

THINGS TO TEACH YOUR CHILDREN: God Wants You to Know Him well

Sixth in a series by Dr. Rick Perrin from II Timothy 1:3-14 and 3:14-17

“From childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.” II Timothy 3:15

I know some of you think that since my beloved Steelers won the Super Bowl last Sunday, I won't be able to talk about anything else. Not true. Instead, let me tell you about the Cleveland Browns, or rather, about Otto Graham. Automatic Otto was the magnificent Hall-of-Fame quarterback of the Cleveland Browns back in the late 1940s and 50s. He was a graduate of Northwestern University where he had enrolled before World War II. The football coach saw him lift a pass during a freshman intramural touch football game, and the next season Otto Graham started for the Wildcats and began setting Big Ten records. On October 2, 1943, Northwestern played Michigan, and sometime during that game Otto was sacked. The next play he was sacked again. And then, three times in a row, he was sacked again! Michigan went on to win 21-7.

Years later, after Graham had led the Browns to the NFL championship, the team was invited to the White House to meet the President. As Graham stood there waiting, he was approached by a large man with blue eyes and a twinkly smile. “Say, Mr. Graham. Just wanted to say hello,” the fellow said. “Oh,” Graham replied. “Do I know you?” “Well, you might say,” the man replied. “I played defensive end for Michigan and in '43 I smeared you three straight times.” Graham laughed. “My head's still ringing! What's your name and what do you do here?” The man said, “I'm Vince Mroz, United States Secret Service.” To Vince Mroz, that encounter with Otto Graham was fun, but it meant next to nothing compared to another introduction at the White House. That was the day his mother came to visit him, and he took her by the hand and walked up to a man with a big grin and a bald head and said, “Mr. President, I'd like you to meet my mom.” And Dwight D. Eisenhower said to her, “Mrs. Mroz, you must be very proud of your son.”

Who have you met? Who do you know, and how well do you know him? Over the last several weeks we've been talking about *Things to Teach Your Children*. Today we'll consider this amazing truth: *God Wants You to Know Him Well*. Turn with me to II Timothy 1:3-14 and then chapter 3, verses 14-17. I want to draw three things out of this passage. **1. God wants us to know him. 2. Five things to do to help you know God better. And 3. How you can help your children to know God well.**

1. God wants us to know him. Let's begin with what Paul says in chapter 1, verse 9. “*God...has saved us and, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity.*” You know, we rather cherish the romantic idea that God is like the head football coach of Northwestern University. He hears about this raw freshman who can really throw a pass, who's actually come to the school to play basketball, and he comes out to see for himself if the kid can play football. And he's impressed. The boy has a lot to learn, he makes mistakes, but there is no denying his talent. So the coach comes up to him after the intramural game and he says, “I'd like you to play for the

varsity.” And he lures him away from the evil basketball coach to the grander glories of the gridiron. That’s the stuff of which legends are made. And we like to think that’s how God is with us. He hears about us, comes to see what we can do, and he spots our good works and our potential. He knows that we don’t do so well in certain areas—maybe we throw a football like a basketball—but we’ve got something he can work with. And so he saves us and prepares us to play on the varsity team in heaven. We like that way to tell the story.

But that’s not how it happens. Paul says, *“God...has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace.”* In other words, however good you may be has absolutely nothing to do with his calling you. Notice this word grace. It doesn’t refer to athletic moves. It means God’s calling is a gift. Totally. The truth is that sin has polluted your whole life—mind, heart, and actions. You were a wreck when God called you. It is rather like God has passed over the talented and impressive quarterback, and he sees you sitting on the sidelines watching--a pimply-faced, slobby, unathletic clod--and he picks you for the varsity team.

Why would he do this? I don’t know. Notice that Paul says God has called you *“according to His own purpose.”* There is nothing in you that induced God to pick you out. But he’s done it nevertheless. Notice that Paul says, this was *“Granted to us in Christ Jesus from all eternity.”* In other words, you are part of God’s plan. From forever past God had you in mind. Don’t worry about how this could be. Just accept the fact that he’s known you from way before you were born. It has always been his plan to send Jesus to come and save you, and at just the right moment of history, Christ entered the world and died on a cross to pay for your sins.

And then, Paul says in the first line of verse 9, He *“called us with a holy calling.”* In other words, part of God’s plan involved when and where you would hear about Jesus and the forgiveness of sins he offers. That’s the call. “Come, put your trust in Jesus Christ alone to save you,” someone said. It may have been a parent. Perhaps you heard the call from a pastor in church. Maybe a friend told you. It could have come as you were reading the Bible. Suddenly the lights came on and you realized that Jesus Christ is your only hope. God’s Holy Spirit in that moment whispered to your heart, and whatever your sin or resistance toward God, you suddenly realized that by faith in Jesus it can all be forgiven. You reached out to him in faith, and you came to know him! Let me say here, it may be that you have never responded to the call of God. Perhaps today you are waking up and you feel God’s tug on your heart. My friends, the invitation is open to any of us who will accept it. Oh, I hope you will, right now, today. Breathe out a prayer to God and tell him that you want him to forgive your sins, that you’re trusting Jesus to save you, and that you’re willing to follow him. Answer his call!

Now skip down to verse 12 and notice Paul’s experience. He says, *“I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day.”* When you become a Christian you trust Christ to do everything necessary to secure your salvation. But Paul is talking about more than that here. He’s talking about entrusting God with all that we value. A man said to his wife, “I have good

news and bad news.” “What’s the bad news?” she asked. “Well,” he said, “we owe \$100,000 in college loans for the kids, a month’s salary in back taxes, and our retirement fund is tanking.” “What’s the good news?” his wife asked, hopefully. “Our identity has been stolen.” Barb and I received a letter from a financial institution a few weeks ago informing us that a tape containing our sensitive financial records had been lost. They’ve since located it. But it reminds us of the danger we all face that someone may penetrate the firewalls and security procedures and rob us of all we own. Who do you trust?

Trust takes a long time to establish. The fact that Paul says he knows God and is convinced that God is able safely to guard everything we place in his care and keeping—that didn’t come over night. It requires months and years of pursuing our relationship with God, building a history of experience with him, seeing him demonstrate his faithfulness over and over. I had a conversation with a long time Christian friend this past week. He is facing the possibility of financial ruin and the loss of everything he has worked for. I talked with another Christian friend. He is being snowed under by a blizzard of work-related demands and doesn’t know how he can handle everything. I talked with another Christian friend whose marriage has hit a rough spot and whose son is teetering on the brink of abandoning the faith. And I went to the doctor this past week for my regular check-up, and am forced to face once again the fragility of health and what could happen sometime in the future. But each of us has followed Christ for many years. We, like Paul, are absolutely convinced that God can and will take care of every concern. That confident faith comes from the experience of knowing God. If you are worried about circumstances in your life, the way to avoid being blown away by fear and doubt is by knowing God well. The hymn writer bids us sing, *“Jesus, Jesus, how I trust Him! How I’ve proved Him o’er and o’er! Jesus, Jesus, precious Jesus! O for grace to trust Him more!”* Dear friends, God wants us to know him like this.

2. Five things to do to help you know God better. How well do you know God? Many Christians don’t know him well at all, with the result that their faith is weak. Some are just starting to follow Christ. Some started well but stalled out along way. Some Christians are in churches where they receive little encouragement to know God better. But all of us, no matter how well we know him, can grow in our relationship with him. In our passage the apostle Paul provides five things we can do.

a. Refresh. In chapter 1 verse 6 Paul says to Timothy, *“Kindle afresh the gift of God which is in you.”* Perhaps you’ve grown weary or discouraged. Age can do that to you. Life can grind you down. Being overused in Christian service can do it. Maybe you are disillusioned with the church. Maybe you’re just tired of the people who are members of the church. (We don’t have any here who would make you feel that way, but other churches do!) Paul gives a clue about how to be refreshed in verse 6 when he reminds Timothy how he received his gift from God. He says, You received it *“through the laying on of my hands.”* The laying on of hands occurred at Timothy’s ordination as a pastor. As a pastor Timothy was employed in ministry through the church. To enable him to do that, God gave him certain spiritual gifts. God has given you one or more spiritual gifts. He does this for all of us. He intends us to use these gifts in the church’s ministry. To be refreshed, then, make a decision to become involved in ministry and start

using your spiritual gifts. You'll discover your spiritual gifts as you go along by trial and error. When we use our spiritual gifts it refreshes us. It energizes our faith.

b. Relate. Paul tells Timothy in verse 8 not to be ashamed of the simplicity of the gospel. And not to be embarrassed by association with other Christians, even though some of them may not be the coolest people. But, he says, *“Join with me in suffering for the gospel.”* You and I may not have to suffer much. So, what does it mean to relate? Make a decision that you will actively participate in fellowship with other believers. Worship is part of that. Regular involvement in the church is another. I know many Christians whose faith flame begins to smolder because they are trying to go it alone spiritually. Get back into the life of the church and it will help you to know God.

c. Retain. In verse 13 he Paul says, *“Retain the standard of sound words which you have heard from me.”* How do we do that? Read the Bible. Let God's word shape your thinking and your behavior. I recall how Barb's dad would slip off by himself when we were visiting, and I would find him quietly reading the Bible. Her mom followed the same pattern, day after day. On the day she died quite unexpectedly, she had been reading the Bible only a short time before. We give you each week and each month a schedule to help you maintain a pattern. Your life may be crammed, but regular Bible reading will help keep your life on track and your relationship with God alive and active.

d. Resist. In chapter 1, verse 14 Paul says, *“Guard...the treasure which has been entrusted to you.”* George Washington took his troops across the Delaware River in the middle of a blizzard. It was so cold one man froze to death. His little army routed the Hessians at Trenton in the battle that saved the American Revolution because the weather was so bad the Hessian commander pulled in his guards. He figured no attack could possibly come that night. You and I must be on guard spiritually in foul weather and fair, to guard against the forces that can eat away the vitality of our faith.

e. Remember. Here we must jump to chapter 3, verse 14. Paul says, *“Continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them.”* He's talking about heritage. Where did you learn about God? It may have been from your parents, or a teacher, or a pastor. A newborn baby named Noah was resting comfortably in his grandfather's arms when the pastor came to visit. Suddenly Noah burst into tears. “That's odd,” said the pastor. He's been hearing my sermons every Sunday for nine months.” “Yeah,” the grandfather said, “but this is the first chance he's had to comment on them.” So much of what we believe comes through other people. To psych ourselves up for the Super Bowl Barb and I watched a DVD on the history of the Pittsburgh Steelers. Chuck Noll was the Steelers' coach for 23 seasons and led them to the four Super Bowl victories of the 1970s. Running back Rocky Bleier was interviewed on the DVD and he talked about Noll's influence. He said, “Whenever I speak to groups about football and about what's important, I'm amazed to discover that 90 percent of it is what Chuck Noll taught me. Remember. That leads to a sixth “R”—

3. Reproduce: How you can help your children to know God well. Once more we find five things to do. For the first of these, turn back to chapter 1. In verse 4

Paul says to Timothy, *“I...long...to see you even as I recall your tears.”* These two men cared deeply for each other. Paul calls Timothy his *“beloved son”* in verse 2. Paul missed Timothy’s presence, and Timothy had openly cried when he and Paul parted. Barb and I feel that way about our children as we live apart from them. You will only have rich emotional ties if you love your children now and build close, happy relationships. Some of you unintentionally are limiting your closeness in the future by choosing work over home now. If you want your children to know God well, they must know you well. There’s no short cut for the time and love that leads your kids to God.

Second, in verse 3, Paul says, *“I constantly remember you in my prayers day and night.”* Parents, pray diligently for your children to know God. That’s the one thing to do if you can do nothing else. God works in response to our prayers. Third, know God yourself. That was the key to Timothy’s knowledge of God. In verse 5 Paul says, *“I am mindful of the sincere faith within you, which first dwelt in your grandmother Lois, and your mother Eunice.”* What an influence they must have had as Timothy was growing up! Today is Abraham Lincoln’s 197th birthday. Did you know that? A teacher asked her seventh graders, “Who killed Abraham Lincoln?” Every student but John raised a hand to answer. “Do you know, John?” She asked. “I don’t know and I don’t care,” the boy yelled, crossing his arms. “Quit asking me these stupid questions!” Upset, the teacher kept John after class and called his father for a conference. “What’s the problem?” the dad asked. “Why is my son in detention?” “I asked John who killed Abraham Lincoln and he cursed and said he didn’t know and didn’t care, and told me to stop asking him questions,” she said. At this the father grew angry. He grabbed John by the collar. “What’s your problem, Son?” he shouted. “If you killed the man, just say so.” Parents, if you don’t know God, how do you think your kids will grow to know him?

Fourth, teach them the Bible. In chapter 3, verse 15 Paul reminds Timothy, *“From childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.* We live in an age where ignorance of the Bible is skyrocketing. We ought to be alarmed, for it’s happening even in Christian families. In our Sunday school we’ve found that many of our children aren’t familiar with the Bible stories. God put them in the Bible so we could know him. If our kids don’t know the Bible, they won’t know God. Verse 16 says, *“All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching.”* Parents, only you can effectively teach your children the Word of God. The church doesn’t have enough time with them.

Finally, there’s one more thing to do that the Bible helps us with. Verse 16 says the Bible is profitable *“for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.”* A little girl had just finished her first week of school. “I’m just wasting my time,” she wailed to her mother. “I can’t read, I can’t write, and they won’t let me talk!” Parents, it takes discipline and training—and time—for your children to know God well. Use these years well that you have them in your home. Since God wants us to know him, our first responsibility is to know him ourselves. Our second is to help our children know him.

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