

Youth Bible Institute Introduction—9/2/2015
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Let's begin our evening by reading Ephesians 6:1-4 with God's particular instructions to children & parents.

Follow along with me in Ephesians 6:1-4. [READ]

Now let's open in prayer to seek God together.

Tonight is our yearly introduction to our Youth Bible Institute, affectionately called YBI.

This is a meeting for parents & teens & leaders because we are ALL involved in this ministry together & we need each other's input & investment for maximum blessings.

We gather every fall to introduce this partially because we have new students moving up from 6th grade Sunday School & AWANA into YBI.

But we also do this yearly because we all need reminders—I know I do even though I'm serving in it and have had kids in it for 4 years.

I'll get to our theme verse & connect that with our broader philosophy, but let me start tonight a little differently.

We began by reading Ephesians 6:1-4, with instructions & promises for children in obeying & honoring their parents & with a warning & command to parents starting with fathers.

Let me make a few observations from those verses.

First to you young people—God calls you to obey & honor your parents & YBI is designed to encourage you in that not to get you away from your parents.

We want you to enjoy God's promise for life to go well.

And that promise says life goes well starting in the heart that obeys & honors parents.

Since I believe God's Word & trust His ways bring the highest joy in us & the greatest glory to Him, then I don't want to lead you away from a clear promise of God.

So as YBI leaders we want to encourage you to honor your parents.

We welcome you sharing with us sins you are battling that you may fear telling your parents & we are going to pray for you & walk with you toward growth in grace & change.

But we're not going to help you dishonor your parents by hiding sin or by grumbling about them in small groups or anything like that.

Of course, if your parents are not Christians or they are hypocritical or they teach or model error, we will certainly not encourage that and we will help you respond rightly.

I have dealt with situations where I have encouraged kids that I am trying to help their parents too & that I don't want them as kids to reject Jesus because of their parents' hypocrisy.

So please understand that YBI is not an escape from authority or a getaway fun time & it is also not a tool for controlling kids to force them into a preset mold.

We simply want to be faithful to apply God's Word to young people & parents & leaders so that we all enjoy God's grace together.

The way to do that is to always be honest with your leaders & your parents, to feel free & open to ask questions, even hard questions where you may not understand or like what's taught.

We know that our hearts wrestle with truth at times & we want you to see the beauty & wisdom & desirability of God & His ways.

So we welcome the chance to discuss things further with you & to walk through Scripture with you & to draw out what's in your heart & mind as we try to help you.

The leaders of YBI & this church are eager to be here for you—it is our joy to pour our lives into you to lead you to follow Jesus.

Ok?—now a word to parents.

Parents—starting with dads—are commanded to actively bring your children up in the discipline & admonition of the Lord.

That seems hard when they are young & we are continually facing the need to discipline for yet more disobedience.

It seems hard to incessantly change diapers, feed mouths & clean up messes, protect from danger & all the trials of toddlerhood.

But babies & toddlers are relatively simple when compared with training our kids as they grow older.

Their resistance becomes more complex with their own reasoning or manipulation or deceit or backtalk or unbelief.

Their love of the world & lust for being cool & enslavement to fitting in or having friends all come out with far greater intensity if we are paying attention.

Then guarding them from roadside traffic & electrical outlets & wiping their faces & bottoms shrink in comparison.

So here you are with kids aged almost 12 to 18 & God is still commanding you to actively bring them up, to actively be involved raising them, training them, instructing them.

You are to do so in the Lord's discipline & instruction, in God's training, teaching, learning, instruction, warning, & admonition.

In other words, you are responsible before God to educate your children in the Lord, in God, in all of life as it relates to God.

Education is a word that means teaching, learning, instruction, & edification—it means all that Ephesians 6:4 means.

But it's a word largely used to describe institutionalized training for a job or career in our culture, isn't it?

If I ask you to tell me about your child's education, you will likely tell me what school he or she is attending or where he or she is taking co-op classes or which curriculum you are using for which subject.

So when you think about your child's education, you may think that's a question about your schooling method choice—public, private or homeschooling, or some combination of those.

But is that a biblical way to think about training your child?

Maybe that's part of it, but if educating means discipling, training, & instructing your children, then doesn't it involve far more than where they take math & with which curriculum?

Even in training for an occupation, we must realize that careers are chosen and shaped and performed with a worldview and ethics.

And it's all done for a reason—for the glory of God, not merely for making enough money for a comfortable living.

And aren't those values far more vital for eternity & for the daily life of work & family & relationships of our kids' futures?

The presuppositions for science, authority, humanity, history, & more frame an essential foundation on which all else builds.

So we need to ask what that foundation is for your children?

No knowledge is neutral—it is either connected to God & the Christian worldview rooted in Scripture, OR it is not.

Of course we need to train our kids to face the errors & people & problems & academic systems of thought that exist in the real world so we can't shelter them forever hoping they'll always be innocent.

But the question is whether you are doing it & how.

Are you giving your children a truly Christian education?

Though that word 'education' often refers to scholastic grade-level progression, let's use it like the Bible uses its synonyms & not allow it as a separate category apart from God.

Are you training your children in the Christian view of science & humanity & philosophy & psychology & anatomy & history & more?

Whether someone else is doing the day to day math facts or Calculus calculations with them or not, are you training them to praise God for math as a display of His glorious order?

Are they learning that the Bible has a perspective on every subject whether that subject has explicit teaching of 2+2 or integrals in it?

As disciples of Jesus—which means learners following Jesus—we are all continually called to be learning & that may mean we need to be learning right alongside of our kids.

But we cannot leave it to someone else to raise our kids.

God gave them to us—He gave your kids to you & He calls you to actively be involved bringing them up in the discipline & instruction of the Lord.

So if that means your kid takes science at school & you use materials from Answers in Genesis to correct & supplement his education with a biblical view of science, then do it that way.

Whatever method you choose & resources you employ, they need to know at some level of education in our culture that the 1st Law of Thermodynamics points to God as the Creator.

If matter is not being created or destroyed only changing forms, then it had to first come into being by God's creative work because God is eternal or self-existing, but matter is not.

And they need to know that the 2nd Law of Thermodynamics is a strike against evolution because order is decreasing not increasing in contrast to the theories of evolution.

With all the resources available with a biblical worldview in our times, you don't have to be an expert in those fields to do this.

I just used that illustration because I heard my wife reading to our daughter as I walked upstairs today.

That's just an illustration of being involved in your kids' training, of being invested in educating them with a biblical, Christian worldview.

That is God's command for you as a Christian parent.

In that sense, Christian education is NOT an option.

And if you think that's a statement about your schooling choice, last week I went over that with our assistant pastor Chris Goerner whose kids are in public school & he agreed.

The command for Christian education is far more than schooling choice—it is a lifestyle & a commitment & investment in training our kids in truth for every subject & every situation & every relationship.

It is what Deuteronomy 6:6-7 describe as teaching God's words "*diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up.*"

That is your role as parents & what we're here for tonight is to encourage you in that role with how we've designed YBI to come alongside of you as a help.

We're not a replacement for your role, but we all know that structure & planning help us accomplish our goals.

So each part of the structure & planning & layout & design of YBI seeks to move toward biblical goals for evangelizing & discipling teens to train them in Gospel-saturated truth & practice.

That's true with counseling & theology & apologetics & Christian living & gender roles & Bible survey & Bible study.

It is all geared to cover as many areas of truth we can pack into these 6 years in this very small part of training teens.

So we urge you as parents to commit to YBI for your students with a greater fervor than any other subject because this feeds the foundation of all other subjects & all of life.

Invest in reading with them or studying on your own with them so you can interact & discuss truth with them.

Invest in going over questions & memorizing verses & making sure they are on time & involved in every class & every outside activity & service ministry.

Make it a priority & stick to it even when it's tough because it is teaching your kids what matters most above other things.

Now Chris & Ken are going to share more details about the structure & curriculum & other parts of YBI.

CHRIS—Structure & JV

Ken—Varsity & Activities & Service

Now I finally want to share tonight how our YBI plan intersects with our church Relational Commitments.

Our youth & children's leaders submit to a background check as part of qualification for protecting our young people.

But they also must be members in good standing in this local church because that is the only way we can know they are Christians & can observe their character enough to allow them to serve.

So if you ever have questions or concerns about a leader, then please talk with that leader or with one of the other leaders or one of us as elders.

We want to be sure we are all always above reproach as examples of the direction we want our teens to be headed.

And teens—we want you headed toward following Jesus & serving His church here or somewhere else in the world.

We want you to love the body Jesus died to save & to be a part of spreading His saving message to the ends of the earth.

1st Timothy 1:5 is our theme verse for YBI .

1st Timothy 1:5 says, *“the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.”*

To accomplish that goal, we want to train in love that requires action & encourages service.

And teens, that means stepping up as young adults.

It's time to grow up & take the state of your soul seriously.

This stage of life is the time to step out in true faith of your own and evidence that by trusting God to help you grow and change.

And if God has saved you and changed you, then make that public by being baptized & joining the church in membership.

We don't want to baptize you just because you want to appear cool or spiritual or you think it will certify you as a Christian or make your leaders or parents happy.

But if you do trust Christ & if your parents & leaders affirm God's grace in your life, then the right step to take is to proclaim your faith publicly through baptism and membership.

The reality of biblical church life is that we come to know that you are a Christian when you identify with Christ in that way.

And if you do not take that step through your teen years, we must assume you are not be a Christian and that's why opportunities to serve end when you age out of YBI.

The real issue is that teens are young adults who are accountable to God for your soul.

It's safe to say that you are past any age of accountability & if you died today you could either be in heaven or in Hell.

You would not be treated like a child who receives grace simply because you are too young.

So realize your responsibility before God & run to Him as your gracious, loving, welcoming Lord and Savior today.

That's ultimately why we are here and why we do YBI.

And parents, we trust that is your prayer too & that we can humbly commit to partnering together.

Now we may have forgotten some things & I may have said things that need clarifying & so we've left some time now for questions.

So let me be quiet now and see what questions you have.

[QUESTIONS]

Close in prayer.