

Only One Thing is Necessary for Our Kids

Franklin Church of Christ
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Introduction:

Imagine the world has come to an end. I don't know what Judgment will look like, but pretend we are standing in a long line, hearing each judgment—"Depart, worker of iniquity"; "Enter the rest of your Lord, good and faithful servant." The line moves slowly, giving us plenty of time to think about our lives. What do you think will be important about your life at that time? We recently read the story of Mary and Martha from **Luke 10:38-42**, learning only one thing is necessary—knowing Jesus (*cf.* **Philippians 3:7-8**). We won't care about our GPA or class standing. We won't care how much money we made. We won't care what house we lived in, car we drove, styles we wore or jewelry we possessed. We won't care what company we worked for, buildings we built, laws we passed, inventions we patented. We will care about whether we knew Jesus. As we ponder our own lives, we glance up the line and see someone familiar. They are about to enter the Judgment Hall. Before they do, they turn and glance down the line. It is one of our children. What question will be in our minds then? "Did I introduce my children to Jesus and help them know Him?" Knowing Jesus is not only the one necessary thing for us; it is the one necessary thing for our children. What does that mean for us as parents?

Discussion:

I. The problem.

- A. First, remember our background story. In **Luke 10:38-42**, Jesus is in Mary and Martha's home. Mary sat at Jesus' feet listening. But Martha was distracted by her hostess responsibilities. Martha did not intentionally ignore Jesus; she was just distracted. According to **Philippians 3:7-11**, the one necessary thing is knowing Jesus. **II Peter 1:3-4** explains why. All things pertaining to life and godliness are granted to us through knowing Jesus. Further, we are granted great and precious promises and become partakers of the divine nature, escaping the corruption of the world. Don't we want this for our children?
- B. Go back to our imagined scenario. As we wait in the judgment line, knowing we are about to hear our son or daughter's eternal destiny, what will we be thinking? "My son was the star pitcher of the baseball team that won the Little League World Series. I know we had to miss a bunch of assemblies because we were on the road so much. Surely Jesus understands how important a team commitment is." "My daughter was the leading lady in her high school and college musicals. She was the star of the show and was going to go on Broadway. I know I would let her skip Bible classes, Gospel meetings and even Sunday night assemblies for rehearsals. Surely Jesus understand how important our dreams are." "My son had a 4.0 GPA all through school, with perfect attendance. He was Valedictorian of his high school and college. I know we rarely had time to study the Bible, pray with him or even get his Bible class lessons done. Surely Jesus understands how important school is to get a really good job and make good money." "My daughter was the first female President of the United States. I know we never taught her to serve other people, visiting the sick, shut-in and elderly or sacrificing her desires for the good of her brethren. But these days a woman has to focus on her career if she doesn't want to get left behind. Surely Jesus understands that."
- C. We live in a fast-paced society, ready made to help Satan distract our children. Sadly, his biggest ally is often us, the parents and grandparents. Too often we want to give our kids all this world has to offer. It offers a lot. But consider **Luke 8:14**. The seed sown among thorns is choked out by cares, riches and pleasures of life in this world. When we spend our time offering our kids everything this world has to offer, we find out this world only offers an eternity in hell. **I John 2:15-17** says the things of the world are not from the Father and are passing away. Only those who do the will of the Father will abide forever.
- D. What gets in the way of introducing our children to Jesus? Our work, their work, their school, homework, PTA, scouts, sports, television, internet, video games, music, movies, friends. Please do not misunderstand. Martha's serving was not wrong in and of itself. In fact, there was a time and place for it even within God's plan. Hospitality is God's command. In like manner, nothing on the above list is wrong in and of itself. But when the average day of our children's lives is done, how much time was spent introducing them to Jesus versus insuring they get to the best college so they can have the best job?

- E. **II Peter 3:10-12** says the earth and all it contains will be burned up. Their diplomas won't make it. Their trophies will be destroyed. Their alma maters will no longer exist and their professors will not be sought for references. Their cars will be burned. Their houses will crumble. Their jobs will not amount to anything. What will matter is their godliness and holiness. How will they measure on that scale? How much of their measurement will be because of us as their parents?
- F. Please understand. I know it is possible for kids to be raised right and go wrong. In the end, our children's eternity will be based on their choices and not our own. However, I do know **Proverbs 22:6**. No matter how you interpret it, it says, as a general rule, if we raise our children properly, they will stick with it, coming back to the principles with which we have anchored them. I know there are exceptions. But in general, when we are focusing our children on knowing Jesus, they will not leave Him when they are older. How, then, do we introduce our children to Jesus?

II. Introducing our children to Jesus

- A. *First, it takes way more than "coming to church."* How many parents have told me they don't understand why Junior left the Lord since they always brought him "to church"? Don Adair illustrated this point for me one night. He asked, "When is it wrong to attend all the assemblies and classes of the local congregation?" The answer, "When that is all you do." If all we can say when we wonder why our children are unfaithful to the Lord is that we "brought them to church," that likely gives us our answer. If all we did was "take them to church," we didn't introduce them to Jesus. We just introduced them to the local church.
- B. *Have a passion for knowing Jesus yourself.* John Maxwell says, "You teach what you know. You reproduce what you are." The reality is, if we want our children to grow up with a passion for knowing Jesus, they have to see it in us. We often turn to **Deuteronomy 6:7-9** to talk about teaching our kids. We need to talk to them when they lie down and when they rise up, when they are in the house and when we walk in the way. But do not miss **Deuteronomy 6:5-6**. We will not remotely accomplish this teaching if we do not love Jesus with all our heart, soul and might. We will not implant Jesus' words on our children's hearts if His words are not implanted on ours. If we asked our children what is our number one passion in life, what would they say? The Titans? Hunting and fishing? Working? Television? Music? Or would it be knowing Jesus? Do our children ever see us studying our Bibles or praying? Do they ever hear us singing praises because we are happy? Do they see us memorizing scriptures? Do they see us resolving problems using the Scripture? Do they see us excited over something we learned from the Bible? Do they see us rejoicing over those who have come to know Jesus and agonizing and mourning over those who are leaving Him? Do they see us sacrificing anything because of Jesus or His church? Where do our children see us spending our time? Where do they see us spending our money? Our children are not stupid. Even if they cannot verbalize our greatest passion, we can be sure they internalize it. This is the only absolute on this list. The rest of the list is more practical and hands on suggestions. You may like them or you may not. You may want to try some and forget others. But whatever you do or don't do, get this one down. Our children are more likely to develop a strong relationship with Jesus if they see we have one first.
- C. *Teach your kids the scriptures.* In **II Timothy 1:5**, Paul talked about the legacy of faith passed from Lois to her daughter Eunice to her son Timothy. In **II Timothy 3:14-15**, we learn an integral part of passing on this faith was teaching the scriptures. Timothy was introduced to scripture in childhood and was convinced of the faith he needed then. No wonder his faith blossomed as he grew. Please, do not leave teaching the scriptures to your children up to Bible class teachers to accomplish in 1 ½ hours per week. Isn't it interesting that we send our kids to school for 30 to 40 hours per week in order to learn how to live in this world, but many of us rely on ¾ to 1 ½ hours per week to teach them how to live in the next. What do you think our children learn from that disparity? You don't have to be a Bible scholar to teach them the scriptures in a number of ways. How about simply having a regular time of Bible reading and discussion? You could purchase some Bible class material to go through together at home. You could do what my friend David Banning recommends. He calls it the "search and discover method." Read through the chapter or Bible passage ahead of time and pick out some things you want your children to find in the text. When you get together to read it, have the kids ready with highlighters and markers. As you read, they look and listen for whatever you have requested. Then discuss what

they found. For instance, you may want your children to learn about treating their siblings properly. Read **Genesis 4** and have them search for how Cain mistreated Abel and then discuss what they found and how it transfers to their life. No doubt, as your children get older you will want to get them into studying on their own. Show them how to use commentaries, concordances and Bible dictionaries. Let them lead one of your Bible discussions. The sky is the limit for how you teach your children the Bible. Let me say that the number one way to teach them the Bible is to inspire them to study it on their own by watching your example of study.

- D. *Have them memorize scripture.* **Psalm 119:11** says, “I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you” (ESV). If we want our children to overcome the tempter, we need to have them store the word in their hearts. Some of that will be done through Bible study and teaching. They will learn the stories that will guide them through life. Further, through study they will learn and outline the books, remembering what happened in each one. But we need to go a step further. No matter your child’s age, you ought to work on memorizing scripture. If they can mimic you, they can memorize scripture. The goal is not to race and get that memorizing thing done. It is just to build and learn. Therefore, you don’t have to make sure they memorize a certain number of scriptures per week. You just need to make sure they are internalizing the scriptures. You can have whatever plan you want. You may want to have them systematically memorize entire sections or even books of Scripture or you may have a list of scriptures you think they should know. I know a person who established ABCs of scripture. He found important scriptures beginning with each successive letter of the alphabet and had his children memorize those. In any case, get them memorizing. One point of caution, it is very easy for children to memorize verses and then forget them later. I don’t know how many verses my kids (and I) have memorized and if asked today, couldn’t quote them anymore. Work on long term memory retention through repetition. Pick a verse or passage. Once the child knows it, have them say it 25 times. Then the next day have them say it 20 times. Then the next have them say it 15. Then the next have them say it 10. Then the next have them say it 5. Then have them say it once per day for the following week. Then have them say it once per week for 5 or 6 weeks. Then make sure they review it once per month following that. In time, the verse will be locked in their memory forever. After they are starting their daily repetitions, introduce a new verse and follow the same pattern. “That is a lot of work,” you say. I know. But it is rewarding and worth it if our children develop an abiding knowledge of God’s word and Jesus. Let me add one final word of caution. If you are not willing to work on memorizing scripture yourself, your children will not likely do it themselves. Inspire them by your example.
- E. *Teach your children to pray.* In **Luke 11:1**, the disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray. If those men needed to be taught, how much more do we and our children? The number one way to teach your children to pray is simply to pray with them. Let them hear you pray at more than meal time. Let them hear you praise God for how wonderful He is. Let them hear you give thanks to God for your home, family, food, job, clothes, air to breathe, etc. Let them hear you confess your sins—yes, confess your sins. Let them hear you make petitions and intercessions. Let them hear how much you trust and rely on God. As they grow, listen closely to their prayers and offer them helpful suggestions. Encourage them to pray on their own. It doesn’t matter when you do this. You may want to do it first thing in the morning. You may want to do it around the meal table (as long as it is more than just praying for the food). In our house, we typically make bedtime a time when I pray with kids. I have to share with you another suggestion from David Banning that I just heard a few weeks ago. We have modified it slightly and implemented it in our home in the last two weeks and it is really amazing. He calls it “Praying through the Bible.” (By the way, for those of you who have been working the prayers in the “Our Spiritual Heritage” lessons, he snagged the idea for the outline of the prayers from the author of that material). Begin with a blank sheet of paper. Write the following five statements on the paper with room in between them to add information. “Dear God, You are...” “Dear God, You...” “Dear God, thank You for...” “Dear God, help...” I have added “Dear God, forgive me for...” Then pick a passage of scripture. Have one person read the scriptures while everyone else fills in their papers. After the reading, discuss what everyone filled in on their paper. Then go around the room and let each person pray. Let them know they are allowed to add in anything they want, but you want them to especially pray what they learned from the Bible reading. You may even

want to keep a master journal of your prayers, keeping track of what you found to pray based on each passage. When we did this for the first time about two weeks ago, we had my cousin's kids with us. Believe me it takes time to do this when you are working with six children ranging from 4 to 10 years old. But when we were finished, they all wanted to know if we could do it again on the next day. Granted, this may not work so well if you only have children who cannot yet write. However, even Ryan, who is four and cannot write or listen attentively for long periods of time, has been impacted. I love hearing him pray, "Dear God, You are wise and we are not. You are more powerful than we are." I think that is a step in the right direction. Don't miss the most important part of **Luke 11:1**. The disciples wanted to learn how to pray because they saw Jesus praying. If we act like prayer is a chore, it will be a chore for them as well. Be excited about praying with you family and then be surprised as your kids are excited about it also.

- F. *Spend time with other Christians.* In **Acts 2:46-47**, we see the early Christians spending time together within and without the assembly. I am amazed at the parents who next to never have other Christians in their home and next to never go to other Christians homes, who then complain because the young people in the church, including their children, rarely want to spend time together. Remember, we teach what we know, we reproduce what we are. Give a priority to your relationships with your brethren over every other relationship you have. Spend social time together and spend spiritual time together. When you get together with other Christians for study, prayer or singing, don't send your kids off to the play room (unless it needs to be an adults only time of study). Instead, let the children be part of the spiritual activity with other Christians. We can get to know Jesus by spending time with Jesus' family. Remember the principle of **Matthew 12:46-50**. These people are our family. We need to spend time with them and inspire our kids to spend time with them as well.
- G. *Prioritize these things.* For 30 to 40 hours per week, we send our kids to school and we won't let anything except emergencies get in the way. We don't say, "I will try." "Maybe." "I'll think about it." We just do it. We enroll our children in sports and we move heaven and earth to make sure they make it to every practice and every game out of commitment to the team. Those things are important to us. We prioritize them and teach our children how important they are by doing that. We need to prioritize knowing Jesus. Our children must know that knowing Jesus is the one necessary thing, more important than even school and other scheduled items. We don't let anything get in the way of that. Further, when other things threaten to block out spiritual activities like assembling or Bible class, we choose the activity that lets us get to know Jesus. Understand me here. I don't know with 100% certainty if you let your child miss an assembly or Bible class for a softball championship game, a play performance or a Scout trip that they have sinned and will lose their soul over it. I do know, however, when you let your children miss Bible class or an assembly that you have taught them whatever you did instead of Bible class or assembling is more important. Don't be surprised if they grow up and think a lot of things are more important than knowing Jesus. Remember which portion will not be taken away (**Luke 10:42**). You may be saying what I catch myself saying all the time. "I want to do these things with my children, but I just don't have time." We have now hit on what this lesson is all about. There is only one way to make time for the one necessary thing. Sacrifice some unnecessary things. Think of it this way: if our kids never learn to hit a baseball, throw a football or shoot hoops, but they know Jesus, their eternity will be alright. If they never learn to parse a verb, recite the multiplication tables or speak Spanish, but they know Jesus, their eternity will be alright. If they barely scrape by financially, sometimes even having to beg for bread, but they know Jesus, their eternity will be alright. Remember the parable of the rich man and Lazarus in **Luke 16:19-31**. As hard as it might be to watch it in this life, in eternity, which would you rather your child be—the rich man or Lazarus? Again, don't misunderstand. I am not saying to get to heaven we have to be just like Lazarus. But it is better to be like Lazarus and know Jesus, than to be like the rich man and be distracted from Jesus. We must keep it all in perspective.

Conclusion:

We have lots of options for our kids. It is a good thing for our kids to get to enjoy and be involved in them. However, only one thing is necessary for them. Let's not develop habits of distraction in them from youth. Instead, let's develop their relationship with Jesus.