

Do You Know Where Your Kids Are?
Psalm 139:1-16, 23-24

If it was going to be easy to raise kids, it never would have started with something called labor.

That should have been our first clue ladies.

In fact, I can remember thinking when I was pregnant with my third child, (yes it took me til my third child), “I am so thrilled I am pregnant but I wonder if there is any chance that this could be my painless delivery, Lord.” It wasn’t!

Neither was my fourth child.

Then a few years rolled by and my children were all teenagers and I can remember thinking, “Who knew labor would be the easy part.”

What I remember the most though, from each one of my children’s births, is thinking as they handed me my child for the very first time, two things:

One, that if God loved this child even more than I did, and I believe He does, how amazing and difficult to comprehend a love so vast and wide and deep, because I thought my own heart would break with the love I felt and still feel for each one of my children.

Elizabeth Stone said this about having children and I agree with her wholeheartedly, “Making the decision to have a child – it’s momentous. It is to decide forever to have your heart go walking around outside your body.”

I made that decision four times.

God has made it countless times.

And my second thought, that this perfect, beautiful, little child was like a blank canvas just waiting to have the brush strokes of life painted upon their very being and wondering what God had planned for their life, what unlimited potential they had and thinking that they could be anything they dreamed to be. And I got to be a part of all of that. I got to see it unfold. God entrusted me to love, guide, instruct and protect each one of my children on this journey.

Each of my children, indeed each child of God, is a bundle of undeveloped, incredible potential and is a person of great importance and significance.

I hear the Psalmist saying this very same thing in Psalm 139:

O Lord you know everything about me. You place your hand of blessing on my head. You know where I am at all times, what I will say even before I say it. Your hand guides me, your strength supports me. You knit me together in my mother's womb to be exactly as I am. You watched over me right from the beginning. Thank you for making me so wonderfully.

You are significant to God, you are of importance to God,
you have been even before you were born.

You are God's heart.

Because you are important to God and he loves you, God has a purpose for your life.

If you let him guide you and lead you, love you and protect you- together you will fulfill this purpose because God has placed unlimited potential within you.

Because God loves us so, he knows where we are at all times.

I find that comforting.

There is no place I can go that God is not there.

No thought I can have that God does not know it.

God is with me always.

He knows where I am at all times not just physically but emotionally, mentally, spiritually, and relationally.

Why do we need to know where are children are?

Indeed, why does God need to know where we, his children, are?

I believe when we know where are children are, we are better equipped to guide, lead, coach and train our children into the fulfillment of their God-given potential and to help them realize their significance.

God has entrusted this sacred responsibility to us parents.

Parents are entrusted with children to raise up godly offspring in order to powerfully influence the world for Jesus Christ.

This makes our children a sacred trust.

This trust is not just given to us parents; it is also given to each of you. Every time we have a baptism - each of you agrees to help raise that child and be an example of God's love in their lives.

If you look at page 35 in your hymnals, this is what you agree to whenever we have a baptism here at the church:

With God's help we will proclaim the good news and live according to the example of Christ. We will surround God's children with a community of love and forgiveness, that they may grow in their trust of God, and be found faithful in their service to others. We will pray for God's children, that they may be true disciples who walk in the way that leads to life.

This sacred trust and responsibility is given to each of us. We each can make a difference in the life of a child, in fact God is counting on us to make the difference in the life of his children so they can become godly adults who powerfully influence the next generation for Christ to become godly adults and on and on.

So how do we fulfill this sacred trust?

There is no better guide than our own Heavenly Father and no greater voice of wisdom than His Word.

Let's look today at a few of the biblical principles we can apply to training, coaching, and guiding our children to their God-given destination. A few principles that will help us to know where our children are – physically, emotionally, mentally, spiritually, and relationally.

First, realize the importance of timing.

Ecclesiastes 3: 1-8 talks about there being a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven. A time to laugh, cry, mourn, dance, a time to be silent, a time to speak, plant and uproot.

Well you get the idea. There is a right time for everything.

There is a time to say no to your child and a time to say yes

A time for helping them and a time to stand back and let them do it for themselves.

A time to give them roots and a foundation and a time to give them wings and freedom.

The trick is knowing which time is which.

That is not always easily done.

In order to know when to teach and when to let your child learn on their own, when to impress your rules and when to let them try their wings out – In other words, when the time is right - you have to know where your children are.

You would not let a 4 year old drive a car. They are not ready in any way whatsoever to drive a car.

However, your 15 ½ year old may or may not be ready to drive a car either.

Just because the law says they can drive at that age doesn't mean they are ready to.

You need to know where your child is to make that decision.

We allowed our four children to get their driver's license at different ages, for different reasons.

When our youngest son was nearing 15 ½ all he talked about was getting his license. He had showed us that he was ready for that responsibility.

We had decided to allow him to.

However, right before he was old enough to go get them, 2 students at his school, who he knew and had grown up with, were killed in a car wreck. This affected the whole community but especially the kids who knew these boys and who had been talking to them just that day.

My son never actually said he didn't want to go get his license.

But by knowing where my son was at, realizing the impact this event had on him emotionally and mentally, we knew that he needed a little more time. After a few more months had gone by and he had been able to talk about their accident and process it some, he was once again ready to take on the responsibility of his drivers license. And once again we decided to let him.

The importance of timing cannot be overstated.

But it is a fine line and difficult to figure out sometimes.

Knowing where your child is will help you to know when each time is right.

Second, listening with the ears and the eyes – Undivided Attention

In Matthew 15:10 Jesus says, "Listen and understand."

True listening is an active discipline.

And it is an active choice of love.

There is no better way of building a relationship with anyone, including God, than by listening.

Listening to our children provides great spiritual training for the practice of prayer.

In his book Sacred Parenting, Gary Thomas says this about listening:

True spiritual listening is about climbing into God's lap, restful and secure, and hearing his soft words of love, affirmation, correction, and challenge. A parent's lap is the most secure refuge ever invented by God."

Prayer is not defined by time or frequency but by intimacy.

If you want to intimately know a child, or a spouse, or an associate, listen to them.

When you truly listen, you are telling your child not only that what they have to say is important, but that **they** are important.

You also are building a stronger relationship so that when the really big, important, and difficult things come along in your child's life, they know they can come and talk to you and you will listen to them.

My oldest son helped me to realize how poorly I did this.

He and I developed a system to help us each learn to listen – not only with our ears but with our eyes and heart as well.

Whenever he wanted to talk with me, he took the cross that hung on the refrigerator and he would bring it to me.

We would say a prayer - then as long as he held the cross he could talk and I had to listen.

I was not allowed to say a word to anything that he was telling me.

When he had said all he needed and wanted to say to me, then he would hand the cross to me and I could talk. It worked the other way as well.

It helped teach me the art of intimately listening.

Third, Communicate in your child's "Love Language."

Romans 12:9 tells us that, "Love must be sincere."

Because Jesus loved unconditionally, he spoke to the people not just with words, but with the heart.

He did this by:

reaching out and **touching** those whom others would not touch.

He used **words** that built up instead of tore down.

He spent **quality time** with his disciples and those closest to him, so they would know how important they were to him and how deeply he cared for each of them.

He shared **acts of service**, such as washing the disciples' feet, feeding the 5000.

He gave **gifts** of sight, gifts of healing, the gift of himself to those around him, and the gift of his life so that whoever believes in him will be forgiven of their sins and have life eternal.

Jesus communicated to others in the ways they could best understand what he was saying, so they could realize their potential and see their significance.

He spoke their love language – he speaks it still to us today.

Speaking your child's love language helps to communicate to your child that they are special, significant.

It helps them feel secure and see their potential.

Gary Chapman and Ross Campbell wrote a book entitled, “The Five Love Languages of Children.”

In it they talk about these 5 languages which Jesus modeled for us: Physical Touch, Words of Affirmation, Quality Time, Gifts and Acts of Service.”

They explain these much better and in more depth than I will today. They point out what Jesus modeled for us – in order to help someone see how significant they are and see their full potential, they have to know you love them and more importantly, **THEY HAVE TO FEEL LOVED.**

When a child **FEELS** loved, they are easier to discipline and train. Although all 5 of these love languages speak to us, we normally respond better to one of these languages. It is our primary love language. And if you have more than one child, chances are they each speak a different primary love language.

In order to discover our children’s primary love language you need to know where they are.

You need to observe how your child expresses his love to you

Listen to your child’s requests and to their complaints.

Such as you never spend time with me or can I have a hug mommy.

This will give you clues as to what is their primary love language.

As I was typing this part of my sermon, my granddaughter, Chloe, came in to my office and was reading my sermon over my shoulder, as she often does.

When she read this part, she said, “Grandma, you always make me feel loved.” Then she hugged me, kissed me on the cheek, and crawled into my lap.

I pray my own children would say the same.

By the way, Chloe’s primary love language, if you didn’t catch it, is **physical touch.**

Fourth, Seek first to Understand....then to be Understood

Proverbs 2:9 tells us, “Then you will understand what is right, just, and fair, and you will know how to find the right course of action every time.”

Have you ever noticed that the way we see the world is not necessarily the way another person sees the world. Just ask your spouse!

In fact, one of the main reasons behind communication breakdowns is that the people involved interpret the same event differently.

Two major problems in communication are perception – how people interpret the same data.

And semantics – how people define the same word.

I’ll bet most of you have heard a child say, “You just don’t understand.”

At the heart of most of the real pain in families is misunderstanding.

Have you ever had the wind knocked out of you?

You know how when that happens you are gasping for air and nothing, I mean nothing, is as important to you at that moment as getting air into your lungs.

It is the same with being understood.

When you want to be understood, at that moment nothing, I mean nothing, is as important to you.

The deepest hunger of the human heart is to be understood.

It is the emotional and psychological equivalent of getting air.

It has been said many times, “People do not care how much you know until they know how much you care.”

It is why it is so important to listen not only with your ears but with your heart as well.

Statistics tell us that 70% to 80% of all communication is nonverbal.

When you really understand another person, it is much easier to then share, confront and teach with love.

Stephen Covey, author of *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Families*, encourages us to use “I” messages.

“I” messages are more horizontal- between human equals.

Such as: This is how **I** see it.....**My** concern is...This is what **I** observed.

“You” messages are more vertical – indicating that one person is better or of greater worth than another.

Like: You are causing the problem...You are so much trouble...You did this

I found as my son and I used the cross to help us really listen to each other, that it became easier for us to understand each other better and communicate more clearly as well.

I could more readily understand his heart.

Lastly, Allow for the expression of Appropriate Emotions

Job 1:20-22 says, “Job got up and tore his robe and shaved his head. Then he fell to the ground in worship.....in all this, Job did not sin by charging God with wrongdoing.” And again in Job 7:11 it says, “Therefore, I will not keep silent; I will speak out in the anguish of my spirit, I will complain in the bitterness of my soul.”

If you read the book of Job, you will see that Job had experienced deep pain and loss. He felt anguish, pain and grief.

He told God about it honestly and appropriately for his circumstances. If we express our feelings to God and to each other honestly and appropriately, it is easier to deal with them without exploding or saying harsh things we may regret later or saying words that may hurt someone.

God created our emotions and so they are good.

We have a fundamental need to express our emotions.

How we express them sometimes is what gets us in trouble.

This is not only true for children but for parents and adults as well.

If your child is not expressing his or her emotions appropriately, rather than react, maybe it is time to ask yourself:

Do I know where my child is, why are they acting like this –
what can I do to help them.

You are the greatest teacher your child will have on how to appropriately express his or her emotions. Be the example!!!

Parents are entrusted with children to raise up godly offspring in order to powerfully influence the world for Jesus Christ.

Sometimes that means we will not be popular with our children.

That's okay, we are not called to be popular we are called to be parents –
to love our children, teach them, coach them, and guide them.

Sometimes we may feel like we are failures.

And we will fail from time to time, the trick is to keep getting back on track, keep loving your child, and never, never, never, never give up.

Take comfort in knowing that God has selected you specifically to raise that child that is in your care.

And he has selected that child to help raise you.

God creates each child and has a deep, passionate love for each boy and girl.

He never misses a single event of their life.

He knows where they are at every moment.

Matthew 25:40 tells us “whatever you did for the least of these you did for me.”

When you bath your infant baby, you are washing God's baby.

Do you see God smiling?

When you feed your toddler a peanut butter and jelly sandwich, you are feeding God's child.

Do you hear God laughing?

When you hug a teenager who has been just turned down for a date, you are comforting God's child.

Do you feel God's tears?

In the process of caring and loving our children, we bring God pleasure.

Parenting is a sacred trust.

Let's Pray

Whether we are parents or not, we have incredible opportunities to participate in this passion that God has for children.

I am sure that God is present in this sanctuary with us today.

Jesus told us that when two or more come together in his name, he is there.

But if you really want to live in the presence of God,

You might want to try hanging out in the Sunday school rooms, or the nursery or at Vacation Bible School this coming week.

There is no way God is missing what is going on there.

He knows where each of his children are!!

Have a great week with God and hug a kid. You'll make God smile.