

Oak Grove Church of Christ Newsletter - 2024.12.29

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Sermon recordings

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Speaker-AM: Josh Vinyard
Title: Spiritual Growth in 2025

Recording:

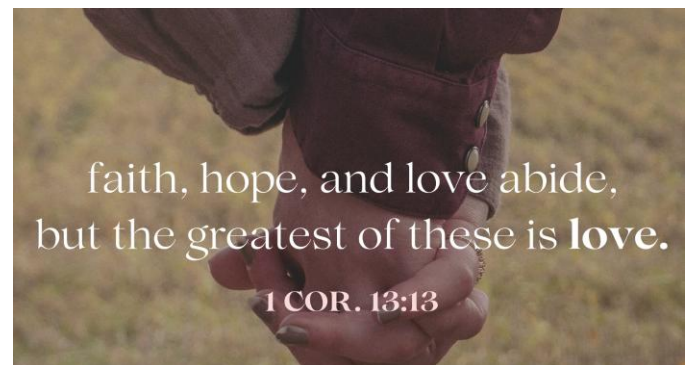


Speaker-PM: Tyler G, Brad B,
Patrick H, and Robbie M
Title: Faith, Hope, and Love

Recording:



But grow in the
GRACE AND KNOWLEDGE
of our Lord & Savior Jesus Christ.
TO HIM BE GLORY
both now and forever!
Amen.
2 Peter 3:18



Two Necessary Things in Christian Parenting, 10/31/2024 by Jen Venuso

Whether or not you make New Year's resolutions (I've been both), you're likely reflecting on the past and looking forward to the next year. Right now, I'm heavily in the throes of parenting, so much of my reflection settles there.

As a bio/foster/adoptive mom to seven kids (plus a few short-term kids), I have parented a wide range of needs. My specifics of parenting change all the time. Different kids have different needs; what's right for one might be harmful to another - depending on trauma, neurodivergence, personality, etc. Different seasons of life often require different techniques - e.g., puberty, mental or physical illness, extra stressful semesters for the child or the parent. We have to be flexible when making parenting plans. There isn't one single formula for raising kids successfully. Still, we are called to raise our children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. What is this way? "*Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged*" ([Colossians 3:20-21](#)).

Two things are common to all children in all seasons, and we should always aim for them in every interaction with them.

1. I am in charge. I am the authority. When I say something, it matters. And
2. I love you. You are precious to me no matter what you do, say, or feel.

I am to my children a representative of God. What I teach them about how to relate to me will hugely factor into how they relate to God. So, my goal is to reflect God's authority and his love in proper proportion.

Law + love, grace + truth, justice + mercy.

When we neglect to emphasize one of these two things in our relationship with our children, we give them a distorted understanding of God. This can become a stumbling block for them as they grow in their own relationship with him.

If I fail to uphold my authority, my children may struggle to submit to God's commands. They may see the Narrow Way as one option among many and God's law as merely a suggestion. They may obey God when it makes sense to them but choose their own path when their way seems better. I must mean what I say and enforce it. I must take responsibility for my expectations of my children, and I must do the work to back it up. Children must be trained and taught - this takes work and investment. I must be a stable and reliable source of strength.

I provoke them if I fail to communicate unconditional love to my children. I teach them that love is earned, that value is measured by behavior, and people are only worth what they produce. This kind of existence is unlivable. My children may view God and his commands as tools for manipulation and exploitation. Instead, I must show my children they are seen, known, and valued no matter what they do, feel, or think. I must not withhold affection because they have upset me. I must not allow my moods to be determined by their performance. I must humble myself and enter their confusion to lead them gently out. I must be a stable and reliable source of grace.

Parenting is sobering, intimidating work. Each of my children has individual needs, requiring me to communicate these two necessary things individually. Add to that my own imperfect faith and the physical and emotional demands that often distort the reflection of Christ in my actions.

Certainly, I will fail to emphasize these truths perfectly. I pray that in those moments of failure, I will seek and find grace from God and my children. Christ's grace is sufficient because he is the good and perfect shepherd, even when I am not.

"All those the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away... And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all those he has given me, but raise them up at the last day" ([John 6:37, 39](#)).