**Notes for “Clashing with Children” (Luke 15:11-32)**

March 23, 2025

1. Children are a blessing.

* It is said that we have to state this, but it is not understood in our culture.
* Psalm 127:3.

1. Children will bring challenges.

* The first challenge is tied to a parent’s role.
  + The role of a parent is to nurture, protect, teach, and develop a completely dependent child into an independent adult.
  + That process will, by its very nature, lead to strain.
* The next challenge is tied to children’s development
  + The younger son was at a point where immaturity and entitlement collided
  + Common place for most teenagers at some point
  + That immaturity isn’t reserved for adolescence alone
* Younger son’s request is highly inflammatory
  + Eldest son entitled to double portion according to Deuteronomy
  + Likely a third of Father’s estate liquified and given to youngest
  + Request is not, “I think I can make the business more profitable”
  + Request is, “I wish you were dead so I can go on and have fun”

1. Children have a unique will.

* The younger son requests the inheritance for the purpose of partying.
* There is limited information about the parents’ values and decisions
  + There is nothing to suggest that this is in line with what they value or have taught
* Kids have unique will from birth
  + Toddlers and the word “Mine!”
* Shifting role of parent to shape that will
  + In younger years, it is task to control and mold that will
  + In older years, we have less direct, absolute control
* Disconnect and conflict for many today when their kids make decisions that seem so foreign
  + Confusion often based on Proverbs 22:6
  + Understand the nature of Proverbs
    - They are a collection of wise statements from Solomon
    - Often better understood as probabilities instead of promises
  + I can teach, influence, invest in, but cannot make decisions for my kids.
  + Taking responsibility away from them is enabling.

1. Children should find grace from their parents.

* Balance this expectation for grace with the reality that kids need to experience consequences
  + The Bible says that those that refuse to discipline “hate” their children
* Younger son considers his situation and sees home as the safe place
* He considers the general goodness of his father and expects him to be consistent with him
* The son sets out, hoping to be a servant, not a son, based on the expectation that his father would extend some grace toward him
* We are expected to forgive. There is not an exemption for our kids.
* While grace was extended, notice what preceded it
  + Remorse, repentance, confession, and ownership of wrong

1. Children need to experience the expressions of a parent’s love.

* While the grace of the father followed the confession, the expression of love didn’t’ wait for that
* The father sees him a long way off- he’s watching
* He runs to him- he’s excited at his return
* He throws his arms around him- he genuinely cares about him
* Our children need to not only hear declarations of our love, but see demonstrations of it.
* Love is a source of security, joy, peace, comfort, and strength for a child (of any age).
* Illustrations of that reality: Compassion Internation Chinese Orphanage
  + Baby orphanage- silent because babies resigned to fact no one is coming
  + Lack of physical connection leads to developmental delays, , lower cognitive test scores, behavioral issues, emotional difficulties, higher tendencies toward anxiety and depression, attachment issues, poor future relationships and even pathological behaviors.
  + Prison- hardened criminals still moved by steadfast love of parents.

1. Schisms with siblings can lead to parental pressure.

* Joy of father is complicated by anger of older brother.
* Older brother feels slighted that his faithfulness has not been rewarded while younger brother is forgiven, excused, and restored.
* Actions of younger brother have likely physically impacted older brother.
* Reality of perceived favorites among parents.
* Parenthood doesn’t happen in a vacuum. It is dynamic.
  + Relationships between siblings impacts parents as well.
* Personal conviction that children need to know that relationships are not always exactly the same because personalities are different, but love is equal.

1. Parents should point to and demonstrate Christ to their children.

* The father in the parable represents God.
* In our interpretation, we’ve used it as an examination of a physical family.
* Parents have a greater potential for evangelistic impact with their children than any other.
* We could and should be the hands and feet of Jesus to our children.
* We should teach them about Christ, lead them to worship Him, but more then all, we should show them who He is by the way we live.
* In intending gospel meaning, we have the ability to sympathize and identify with both the prodigal and the older brother.
  + Younger- we are sinful, rebellious people that chose ourselves over a faithful Father at some point.
  + Older- particularly as older believers, it is easy to feel like we’ve dedicated the time and energy to do the right things- and we act as gatekeepers against those that haven’t done right.
* The father is equally good to all- and His kingdom is big enough for both.