

Parenting Lessons I Learned From a Funeral

This past weekend my wife, Deborah, William (my oldest son), and I spoke at a parenting seminar at Bethel Brentwood. During the half-day seminar, we talked about the four E's of parenting (sound familiar?) and tackled four big questions that every parent should ask themselves:

- How can we *engage* our children's world?
- How can we *establish* strong biblical foundations?
- How can we *equip* our children for life?
- How can we *empower* them to pursue God's calling?

I opened the first session with a story about a good friend of mine who recently passed away at the age of 77.

Salvador "Bomboy" Fabregas was a pillar of our church for many years. He and his wife became Christians in their late-40s. One by one his adult children came to faith, and most of his 18 grandchildren have grown up in our church in Manila.

When we found out about his passing, I was in Nashville, so I quickly booked a flight to Manila so I could be there for the funeral.

One thing I will never forget about the funeral was hearing his grandchildren talk about their grandfather.

One grandson talked about his memories playing chess with—and always losing to—his grandfather. Another referred to his grandfather as one of his biggest fans on the soccer field. One granddaughter talked about how her grandfather was such a good listener and was always making sure he was up to date on what was going on in her life. For me, the most poignant story of all was hearing a teenage grandson tearfully explain that while all his friends complained about their obligatory visits

to their aged grandparents, he absolutely looked forward to and thoroughly enjoyed every visit with his grandfather.

Pretty soon a clear pattern emerged.

This grandfather was deeply *engaged* in the lives of his grandchildren—all of them, individually. He didn't necessarily care about chess or soccer or high school drama—he cared about Carlos, Bea and Daniel, and the other 15.

As a grandfather of two, I was blown away by the fact that my friend had 18 grandchildren—ranging from their mid-thirties to their pre-teens—and every single one of them felt like the favorite. Favoritism is destructive when one child or grandchild feels favored and the others feel rejected; however, when all feel equally favored, favoritism is a thing of beauty.

As parents, one of our most important jobs is to engage our children. Love what they love. Care about what they care about. Listen to what is on their minds.

It seems simple enough, but at certain stages, it can be really difficult for parents to engage their children. Maybe your son's or daughter's interests have changed to things that you know nothing about. Maybe your teenager is intentionally pushing you away. Maybe you have a new baby in the family that is taking a lot of your time and attention. Or maybe you are simply too busy at work.

Whatever season of parenting we find ourselves in, let's learn from my good friend Bomboy. Let's stay engaged with our children, and eventually our grandchildren, all the way to the end. {eoa}

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For the original article, visit .

Retired Colonel: At Least 1,000 People With 'Nefarious' Terrorist-Linked Plans Now in America

At least 1,000 people associated with the Middle East-North Africa region came into America with "nefarious" plans, Retired Lt. Col. Robert McGinnis tells Jim Bakker.

"Now these are the ones the border patrol knew about that came in illegally," McGinnis says. "Likely there are many others that have come into this country and are already planted as cells as ready to attack."

So what does this mean for our future and safety? Watch the video to see.

Tullian Tchividjian: The Disgusting Truth About Myself Made Me Want to Commit

Suicide

Famed megachurch pastor Tullian Tchividjian, the grandson of Billy Graham, contemplated suicide when his world came crashing down.

In a new post for [The Gospel Project](#), Tchividjian shared just how close he came to killing himself, including research and an apparent suicide note.

He writes:

Words cannot express the pain I feel for the hurt I've caused. It has become too much to bear. Based on what I've done and the pain I've caused, I have concluded that it is safer for all those I love that I just disappear.

Life without hope is death.

At the end, I tried. I really, really tried. God knows that my apologies and my expressions of love were real. So real. But what does that matter when the people you want so bad to believe you don't? I understand why they didn't. Given my recent track record, why would they? So when it became clear that those I love most wanted nothing to do with me, the choice I needed to make became clear.

Initially, I got angry and defensive when I was told that I'm a monster, evil, disgustingly dangerous, etc. But it has sunk in and I finally believe it. I am all those things. Lord have mercy.

One final word to the church: When people screw up bad, try to help them. Do your best to sacrifice anything and everything to help them. More than likely, they screwed up bad because they need help. Don't turn your back on them.

Pursue them. Something isn't right with them and they need help. Even if they have hurt you bad, do everything you can to help them.

"It is a far, far better thing that I do, than I have ever done; it is a far, far better rest that I go to than I have ever known."

The note came after Tchividjian resigned from Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church and admitted to having an inappropriate relationship last year.

"I could never really fully understand why people would take their own lives and while I have not been, thankfully by God's grace, tempted to do so, I for the first time understand why," Tchividjian said at the time. "I get the desperation, I get the despair in a way that I never have."

Tchividjian says having an affair really forces a pastor, a person, to look at themselves and ask, "What kind of person did I become for me to do what I did, my wife to do what she did, where did I fail? Did I become something, someone I didn't see I was becoming?"

It's this thought process that could have caused both Seth Oiler and Isaac Hunter to take their own lives after being caught in affairs.

But God was not done with Tchividjian yet.

The former pastor admits he strayed from biblical promises made in Ephesians 1:5 and John 1:12, that once a believer puts their identity in God, they are adopted into His family.

"Because I had existentially located my significance in things smaller than God, my loss did not simply usher in grief and pain and shame and regret. It ushered in a severe identity crisis. Without these things and people that I had come to

depend on to make me feel like I mattered, I no longer knew who I was. I felt dead. Therefore, I might as well be dead," Tchividjian writes.

But now, Tchividjian says, he's learned this:

Our identity is firmly anchored in Christ's accomplishment, not yours; His strength, not yours; His performance, not yours; His victory, not yours. The gospel doesn't just free you from what other people think about you; it frees you from what you think about yourself.

This means that He is the light at the end of your dark tunnel. And He's not going anywhere. Others may leave, but He will stay. As Winston Churchill famously said, "When you're going through hell, keep walking."

Your life is far from over. In fact, it may be just beginning.

Another Country Allows Children to Change Their Gender

A new law in Norway means children as young as 6 years old can choose their gender.

Until July, Norway was one of 32 European countries that required people to undergo irreversible sterilization before their gender change would be legally recognized.

Ten-year-old Anna Thulin-Myge is one of nine children who have taken advantage of the new measure. It allows Norwegian children to self-identify as male or female with their parents' consent.

"In some weeks, I'm going to have a new passport and then it's going to say 'F.' My name will be Anna, and that's going to be great," the transgender child said.

"I think it's a beautiful thing that Norway can finally recognize her as the girl she actually feels she is," Siri Oline Myge, Anna's mother, said.

So far, Norway has not refused a single gender reassignment application for an adult or child. There is no requirement for surgical or psychological intervention or approval.

Legal officials say the process is simple: Applicants just go online and fill out a form.

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Supreme Court Asked to Protect Religious Liberties of Christian Schools

Tuesday, the First Liberty Institute—the largest legal organization in the nation dedicated exclusively to defending religious freedom for all Americans—filed a brief with the U.S. Supreme Court, asking for a review of a case in which the

religious liberty of faith-based schools and colleges across the country is at stake.

At issue in *Gloucester County School Board v. G.G.* is whether or not an advisory letter from a federal agency can “carry the weight of law” as was suggested in a 2-1 decision by the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals. The letter, sent by a mid-level official at the U.S. Department of Education in January of 2015, said that a biological girl who suffers a condition that makes her believe she is a boy must be allowed to use opposite-sex bathroom and locker facilities or the school district could lose its federal education funding.

The letter said that because Title IX requires schools to offer equal-quality facilities to both sexes, schools must allow students to use the bathrooms and locker rooms of whichever sex they identify with.

“No one has the authority to say that a letter written by an unelected government agent is now the law of the land,” First Liberty Institute President and CEO Kelly Shackelford said. “Federal law says that at the very least, agencies must go through a process of public notice and comment to allow concerned citizens to weigh in.”

The Fourth Circuit ruling, if allowed to stand, would be applied to every school in the country. And, as a result, faith-based schools could be stripped of their federal funding under Title IX grounds, unless they adopt the new policies, even if the policies violate their religious beliefs.

“The First Amendment clearly protects the right of faith-based schools and educators to voice their concerns before the government strips away their benefits, and even then penalizing them for their faith would still be against the law,” Shackelford added.

A number of faith-based educational organizations and educators joined in the amicus brief. These include:

- The Cardinal Newman Society
- John Paul the Great Catholic University
- Thomas Aquinas College
- The Thomas More College of Liberal Arts
- Wyoming Catholic College
- Ignatius Angelicum Liberal Studies Program
- Dr. Byron R. Johnson, Institute for Studies of Religion (ISR), Baylor University
- National Catholic Bioethics Center

“This is yet another example of our government circumventing the Constitution, violating federal law and stifling religious freedom,” Shackelford concluded. “We hope the Supreme Court will uphold the rights of these educators to participate in public debate regarding this sensitive issue.”

Using Scripture to Quash the Stranglehold of Emotional Eating

Is food your hiding place?

When emotional eating had me bound years ago, God revealed that food had become my hiding place.

I ran to food whenever I experienced feelings in my heart that I didn't want to feel.

I used food to stuff down my frustration whenever I didn't express my opinion for fear of others rejecting me. I used food to mask the disappointment in myself when I refused opportunities because I was afraid of success or failure.

But over 10 years ago, God invited me to turn to Him as my refuge instead. From the safe place He offered to the scared little girl inside of me, I discovered I no longer had to be insecure or afraid.

I was free to be me!

The enemy had convinced me that if I didn't turn to food, I would be left without comfort. But that was a lie!

I learned that through the Holy Spirit, I had a built-in Comforter. He would never leave me nor forsake me. If you have been using food as a hiding place, then your Rescuer is here!

Meditate on the comforting Scriptures below for reassurance. God wants to become your shelter, your refuge:

"The Lord your God is in your midst, a Mighty One, who will save. He will rejoice over you with gladness, He will renew you with His love, He will rejoice over you with singing" (Zeph. 3:17).

"For You have been a refuge for me, and a strong tower from the enemy" (Ps. 61:3).

"There shall be a tabernacle for a shadow in the daytime from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a shelter from storm and from rain" (Is. 4:6).

"The Lord roars from Zion, and sounds His voice from Jerusalem, and heaven and earth quake. But the Lord is a refuge for His people, and a stronghold for the children of Israel" (Joel 3:16).

"I will abide in Your tent forever; I will seek refuge in the covering of Your wings. Selah" (Ps. 61:4).

God is waiting with open arms to provide shelter for you when you are hurting. The question is: Will you embrace Him? {eoa}

Once 240 pounds and a size 22, Kimberly Taylor can testify of God's healing power to end binge eating. She is an author and the creator of the Christian weight loss website . Visit today for inspirational health and weight-loss tips.

For the original article, visit .

Sign of the Times: Transgender Man Gives Birth to First Child

A transgender man has given birth after conceiving a child with his transgender wife. Fernando Machado was born a female; his partner Diane Rodriguez was born a male. Neither has completed sex-reassignment surgery. As a result, the transgender man was impregnated by his transgender wife and bore a child.

Gender identity issues are increasingly in the news these days. *The Wall Street Journal* reports that sex reassignment surgery is becoming more common as a growing number of hospitals offer the procedure and insurance companies provide coverage. And efforts are underway to encourage more children to question their gender identity.

For instance, Washington State public school curriculum will begin teaching kindergartners to "understand there are many ways to express gender." By grade five, students will be taught to "identify trusted adults to ask questions about gender identity and sexual orientation." We are likely to see more such initiatives: The Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network received a \$ million grant from the Centers

for Disease Control in 2011 to promote the LGBT agenda in public schools at taxpayers' expense.

It's no coincidence that unbiblical morality is increasing as trust in the Bible decreases. Since 1990, the American Library Association (ALA) has released each year a list of the ten "most challenged books." Now the ALA has released its 2015 list. For the first time, *The Holy Bible* is on the list. The only reason given: "Religious viewpoint."

According to Barna, the percentage of adults who read the Bible once a week or more is steadily declining. It is highest among Elders (49 percent) and lowest among Millennials (24 percent). In addition, the number of people who disagree strongly that "the Bible is totally accurate in all the principles it teaches" has nearly doubled in the last six years.

In the moral maelstrom of these days, how can you and I make a difference?

Surprisingly, our first job is not to change the culture. Rather, it is to keep the culture from changing us. Why would people want what we offer if it's no different than what they already have?

God's call is clear: "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Rom. 12:2). Note the order: Refuse to be conformed before you can be transformed.

God's Spirit wants to transform us into the character of Christ (Rom. 8:29) by renewing our minds through Bible study, prayer, and other spiritual disciplines. But we must choose between following the fallen world and serving the risen Savior. We can be conformed to the culture or transformed by Christ, but we cannot be both (1 Kings 18:21).

If you were less like the world and more like Jesus, what

would change in your life today?

The Strange Union of Christianity and Violent Sports

God alone knows the heart and only He can judge who belongs to Him and who doesn't, but there is something exceedingly strange about a fighter pulverizing his or her opponent, leaving them bloody, dazed and broken on the floor, while giving honor to Jesus Christ who gave them the victory. How can this be?

This past Saturday night, the most feared woman in Mixed Martial Arts (MMA), Cristiane Justino, better known as Cris Cyborg, walked out to fight her Swedish opponent to the accompaniment of a beautiful worship song known around the world, also holding up the cross around her neck before kissing it.

When the fight began, as expected, Cyborg dominated her game opponent, punching her in the face and kneeing her in the stomach and throwing her to the ground until the other woman's face was a mess, her left eye swollen shut and blood staining her shirt and shorts.

Was Cyborg helped by the Lord to administer this beating?

It is true that, in keeping with MMA custom, the two combatants hugged in the ring afterwards in a sign of mutual respect, and it is true that, for them, this is a sport that they engage in by choice. It is also true that, ultimately,

the fighter's safety is of paramount importance, meaning that no one wants to see a fighter permanently injured or, worse still, killed.

But is there nothing odd about blasting praise music through a massive PA system and kissing the cross before beating the living daylights out of an opponent, often rendering them unconscious with kicks and punches before the referee mercifully steps in? (Remember, we're talking about doing this for the entertainment of the crowds, as was done in ancient Rome in the Colosseum, as opposed to engaging in a just war to protect a country or engaging in an act of self-defense.)

Is there any harmony between violence like this and the Spirit of God?

Again, I am not judging the hearts of the combatants and claiming they have no relationship with God. That is for Him to decide. I'm simply raising some very obvious questions.

An article last year on the MMA Weekly website highlighted some post-fight comments made by a few of the fighters.

The first comments of the likable Benson Henderson following either a win or a loss are, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me," citing Philippians 4:13. Is this what Paul had in mind?

After Cuban-born Yoel Romero knocked out Lyoto Machida, he said, "What happened to you USA? What happened to you? What's going on? You forget that the best of the best of the world, the name is Jesus Christ. What happened to you? Wake up USA."

If this wasn't clear enough, he added in his imperfect English, "Go for Jesus, not forget Jesus, people."

Obviously, I share Romero's sentiments and wish that more pastors would preach what he preached, bringing a wake-up call to the nation.

But Romero had just knocked out Machida—literally, knocked him unconscious—by pummeling his face with his elbows, after which he preached Jesus to the crowd, which was there to see violent knockouts just like this. How can this be?

It has been common for decades for Catholic boxers to make the sign of the cross before fighting, while others kneel down and pray in their corner before the bell rings (think Manny Pacquiao, as a prominent example).

And they will often thank God for helping them defeat their opponent, which could also mean through a flurry of violent, life-threatening blows.

But does the Lord really get involved in all this? Is He really helping these fighters smash their opponents? (You could just as well ask if He influences the outcome of other sports events, as I'm quite aware that many question the violence of the NFL and the physical debilitation it brings.)

I have friends who have spent time with Manny Pacquiao, and he seems to be a genuine believer who loves the Lord and has a big heart to help his needy countrymen in the Philippines. In fact, the boxing promoter Bob Arum famously commented that Manny was the welfare system of his nation.

It is also clear that Manny does not want to hurt his opponents and has even let up at times rather than punish them unduly. Once again, I am not writing this as his judge.

But when Jesus-exalting music blares through a massive auditorium where fans have gathered to feast on violence and bloodshed, something is terribly wrong.

In times of revival, when the Lord is near and the beauty of the Lord is present and the fear of the Lord is in the air, something like this could never happen in a million years.

May He sensitize our hearts and the hearts of these athletes.

Senators: DOJ Not Doing Enough to Protect Churches

The Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances Act, a 1994 law meant to protect access to abortion clinics was amended prior to its passage to also ensure the security and religious liberty of churches and other places of worship in the U.S.

U.S. Sens. Ted Cruz (R-Texas) and Mike Lee (R-Utah) have been pressing the Department of Justice and Attorney General Loretta Lynch for more than six months over whether or not the department is favoring abortion clinics over churches. They have demanded that federal law enforcement agencies take steps to “ensure the rights of all American citizens” are protected under FACE, not just those that carry favor with the current administration.

They wrote a letter Tuesday to Lynch, accusing her and the Department of Justice of a double standard in enforcing the FACE Act. They point to the fact the department has pursued 25 cases involving actions to safeguard access to abortion clinics, but not a single one to protect access to churches or places of worship.

In particular, they pointed out protests at the Los Angeles Temple of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints against the Mormon church’s support for Proposition 8 that overturned a court ruling “legalizing” same-sex “marriage” in California and restored biblical marriage. More than 1,000 protesters shouted angry slogans and blocked entrance to the building.

Cruz and Lee wrote:

Demonstrations like this were part of a larger campaign of intimidation and harassment carried out against the Mormon Church for its support of California's Proposition 8. This campaign of hate was covered extensively by the press; for example, stories ran in major newspapers like the Los Angeles Times, and on national news networks like CNN and CBS.

The DOJ's explanation for its inaction on this issue, that the matter "had not previously been brought to our attention," simply lacks credibility. In short, it would appear the DOJ's process for tracking violations of religious liberty is either woefully inadequate or purposefully biased.

In their letter, the senators asked a series of follow-up questions, and have repeated several questions that were not answered in a previous letter sent in March. They said the information is necessary to conduct oversight of the Department of Justice and to determine whether or not it is "doing everything it can to protect the rights of all American citizens."

Why the Enemy Wants You to Engage in This Battle With God

One of the signs that envy is in your heart and you need to eliminate it is that you constantly use this phrase: "It's not fair." "It's not fair that he gets to do that and I don't." "It's not fair that it's easy for her and not for me." "It's not fair that their kids got the award and mine didn't." "It's

not fair that they can afford that vacation and I can't."

Envy is actually a battle with God. You're in a war with God every time you envy. Because what you're saying is, "God, you blew it. You didn't do it right. You didn't have the brains enough to make me the way I ought to be. Because if you really loved me, you wouldn't have made me *me*. You would have made me somebody else."

And God says, "*Huh?* If I didn't make you *you*, you wouldn't exist!"

The problem with envy is this: You don't trust God. You don't believe that He has your best interest at heart. You don't believe that He knows more than you do about what's best for you.

There are things in your life you don't have because God knows a reason why you shouldn't have them. There are some talents God did not give you. There are some opportunities God does not give you. And there are some experiences in life you don't get.

You can either trust God, or you can shake your fist in anger. But God is smarter than you, and He knows better. *He knows better!*

God has given each of us a race to run. You can't run anybody else's race, and no one else can run yours. You can either run your race, or you can make up your own race. That's what most people do—they make up their own race in life and then wonder why they hit dead ends.

God wants you to run the race He has for you. It's a plan that is custom designed for your life. When you focus on God's race, you won't need to worry about the race everybody else is running. You won't be bothered by the crowds that are cheering or jeering in the stands. You're living for an audience of one: God.

The Bible says in Hebrews 12:1, *“Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us”* (MEV). The more you understand your call from God, the less you’ll be worried about what God has called other people to do.

Any time spent envying other people is wasted time. Just be who God made you to be!

Talk It Over

- How do you respond to a child who says, “That’s not fair”? What can you learn from your own response to that child?
- Do you trust that God knows better what you need? Why or why not?
- What has God called you to do and be? What are you doing right now to work toward those goals and focus on God’s race that He has planned for you?

Rick Warren is the founding pastor of Saddleback Church. His book, *The Purpose Driven Church*, was named one of the 100 Christian books that changed the 20th century. He is also founder of [Pastors.com](#), a global Internet community for pastors.

For the original article, visit [Pastors.com](#).