

John 14:8-17 (25-27)

Philip said to Jesus, "Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied." Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves. Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father. I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it.

"If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you."

Good morning. As you can see from the red it’s Pentecost and so I want us to talk about our kids.

I know. That’s probably not what you expected. Typically, we would be talking about the birth of the church, the coming of the Holy Spirit, and the sharing of the Gospel, sharing the Good News of Christ, with all nations. All good stuff. But today, I thought we would talk about our kids and our grandkids.

We do love our kids and grandkids, don’t we? In all things, we want the very best for them. From the moment we learn about their pending arrival, their future becomes paramount in our minds and lives.

Our planning and our action start while they are in the womb. Expecting mothers change their diets to assist the baby in its development. They give up smoking and drinking alcohol. We; parent, grandparents, family, and friends; we all start to talk to bellies and tell our new family members about mom and dad and even weird Aunt Mable, who it will take a little time to

get used to at Thanksgiving dinner. We tell them that we love them with music playing in the room so that they can gain an appreciation of the good music of Mozart, or the Beatles, or maybe even Dr. Dre or 50 Cent, although that's seems unlikely that those last two would be too helpful in this area.

After they arrive into the world we feed them all the right foods. We buy toys to stimulate their minds, we get them into play groups to help them socialize, we get them onto sports teams or debate clubs, depending on their gifts, so that they can learn about achievement and fair play, and we warn them about the dangers of life in order to save them from unneeded heartache.

We love them, and guide them, and discipline them when necessary, and all along the way we dream about their lives always searching for ways to help them be all they were made to be; happy, healthy, and productive. There are exceptions, of course, but for the most part, that is what parents and grandparents do.

I read an article this past week about child rearing. Maybe that is why this is all kicking around in my mind. The article was based on research that has come out over the years from places like Duke University, Indiana University, and The University of Michigan. It included studies from The Center for Disease Control, Barna Research Group, Gallop, Pew, and the National Institute of Healthcare Research. All the studies, and their results from these universities and organizations, have been verified by several national surveys. What the combined studies reported was that they now have a proven program for our children called ACP, which is proven to do the following:

1. Increase the average life expectancy of your child by eight years.
2. Significantly reduce your child's use of, and lifetime risk from, alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs.
3. Dramatically lower your children's risk of suicide.
4. When depression hits, which we all know sometimes happens, this ACP protocol is proven to help them rebound from that depression 70% faster.
5. This program, when followed by the family, will improve children's attitude in school, increase their connection with their friends and their teachers, and when they rebel, which, let's face it, all kids do at some point, this program reduces the risk of life long repercussion from that rebellion.
6. It is proven that ACP will increase their chance of attending college, reduce their chance of binge drinking while there, and dramatically reduce their risk of committing a crime.
7. When followed into adulthood, participants in this program are more likely to report that they are "very happy" in their lives, they are more likely to be able to communicate a life-long moral compass that guides their lives, and are more likely to have intact extended family for their own children to interact with. They even wear their seatbelts more often.

ACP. It sounds pretty good, doesn't it? It is all researched and proven; documented and confirmed. It is hard to imagine what parent or grandparent would not be willing to spend the couple of hours it takes to get started. I mean, for cryin' out loud, thousands will stand in line all night for the release of the next iPhone. A couple of hours one morning seems like not much to ask.

ACP is available in every town, is free to start, and you only pay anything if and when you are satisfied and even then you only pay whatever you decide to pay. ACP. It is an acronym that stands for Active Church Participation. Its benefits are proven by one study after another and it is pretty much guaranteed to change your family's life for the better when embrace.

And this is the day that ACP was launched just over two thousand years ago. This is the day that God established the program in order to bring the fullness of life to your family, to your children...and to the world.

You see, Pentecost, I think, served two main purposes. The Holy Spirit came into our lives in order to build us up, that's number one...in order that, number two, God might reach the world through us. There were tongues of fire to enliven us, so that we would go into the world to enliven others. We received the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit...so that we would allow the Holy Spirit to enlighten all people through us. There was the moving of the wind in our existence, so that we could share that wind with others.

What parent or grandparent or great-grandparent would not want to share all of the above with their children? It would seem like an absolute slam dunk...longer, healthier, happier lives. It is an existence that brings them more in their lives as well as an existence that gives them the purpose, the privilege, and the joy of bringing more to the lives to others. Why our churches are not filled with growing children is an enigma to me.

But this all comes with other factors that need to be known. The studies show us some other details that parents must consider.

1. The studies show that a child's moral foundation is generally in place by the time they reach nine years old. Their perspective on truth, integrity, meaning, justice, morality, and ethics are formed, for better or for worse, very early in life. How they see and engage the world is developed by what we do for them in that first ten years of their lives. After that first decade, it becomes more difficult, although not impossible, to adjust and most people simply refine their existing views as they age, not change them.
2. A child's determination of how Christ's death and resurrection fits into their life is mostly set by age 12. It still may be simplistic, but the core is there. In most cases your child's or grandchild's spiritual beliefs are formed as they enter their teenage years, which is a real blessing from God, and probably His intention all along,

considering the turmoil their lives encounter during adolescence. As one researcher put it, what you believe when you are 13 in the church is, most likely, what you will die believing.

3. In a typical Protestant church 40% of the people ministered to are children, but almost 90% of ministry dollars are spent on adults. This would only make sense, if a big chunk of the 90% of the ministry dollars spent on adults were spent to teach them how to relate their faith to their children.

Pentecost is one of the principal feast day of the year. Today we celebrate the coming of the Holy Spirit so that we can go and be the church in, and for, the world. As we do, let's not forget that God has given us, and our children, a great gift in being that church. Don't our children deserve that gift?

Happy Pentecost...happy Children's Day.

Amen.