

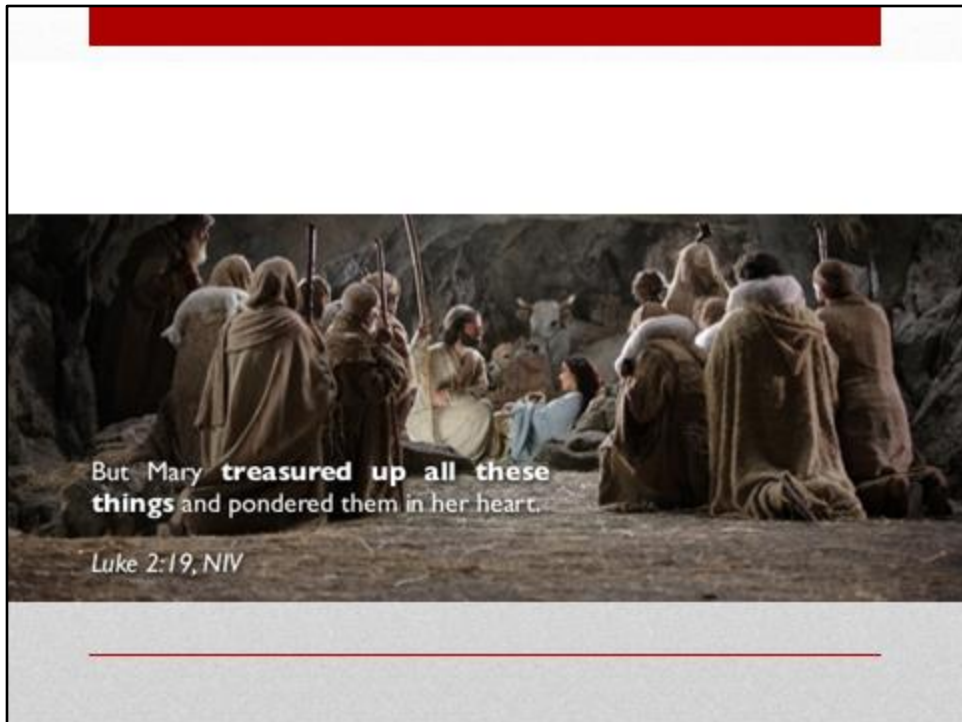


Making Sense of it All


- Parenting is hard



Jesus was 12 and his parents could not find him for at least three days! They had checked where they stayed, they checked with friends, checked at the market place – checked with the authorities. But he was at the temple, amazing the teachers of the law. Mary and Joseph took offense – as we would – “Why have you done this to us?” And Jesus’ reaction was – common’ Mom, “didn’t you know I had to be in my father’s house.”



Mary, treasured all these things in her heart...the same phrase used earlier in Luke's birth story. The first time Scripture tells us that Mary treasured an event in her heart and pondered upon it was after the shepherds came to worship her son, God's son-in the stable. There were other times that Mary may have treasured in her heart and pondered circumstances surrounding the life of her Son. Like when she faced public humiliation because she was pregnant without a husband and when she waited outside the temple to see Jesus only to have him declare that "whoever does the will of my Father" was his family (Matthew 12:50 NIV). As she watched him suffer on the cross, did she remember those shepherds bowing down before her Son? Did she realize that he was only moments away from being at his Father's throne? Were there other ponderings that brought her comfort?

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- "Do you think it's important to pass down your faith to your children?"
 - "Do you think your child will have a strong faith when he or she gets out of college?"
 - "Outside of going to church, what are you doing intentionally to introduce and build a growing faith in your child?"
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Mary teaches a wonderful lesson. We need to listen to and observe our children. Then we need to treasure in our hearts and ponder what we have seen or heard. As we open our hearts before God, we will be shown the path to take.

Jesus was special, but so are each of our own children. A survey of a thousand parent's was taken. Here are the three questions:

...1 As you might expect, more than 90 percent said, "Yes! It's very important!"

...2 Again, 90 percent of those responding said, "You bet!"

...3 Fewer than 30 percent were doing *anything* purposefully to meet that goal during the 166 hours a week their children were at home.

Think about that. Godly, well-intentioned parents strongly believed they should be involved in their children's faith development. They also were highly confident that their children would embrace the faith by the time they were on their own. But when it came to actually preparing their kids, they were just dressing them up and dropping them off at church — and setting themselves up for a failure.



Did I do all I could have? Why, since I raised them to know the Lord, did they, or he or she stray so far from God? Those are the questions that can torment any mother or father, but especially those of us who are believers. Those questions that keep us awake at night, the questions that tear at our heart, the questions we sometimes dare not utter to other believers. “We need to acknowledge the heartache of parents with a child who has strayed from the faith; We need to remember that if anyone knows the heartache of someone turning away, it is Christ. We also need to not judge them and to recall that for all of our parenting mistakes and failures and sins against our children, we’ve been forgiven.” *Jessica Thompson*



At any age, we care about the eternal status of our children? We care whether and how close their relationship to God is. Even if we don't have our own children, we care about those we have helped raise. The children in our community, in our church. But how can we better Parents? Or God Parents? Or Teachers? What does it take more of? What does it take less of? I do not have all the answers, but I know where to keep looking. We need to be diligent in knowing God's instructions. Psalm 119 says:

9 How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to Your word.

10 With all my heart I have sought You; do not let me stray from Your commandments.

11 I have hidden Your word in my heart that I might not sin against You.

12 Blessed are You, O LORD; teach me Your statutes.

13 With my lips I proclaim all the judgments of Your mouth.

14 I rejoice in the way of Your testimonies as much as in all riches.

15 I will meditate on Your precepts and regard Your ways.

16 I will delight in Your statutes; I will not forget Your word.

- A)** “I’m not an expert on Christianity.” **Proverbs 12:19**
Openness enables the children to talk about what is troubling them.
- B)** “My own relationship with God isn’t going too well. – it isn’t very deep.” Attempting to know God, struggling to figure out scripture – points the way.
- C)** “It’s already too late.” Job 6:14. God saves - not us.
Pray.
- D)** “I’m afraid I’ll do it wrong, or I’ve done it wrong and I’ll never have another chance.” Knowledge often abounds, but perhaps we need to pray more for this knowledge to be far richer in love! [Philippians 1:9-10]
- E)** “I can’t because they don’t listen anymore.” Proclaim it anyway Romans 9:17., but Make the way home easy.

Before we can impart or lead or even set the expectations for faith for our young children, or even our older children, we need to step up and stop telling ourselves the lies that stop us.

Through it all, we hope our children will see the anxiety they have created in us, that they will see the goodness of a relationship with the Holy One, but in the end, it’s not up to us to convict their hearts—that’s the province of God—so we tell them we love them, levy appropriate consequences when necessary, and we make the way to repentance not steep or rocky, but paved with love and forgiveness.

Encouraging scriptures about parenting can be found at:
<https://www.biblestudytools.com/topical-verses/bible-verses-about-parenting/>