

Living the Enoch Example – Question & Answer

The Enoch Example – Part II

Selected Scripture

Introduction

Happy Father's Day! Today Dr. Stephen Davey will be conducting a question and answer time with Scott Wylie. Scott is a graduate of Moody Bible Institute and Trinity Evangelical Seminary in Deerfield, Illinois. He has worked with Stephen on staff at Colonial Baptist Church for over eleven years. He pastors the children's ministry and works with about a thousand children every weekend – and all the moms and dads that chase them around during the week.

As we have been focusing on Father's Day, we have been focusing on Enoch and his example (Genesis 5:21-24). Today we want to take time to go through some questions that moms and dads are probably asking that are very critical questions.

Typically moms and dads do not think they are doing it all right – and no mom or dad does. So, we want to be encouraging as we provide some examples and principles from the word of God that let us know we, as parents, have a lot to learn.

We want to offer help today to all, including us, who are parents. Scott is the father of two boys, so he is learning. Stephen is the father of four – two boys and two girls. So we know how to make a lot of mistakes!

Questions and Answers about Biblical Parenting

Let us begin our questions with a larger question. Scott will answer the questions, with Stephen contributing to the discussion.

1. What is the goal of parenting? What are we, as parents, really trying to do?

One of my favorite passages of scripture, as it relates to parenting, is Psalm 78. I use it frequently in the context of baby dedications because it provides such great insight for young parents who are just starting out. They can use it to keep the end goal of what parenting is all about in mind.

The author of Psalm 78 is Asaph. The first thing he makes extremely clear is that one of the responsibilities that parents have is to pass on spiritual truth to their children. He gives some specific goals in doing this.

- In verse 4, for example, Asaph says,
***We will not conceal them from their children,
but tell to the generation to come . . .***

Then he gives three things that parents are to give their children:

- the praises of the Lord,
and His strength,
and His wondrous works that He has done.***

This is a key responsibility that parents have – to make sure their children understand these things about God.

- Another verse that stands out is verse 7 due to Asaph's words concerning children.

that they should put their confidence in God and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments,

These things are the goals as we think of our children moving into adulthood. These are the things that we want to be true of them. We want them to be people who put their confidence in God, who do not forget His works, and who keep His commandments.

- Asaph goes on in verse 8 that in doing these things, our children will not be,

... stubborn and rebellious ...

That they will have before God a proper,

... prepare[d] heart ...

And that they will be,

... faithful to God.

Psalm 78 is a wonderful passage that provides insights as well as goals for parents.

I would add something that we know from working in a church with several thousand families. Unfortunately, for many parents, not only in our church, but I believe in churches across the board, in America especially, the goal in parenting is to somehow get their kids through high school without them getting on drugs, having a child out of wedlock, or whatever it might be. The goal is, for the most part, to keep their children out of trouble. However, the Bible talks about goals of parenting being much more positive and productive in turning their hearts toward God.

I fall into this very same trap. Even this morning, my colleagues knew that I was doing this question and answer time and gave me a hard time about my qualifications to talk about parenting. I use the phrase, "My kids are good kids," and I was challenged, "Is that your goal – to have it be said of your kids that they are good kids?"

No, this is really not our goal. Our goal is that we have godly kids, and to teach them to live that way.

2. What are some things that keep men from leading their children in the direction of being not just good kids, but godly kids?

I think there are a couple of things, one of which is that men do not fully embrace the spiritual training of their children as being their responsibility. Sometimes they are very willing to delegate this completely to the church or to a private school or to

some other means in which they believe this will be accomplished.

The first thing that men need to do is to understand that the spiritual condition of their home is their responsibility. They need to ask themselves, "Am I preparing my children to stand in the Day of Judgment?" What is more important than this?

3. This is a very good point, so if men are responsible for all aspects of a child's life, including the spiritual aspect, then what role does the Sunday school or Christian school play? Is there a place for other people to be involved in the training of our children?

There is a place for other people to be involved in the lives of our children, whether that is a church or a school situation. However, the one thing that parents need to always keep in mind is that even partnering with someone else never takes away their responsibility or their accountability before God for what happens in the life of their child.

I think there is a need for balance in this. We see different perspectives gaining a momentum among wonderfully passionate parents who are absolutely convinced that their child should go to a Christian school or should be homeschooled only, and should never go to a public school or whatever. I think it is important that whatever we choose – and we follow God as He leads our individual families – we understand we are not abrogating this responsibility; that we are not handing this over to someone else.

In other words, we, as parents, are not to say, "You are a youth pastor – you make my teenager walk with God." Or, "You, Sunday school teacher – we want you to teach our child the word of God." This is a partnership.

My wife and I have prayed often that God would lead adults into our children's lives that would impact them and challenge them with the truth of scripture. We pray this because, while we are we are responsible – and the father especially, being the shepherd of the household – we happen to believe that we need help and those who partner with us in church or in a school setting or whatever are multiplying our efforts. Others are not dividing our efforts or taking responsibility away from us, but are multiplying what we want to see in the hearts of our children.

I definitely want there to be other godly people involved in the lives of my children as they are growing up and learning what it means to be a godly man or woman. However, parents should have a

sense of their need to be careful in who they partner with. When it comes to choosing a church, for example, these types of things are important decisions. When we are turning our children over to someone else's care for whatever period of time, we need to remember that whatever they are taught and are learning, we are still accountable for these things.

As we accept this responsibility, we really need to be concerned about the kinds of programs our children are involved in, what they are learning, who their school teachers are, and who their Sunday school teachers and pastors are. Let us talk a little about this.

4. For those who are choosing a church for their family, what would you say should be on the list of things to look for when looking for someone to help partner with them in raising their children?

I think the most important thing that the family needs to consider is oftentimes the last thing they actually do consider. I believe that when a family is evaluating a church, the number one priority should be to determine if the man, as a father, is going to be trained himself; if he is going to learn what he needs in order to be able to lead and guide his family effectively, properly, and biblically.

So many times, a family chooses a church based on the youth group, on who the youth pastor is, or on what programs are available for their children. This is a very common way that people go about looking for a church when they relocate to a new home. I really believe that the number one focus needs to be the development of the father spiritually. He has the responsibility to lead his family and he needs to be in a church that is equipping him with the tools and the resources that he needs to be able to do this effectively.

Other things are also important. I think, as a children's ministry pastor, that children's programs are extremely important! And I think youth programs are important. However, there is nothing more important in the lives of young children and teens than their parents. If their parents are not being fed, there can be wonderful programs on Sunday for the kids, but they will fall far short of what they really need, which is the godly influence of loving parents.

5. Let us say a family has found a good church, and ask how they can teach their children to love the assembly and to love the ministry and programs of the church?

I must tell a story from just this morning, as I was pulling up to our church. A preschool program is going on and the kids are coming to learn about the Lord. A woman was walking in with her little three year old and I looked at him and said, "Hey, buddy, how are you doing?"

He kind of said, "Hello."

Then I asked, "Are you glad to be here?"

And he kind of looked at me – and I did not know if that meant, "No," or "Yes."

His mother said, "Well, to be honest with you, when I got his book bag, he said, 'Church? No. No.'"

He was not very excited about coming to church today.

So how do we develop this love in them? And do we leave it up to them to decide whether or not they are going to come?

To the last part of the question, I would say, "Absolutely not." Church is not an option. It is not an option for us, as adults, or for our children. It is non-negotiable. They are going to go to church.

However, I do think parents can go a long way in helping toward this whole process. The parent's enthusiasm, for example, makes a difference. Is Sunday a great day? Is Sunday something that is clearly a day that we, as moms and dads, delight in – in going to church and in gathering with our brothers and sisters in the Lord and in learning about the things of the Lord ourselves? This enthusiasm is contagious to our kids, as opposed to an attitude of, "Oh, here comes Sunday again," indicating it is drudgery. Kids pick up on this.

Scott, you write about this in a booklet. You say that we can make Sunday a special day by talking about it during the week, creating an air of anticipation, maybe even taking some time on Saturday to lay our clothes out and get our Bible and make sure we have everything we need for Sunday morning – to plan for it.

The name of this booklet, by the way, is "The Enoch Example, A Father's Legacy," and it is written together by Stephen and Scott. It is a fascinating small booklet in which the life and legacy of Enoch is investigated. It teaches how walking with God now can impact your family for generations. This booklet

is available through the Wisdom for the Heart ministry.

Before we leave the topic of teaching our kids to love church, there is one more area that I want to discuss. It is that parents teach their children an awful lot when they miss church, and especially in their reasons as to why they miss church. I would encourage parents to really think through, maybe even evaluate over the course of the last year all the times they missed church, why they missed and what was so much more important than being assembled with the body of Christ in their church. This really does teach their children – subtly, but it does teach them – the parent’s priorities.

If we allow children to miss church – and let us get even more specific – because they are playing soccer, they are going to grow up and miss church because they want to go fishing. If soccer is more important in your family than being assembled with the church on a Sunday morning, this teaches children something – that soccer, or whatever, comes first.

There are valid reasons that people need to miss church from time to time, but I think parents need to be careful and cautious about this.

I think one of the problems with pastors, and this is where we bear some of the responsibility, is we are trying to make church as fun as soccer or as exciting as a fishing trip and we are losing our focus. As parents, we need to understand why we are going to church, and as pastors, we need to get back to the primary focus of church. If the goal of parenting is to tune children’s hearts toward God, then the goal of ministry in helping parents should be to tune the hearts of moms and dads toward God. This needs to be the focus of and the reason for our assembly.

6. Let us talk about the child that grows up and begins to evidence rebellion in their life, and talk about rebellion as a phase. What would you say to someone who says, “My child is fourteen or fifteen years old and, yeah, they are rebelling, but that is something we were expecting – they’ll grow out of it”?

I really do not see this whole idea – that rebellion is a natural phase that people are to go through in their lives – anywhere in scripture. Some children grow up and signs of rebellion are seen – and it seems to be a fairly common occurrence – but scripture does not teach that there will be a time of rebellion in the lives of children; that it is a “given” or understood that it is to be expected.

I think what we do see as parents is that teenagers enter the frustrating time or phase in which they are no longer children, but in our culture and in our church, they are not adults either. And there are additional factors during this time of our children’s lives – it could be the failure of a parent or society to recognize that they are indeed going through spiritual changes, as well as mental and physical changes that we need to be sensitive to.

However, I think the church as a whole has sort of adopted the attitude that, “Well, you know, they are teenagers, so first, let’s not try to teach them much and let’s not have them sit still for very long and let’s design a program that is fun and games.” I am not against fun and games, but this idea of teenage rebellion is foreign to scripture as a phase they are going to go through.

Rebellion, at any age it occurs in the life of a person, is called one word in scripture – and that is sin. And it needs to be dealt with for what it is. It is not a phase of life – it is sin and needs to be treated as such. It should be addressed and dealt with, while at the same time, being sensitive to the phase of life the youth is in, in terms of their physical and mental changes and some of the societal pressure they are going to be under. However, sin is sin.

This point about our society is valid because in this day and age in which we live, young people are expected to grow up at a slower rate than they were in the past. There was a day when young men of fifteen or sixteen would be in the work force already – earning a living. Those days are gone and I am not suggesting that we return to that, but I am suggesting that we need to learn and to treat them, in the church and in the home, properly and in accordance with the developmental stage that they are in.

Young people; teenagers can assume a great deal of responsibility. They can, as we have seen in our church, go on mission trips and become part of service projects. All of these things are wonderful and extremely helpful to them. I am not opposed to fun and games, but there are things that we can do with our programs and in the way we treat teenagers that will help them tremendously through this phase of life.

7. Scott, you are a pastor of children's ministries and we are talking about fun and games and the fact that they are not necessarily a bad thing. Can fun and games be incorporated in the way we teach our kids the Bible when they are young, or what is the best way to go about this?

There is absolutely a place for fun in the life of a child. I think childhood should be fun and I want my children to have fun.

However, as far as teaching children the Bible, one thing I like to emphasize, and we do emphasize in our church, is that during the childhood years, there is a tremendous potential for memorization. I know for me, memorizing has become difficult, but for my children, it seems to be easy. So harnessing this ability to be able to memorize large pieces of scripture is one thing that I think is very helpful.

The booklet has the comment that by the time our children enter kindergarten, there are some things that they should have. There have been times when I have walked into a class of second or third graders and noticed a child carrying a preschool picture Bible. I think when children are starting to read, they need a real Bible. Now, it can be a good children's Bible with fun pictures and those types of things, but they need the whole text of scripture. I think picture Bibles and storybook Bibles are wonderful for preschoolers. They love stories and it is a good opportunity to help them understand the flow of scripture and the types of stories that are there. However, by the time they enter school, they need a real Bible.

Now let us preface the next question with the comment that every mom and dad who knows the Lord wants their children to come to know the Lord as well. In fact, the number one prayer on the hearts of many people is that their young children accept Jesus Christ as their own personal Lord and Savior. Let us ask a tough question relative to this.

8. Do you think it is appropriate to require unsaved children, and I know no other way to word this than, to live like Christians?

This is a hard question and my answer to it is, "Yes." I think there are a couple of levels to this answer.

First, it is always appropriate at any age to require a standard of morality from our children.

This is not usually what parents mean when they ask this question, however. They usually mean, "Should I be requiring my child to pray? Should I be

requiring spiritual disciplines of them even before they are saved?"

I still answer this, "Yes."

While children are pliable and fashionable, parents should be teaching them these disciplines. You want to teach your child how to pray before bedtime. You want them to form words and to pray to Jesus and to develop the things that can become, as they accept Christ, a good foundation for spiritual discipline.

We understand, of course, that there is nothing about this that impacts a child's standing before God. An unsaved child praying or participating in any of these spiritual disciplines, does not impact their standing before Him. Until Christ has saved them, they are still unsaved. Reading the Bible and acting like a Christian, and for parents to even require them to act like a Christian, does not make them a Christian. This needs to be understood.

Children of Christian parents and in Christian homes still need to be saved by the grace of God, not through these things that the parents may require of them. However, this instills in them habits and disciplines that are good and will help them. They will grow up in an environment of prayer and of Bible reading and study and even when they are very young, will start to develop these habits that I think will carry them into later life.

We know Timothy is a good example of this. The apostle Paul tells us in II Timothy 3:15, implicitly in the text, that Timothy at a very young age during his childhood had come to know the scriptures. Obviously, his mother and his grandmother taught him the word of God (II Timothy 1:5), which would become a wonderful foundation, even prior to his salvation.

We also need to point out that there are exceptions and limits to this. For example, young children who are unsaved should not be participating in the Lord's Supper and we do not baptize them. There are certain things that are reserved only for believers.

Let me add, without venturing too far afield or diminishing what has been said, regardless of the way we act or the way our children act, there is always the need for a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. However, we do not have to go too far back in the history of our own nation to come to a point where there was an underlying foundation of biblical knowledge and morals. It is hard to argue that it is a bad thing for even non-Christians to behave like Christians. There was a time in this country when

this was expected, whether a person called themselves a believer or not and that was not a bad thing.

We are old enough to remember when stores were closed on Sunday. There were the “blue laws”. Our culture even expected certain things to happen on Sunday.

This is a good point and even though we want our children to act like Christians; to act as if there are moral guidelines and moral standards and spiritual foundations that are being taught, there should be some spiritual prohibitions. One should be communion.

I am frequently asked by parents, “When do I let my child participate in communion?” I answer that they should not let their child participate until they are convinced that the child is saved. Participating in the Lord’s Supper is something that is reserved exclusively for believers.

My children are still quite young and I am not yet sure that they are saved. But I will call upon them to pray at dinner and I ask things such as this of them.

Now, how young can a child be to accept Christ?

I believe that God can save very young children, and I believe He does. The difficulty is for us, as adults, as we try to evaluate what has happened in the heart and life of the child. It is very difficult for us, as parents, to discern whether what they are professing to be true is true. Even sometimes, the changes that we see in them – how do we interpret them? It is possible for a child to grow up and be a very compliant and obedient child, and for us to look at this child and think, “They are acting like a Christian.” But it might just be that they are a compliant and obedient child to their parent. So, yes, I believe God can save very young children, but the difficulty then comes for us, as adults, in knowing whether it is true and real.

So we are not to breathe a sigh of relief and think, “Okay, they prayed the sinner’s prayer and now we are good to go.”

We certainly want to have that moment in time with our children, but I would say we need to continue to rehearse the truth of scripture and the gospel. We also know, those of us who have said this prayer at a very early age, that there are doubts that come up and we need to reassure our children that this is the gospel; this is how they can know they are saved. This will be a struggle for children.

We know as well, to be careful to not try to convince our children that they are saved when in

fact, they might not be. This happens many times. I will have parents sitting in my office for one reason or another and I may ask their child, “So tell me about your profession of faith. You say that you are saved – tell me about that.” Then the mom or dad will sometimes jump in and say, “Don’t you remember? You prayed when you were four . . .” sometimes almost trying to convince the child by reminding the child. I think we need to be careful about doing this because if in fact, the child is not saved, we do not want to be convincing them that they are.

This is a very difficult issue and is consistent with Paul’s words to adults. He said, in I Corinthians 11, to examine yourselves; examine your faith. So there is a sense, as our spiritual father, he was challenging us, as adults, to not just rely on some prayer that we prayed twenty-five or thirty-five or forty-five years ago – our testimony is current, so examine what are we doing that gives evidence of a genuine conversion.

We can look in the text of scripture and find evidences of things that are to be true of the believer. So, one of the things we can do with our children is to look at the text of scripture with them and help them to see what it says is true of believers, and then, give them tools to examine their lives.

The apostle Paul’s challenge is appropriate and good. And scripture also gives us the tools that we need in order to do this effectively.

We can help our children ask themselves if these things are true in their lives that are true of a believer. We can talk about these things with our children and pray with them and encourage them. We do not want to put doubts in their mind that should not be there, but we also do not want to convince them of something that might not be true of them.

There is a balance to this. We do not want to be saying, “Well, honey, you are saved because we prayed together when you were three or four.” On the other hand, we do not want to be saying, “You must not be a Christian because a Christian does not do that.” We do not want to shed doubt into their heart, but want to continually reaffirm what the gospel is and the way a believer lives. Then we want to lead them to a life of examination that is going to carry, not just through their childhood, but into their adult life when they fulfill what Paul told the early church to do, and that is to examine their faith.

There are constant times of revival in the lives of genuine believers. I think the Lord’s Table is a time of revival. It is a time to evaluate our walk and our

life with the Lord as we take it, and not to take it unworthily, meaning there is not to be cherished sin. There is a reviving moment in this. So we can teach our children to have these times without causing them to doubt their salvation and without assuring them that they are saved when they may not be. This is a time to be right with God and to examine their faith.

However, I think it is good and wise for parents to be slow when it comes to certain things like baptism or the Lord's Supper. It is okay to wait. Sometimes parents will get concerned that their very young child, perhaps five or six, has made a profession, but has not yet been obedient to Christ in being baptized. I like to reassure parents that it is okay to wait on some of these things when a child is young. As the child gets older and enters their later elementary years or teen years, there can be more fruit or more evidence of a true conversion in their life. It is okay and appropriate to wait until such a time on some of these things.

This goes back to the heart of our theology which is driven by biblical text. It goes back to Matthew 28. The Lord made it very clear that those who were baptized were disciples. So this is not something the parent does for the child; this is something the child does for the Lord, as a step of obedience.

We as parents really want to hurry and see fruit and see obedience, when we need to be slow in allowing the child to develop at their own rate. And every child is going to be different.

So, if your child has made a profession of faith – encourage them, rejoice, and pray. However, do not breathe a sigh of relief because you do not know the child's heart – only God does. Continue to talk about the gospel with them and explain what the gospel

message is and rehearse this over and over with them, but do not rush them into certain things either.

Conclusion

These are challenging issues. Being a parent is one of those things that we kind of nail down and figure out by the time our children are grown and gone. Then, we have a little experience!

We are also experts before we have kids! Until we have kids, we know it all; we are experts at parenting! Then we have them and that is no longer the case. We have them and realize we are not that good at it, but we are still experts at raising other people's children! And none of us are grandparents yet, but I am sure when we are, we will know exactly what should be happening in their lives too!

Stephen and Scott have written together a booklet called, "The Enoch Example, A Father's Legacy". Let us tell what this booklet is about.

The first part of the booklet is an exposition that Stephen did in the pulpit at Colonial Baptist Church. It is the message of Enoch's life. Enoch was a man who began to walk with God after he became a father. Truths and principles are given directly from this biblical text.

The latter part of the book is a set of questions and answers in which Scott specifically works through some of the questions that have been dealt with today, as well as others that we have not been able to cover during this time.

In the material, a lot of the questions are the hard questions, not the easy ones. If you are intrigued by this discussion today, I would encourage you to ask for a copy of this booklet from the Wisdom for the Heart ministry. The last section of the booklet contains questions and answers related to leaving a legacy for your children.

This manuscript is from a sermon preached on 6/18/2006 by Stephen Davey.

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