (signing as they came out of captivity hoping to reestablish themselves)

Vv.1-2: Unless the Lord builds the house, the work of the builders is useless. Unless the Lord protects a city, guarding it with sentries will do no good. It is useless for you to work so hard from early morning until late at night, anxiously working for food to eat; for God gives rest to his loved ones.

Vv.1-2: when we forget God's covenantal commitment to us we become more self-reliant

Vv. 3-5: Children are a gift from the Lord; they are a reward from him. Children born to a young man are like sharp arrows in a warrior's hands. How happy is the man whose quiver is full of them! He will not be put to shame when he confronts his accusers at the city gates.

Vv. 3-5 God wants to do something for you (give you a future – place of children in Hebrew culture)

**Big Idea:** Trusting in God's covenantal commitment gives you rest from your enemies – it provides a cover and a future by establishing your household.

Both sections share the distinctive theme of Yahweh's hidden, though decisive, involvement in house and home. In the Hebrew text, there is a wordplay between the "builders" (Hb. *bonayw*) in the first half and the "sons" (Hb. *banim*) in the second. We also need to recognize the ambiguity building a "house" has in Hebrew (as in English): it can denote the physical structure but also the household, that is, the family. While we cannot be certain the latter meaning was originally part of this first proverb, it certainly steps forward when seen in light of the second proverb. Thus, the whole psalm is concerned

with the building of one's family (p.460). NIV Biblical Commentary by Craig C. Broyles published by Hendrickson (Peabody, Massachusetts).

Now I am coming to you for the third time, and I will not be a burden to you. I don't want what you have; I want you. And anyway, little children don't pay for their parents' food. It's the other way around; parents supply food for their children. I will gladly spend myself and all I have for your spiritual good, even though it seems that the more I love you, the less you love me. (2 Corinthians 12:14-15)

### *Fight Affluenza*

The biggest enemy in our culture is busyness and consumption that disconnects families. It is an ongoing battle to become a restful connected family.

Affluenza, n. a painful, contagious, socially transmitted condition of overload, debt, anxiety, and waste resulting from the dogged pursuit of more. Affluenza by John De Graaf, David Wann & Thomas H. Naylor

Modern parents are teaching children that life exists in caring for and preserving things instead of people. The culture of consumerism is not just possessing things, but doing so with such frequency, volume and unquestioning routine, that those very things, as well as the values with which they are laden, actually possess us. Consuming becomes the central fact around which all of daily life revolves. Where is an unholy amount of our week often spent? Buying, returning, standing in line, driving around town to get the best price, arranging, cleaning, repairing, browsing, updating, discarding, paying, shopping, comparing, financing, and venturing out into the world to get the squarest deal. "Spending the Currency of our Lives" in Mars Hill Review by Tricia O'Connor Elisarna

This pursuit of "Affluenza" begins and continues based on a faulty belief that God has not done enough and is holding out on us.

The seed cast in the weeds represents the ones who hear the kingdom news but are overwhelmed with worries about all the things they have to do and all the things they want to get. The stress strangles what they heard, and nothing comes of it. (Mark 4:19, The Message)

### *Practice Life Giving Discipline*

#### *A. Life Giving Discipline Undermines Self-Reliance & Reinforces Interdependence*

The goal of discipline is to drive out "foolishness" (Proverbs 22:15). Biblical foolishness is living self-reliantly (trusting yourself) instead of "fearing the Lord." Discipline is not hurting your child after they have done something wrong it is guiding them away from self-reliance towards trust in someone bigger (parents first and then the Lord). The result of children obeying (listening to and accepting a parent's care and guidance) is better behavior. If you grow a more interdependent relationship with your child it will help them find that in the future.

Remember Grace and Truth

Remember it takes a team (disarming triangulation) focused on harmony not unity

## *B. Life Giving Discipline Guides Children Toward Cooperating with the Lord*

What does this look like?

1. Help Your Child Accept and Live Into Guide their God Given Design (drive out their child's unique foolishness).

Train up a child in the way he should go, Even when he is old he will not depart from it (Proverbs 22:6, NASB)

The proverb (22:6) invites us to teach our children according to each one's unique "bent," their natural inclination and learning style. And if we work in concert with our children's uniqueness, they won't depart from their God-given bent even as they age. If we were working with wood to fashion a bow for hunting, we would bend the wood in the way it is formed rather than to try to refashion it by bending it in the opposite direction (pg. 31). Dan Allender in *How Children Raise their Parents*

Children need recognize, name and accept their Strengths & Weaknesses

Don't think you are better than you really are. Be honest in your evaluation of yourselves, measuring yourselves by the faith God has given us. Just as our bodies have many parts and each part has a special function, so it is with Christ's body. We are many parts of one body, and we all belong to each other. In his grace, God has given us different gifts for doing certain things well. (Romans 12: 3-6, NLT).

2. Help Your Child Do Aloneness & Powerlessness

Each heart knows its own bitterness, and no one else can fully share its joy. (Proverbs 14:10)

Three different times I begged the Lord to take it away. Each time he said, "My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness." So now I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ can work through me. That's why I take pleasure in my weaknesses, and in the insults, hardships, persecutions, and troubles that I suffer for Christ. For when I am weak, then I am strong. (2 Corinthians 12: 8-10)

3. *Help your child grow a willingness to be misunderstood*

When the accusers heard this, they slipped away one by one, beginning with the oldest, until only Jesus was left in the middle of the crowd with the woman. Then Jesus stood up again and said to the woman, "Where are your accusers? Didn't even one of them condemn you?" "No, Lord," she said. And Jesus said, "Neither do I. Go and sin no more." (John 8:9-11)

## Questions for Reflection

1. What are your greatest fears as a parent?
2. Are there ways you try to control your children (actively or passively)?
3. What would it look like for you to parent more out of faith in God and his love for your children?
4. Where are you following the lie of affluenza in our culture? Are there ways you can slow down, consume less and have more space to be with your children in more relaxed ways?
5. Do you see the goal of discipline as driving out foolishness? What might it look like for your child to trust themselves less and lean on the Lord and others in good ways? How could you help them get there?
6. What would it look like for you to help your child better cooperate with the Lord? Go through each of the four ways mentioned to do this and consider where you can help your child to move into this.