

You Are Your Own Fault

Or Kids Are People Too: Studies in personal responsibility and authority through the lens of parenting.

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Introduction

My propositions serve as elucidations in the following way: anyone who understands me eventually recognizes them as nonsensical, when he has used them—as steps—to climb beyond them. (He must, so to speak, throw away the ladder after he has climbed up it.) He must transcend these propositions, and then he will see the world aright.¹

Only lies are simple. Truth is complex, messy, alive. And words are dead things, mere tools. Language is machinery put in motion by people engaging with it and responding to it. So don't expect to find an ordered presentation of a simple system. I do not claim to offer answers. Expect rather to find words intended to provoke responses, ideas worth arguing against. If you find yourself agreeing with everything written here, then you are not reading it. I misquote, and misapply quotes. I contradict myself. I argue in favor of positions I disagree with, sometimes without any indication of sarcasm. I skip predictable connecting phrases and repetitive concluding statements. If the words that follow have any value, that value is derived from the work they provoke you to do.

The Proof is in the pudding

The apple doesn't fall far from the tree. Like father, like son. If you like how your children turned out, then you did a good job as their parents. Or if your children still like you when they grow up, then you were a good parent. If you are a felon, then your parents did a bad job. If you are not conversant with the classics of the English canon, then your parents could have done a better job. No, the true measure of successful parenting is survival – did your children reach adulthood physically healthy without having suffered abuse. Good parents raise geniuses. Good parents raise self-confident children. Good parents raise children who are self-controlled, diligent and honest.

Kids are people too. They are not stones to be shaped, or pets to be trained. Parents and kids are made of

¹Ludwig Wittgenstein, Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus

the same stuff – parents are not farmers while their kids are seeds to be grown. Two primary implications of children being their own persons: 1) when you are called to give an account for your work as a parent, you will not be judged based upon how your children turned out; and 2) your authority as a parent is limited, the goals you may set for yourself are limited, and the methods you may use to achieve those goals are limited.

- You are your own fault
 - Being a person means being accountable for your choices
 - You know what is right, and still choose wrong. You know the truth and choose lies. Maybe some meditations on lies
 - You are not an expert at running your life
 - You have little control over yourself – you do what you do not want to do
 - You cannot give up accountability for yourself
 - No one else can tell you who you are
- Sinners
 - Sin is a big deal bc God is holy
 - Justice as reconciliation / relationship
 - Only the gods can cross the chasm between is and ought
 - Being born a sinner is not
- Beliefs vs action
 - Belief doesn't determine action, and cannot infer beliefs from action
 - Bonhoeffer – belief doesn't precede action.
 - Cannot forcibly change another's beliefs, though can force action.
 - Even if you could program your kid's souls, you shouldn't
 - * Because you are incompetent, and would just make them worse
 - * Because they are responsible for their souls and you don't have the authority.
- Authority
 - Job of any authority
 - Parental
 - * parents are an authority, not only authority – part of hierarchy
- Kids are people too
 - So they are their own fault, not their parent's fault. Remember your creator in the days of your youth
 - Kids are Other, they have internal worlds, souls, that can be invited but not manipulated
 - They make their own decisions – people are not robots – it is immoral to see them as manipulable.
 - Kids are born sinners. Does not reduce their culpability.

- Transparency – developing a soul worth hiding
- Rights as people: privacy, agency
- If you have so little control over yourself, how much less control do you have over those around you
- You cannot tell another person who he is
- Adulthood defined
- Discipline
 - teaching vs learning
 - disciplines that free
- Leading / Serving Others in a way that leads them to freedom and flourishing

You are Your Own Fault

Great White Throne

A king may move a man. A father may claim a son. That man can also move himself, and only then does that man truly begin his own game. Remember that howsoever you are played, or by whom, your soul is in your keeping alone. Even though those who presume to play you be kings or men of power, when you stand before God you cannot say, “But I was told by others to do thus.” This will not suffice.²

It is appointed for men once to die and then to face judgement.³ And I saw the dead great and small standing before a great white throne, and all spake with one voice, “My mommy made me do it”.

You will stand and give an account of your deeds, your actions, your choices.⁴ Every idle word.⁵ You are your own fault. But I was poor, if I were a rich man⁶, I would have done better. But I was oppressed, and if I had been freer I would have done better. But I was abused, and if I had been loved I would have done better. But this woman whom you gave me, she gave me the fruit of the tree.

Wherever you came from, whatever was done to you, your choices are your own. You are your own fault. Whatever your circumstances, there is a morally upright way to live through them.⁷ What happened to you

²Kingdom of Heaven, 2005.

³Except for Lazarus, he was appointed twice to die. And Elijah rode away in a whirlwind. But other than them, once to die.

⁴Romans 2:6, 16 – He will repay each according to their deeds. God will judge the secrets of mankind through Christ Jesus. Romans 14:10,12 – We will all appear before the judgement seat of God. Each one of us will give an account of himself to God. Matthew 25:31ff – When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another. Matthew 16:27 – For the Son of Man is going to come with His angels in the glory of His Father, and then He will reward each according to what he has done. 1 Peter 1:17 – And if you address as Father the One who judges impartially based on each one’s work, you are to conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your temporary residence. Jeremiah 17:10 – I, Yahweh, examine the mind, I test the heart to give to each according to his way, according to what his actions deserve. Revelation 20:11 – I saw the dead great and small stand before the throne . . . and the dead were judged according to their works according to what was written in the books. Revelation 22:12 – I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me to repay each person according to what he has done.

⁵Matthew 12:36

⁶bada daba daba dum

⁷Titus 2:10, Genesis 38:26

yesterday does not excuse what you do today. What someone else did or said does not explain your choice. It is an error to look outside yourself to find a cause for your behavior.

Other people in your life may have done blameworthy things, even blameworthy things against you, and they will face judgement for that. But your responses, the lies you tell yourself, are yours.⁸

I'm like this because my dad . . . , if my mom hadn't . . . , then I wouldn't find it so hard to believe that God is This is a lie. If your dad was always a model of godly fatherhood, you would still believe lies, you would still have your own brokenness, your own rebellions, your own bents toward sin. Adam had the perfect father and still chose to follow his own lies. Others experienced the same things from their parents as you did, and they don't believe your lies or share your bents. You want to excuse your choices, but your attempt to blame others for yourself reduces your own humanity – you become a mere tool that others use. It is overly reductionist to point to any one experience, or a multitude of experiences, in your life and say that this why you started believing a given lie. More than that, even if you could identify the motivations behind your lie, doing so is not particularly helpful in rejecting the lie and walking in the truth. The serpent deceived me. The woman you gave me. A story explaining why does not excuse the lie and is not needed in order to repent or counter the lie.

It is easy to convince your therapist that you are someone else's fault. That is what they are trained to do – to find excuses for you in order to salve your shame. They are required to believe that you are caused because only then is it possible for them to fix you. When your deeds are on the scale and your soul is in the balance, best of luck when your defense begins with “but my therapist said”.

Nature versus nurture is a false dichotomy. If it were true that some combination of our genetics and experiences determined our choices, then we could, as we attempt to do, explain our choices by what happened to us. However, if we were honest and willing to look, we would always find counter examples to any proposed explanation. There is always someone who shares that gene or that experience and yet makes different choices. So, to maintain our deterministic theory, we would be compelled to add more and more differentiating details to our explanation. “Anyone who had all of these particular genes, and had experienced this exact long thread of particular experiences, would make this same choice.” Taken as far as would be required to uphold determinism, the explanation would simply become “Anyone who was me would choose what I chose.” Which is no explanation at all.

Attempting to explain the choices made by other people by looking outside the person for a cause is dehumanizing. You make them less than human in your eyes. They become a machine who's dials just require some fiddling to work right.

⁸Philippians 4:11ff, 1 Peter 2:18ff

Just as you cannot evade moral responsibility for yourself, so you cannot take upon yourself another's accountability. Even if that other person is your child, they will stand before the throne alone.

Bullshit

Whatever keeps you going. Whatever gets you up in the morning. – Whatever keeps you going,
Donovan Woods.

Don't settle for bullshit. The lies you tell yourself are the most hidden to you and most destructive. The heart is deceptive above all else.⁹ But if you're going to hold onto a lie, then own it. Don't claim to be an atheist and then pretend there's an alternative to nihilism. Don't accept nihilism and then claim there's a reason to get up in the morning. Walk towards truth or own the lie, but don't see the lie, pretend that it is the truth and change nothing.

Bear Fruit in Keeping with Repentance

The survivors that are left of the house of Judah will again take root downward and bear fruit upward.¹⁰

It says in one place, we must all appear before the judgement seat of Christ so that each may be repaid for the deeds done while in the body.¹¹ Now this "done while in the body" signifies that the judgement is based upon what a body, your body, is capable of doing. As it happens, you have continually done all the evil you are capable of.¹² You will be judged for whether your work was good or worthless, not for what was accomplished through your work. You are not a god. You control very little. Elijah prayed for rain, but God caused the rain. Elijah called down fire, but God sends the fire. Elijah anoints as king, but God builds up and tears down kings and kingdoms. Elijah judges his own work as unsuccessful, and God preserves for Himself a remnant. Paul and Apollos can plant and water, but only God causes the growth. The farmer spreads the seed on the ground, then goes to sleep and gets up, night and day, and the seed sprouts and grows, though the farmer does not know how. By itself the soil produces a crop.¹³ The farmer is judged for the quality of his planting and watering, but the quality of the crop is beyond him.

Cursed is the ground because of you, in toil you shall it of it... both thorns and thistles shall it

⁹Jeremiah 17:9. Does the heart deceive more than anything else deceives, or does the heart deceive more than the heart does anything else?

¹⁰Isaiah 37:31

¹¹2 Corinthians 5:10

¹²Jeremiah 3:5

¹³Mark 4:26ff

bear for you...by the sweat of your brow shall you eat bread.¹⁴

Men toil in the hope of bread, but only gods have the power to cause the sun to shine, the rain to fall and the seed to grow. What does this “sweat” signify, but that you may work hard for the fruit. And this “of your brow,” but that you may work with intelligence for the fruit. And yet thorns and thistles shall it bear for you. The toil with sweat and brow does not determine whether the fruit that grows is bread or thorns.

Produce fruit in keeping with repentance... Every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.¹⁵

See also, John 15, Matthew 7:17ff, Matthew 13]. These commands are not about changing other people, but developing your own character. Sinful passions also bear fruit.¹⁶ In the metaphor, you are the tree that is bearing fruit. If that fruit were some change you were making in other people then those other people wouldn't be trees themselves. A tree bears fruit in itself, not in other trees.

What does fruit mean in this context? There are many works of the flesh but only one fruit of the Spirit. Works are done by human hands, fruit thrusts upward and grows all unbeknown to the tree which bears it. Works are dead, fruit is alive, and bears the seed which will bring forth more fruit. Works can subsist on their own, fruit cannot exist apart from the tree. Fruit is always the miraculous, the created; it is never the result of willing, but always a growth. The fruit of the spirit is a gift of God, and only he can produce it. They who bear it know as little about it as the tree knows of its fruit. They know only the power of him on whom their life depends.¹⁷

Fruit is grown to be eaten, not merely to be replanted.¹⁸ This aspect of the metaphor seems to get lost in discussions of spiritual fruit, regardless of how the word “fruit” may be understood. We are too divorced from the agricultural context in which the metaphor originated. Fruit does not bear fruit, plants bear fruit. Some fruits can be planted to grow more fruit, but many of the fruit bearing plants, especially in that original agricultural context, are not multiplied by planting but by grafting. Be aware when considering fruit bearing metaphors that you do not see yourself as the plant and other people as the fruit. Unless you are making babies¹⁹, this misreads the metaphor – you and other people are always the same stuff.

I will be judged based upon my obedient work, not whether that work successfully bore fruit. And so I don't have to resort to unjust methods to be successful. It's not my job to change the world. My job is to trust and follow.

¹⁴Genesis 3:17-19

¹⁵Luke 3:8-9

¹⁶Romans 7:5

¹⁷Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, p 284. Suggesting that even our own character is fruit beyond our power to grow in ourselves

¹⁸Jeremiah 2:7

¹⁹be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.

A man can be perfect and still reap no fruit from his work.²⁰

It's Not About You

It's not about you.²¹

Your time of judgment before the great white throne is not about you. The time you spend on this earth is not about you. Nor is it about, as the script writers of *Dr. Strange* were suggesting, humanity as a whole. You are not worthy of being the center of your own life, much less the center of anyone else's. Gathering a bunch of unworthy people together under the label "humanity" does not make the label worthy of being the center. Do not make of yourself a little god. Even if you should stand before the throne unbowed. If you should stand clothed in your own righteousness. If the books that are opened are filled with your praise and not your condemnation. Even so, you are an unworthy servant, having done only what you ought to have done.²²

It is not your job to make the world a better place. Nowhere is it so written. You were not created for the purpose of improving the world. The world was good at creation – it had no need to be improved – and yet people were part of that creation and had work to do in it. It is not your job to make your mark on the world, to leave a legacy, to be remembered. Those terrible cliches in which "you live as long as the last person who remembers you." This is part of the hubris and fallacy of Babel. You make yourself into your own idol whether you live for your own pleasure or for the change you make in the world.

Used Tampons or Only Superman Does Good

You won't stand before the throne while clothed in your own righteousness, because your righteousness is like filthy rags.²³ The command is to love the Lord your God with all of your heart, soul, mind, and strength. You cannot love what you do not know. You cannot love with your whole being if you do not fully know yourself and fully possess yourself. It is against loving a person to lie to or about them. So to fulfill the first command for even a single breath, you must fully know yourself and God, and then fully express that truth in the depths of your will, words and work.

Superman does good, you're doing well. Only God is good, you are feeling fine. Your righteousnesses, your best efforts in your best moments, are filthy rags.

²⁰Merton 7.8

²¹Tilda Swinton as The Ancient One to Benedict Cumberbatch as Dr. Strange.

²²Luke 17:10

²³Surely "used tampon" is the best translation of the Hebrew in Isaiah 64

You may be engaged in vaginal intercourse with your wife for the purposes of procreation, but that does not make the act sexually pure²⁴. You bring all your brokenness into bed with you.

You are not a righteous person who sometimes stumbles. You don't stumble so as to fall. You are fallen. Laying in the pig slop. Maybe trying to get up and walk, but still covered in the muck. If you are also covered in the blood of the sacrifice, then the judge may choose to think of you as righteous. But that right judicial standing does not fix your actions.

How you see God is tied to how you see yourself. How you see others is tied to how you see yourself. The more righteous you are, the smaller God is, and the more unforgivable others are. The more holy God is, the more you need grace and the easier it is to offer grace to others.

The Law was not given to explain how to be righteous. It was given to prove to you that even in these littlest earthly things you are wrong. You cannot keep your hands from killing and stealing, how much less can you glorify God as he deserves.

I'm just Ken

and I'm kenough.

No. You are not enough. An absurd claim. For what are you enough? You are not enough for your own happiness or contentment. You are not enough for your own health. What magic do you wield that will keep you from the cancer. You are not strong enough to protect yourself. You can only ever carry so many bullets, and the best marksman misses shots. Every act of life requires risk. You are not wise enough to make the right decisions for your life. Too much is unknown, unknowable, and beyond human control. Which of you by careful planning and diligent effort can add a single hour to your life.

You are not an expert at running your own life. You have brokenness you haven't fixed, wounds you haven't healed.

If you are not enough for yourself, how could you be enough for anyone else. You are not enough for your kids. You are not enough to keep them safe. You are not enough to keep them healthy.

One response to not being enough is Disney's nihilism – just be yourself. Let it go. Assert that what matters most is being true to myself, which quickly becomes what matters most next is that you accept me for who I say I am. Set aside the incoherence of the train of thought that progresses from “I am not enough” to “I not even going to try, I'm just going to be me” to “you have to tell me that I am enough”.

²⁴Exodus 19:15, 1 Samuel 21:4 – sex defiles. Or how about David's “In sin my mother conceived me” in Psalm 51:5

The value of our activity depends almost entirely on the humility to accept ourselves as we are. The reason we do things so badly is that we are not content to do what we can... Who is willing to be satisfied with a job that expresses all his limitations?²⁵

Have the courage to be small, to be humble, to be only myself. Not a little god.

God does not demand that every man attain to what is theoretically highest and best.²⁶

You are who you are supposed to be. A tool to be used, and used up.

Unveiled Faces

It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.²⁷

Our God is a consuming fire.²⁸

You were made to meet your maker.²⁹

No matter your age, gender, ethnicity, intellect or wealth, all will stand before the throne and give an account. This implies that you have been deemed worthy to enter the throne room and stand before the King. No mere ape is worthy. No animal is morally accountable for their behavior. Angels don't stand before the throne. The seraphim fly with feet and eyes covered in constant worship. Isaiah stands barefoot on holy ground, with his eyes open, talking directly to God. The fiery coal which the angel won't touch except with tongs Isaiah kisses. We are made for [only] a little while lower than the angels.³⁰ Abraham, Jacob, Moses all talk with God face to face. They argue with God. Therefore he is not ashamed to call them his brothers and sisters.³¹ You are deemed worthy to stand before the throne. Your kids are worthy to stand before the throne.³² Each may be rewarded either with glory or shame, but all are granted entry to the throne room of God.

See Thee Beneath God³³

Every life belongs to me. The life of the father is like the life of the son – both belong to me.³⁴

²⁵Merton 7.5

²⁶Merton 4.13

²⁷Hebrews 10:31

²⁸Hebrews 12:29

²⁹Mumford and Sons

³⁰Psalms 8:5, Hebrews 2:9. Compare *elohim* to *angelos*.

³¹Hebrews 2:11

³²The kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.

³³The Pope's Exorcist

³⁴Ezekiel 18:4

You are gods. You are all sons of the Most High. However you will die like humans and fall like any other ruler.³⁵

Your child is morally accountable to God. If you have a violent son who commits detestable acts, his death will be his own fault.³⁶ Your child's wickedness is not, and cannot be, your fault. You do not have the power to make your child evil any more than you have the power to make them good. You, as a parent, do have responsibilities towards your children. And you will be judged for the manner in which you fulfill those responsibilities. But you will not be judged based upon your child's choices. You can feel proud or ashamed of your kids, but you can't take credit or blame.

Like channeled water³⁷

Arguments against being your own fault.

Why do you make us stray. Isaiah 63:17.

A person's way is not his own, no one who walks determines his steps. - Jeremiah 10:23

A person's heart plans his way, but the Lord determines his steps. Proverbs 16:9

Moral culpability does not rest on actions being without cause or without explanation. An explanation for your choices does not excuse them. Naming a cause for your actions does not free you from the blame.

Notes

The only truly unapproachable subject for you is that it's your mind, within your control...

You are the master of your universe... The thing about repairing, maintaining and cleaning [your own mind] is that it is not an adventure. There's no way to do it so wrong you might die.

It's just work. – Rick and Morty, Season 3 Episode 3.

The stories that scripture tells never explain a person's choices by describing their past or their parents. In fact we are very rarely told anything at all about any Biblical character's childhood. Why was Moses who he was – we're not given any explanation. We are simply told of his choices. How was David raised that made him a good king, a man after God's own heart – we are not told. Was it because David had good blood – no because we are told his ancestors were incestuous, adulterous and foreign. The Text has no interest in what processes made David to be David, because the Text does not assume that there were processes

³⁵Psalm 82:6

³⁶Ezekiel 18:13

³⁷Prov 21:1

that produced him. The Text assumes that he chose, that he is accountable for his choice, and that there is no value in attempting to discover an explanation for his choice. Any direction we would look for an explanation, the Text provides either an explicit counter example or a wall of silence.

Mistakes are a part of our life, and not the least important part. If we are humble, and if we believe in the providence of God, we will see that our mistakes are not merely a necessary evil, something we must lament and count as lost: they enter in the very structure of our existence. It is by making mistakes that we gain experience, not only for ourselves but for others. And though our experience prevents neither ourselves nor others from making the same mistake many times, the repeated experience still has a positive value – Merton, 7.10

Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God

Or the Speck in your brother's eye

Behold the Kindness and Severity of God

For not knowing about God's righteousness and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God.³⁸

We make our sin too small and too large. We make so little of it that we can't understand why it would be so offensive to God – he should just get over it, what's with this eternal damnation stuff – the gospel is unnecessary. And we make so much of it that it becomes unforgivable – letting our shame convince us that no one could, or should, accept us if they knew the real us – the gospel is not strong enough. The significance of sin is rooted in the holiness of God. When we make little of our sin, we make little of God.

Fallen Angels

Only the lost are saved. Only the sinner is justified. Only the dead can rise from the dead...
Some men are only virtuous enough to forget that they are sinners without being wretched enough to remember how much they need the mercy of God.³⁹

We don't really believe that we are sinners. We talk about people as though they "stumble" or "fall" into error. As though there was a good person who was walking rightly and occasionally trips.

We don't really believe that we are sinners because we don't really believe that God is holy. God is just like us.⁴⁰ He's an old man in the sky. Perhaps powerful. Perhaps wise. Perhaps even loving. But a person like us. And so his moral code is ultimately arbitrary – yes maybe he knows us best and so knows what is

³⁸Romans 10: 3

³⁹Merton 11.4

⁴⁰Psalms 50:21

best, so that the constraints of morality are really for our well-being. And maybe the law is a reflection of his character – he is good, he models goodness, and calls (commands) us to be like him. But because he is like us, he is not in himself worthy to be the highest value of the universe. He is not worthy to be the point. Setting high moral goals is fine. But when we inevitably fall a little short of perfection, that is an opportunity to learn and grow, not an occasion for judgement.

If sin is simply lawlessness, breaking the rules of the latest Baal, then I don't have a sin problem or need of redemption. If the motivation offered for following the rules is the hope that death won't be the end of this life, then we are too be most pitied. Our fear is not that this life will end, but that, whether it ends or not, it is meaningless and empty. An eternal, hopeless, unsatisfied existence is infinitely terrifying. No law has been given that is able to impart life.⁴¹ The rules are not the fullness. The letter is not the spirit. The rules are a teacher that guide us to Christ.⁴² The point of the law is the person of God. Sin is not breaking a rule – it is breaking a relationship. Sin severs our connection with the only person in the universe who can bring us life and satisfaction.

Our understanding of sin and redemption must be grounded in joy and life to the full, both tasted today and hoped for tomorrow.

Breaking his law is not simply a foolish mistake, a minor character flaw. By our words and actions we lie against the truth of who he is.

Between Good and Evil. Morality is pervasive.

Our whole life is startlingly moral. There is never an instant's truce between virtue and vice. –
Thoreau Walden p. 194

There is no room between good and evil. Morality is pervasive. No action is amoral. No choice is gray.

Pervasive relational morality. Moral hierarchy. Morality is 1) Objective not subjective; 2) Concrete not abstract; 3) Personal not general; 4) Relationship not rules; 5) Faith or truth not action (most actions are not in themselves sinful, but are sin because of the actor, circumstances, concrete situation, or the actor's beliefs)

Every moment I have to choose what to do. At each moment, the set of alternative actions from which to choose is practically infinite. God in His transcendence wills precisely that action which I will have chosen. God in His immanence wills precisely that action which I *ought* to choose. "Ought" as in that action which is morally perfect - that singular action that is fully obedient to God's revelation generally and

⁴¹Galatians 3:21

⁴²Galatians 3:24

specifically to me; fully expresses affection for (worships) God, myself and all other beings in proportion to their true worth; and fully reflects the truth of who I am and the gifts I have been given. My work is to pursue the understanding, wisdom and self-control required to see, choose and act as I *ought*. When I fail to choose/act as I ought, God in His transcendent immanence effectually acts to fully redeem my failures and accomplishes an end that is morally perfect.

Every action is either sin or not sin, there is no gray, no sliding scale. But the line between sin and not sin is not down at thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not lie. The line is far up at love God (fully know and fully express the truth in worship) with everything I am, and love my neighbor as myself. Which means that my every action is sin. I can sin in ways that move me and people around me towards God, or ways that move us away from Him. And regardless of which way I'm currently sinning, I have the relentless power of the blood redeeming all to His glory. There aren't better or worse sins. There are better or worse ways to sin each sin. Are we excused from choosing the better because it still falls short? May it never be. The call is to perfection, to be holy as God is holy. We are freed from the delusion that our righteousnesses are ever more than filthy rags. Freed to show grace, patience and perseverance to others and to ourselves. Freed to forget what lies behind and press on towards the upward call. Chandler – Grace does not make sin safe.

There is a difference between *morally perfect* and *morally blameless/acceptable*, between a choice which doesn't merit condemnation and a choice which is *good*. There is a force of *ought* behind moral perfection – I ought to always and only do that which is *best*. From the set of available choices, I am capable of identifying some as *my best* – the best I can do right now, given what I know about myself, God, others, my assignments. But rarely does *my best* narrow the field of choice to a single option. How to choose between *my bests*. Is there a larger set of *acceptable* options around *my bests* such that I could choose poorly without choosing wrongly, choosing evil.

Making the world a better place

The moral value of your actions is found in you – in your desires / choices / actions / beliefs. Not in the affects that those actions have in other people. Mens Rea. It's sin if you thought it was sin. It's sin if the goal was wrong. It's sin if method was wrong, even if the goal was good. It's sin even if it works out for the best (because everything is always made to work out for the best).

A virtuous act is not virtuous because of how the other responded to it. But a manipulative act, an act that is intended to provoke a specific response from an other is judged for the provocational intent. Am I my brother's keeper – no You are, and as your servant I am. Pharoah will harden his heart and not hear you – so you should be more creative in your presentation.

Morality is Objective

Good and evil are defined by something outside of you, your feelings, your wants, your abilities.

One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism. Morality is Personal.

There is only one way to be good. Only one right way to live. One right way to dress. One right word to say in that moment. One right way to cut an avocado. A person is only their own person because they continue to be sinners. When the perfect comes, every person will be the same person and everything will be done rightly.

Go and sell everything you own and give it to the poor and come follow me.

Can't be a command for everyone.

God calls and uses particular individuals. Not called to be Jesus. Perfection does not mean that I do the same thing that Jesus would do if he were incarnated into my position. Special revelation, the call / assignments on me in particular.

Morality is a hierarchy

Morality is relational

morality, like destiny, is worked out with a personal God

every act is more or less an expression of love for God. God is at top of moral hierarchy - Experiencing and responding to His love. Discerning the voice of God. Knowing assignments each moment and doing

Why you did something affects whether the action was morally right. There's a mens rea of understanding, and a mens rea of intention. Did you restrict a child's access to the Internet because A or B.

Forgiveness

forgiving requires forgetting

What is easier to say "your sins are forgiven" or "get up a walk". The sins was the real problem, the real disability. And to forgive or proclaim forgiveness was the harder work. The walking was proof that the harder work had been done.

Chandler: Grace does not make sin safe.

The Law

Law is made for man, not man for the Law. New covenant

Beyond Good and Evil - The Law is not a list of rules defining morally good actions and morally evil actions. Principles that we are meant to see beyond – God did not kill Cain or Moses when they murdered, even though that was the punishment that was written. The odd placement of Jesus' teachings on divorce. Paul's application of muzzling an Ox to teachers. What about "sin is lawlessness". Holiness (as otherness) as becoming like God. Jesus didn't evaluate each moment whether a potential course of action was allowed by the Law (did He? what about in the temptation of Satan), even within the hierarchy of laws, but rather *knew* what He *ought* to do in that moment as it had been taught to Him by His Father.

Not just that laws are "fuzzy" (as in it's hard to define murder). The "why of an action matters: I killed on accident, I killed to prevent worse, I killed because I hated. The "how" of an action matters: I killed in a way that caused suffering, I killed publicly, he sought to divorce her quietly.

The sinfulness of an action cannot be judged by analyzing only the action itself. The widow gave 2 mites - for most others this would be treating God with disdain, but her act honored Him. The people passed their children through the fire to Molech and were condemned as having done that which was worse than anything God Himself could imagine. Abraham sacrificed his son in fire on the altar and it was credited to him as righteousness. God sacrificed His Son in the fire of His wrath and it was righteousness to the world. Perhaps no action in isolation, abstracted away from the people and circumstances involved can be judged morally right or wrong. Maybe one of the lessons we're supposed to learn from the OT Law is that it's foolish to say things like "murder is wrong". Not because we each get to decide what is good or evil for ourselves, but because the top of the moral hierarchy is a Person and so morality is inherently relational, concrete, and personal.

I want to say "I can't tell someone else what is good or evil for them with the authority of God". But I don't want to be heard as saying "everything is permitted" (1 Cor 6:12). Nor as saying morality is subjective, up to each person to decide, as opposed to absolute. Morality is absolute and pervasive – every thought and action is either good or evil, and which it is may be discovered by you, but it is decided absolutely by God. Because the highest command is that I love God with everything that I am. Everything short of that is sin. Which means that our righteousnesses are filthy rags. ... Is this hypothetical guy sinning when he has sex with another guy? Yes. His heart is filled with a thousand idolatries. In his actions and beliefs, he lies against who God is and who he himself is. Is it sin because of the gender of the person with whom he's sleeping? I am not his judge. And I don't have to make that judgement in order to counsel him because my counsel is on the truth and lies. God will change hearts and actions. I don't get to decide which part of this

other person He heals first.

Does special revelation trump general revelation – purpose of law is not to equip you to judge others, but to equip you to judge yourself. Thou shalt not murder (or sacrifice your children) – Take your son whom you love and sacrifice him to me. Thou shalt not lie – I will go and be a lying spirit in the mouths of the prophets. Thou shalt not make a graven image – Make a serpent and anyone that looks upon it shall be saved.

Only One is Good. There is not only one way to be perfect. Morality is objective and absolute. All of your actions are either morally good or morally evil and there is no gray. You are not your judge. Morality is objectively a Person and absolutely personal. Good is not defined by what feels good to you. Good may be different for you than others, because it is defined for you specifically by the person of God.

When you are enslaved, every action you take, no matter how strongly logic claims it will lead you to freedom, serves only to entangle you more in your chains. You must be made free. And only then can the chains be loosed. The chains of our captivity become comfortable. We cling to them even after being freed – how often did the Israelites beg to return to Egypt while they wandered in freedom. ... While you are enchained, what hope can you have of freeing your child. Your actions entangle your chains and their own. You can't see clearly enough to distinguish between the chains they wear and the ones you wear and have wrapped around them. The blind leading the blind.

sin twists good, healthy things into evil. only God creates ex nihilo, evil must use what's already there. Romans 7:13.

Deal with sin by pursuing God, so spend some time discussing how to do that. Different from studying Text. Connects to "secrecy of God".

Jesus was Jesus so that we don't have to be. Our failures prove our need, we cannot hold others to a standard that requires them to be Jesus for others – they must be allowed to fail, to get divorced, etc.

Justice is about *community*. Questions of morality or equality are derivative of community, similar to Newton's Laws being special cases of Einstein's Relativity. Justice is not just reconciliation in the sense of "now we can be friends again", it is making things right, restoring the world to what it would have been without the wrong.

Does a personal "offense" (someone sinned against me) create "debt"? You hurt me, so you owe me? Doesn't feel right. By doing wrong, you brought evil, broke the "pre-existing peace, good, rightness", and that needs to be fixed, repaired, made right, redeemed. And it seems right for you as the breaker to bear the costs of repair.

Jr's arguments re his president who allowed a felonious sexual deviant to be a teacher/coach basketball and lied about it: epistemological - how can I know this guy is repentant and cured of that inclination to sin. Other equally qualified candidates who have not had a moral failing. If you had a moral failing and are really repentant then you wouldn't want to have your old position back. Must be above reproach and can never be after a moral failing. – But I feel that justice is restoration. Not that you deserve or get your job back, but that you are requalified. Moses. Peter.

The church's work, as Christ's presence on earth, is to do the same thing Christ did: bear the sins of the world. To suffer for sinners. Not to suffer as righteous.

We talk as though government is an "it" that takes from "us" and gives to "them". But government is us. "We", as a community, in order to be in community, agree to use our individual freedoms to, in part, advance the interests of the community. Acts 4 is not a commune or communism, it's a microcosm of the natural order of community. The natural state of man is not a Hobbsian war of individuals. It is communal cooperation. Cain is the aberration. The Tower of Babel the perversion. The natural, healthy bent of man is to community. Scatter us across the globe and we immediately band together as much as we can.

Incorporate [Other People's Problems](#) book into this one?

Cannot decide what is broken in another person, any more than you can decide how you're going to fix them. Cannot see or know. Can only help them see themselves and then allow themselves to be seen and healed.

You are not their priest, their confessor. They do not owe you penance or require your absolution.

Darkness is a harsh term, don't you think? And yet it dominates the things I think. ... It's not the long walk home that will change this heart, but the welcome I receive with a restart. – Mumford

What are we with our little conversion, our little repentance and revising, our little ending and beginning, our changed lives? .. It is in His conversion that we are engaged.... It is in His baptism in Jordan that we are baptized.... It is in His death on the cross that we are dead ... and in His resurrection. .. that we are risen. . . . It is because this is the case .. that the awakening to repentance is the power of the Gospel, and that it has the force and depth ... which are proper to it. .. It remains for us to know that .. we are [upheld] by the great movement which He has fulfilled. – Karl Barth

As the body of Christ, the church is called to do the same - to be present in public life as sinners who direct God's judgment away from others by taking responsibility for sin through

repentance. In doing so, the church faithfully witnesses to the lordship of Christ and participates in Christ's transformation of this world. – From church and politics book on kindle

- Grace
 - Repentance and Forgiveness
 - * What is repentance
 - * Deciding whether someone else is repentant.
 - * Rickey's comment re pharaoh – that in Ex 10:16-17 pharaoh appears to be repentant (we should let him in the church, put in charge of hospitality, hahaha), but he clearly isn't because God is responsible for repentance just as He is for the lack of it that we see in Ex 10:20.
 - * Progressive sanctification – Ex 23:29 and Matt 12:43 – God doesn't deal with our sin at all once, but frees/heals us slowly as we are able to fill that space.
 - How to walk with others through sin.
 - Judging others - not your job to decide who is saved (Ez 37:3 - You know Lord.)
 - church membership
 - * why, why exclude, when to kick out
 - * moral failures of leaders

How to deal with sin?

The work we do is identify the lies we believe about ourselves, God and others; counter those lies with the truths of God; incorporate those truths into our minds and souls; commit to live according to the truth.

The Sin of others:

- Matthew 18
- 1 Corinthians 5
- James 5:19
- 1 John 5:13-20
- Luke 17:1-4
- Galatians 6:1
- 2 Thessalonians 3:14-15

We are all sinners. We all have unconfessed sin. We all have sin in our lives that we don't know is sin. Our souls are broken on the surface and in their depths. God does not require that we address all of our sin at one time, nor that we fully understand the depths of our depravity, or the far reaching death brought into the world through our sin. He works slowly, on little parts of us, and He redeems the death our sin has

wrought. It is not our job to tell others their sin. It's our job to walk with others as we both walk with Jesus, and let Him address their sin. There are situations when we are required "to judge those within the Church", to help someone get the speck out of their eye. Those situations are decided primarily by the discernment offered by the Spirit as guided by the wisdom revealed in the Text (as in the above passages). Anytime we are dealing with other's sin, we have to remember to be gracious, to remember that "we were once ourselves foolish, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures ... but the kindness of God appeared and saved us" (Titus 3). Often the only thing that can or need be said when someone you care about is dealing with sin and death is "That sucks. I still love you. God still loves you. Let's walk through this." God is immeasurably kind and patient and wise. Jesus prayed for those driving nails into His hands.

I was born this way. Wrong on 3 levels:

1. won't find the gene and don't want to. If found, then could be detected, corrected. Not morally acceptable, just genetically deformed. Doesn't assuage feelings of shame or guilt.
2. denies your moral agency. I can't be held responsible for my actions, at least in this area. Because I'm not a person, in an animal, a machine, my body made me do it.
3. your moral responsibility is not to be as morally upright as you are able. Weakness or innate proclivities don't excuse moral failings. Your responsibility to is not be to be morally perfect. It's to be good. Good as God is good. You must be like God. Holy.

Beliefs and Actions

Homo Economicus

We like to think that we, and everyone else, make choices by considering what we believe to be true, examining our desires, and then choosing the action that we predict will maximize the fulfillment of our desires. I believe apple fritters are delicious and I desire an apple fritter for breakfast, therefore after consideration I chose to get an apple fritter. Enlightened self-interest. But this is blindingly fallacious. We hold contradictory claims as truth. We have conflicting desires, and often don't know what we want. And we regularly choose to act in ways that we know will be harmful to our own interests. But assume for a moment that everyone acts with enlightened self-interest: All you would have to do to fix behavior is teach a better understanding of the world or change desires. However, teaching is hard (or rather making someone learn is hard).⁴³ And changing someone else's desires is both hard and manipulative.⁴⁴ Consider how successful you have been at changing your own desires. Even if we all acted with enlightened self-interest, still correcting our faults would be unceasingly difficult.

What we believe about the ourselves, others and the world may inform our choices. And our beliefs may define for us what we see as our options from which to choose. But our beliefs do not determine our choices. You know this to be true because you constantly do stupid things that you knew were stupid and that you didn't want to do. You examine a prior choice, regret it and the consequences, commit not to do it again, and then you do the same thing all over again. At least I do, but not you. You nail the basics. You always stick to your diet. You never lose your temper. You make consistent progress towards your goals each day. Your house is clean. You arrive on time and well rested.

⁴³Is it morally acceptable to teach someone something they have not chosen to be taught? A lecture is a method of punishment.

⁴⁴What are the methods to change desires (apart from offering alternative truth claims) that you would not consider to be manipulation?

Scientology

Psychology is a failed science. Nor will neuroscience's attempt to explain cognition with a physical model of the brain succeed. The best that psychology can offer are moderately interesting statistical phenomena that are almost measurable on the margins – if you are exposed to words that prime you with associations about old age, it is possible that you will move somewhat slower for some indefinite period of time afterwards, or maybe you'll move somewhat faster. If we have explanatory models that effectively predicted human behavior, then where are they and to what use are they being put? Who is putting their explanation of human behavior to the test by actually changing the outcome of an election, or measurably driving of sales of a chosen product, or demonstrably reducing crime, or consistently healing individual mental sufferings.

Psychology is as if you went to an orthopedic surgeon to get your broken arm addressed, and the only thing the surgeon knows about arms is interesting patterns of freckles. They don't know what bones are, they have no method to identify if a bone is broken, and no model telling them what the broken bone is supposed to look like. They don't have a scalpel, an x-ray machine, antibiotic, or even an advil. If the bone shards puncture the skin and deform what was an interesting freckle pattern, then maybe they can repair the freckles. And maybe that's better than nothing.

It is true that most people most of the time behave in predictable ways. Predictable either because you are specifically familiar with them individually – she always goes on a walk in the afternoon, so she will go on a walk this afternoon. Or predictable through generalities – everyone feels self-conscious and insecure at the center of attention in unfamiliar circumstances, so she almost certainly feels that way here in this analogous situation. Being predictable in broad strokes does not imply determined. Being able to offer a believable explanation of behavior does not imply that the behavior was caused anymore than being believable makes the explanation accurate. The clearest proof of this is that despite being predictable in broad strokes, people remain resistant to manipulation. With billions of dollars at play, advertising remains only measurably effective at the margins – you can “trick” someone into buying a large coke rather than a medium coke, but not into buying a coke rather than using the restroom.

Psychology cannot help but fail because it cannot offer a definition of “healthy”. Blind leading the blind.

Mens Rea

It's the thought that counts.

What you were trying to do matters. The “why” of an action matters and cannot be inferred from the action itself. We recognize this in our justice systems – killing with intent to kill is categorically different from

killing unintentionally, even though the actions and effects are in themselves indistinguishable. Sacrifice your son, your only son whom you love, on the mountain to appease Molech versus sacrifice your son, your only son whom you love, on the mountain because God commands it. Turn from your wicked ways to save yourself through your own righteousness vs turn from your wicked ways to participate in sanctification. Was their locking the door a compulsive behavior, a wise precaution, or a response to fear.

What we are is to be sought in the invisible depths of our own being, not in our outward reflection in our own acts. We must find our real selves not in the froth stirred up by the impact of our being upon the beings around us, but in our own soul... But my soul is hidden and invisible. I cannot see it directly, for it is hidden even from myself.⁴⁵

It is impossible to examine the behavior of another and derive from that their beliefs and desires. We assume that we can read people. That we can observe their words and actions and from that understand their inner world. And we are wrong. Wrong to attempt to see inside someone else because it violates their right to keep secrets and control their self-revelation. Even God covers our nakedness. Wrong to see others as objects, as machines to be explained and controlled, as less than people. Even if it wasn't morally wrong, we are too often factually incorrect – we constantly misunderstand people when they are trying to tell us something; how much more do we misunderstand them when we think we are seeing what they are not trying to tell us. How often do we misunderstand the beliefs and desires behind our own actions, and still we pretend to have access to the inner worlds of others.

Faulty Logic

You deceived me and I was deceived.⁴⁶

Your beliefs are your own. No one can force you to hold to the truth or to hold a lie as the truth. They can invite, encourage, or argue. They can manipulate, disguise, or threaten. Force imposed upon you can compel action or speech, but no torture or trickery overcomes your responsibility in your inner self to affirm the truth.

Know Thyself

we ought to have the humility to admit that we do not know all about ourselves [so how much less do we know our kids], that we are not experts at running our own lives [so how are we experts at running our kid's lives]. – 3.8

⁴⁵Merton 7.1

⁴⁶Jeremiah 20:7

Your soul is opaque, even to yourself. You don't know yourself. You have special access to your own internal world, and still that world remains uncharted to you. How much less insight do you have into the souls of other people.

To "Know yourself" is good advice. But to know ourselves doesn't mean to analyze ourselves. Sometimes we want to know ourselves as if we were machines that could be taken apart and put back together at will. At certain critical times in our lives it might be helpful to explore in some detail the events that led us to our crises, but we make a mistake when we think that we can ever completely understand ourselves and explain the full meaning of our lives to others. Solitude, silence, and prayer are often the best ways to self-knowledge. Not because they offer solutions for the complexity of our lives but because they bring us in touch with our sacred center, where God dwells. That sacred center may not be analyzed. It is the place of adoration, thanksgiving, and praise. – Henri Nouwen in *Bread for the Journey* (HarperCollins ebooks) reading for 22 March.

Dehumanization

To the extent that you claim for yourself control over the soul of another, to that same extent you make them less than human. For you they become objects, things to push, stones to shape. God is able to claim the power to move and shape souls without dehumanizing because he is both higher than human and knows each of us more fully than we know ourselves.

To dehumanize a person is in itself immoral. It is lying to look upon an enfolded immortal soul and see it as an object to be shaped, a machine to be programmed, an animal using inherited behaviors to react to external stimuli. It is a lie to claim to have plumbed a person's depths (your own, much less another's). It is a lie to assert an ability to diagnose another's ills much less prescribe the cure.

How can anyone understand his own way.⁴⁷

We claim an understanding of our children's inner world that we don't have of ourselves. We claim an influence into shaping that inner world that we don't have over our own inner world. We claim an ability to fix their souls that we have never effectively used to fix our own souls.

Beliefs and Actions: It is not possible, as a general rule, to determine what a person believes by looking at their actions.

- A person's beliefs influence, but do not determine, their choices/actions.

⁴⁷Proverbs 20:24

- Even if a person’s beliefs fully determined their actions, any given action or pattern of behavior is consistent with many different networks of beliefs. (The set of actions is smaller than the set of beliefs, so the mapping of action to belief is a one-way hash.)
- Beliefs don’t fully determine actions. I do not do what I want to do, and what I do I hate.
- Beliefs change.
- What a person claims to believe is not trustworthy.
 - We don’t know ourselves. We don’t know what we ourselves actually believe.
 - The heart is deceptive above all else.
 - The heart knows it’s own bitterness, and another cannot share it’s joy.
- It is possible, sometimes, to see that a person’s actions do not appear to be consistent with their professed beliefs. To as for explanation.
- It is possible to see that a person’s professed beliefs are not consistent with each other.
- It is possible to see that a person’s professed beliefs or their actions are not consistent with your professed beliefs.
- Cannot require/compel right belief from those under your authority. Because you cannot know what their beliefs are. And even if you could compel belief, it would be wrong to use that power (no man shall tell another who he is), and it would be futile (even the demons believe and shudder). You can teach, model and invite, but only the other person can choose to learn, choose to adopt a belief as their own, choose to live that belief.

What it means “to teach” can only be understood in light of the purpose, goal. Is the goal to get the student to pass a test? To give the accepted answers to given questions? Go and make disciples, teaching them all I have commanded you. Not teaching more than I commanded – It is as wrong to do more than your job as it is to do less. Teaching is more than “go and say.” Jonah did the bare minimum. Utilize creativity and situations to teach in a way that “can be understood. Not agree with. Not changed by. Not accepted. Not even understood. Merely understandable. Teaching so as to be able to be understood does not mean that it will be understood. Because understanding requires participation, work, from the learner. Let him who has ears to hear. Jesus came to testify to the truth, but only those who are of the truth hear his voice. The parables are not examples of great story-telling that aid understanding – they were intentionally designed to testify to the truth in a way that only those with ears to hear could understand.

If you had taught them the truth effectively, then they would have understood and accepted it. They would be living that truth. Because who wants to live a lie. You’ll know you’ve taught them rightly by the way they live. If they aren’t living the truth, it’s only because they haven’t heard it. If they haven’t heard it, it’s only because you haven’t been intentional enough and creative enough in your presentation.

If shaping the depths of someone were this easy, then advertising would work better. We would all drink Coke® and everyone would still smoke cigarettes. Manipulation of even insignificant surface level behaviors is hard and hardly effective. Funded by billion dollar corporations and driven by the potential for massive profits, advertising still manages to succeed only on the margins – to swing the probabilities by fractions. But the goal of this “shaping” is to change someone’s core beliefs. If you think yourself able to see into the depths of others and then reach in and shape those depths, then go make your billions – advertising, sales, poker, stocks. Game theory – Your choice of action is informed in part by how you expect others to interpret and react to those actions – your actions can be intentionally deceptive. Billions to be made from effective advertising and billions spent on advertising, and the effectiveness is far smaller than any child raising method assumes is prevalent much less possible.

The failure of therapy is root in the counselor’s ignorance of the truth. Therapists don’t know the truth about themselves, much less that of others or of God. They lack a definition of healthy and so cannot recognize disease or propose a cure. The blind leading the blind.

We are allowed to hold to a philosophical claim of determinism – I may not have the capacity to trace the chain of cause and effect backwards from my choice to the first mover, but the chain must exist because there cannot be an uncaused effect. Though we may hold that philosophically, we are in practice required to live as though we and all other people have enough free will to be moral agents. I will be judged as though I were a moral agent and not simply a complex bio-chemical organism responding programmatically to external stimuli. And if I look at other people as less than moral agents, then I am profaning them in a way that itself merits judgement.

The soul is uncaused, untouchable. Not even directly accessible to itself. Less a beetle in a box, more a chinese room. Body provides means of input and output, but the input does not determine the output, and the output does not define the soul.

Authority

Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture...I will gather the remnant of my flock from all the lands where I have banished them...I will raise up shepherds over them who will shepherd them.⁴⁸

World domination is not in itself evil. Jesus is pursuing it. Hitler didn't compare himself to Hitler – presumably he didn't consider his actions evil. In parenting, as in world domination, it matters who is doing the dominating and what methods they use. All people live within webs of authorities. They are part of those overlapping layers of authorities. Parents are an authority, though not the only authority, in the lives of their children. The power of an authority can be misused, abused. An authority may immorally fail to use their power to fulfill their responsibilities. An authority may immorally exceed their mandate, using their power to take from those they were assigned to serve.

See Thee Beneath God

There is no authority except from God and those that exist are established by God.⁴⁹

Authority is always derived. It is given by a higher authority in conjunction with an assignment / responsibility. In other words, authority is always a stewardship. Every thing, every person, every right, every power always only belongs to the king. The cattle on a thousand hills are mine. The king may choose to accomplish his purposes by delegating, but that grant of authority is a stewardship. One consequence: your authority as a parent does not derive from having birthed your child – I brought you into this world, and I can take you back out.

Pagans cannot have assignments / stewardship / authority / dominion because they are rebels against the king. So no authority over their kids. But it's all God's stuff, so even pagans are implicitly stewards of what

⁴⁸Jeremiah 23:1-4

⁴⁹Romans 13:1

they have been given. Pagan kings are established by God – all authorities are established by God. Deut 2:9 – Don't bother the Moabites for I have given them Ar as their property.

So that you may learn not to exceed what is written.⁵⁰

Honor your father and mother

Honor your father and mother. But also if anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother he cannot be my disciple.

If kids are people and parents are authorities (all authority is established by God), then what are the limits, responsibilities and roles of any legitimate authority. Enter into the joy of your Master - to equip those served to flourish.

Authority is always limited, derived. Questions of parental roles/authority inherently intersect with questions of civil/legal/social/organizational authority. Submit to authorities as agents of God. This is circular. Should authorities look to God as a model for how to discipline, or are the authorities God's method of discipline and so they are ultimately looking at themselves?

Contrast the authority that: 1) requires seatbelts, 2) prohibits hidden fees, 3) helicopter parenting...

Good kings

To bring shalom and teeming life (which may sometimes feel chaotic) to his dominion. To equip and empower others with dominion, invite others to rule over their own dominion or subdomain. Work is a gift – chores are not training or practice for being an adult, they are not an excuse to teach about money. Chores are an exercise in dominion – let them rule over the trash in the cans, and the toilets, and every sock under the bed.

- Responsibilities of all authorities.
- Conflicting responsibilities: Good king seeks the flourishing of his subjects. But good king must also send subjects to die in war, punish subjects for breaking peace. Behold I send you out as sheep amidst the wolves. Standing as Steven is martyred.

Owe duties of provision and protection. Those being led cannot teem with life if they don't have the necessities of life or if they are harrowed by enemies. Leaders take the hits. A king who only taxes, who only takes but never gives is not a king but a bully.

⁵⁰1 Corinthians 4:6

Use of force

Force is any action you take with the aim of provoking an action from an other that they did not freely choose.

Cannot trick into being wise or beat into being kind or punish into being self-disciplined. Cannot convince to be compassionate or persuade to be persevering.

Provision and Protection. Love is not contingent.

Cannot be to ensure that they never experience loss or pain or want or discomfort. Always happy, always watched, always given desires. Never pushed, never asked to serve, never asked to sacrifice, never struggle, never expected to grow.

Must grow as they grow. Can't have a philosophy that uses a 5 year old as a static model.

The one who does the Lord's business deceitfully is cursed.⁵¹

Daniel vs Nebechadnezzar – when I attempt to take from them their autonomy, I face judgment for my wrong, and they face judgment for wrongly submitting – better to be cast to the lions than bow the knee.

do parents have responsibilities beyond an authority generally

Parents are not the final authority. They are an authority. Their authority is broader than most. But it is limited. Communities (church and secular) have obligations to oversee parents as persons and as parents, and they have obligations to oversee the children as persons both in conjunction with and independent of the parents. The child himself has authorities over himself that limit parents. Moral obligations impose limits on communities, parents and children. Not a hierarchy of authorities, but messy overlapping webs. The family is not above the community or the individual. They all exist at the same level. They are all created by, overseen by and grown by the others. The church is not subservient to the parents.

The misunderstanding that makes parental authority absolute appears to grow out of a misunderstanding that grounds God's authority in creation. The argument goes that God has authority *because* He created. And so parent's have authority because they created. But God's authority can't derive from creation because creation itself is an act of authority - He commanded all into existence (except for man who was "formed" – does this suggest something about how man must choose to submit whereas the rest of creation is bound). Principalities and powers. Angelic watchers. Sacrifice of Isaac. Sons of Levi post passover.

Force use by authority generally: Authorities are only "authorized" to use force against another person under their authority in order to:

⁵¹Jeremiah 48:10

- Authorities are “authorized” to use force. But they should strive to use the least force necessary. Not only because force is a violation of the personhood of the one being ruled, but also because a good authority cannot accomplish most of their purposes through force – force as a tool is limited in its abilities.
- Any imposition of my will on someone else’s will is an act of violence. Legitimate violence is still violence. Authorized violence is still violence. Well-intentioned violence is still violence. If I trick someone or manipulate their circumstances or limit their knowledge in order to position them to “choose” what I want them to choose, then I have violated them. I have taken from them – taken their dignity, taken their autonomy. I have used them as an end, as an object, as a tool. I have treated them as less than a person. You cannot help free an other person without allowing them to choose against you.
- An authority not using force communicates as much as time that force is used. [Skyfall](#) – Every now and then a trigger has to be pulled. Or not pulled. It’s hard to know which in your pajamas.
- Prevent a behavior that puts them at risk of physical harm, when the ratio of higher harm to smaller cost/force is too high, or they are not equipped to appreciate and mitigate the risks and bear the costs of injury. Ought to be paired with equippin
- Prevent behavior that imposes risks or costs on others, scaling up the force allowed with the costs. Included in this is compelling conformance to the group norms, as breaking from those norms imposes costs on others.
- Preference is always for **least force necessary** because all use of force violates the person, it is a taking, a violence
- Cannot use force to compel belief or character – to assert a soul is to assert a disconnect between external material cause/effect, and the internal spiritual being.
- Cannot command respect, but can command respectfulness, respectful behavior.
- Any philosophy of parenting must account for the rebellious child, for the careless child, for the naive child – there are always times when some form of force will be required:
 - touching a hot stove
 - biting a sibling
 - running into street
 - eating a whole container of tomatos
 - hurt or sick
 - *instruction* -> No, I hate you, No, No, No, Mine Mine Mine

Parents bear the sword. Rom 13, and Deut 21:18-21. But that does not mean that they won’t be held accountable for how they wielded their sword.

How you play is what you win ⁵². Even in an unjust war, how you fight matters. Your children may grow into flourishing, healthy adults, and you must still stand before the seat of Judgment and give an account for the methods you used while parenting.

Not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. 1 Peter 5:3

“By what a man is overcome, but that he is enslaved.” 2 Peter 2:19. The word translated “overcome” is used again in v 20 - having escaped the world’s impurity they are again entangled in these things and overcome. The Greek word is connected to the word for “worse”. We would say in English he lost, he was bested, he was defeated. The Greek is something like he was worsted, he was made lesser, he was conquered. Almost as though in English we are celebrating the victor, here’s your prize. But the emphasis of this Greek is on the loser – you are now below me, get down on your hands and knees in front of my throne and let me use your back as a foot rest. Peter is using this language to talk about the way sin treats us - it conquers us, enslaves us, makes us lesser. But I was thinking about how that’s the same model we generally have for anyone in authority. The police officer kneeling on the neck of the ruled. That an authority is someone who is over others, and the purpose of authority is to control those who are below them.

it is terrifying to be unable to find one adult who can earn your respect. – Dobson

⁵²The Matter of Segri – Ursula K. LeGuin

Kids Are People Too

A person is a soul. Immortal, accountable before God. An Other who is an I. Having an inner world that is complex, inaccessible from outside themselves, and not even fully accessible or understood by themselves. A child learns to be a person by being treated with the respect of a person by others.

All people are different people. – Ted Lasso

Kids are people too. Each his own person. A child is a soul. They may have a body and that body may be small, but their soul is the same size as yours. Unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the Kingdom of Heaven.⁵³ A child can trust and follow Jesus. The kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.⁵⁴ A child can be indwelt by the Spirit. And if the Spirit of God indwells them, even though a child, they become a priest and king. If they have the Spirit, then they don't need anyone to teach them because his anointing teaches them all things.⁵⁵ No man shall teach his brother or his neighbor saying "know the Lord", but each man shall teach his son.

Kids, as people, are owed personal privacy, the secrecy of their own being, the freedom to keep secrets, to be safe inside themselves. Not pried open. Even if you think you can see the truth of someone else, you should cover your eyes, give them the clothes of animals to cover what their poorly sewn figs leaves are leaving exposed. Helped as they discover/decide their identity, but not told who they are or who they ought to be. Respecting their secrecy, inviolability of their personhood. Allowed to be wrong, to be dumb, to tell their own lies. They must each build their own temple of identity encircled by their own fortress of beliefs. The walls you think you are helping build for someone else become not walls in their fortress but the walls of their imprisonment.

People, even young people, are complicated. Not simple machines. No simple explanations. No simple fixes. And most of the things in a person that need to be fixed can only be fixed by them. Far less moldable, less teachable, by society, by schools, by culture or by parents, than is generally assumed. They enter the world

⁵³Matthew 18:3

⁵⁴Matthew 19:14

⁵⁵1 John 2:27

with their own bents and brokennesses. They tell their own lies, though they may use the words of others to do so. They need their own faith, their own personal redemption.

Right to be told the truth. Instruction isn't made less effective by being explained. No hidden agendas – reeks of manipulation and superiority.

Can't tell them who they are. No man can tell another who he is. Can't tell them what they want. Options, costs benefits. Model.

Almost

Kids are people sort of. Kids are people sometimes. A child is a person when they agree with me, and are pleasant to be around, and are obedient and quiet. A kid is a person until giving them the space to be their own person is inconsistent with what I think is best for them. Kids are people too until a child makes a choice that I think is less than in their best interest. Because I know what the right choice is. Because I am an adult, a real person. I and my fellow adults have the wisdom and understanding that enables us to choose what is in our own best interests. And what is in the best interest of everyone else. Convention requires that we give other adults the freedom to make less than ideal choices. But children are not ready to be people and need us adults to protect them from themselves. A child is only a person if I let them. Therefore, any moral restraint surrounding my actions and intentions towards other people only apply to a child if I feel like it. I brought you into the world so I get to control you for your own good.

Children don't have souls. They enter the world in sinless ignorant bliss. And stay like that until we inscribe upon them our own corruptions, infect them with shame and guilt and moral accountability. Better not to teach them at all. Better that they never learn right from wrong, then they will never face judgement. Children aren't people who make choices, they are pets who only misbehave because they need more training. Kids are pets not people.

Kids can't pray or worship. Those who worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. They have not the Spirit, therefore they cannot worship rightly. So also pagan adults.

Like clay in the hands of a potter

Parents and children are made of the same stuff.

Parents are people too. Persons are not abstract. You personally were called to parent your children personally. There is not a singular perfect parent. There is not only one way to be perfect. It is okay to be you as a parent. You growing, you doing the work in yourself, but you. You are not enough, but you are assigned the task.

I want to say, goal is that they don't need me but they already don't need me.

https://c.pwm.fund/wiki/jrnl/You_can__39__t_reach_the_brain_through_the_ears/

He leaves no gate unlocked in his fortress of logic.

Incapacitated

See that you do not look down on one of these little ones.⁵⁶

Children are looked down on, treated as less than, treated as incapacitated. For example, they are subject to the control of their parents and other authorities using methods and to extents that would be morally wrong for an authority to require of an adult. The same adult who decries the state for daring to regulate the size of cups at fast food restaurants will, in the same breath, condemn parents whom they deem to have failed to supervise their children's diet with sufficient attention. What is it that is true about children, but not true about adults, that justifies or requires that children be treated differently? It is sometimes argued that children lack some level of brain development, or some particular understanding, or some mental ability, that is present in adults – “I am but a little child: I know not how to go out or come in.”⁵⁷ This could make sense except that we do not test for the presence of some identifiable mental faculty before treating anyone over the age of 18 as an adult. Perhaps it is that children are too inexperienced, or too short-sighted, or too

⁵⁶Matthew 18:10

⁵⁷1 Kings 3:7

naive to be allowed to make decisions that could affect too long into their futures. But we all know too many adults who are unworthy of being trusted to make decisions for themselves.

are kids different that just “a person”. Do they have some sort of incapacity that renders them less than and so subject to the will of their parents. What is true about a child but not true about an adult, that allows or requires children to be treated differently? Force can be used against a child in situations and for purposes that would be morally wrong if so used against an adult – a fellow full person. Why? – It is not a question of a child’s incapacity or disability – It’s that parents are part of the multitudinal hierarchy of authorities, and therefore have responsibilities beyond just their kids – seeking the shalom of their dominion, instruction, rebuke, correction, the sword against evil-doers, kings tear down the high places, leaders seek the flourishing of those led but not flourishing towards just any goal. God demands our internal affections, but he commands (and entrusts authorities with enforcing) external behaviors – I don’t know if you love the Lord with all of your soul, but I require you to attend the yearly festivals.

Their brains aren’t fully developed. They lack impulse control. They can’t be expected to ...

Adults

You can’t disciple a pagan. If your child is saved, they are an adult. Children can be enslaved, but they cannot be knighted. A man submits to his king – maybe the wrong king – but a man chooses his king and bends the knee.

Notes

All children of the king are under the command to be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it. But of the pagans it says, “Let the dead bury their own dead”.

All men by nature desire to know. No, “all that can be known about God as already been made manifest to them”. All men desire to deceive themselves and others. All men desire to be known (seen) and loved. Delusion that I could finally love myself if someone else would love the “real” me. Not me as I am called to be, but me as I tell myself I am. Except I don’t know who I am, and what little I know I don’t like. Trans Visibility Day – I’ll finally be happy if I’m seen and accepted. We desire community, acceptance; but not to be known. We need and desire to be in secret, to be covered.

From a lower school email: ‘We believe that the first and most important goal of education is to help children grow into adults free to choose virtue, to make informed choices, and to engage actively and civilly in society. Mr. Fred Rogers reminds us, “Mutually caring relationships require kindness and patience, tolerance,

optimism, joy in the other's achievements, confidence in oneself, and the ability to give without undue thought of gain."'

Mad-libbing. I wish I had [name an activity you did with your kids] more, because it hurts me that [son/daughter] is [name a painful experience your kid is having] now, and if I had done that more, then they wouldn't be going through that. Full stop. No. Your child is their own person. Their problems are their own. You cannot ground your regrets in hypotheticals where you have the power to heal everything broken or bent in their soul. Regret that you should have done X because you knew at the time that doing X was required of you and you chose to follow your own brokenness instead.

- A child is a person. A person younger than 18 years old is a person.
 - Ecc 11:9 – Enjoy the days of your youth, follow the desires of your eyes, yet know that God will bring you into judgement for all these things.
 - Lk 18:21 – All these [commands] I have kept from my youth.
 - Rev 2:23 – I will kill her children with the plague. Then all the churches will know that I am the One who examines minds and hearts, and I will give to each of you according to your works.
- Not clay to be shaped as I want. Not robots to be programmed. Not empty vessels to be filled.
 - Even if parents, or some other human being, had the power to shape the soul of a child, to program, to write upon the empty slate, it would be not just morally wrong but bound to explode in failure. Every human being fails spectacularly at managing their own lives, growing their own character, in what world should they expect to fail on themselves but succeed on their children. Rom 7 – what I want to do, I do not do; what I hate, I do; I am at war with myself. Rom 2 – you have no excuse, you foolish person, everyone of you who passes judgment; for in that matter in which you judge someone else, you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things.
- Parents are *an* authority overseeing their children: honor your father and mother.
 - not the only or primary or highest authority. NOT HELPFUL: “Parents are the primary disciplers of their kids”.
 - * Nothing in Text to suggest *primary*.
 - * God is always highest, and any other authority is derived from, given by, Him. Rom 13.
 - * God is the model of a disciplining (not discipling) authority. Heb 12.
 - * Jesus called disciples away from parents
 - * Behold I come to cast a fire on the earth, they will be divided father against son and son against father. Luke 12:49 and Matthew 10:37 (must hate father) – Did Jesus alter parent/child roles? Do not be called Father for one is your father. Matt 23:9.

- * If “parents are primary disciplers”, then how can the church justify reaching out to kids of non-believing parents
- discipline, not discipler. No such thing as discipler. The Greek for discipline is *paidea* – as in the slave/tutor that followed little rich kids around with a stick. A “disciple” is a particular Jewish/Biblical relationship, not just any parent/child relationship. The primary method of discipleship is imitation – come follow me. Discipline, on the other hand, is a training imposed by an authority.

Pay attention to the way people talk about kids. For example, “When students face challenges—and even failures— in a controlled setting and supported by caring and empathetic adults, it helps students learn how to bounce back from adversity and accomplish their objective. True achievement comes from encountering something difficult, persevering through it, and then finding success. As Dr. Charles Fay of the Love and Logic Institute explains, encountering real struggle is the only way children will develop the grit and determination to handle the much bigger challenges that life has in store for them when they’re older.” Hear the determinism. What choices is the student given. In what ways is the student treated like a person in himself. I, as the teacher, require that the student struggle to accomplish some feat I have chosen. If I require them to struggle until they achieve, then they will become adults who are able to handle bigger challenges. If I don’t, then they won’t become that. I control who the student becomes. I decide who they should be as adults, and my treatment of them makes them who they are as adults.

Your kids adopt their own lies and live their own faults. You see your faults in your kids because you see your own reflection in everyone. You can’t see past yourself. Whatever problems you find most glaring in others are in reality your own. If you don’t see yourself clearly then you only see yourself when you look at others. If you saw yourself clearly, then you would see how little access you have to your own soul, and you would stop deceiving yourself into thinking you have access to other people’s souls.

Treating people as people:

- Stand each before the throne
 - Naked I came into the world and naked I shall return
 - Cannot write deeds onto someone else’s page in the book of deeds.
 - If you do the work another is called to do, you take from them the opportunity to grow in the work, to live a life worthy of their calling. You sin yourself and drive them to sin through passively allowing your usurping of their responsibilities.
- Fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over. – A person must both submit to authorities and serve as one “under authority”. – Adam and Eve were called to this before they knew Good or Evil.
- Tend the garden – personal assignments.

- Born a sinner – broken, lies
- Invited to follow Jesus – let the little children come unto me.

The right to take risks is a central part of human dignity and autonomy. Elder Law, Kohn.

Biblical:

- there are children and adults: when I was a child I thought like a child ... But when I became a man I put aside childish things.
- children can come to Jesus: if they have the capacity to have saving faith, then what are they lacking for adulthood
- before the cold knows enough to choose the good and reject the evil
- good parents don't necessarily make good kids - see the Kings.
- children have a duty to submit to parents - 4th command. This duty remains even if the parent is bad and into the child's adulthood?
- don't you know that I have to be about my father's work - even as a child he had the capacity and duty to respond to the call of God.
- do not exacerbate your children
- don't spare the rod - is this a command or just wisdom literature to be argued with.
- my son listen to my instruction
- the secret things belong to the Lord, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children
- the children are sanctified by the believing spouse

Before (at the time) the child knows to reject the evil and choose the good. – but see also Jonah 4:11 where adults cannot distinguish between their right and their left.

When I was a child, I thought like a child

Titus 1 - an elder must have believing children. So a parent can control / decide / shape even belief in their kids.

The Mosaic Law does not explicitly forbid pedophilia. So law is intentionally incomplete (a hierarchy of principles with a god at the top). Nowhere is it written "thou shalt not lie with a girl as one lies with a woman." The prohibition has to be inferred from more general prohibitions against adultery – you aren't married to the child therefore it's adultery. Most states in the US permit a child to marry an adult if the child's parents give consent. Set aside the law, as a moral question: can a parent give consent on behalf of a child for an activity to which the child themselves could not consent. A child is not legally empowered to consent to life-saving medical treatment. A child is not legally empowered to consent to have their teeth cleaned by a dental hygienist. What moral principle distinguishes between a parent giving consent for a

doctor to amputate a child's arm to save their life; and a parent giving consent for a child to marry. Parallels between consenting on behalf of children and consenting on behalf of the senile. An agent holding a durable power of attorney is expected to make the choice they think the principal would make if they were able. There's a difference between an agent you chose consenting for you, and unchosen parents consenting for you. We allow adults to make choices that harm themselves – to choose not to receive treatment, to choose to engage in risky behavior, to choose to overindulge on food or drug.

Eph 4 – building up to mature manhood.

You are not a man because you pass a test or attained some age or achieved some feat. Manhood is not a line that is crossed. It is a path that is walked. You're a man when you own responsibility for yourself, and choose daily to grow.

Don't let them despise you because of your youth. Age that adulthood happens. Importance of community celebrating becoming adult, and then holding to be standard.

Self-evident Truths

We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all free, land-owning white men are created equally better than any other race, gender or economic stratus, and that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights.

We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal and that they are endowed with certain unalienable rights. This is not true for the materialist. Evolved by definition means unequal – each member of the species is somewhere different on the spectrum of more or less fit. There is no human dignity or human worth, only power, only competition, the endless struggle to hoard limited resources and reproduce. There is no soul, no I, only flesh – indistinguishable from the flesh of any other animal. There is no hope for tomorrow, only this life today. The materialist is scary because if they ever finally acknowledge their reality, then they can rationally only become either a nihilist or a hedonist. Humanism is inherently irrational for a materialist.

What is true of all persons? Accountable before God. Rights: Agency, Secrecy. Are they stewards before they confess Christ?

What is a man

- 1 Cor 13
 - Put away childish things is a metaphor for partial -> perfect. (perfect = telios)

- Eph 4:13
 - Attain to a perfect (telios) man, measured by the maturity of the fullness (like a ship's hold) of Christ.
- Which is to say that manhood is a process, a growing, not a switch
- A man knows his king. (Hierarchy of authorities)
 - A good man submits – I will serve, I will be of service.
 - Implies that a man rules himself enough to submit.
 - A boy is mastered by his desires
- A man knows his domain, the areas where he is king, and rules it.
 - A good man's rule brings shalom and teeming life (which sometimes feels chaotic).
 - Perhaps implies provision (1 Tim 5:8) and protection (Orphan, widow, alien). A leader takes the hits. If we succeed, we'll celebrate together; if we fail, it's my fault.
- A man has chosen and serves his god, his highest value. (Owns his faith – God is my God).
 - A good man chooses a god worthy of his worship.
- A man, as priest to his god, knows difference between good and evil as defined by his god. (Heb 5:14, Mal 2:7)
 - A good man carries his cross
 - * bears up under the sins of the world, carries the judgement for, intercedes
 - * Is 59:16, Ez 22:30 – Standing in the gap between God and world
- A man makes plans and takes steps today
 - A good man finds his assignments as he is led by the Spirit (Acts 16:7)
 - A good man makes it his ambition to lead a quiet life, work with his hands, live at peace with all people (1 Thess 4:11, Heb 12:14)
- A man does the work
 - A good man is detached from the results of his work because he knows that he is not God. (Give us this day our daily bread, and Mark 4:26ff) – I may work the soil, but God prospers the seed, or not).

Deut 21:20 – The rebellious son was a “drunkard and a glutton”, which doesn't sound like a minor child. -> Honor thy father and mother not just a command to little children.

Discipline

I am opposed to people being programmed by others. My whole approach in broadcasting has always been “You are an important person just the way you are. You can make healthy decisions.” Maybe I’m going on too long, but I just feel that anything that allows a person to be more active in the control of his or her life, in a healthy way, is important. – Mr. Rogers testifying before the US Congress

Is it ever your job to change someone else?

Both self discipline and imposed discipline.

My job as a dad is to 1) provide for their physical needs (1 Tim 5:8); 2) as priest to pray, moral instruction, theology (Deut 6:4); 3) as king to bear the sword, rule so as to teem with life (Gen 1). All complicated by fact that each child are themselves kings and priests.

God is a bad father

Nature or nurture, God was the only father of Adam and Eve. He was the only culture around them that could have corrupted them. Everything they were born with was formed directly by his hands. Everything they were taught, they learned directly from his words. Everything around them that they could experience was spoken into existence by him. Placed in a garden he built. His was the highest and most extreme version of the protect-your-kids-from-every-harm-by-overseeing-everything-they-see-hear-or-do movement. He took Captain Fantastic farther than Vigo. And they still ate of the tree.

If being a good parent is measured by how your kids turn out, then God is a bad father, because Adam and Eve fell. If being a good parent is measured by how your kids raise their kids, then God is a bad father, because Cain was a murderer. If being a good parent is measured by how effectively you protected them from all threats foreign and domestic, then God is a bad father, because He let Satan himself into the garden. Whatever measure you use to evaluate earthly fathers should be applicable to heavenly fathers.

The Apple Doesn't Fall Far From the Tree

Suppose a man is righteous and does what is just and right ... suppose the man has a violent son who sheds blood and does any of these [evil] things; though the father has done none of them.⁵⁸

It is fallacy to measure how good a job a father did by looking that his sons. Good fathers may have evil sons, and evil fathers may have good sons.⁵⁹ Wise fathers may have foolish sons.⁶⁰ The text does not praise a parent for the choices of their child, nor does it excuse the choices of the child by pointing to the parent. To the contrary, one of the consistent themes of the narratives is that it should not be said that the fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth have been set on edge. David's faith was a model for generations of his faithful sons, and it preserved God's covenant through generations of his evil sons. But his faith could not cause faith or faithlessness in his sons.

Hear the tension in:

Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it.⁶¹

and

They would not listen to their father, since the Lord had decided to kill them.⁶²

Spare the rod, spoil the child. No – he hates his child who spares the rod. Same word for “rod” as in thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. And same as in the scepter shall not depart from Judah. Does that change how spare the rod is understood.

Jeremiah 30. I have struck you as an enemy would, with the discipline of someone cruel, because of your enormous guilt.

Prodigal Father

Was the father of the prodigal son foolish for giving his younger son his inheritance early. Was he a bad father for failing to stop his son from throwing his life away on loose living.

The prodigal's father was a bad father because both his sons made poor choices, except the father is supposed to be parabolically (paradoxically) the Father. Look all you want at your bad father, you will not find an excuse for you, you will not find an explanation for yourself. You chose. You acted.

⁵⁸Ezekiel 18:5-13

⁵⁹Ezekiel 18, 1 and 2 Kings

⁶⁰Ecclesiastes 2:19

⁶¹Proverbs 22:6

⁶²1 Samuel 2:25

Shepherding a Child's Heart

In vain I have struck your sons; They did not accept discipline.⁶³ They would not obey or pay attention, each one followed the stubbornness of his evil heart.⁶⁴

God can't⁶⁵ change their hearts, but you can. Discipline that shepherds your child's heart. What would you do to "shepherd your child's heart" that God didn't do as shepherd of his people. And they rejected him. What tools do you have that he lacked. What authority.

You cannot shape the soul of another person. You can hardly shape your own soul. You can be a help or a hindrance to the other person. Better a millstone be tied around your neck. You can't shape the soul of your child. You can plant and water. But only the child can till their soil. And only God causes growth.

A good father's children like him and listen to him and respond to his instruction. Witness Jer 2:21, 2:30, 3:19, 4:22, 5:7, 32:33. Discipline must be accepted. Even God's discipline is not measured by the change wrought in others.

You can't teach what they don't choose to learn. Easy, just convince them to choose to learn what you want to teach them. I don't like chocolate donuts, how are you going to get me to choose to eat them. Easy, you choose to eat this chocolate donut or I'll pull another of your fingernails out with these pliers. No that's torture – I wouldn't be making a choice and you wouldn't be treating me like a person. Okay, I'd make the chocolate donut irresistibly appealing. A fancy chocolate donut on a fine china plate is still a chocolate donut. And no matter how many times you eat a chocolate donut in front of me and tell me how good it is, I'm still not going to like them. A creative lesson about a topic I don't want to learn is just another lecture. Your sermon can have jokes. Your presentation can be a clever parable told by a cartoon. Teaching school level math is easy – rote regurgitation of basic jargon in order to earn praise and avoid embarrassment. Teaching a musical instrument is harder – at least with semi consistent practice you can pick up the basics, though you won't be playing music. You're going to put real emotion into the next performance of that concierto or so help me. Teaching wisdom is hard.

Coercion

For what purposes may an authority rightly use force. What change can you coerce in others.

There is a difference between a firing squad, life without parole, and a fine. There is a difference between a belt, a timeout, and a lecture. There is a difference between taking away a phone, taking away a dessert,

⁶³Jeremiah 2:30

⁶⁴Jeremiah 11:8

⁶⁵or perhaps does not. And if he does not, on what grounds do you attempt it.

and taking away a choice. But all are force. All are imposing my will over another's. An authority can say, "I encourage you to do X, but even if you choose not to I will support your decision." Advice is given without use of force. But anytime an authority says "You must", it is followed by a, perhaps implicit, "and if you don't then" force.

Go out into the highways and compel them to come in. What coercion are you permitted to use to save someone from hell. Are you allowed to use more force to accomplish lesser ends – (not allowed to put someone in a time out until they confess Christ as lord, but can put them in timeout until they are ready to apologize to their sibling).

Are there tools to provoke, encourage, or increase the likelihood of desired change in another person. Are those other tools simply disguised force. Are those other tools moral to use on another person. Are those other tools right use limited to being employed by parents or can anyone use them against another.

Anyone can *invite* anyone else to change – model, persuade, encourage. One in authority may use the sword, or threat of sword, to compel change from subordinates – timeouts, lectures, getting fired from a job, facing a firing squad. Authorities ought to be clear when they are speaking with a sword behind their words – don't phrase a command as though it's an invitation. An offer that cannot be refused is not an offer. If either party can't say f you and walk away, then it's not a negotiation. A sword that only sometimes swings makes defiance a game of chance.

Blind leading the blind

I'll do all I can To be a better man Oh I'll clean up this act And be worse than we started –
Derek Webb, Mockingbird.

Luke 4:23 – Physician heal thyself. If you can fix your kid's souls, why is yours broken.

You can't run your own life. You aren't wise. So why is your wisdom needed for this kid. How many therapists need therapy

You don't know your own soul, you don't have direct access much less direct control. How much less the soul of your child.

Jesuit Maxim: Give me the child for the first seven years and I will give you the man.

Romans 2:17-21 – You ... boast in God, know His will, and approve the things that are superior, being instructed from the law, and ... you are convinced that you are a guide for the blind, a light to those in darkness, an instructor of the ignorant, a teacher of the immature, having the full expression of knowledge and truth in the law— you then, who teach another, don't you teach yourself? You who preach, "You must

not steal”—do you steal? You who say, “You must not commit adultery”—do you commit adultery? You who detest idols, do you rob their temples? You who boast in the law, do you dishonor God by breaking the law? For, as it is written: The name of God is blasphemed among [your children] because of you. 1 Cor 4:8 You are already full! You are already rich! You have begun to reign as kings without us. Romans 15:14 you are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able to instruct.

Notes

No discipline seems enjoyable at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it yields the fruit of peace and righteousness to those who have been trained by it. Therefore strengthen your tired hands and weakened knees, and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be dislocated but healed instead.⁶⁶

Discipline is not aimed primarily at moral behavior, but at healing. To heal what is broken, to build up the supporting muscles, so that walking rightly is possible, even in rough terrain. What can an authority, one who bears the sword, do to heal the soul of another.

Going beyond your authority is injustice.

Truth, Authority (Lordship), Love. Truth, not psychology – A person is who God says they are, regardless of what others may say of them. To overstep one’s authority is to commit injustice. Psychology can inform on the margins, after truth has established the principles that guide action.

We may want many things for our kids. We may want them to never suffer pain or loss. We may want mature wisdom and diligence. We may want for them to be content and prosperous. We may want grand kids. Some *wants* may only be prayed for in secret. Some *wants* may be taught, encouraged, modeled; but not coerced. Some *wants* you are required to make a reality through exercise of your authority.

Only God can take care, for it is he who rules the world. Since we *cannot* take care, since we are so completely powerless, we *ought* not do it either. If we do we are dethroning God and presuming to rule the world ourselves. – Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, p 179.

I cannot and should not try to “fix” someone else, including my kids. No man can tell another who he is. Jesus is the cure-giver, I am the care-giver.

He can deal gently with the ignorant and misguided because he himself is clothed in weakness; and because of it is obligated to offer sacrifices for sins for himself as well as for the people. Heb 5:2-3. Physician heal thyself.

⁶⁶Hebrews 12:11-13

God redeems our errors, so what is discipline? Not punishment or justice. Correction. Training. Equipping to walk freely.

But difference between discipline and conformity. No man can tell another who he is. I know the Truth of who you are and who God is and how you are supposed to live. So I use my authority to coerce you to do what I know is best and then call your conformity “growth”.

They must admit that in no circumstances do they possess any rights or powers over others, and that they have no direct access to them. The only way to reach others is through him in whose hands they are themselves like all other men. – Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, p 187.

This myth of the easily-malleable human is so widespread and so deeply believed that it borders on delusion... Most people’s theories of human behavior are just never gonna be tested, and so their hypotheses can be both wrong and immortal... Even when there is reasonably good data, our hypotheses about how humans work are often so vague that they can withstand any attempts at falsification. Okay, so this emotions-based anti-drug intervention didn’t succeed, but maybe that’s because the instructors weren’t motivated enough, or it didn’t go on long enough, or they used the wrong kind of deep breathing technique, or they should have targeted fifth-graders instead of seventh-graders, etc., on and on, forever. If you can only think of all these critiques and exceptions after the fact, however, you at least have to admit you didn’t really know what you were talking about in the first place. – <https://www.experimental-history.com/p/how-to-get-7th-graders-to-smoke>

Create an environment, a space, where they can choose to grow in healthy ways. Equip and empower to make wise choices. Once empowered, allow to make poor choices.

Don’t always catch them when they fall. Falling is important. You learn to walk by falling over and over again.

Discipline that sets free

Paternalism – protecting them from their own stupidity. And restaurants shouldn’t serve fat people. Not yet their own persons?

Safety not highest priority – Mike Rowe. Goal is not survival. Not protecting from *all* risks, *all* pain – because some pain is healthy, results from pushing own boundaries. You can be sore, in pain, after hard work. You risk pain in relationships, even if everyone involved is “good” and “engaged” and “honest”. Fear is the mindkiller.

Endoctrinating, brainwashing, into religion versus inviting to faith. Summer camp euphoria. Instruction isn't made less effective by being explained.

Laiang book where his patients step deeper into dysfunction but where each step seems (at least to them) like a rational response to their present circumstances and desires. We do not fix our own brokenness. Most of the time we are oblivious to the many places we are broken, the many lies we believe. But even when we see, or think we see, and try to respond to that brokenness in healthy ways, we perpetuate the bent places. We bend and break other parts of our souls convinced that we have straightened the parts we can see. Like the blind leading the blind. Your use of force against the brokenness in your child doesn't fix them, anymore than you can fix yourself. Even if it were possible for you to reach into their soul and straighten what you see is bent, you would inevitably bend and break unseen parts worse than what you thought you were fixing. And you would not stand in judgment for their brokenness – it is theirs. But you would stand in judgment for your having exceeded your authority and assignment.

No child of mine would ever do X, because I would Y. That's a big red flag. Because I would. I can control this other person so fully that I can confidently say they would never. God is a good father, and He has the wisdom to know the best Y, and the power to do Y, and yet his children whom he loves constantly do X.

Example in Connection and Control book Tim read about a selfish child. Question was how to best intervene. Never said, we don't know it's selfishness, we only know behavior. Never asked if it was right to try to change the character. Never asked if they could change the character. If the answers are yes we can and should fix the selfishness then on what principle do we stop there. My kid isn't as extroverted as I would prefer. My kid doesn't laugh at the right jokes as much as I want them to. My kid is too interested in musical theater.

It is not right to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs. You have different authority over and different assignments towards different people. It is wrong to treat each person the same.

Contrast between teaching someone to play an instrument, and teaching them to play music – you can't play music without a discipline that instills the skills to play the instrument, but playing music is not just another skill, you don't cross a line in skill at playing to where now it's music.

If I don't model His love and submission to His lordship, how will my kids know His love for them or know how to follow Him. This is backwards. We know what a good father is because He is a good father. We love because He first loved us. The quality of our marriage is not a demonstration to the world of God's covenant relationship with us. God's covenant keeping is the model we follow. God's invisible attributes, everything that can be known about God, is made manifest to all in spite of us, not because we "image" Him so well. They are not trained so as to be able to see Him by watching us live rightly. They already

know Him. Hopefully they see us walking rightly and are and to see enough of we have they already know of Him reflected in us to see that we are His.

All words are at best only partial truth. Words don't point, but if they did they could only gesture imprecisely. Words don't map⁶⁷, but if they did the map would necessarily always be incomplete. Words are always abstract, and abstractions always leak. So all words are always at least partially lies. Deceptive. You may hold onto the truth in your words and find them helpful, but your listeners may choose to hear the lies in them. In them are many things hard to understand which the unstable and untaught distort to their own destruction.⁶⁸

A shepherd is like a farmer – he plants, he waters, but God causes the growth. The shepherd protects the sheep from their own idiocy. Protects them from outside threats. Leads to food, water, shelter; but the sheep must choose to wander, eat, drink.

do we, you and me, know what he is called upon to do, what path to take, what actions to perform, what pain to endure? ... Which father, which teacher had been able to protect him from living his life for himself, from soiling himself with life, from burdening himself with guilt, from drinking the bitter drink for himself, from finding his path for himself? Would you think, my dear, anybody might perhaps be spared from taking this path? That perhaps your little son would be spared, because you love him, because you would like to keep him from suffering and pain and disappointment? But even if you would die ten times for him, you would not be able to take the slightest part of his destiny upon yourself. – Siddhartha

What are the consequences when they don't listen to instruction, or when they choose to act against peace.

Coaching. Teaching. vs controlling, shaping, molding.

There's an ambiguity in the idea of "teaching". On the one hand it can mean offering an opportunity to learn. On the other hand it can mean getting them to have learned. There are limits to what can be required to learn. Force can only "teach" so much. Must have eyes to see and ears to hear. Though Tim would say that all that is necessary to get someone to learn is enough creativity on the part of the teacher. The student must choose to learn. Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear. The learner has to do internal work, work they can be invited to do, work they can be given material for, but work that only they can do in themselves, by themselves and for themselves.

With the guys, when I see a potential problem, I wait and pray. Sometimes I can encourage or model. If they invite it, I can hold accountable, which is really just more consistent and direct encouragement. But

⁶⁷Wittgenstein, Tractatus

⁶⁸2 Peter 3:16

there's no discipline, no admonishment, no "this is how you should act/change/be" and "when I see you not doing it that way, these are the consequences I will impose". I don't decide who they should be and then impose my will upon them. But I do with my kids. Should I?

Durrett: I am the tide. Consistency of correction.

There is a common critique of spanking that goes something like this: Little Johnny hits his friend and you walk up to him and slap his butt and say "don't hit". The problem with this critique is that it fails to account for the difference between authorities and peers. Authorities have the right to do things that peers do not. What an authority does to discipline you is not an example for how you should treat peers. Authorities aren't examples. They are authorities. You are not supposed to discipline your peers the way you are disciplined by your authorities.

Bobby hears that Carol wants a cookie, and he runs in the other room and eats the last cookie from the communal first come first serve cookie jar. Alan sees all of this happen. How ought Alan respond if: B and C are A's 35 year old coworkers; B and C are A's 16 year old children; B and C are A's 6 year old children. A could ignore, make more cookies, preempt the expected fit from C, permit the fit by C and then address that with C (as B won the first come first serve), address the selfishness of B with lecture, demand apology from B (and what if B says "no").

Reconnect with intro: God is not a clear example of a good father (or a good husband). See Adam/Eve/Cain – did he leave them untaught, unprepared, unequipped; was his instruction ineffective. Say the same thing about God that you'd say about their parent's if they had one – if God had done his job well with Adam and Eve, then they wouldn't have eaten from the tree. Husband's duty is to protect/provide/lead – and look at what a good job God is doing of that for his bride – a persecuted church whose shepherds abuse children (Catholic priests), and women (SBC).

Proverbs 13:1 CSB – A wise son responds to his father's discipline, but a mocker doesn't listen to rebuke. Not the son is made wise by discipline, but the son who is already wise responds to discipline. Proverbs invites, asks, begs the son to pursue wisdom and respond to discipline – it's the son's choice to respond to discipline or reject it, to be a fool, a sluggard, a violent man. – Compare prov 22:15 to 27:22 – Can you or can't you beat the foolishness out of a fool.

Make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be dislocated but healed. Hebrews 12:13. Connect to col 3 - rules have the appearance of wisdom but are of no value. And Rom 7 - sin used the law to provoke me to sin. I didn't need exposure to sin to learn how to. Sin was already in me and twists even the good and holy law.

Is 53:5. The discipline (musar) for our shalom was laid upon him. Same discipline as prov 22:15.

There are fences that imprison and fences that free. A fence that protects you from mistakes without unduly restraining freedom. Fewer options can be a blessing. Fewer ways to hurt yourself. Chesterton's protection from the cliff's edge. Connected to restricting access to a phone or social media.

2 Peter 2:19 - they promise them freedom while they themselves are slaves of corruption, since people are enslaved to whatever defeats them. Connect to Colossians 3 - man-made rules with the appearance of wisdom. But also connect to authority over kids - by what a person is made lower than, made inferior to, forced to yield to, to that he is enslaved. To lead, to serve, to rule, without enslaving.

What should a parent teach? What disciplines? A child was raised well if they have been taught how to do X, even if they choose not to, they are free to choose X because they have been equipped. What are the X's?

- Money
 - Budget, plan
 - judge value versus cost
 - seeing through ads
- Care for body / home
 - cook / eat well
 - clean self and home
 - dress self and home
 - how to swim
- Interact with others
 - manners / polite / respect
 - Hello, goodbye, please, thank you, shake hands, eye contact, eat with knife and fork
 - Say no. To confront gently.
 - pursue the things that make for peace. Able to bend in order to be in community.
- Morality
 - Truth-telling, but without requiring transparency from them or others. Fig leaves.
 - Steal (respect other's possessions), kill (hate)
 - Sex
 - Keep promises, Guard secrets, both required for intimacy.
 - Be content. Distinguish between what they value and what they want because other's value.
 - diligence / perseverance
 - mercy / grace
- Musical Instruments or Sports? Mastery or just exposure?

How to Free an Other

Acceptance, Affection, Affirmation

How to free another person (to be grown themselves):

There is a discipline that sets us free. Free from ourselves, from the sins and lies and fears and tendencies and habits that enslave us. The goal of that discipline is not behavior modification, or “heart” modification. It’s freedom, empowerment to make own choices. Moves from more restriction to less, not because the child *will* make good choices, but because they have been equipped to make their own choices and must be allowed to make bad ones. If I cannot follow the rules I impose on myself, in what sense can I choose the principles by which I live. Without discipline, I don’t choose; I merely act.

- By freeing yourself. Take the log out of your own eye. By no being dependent upon them for your identity. So that you can be trusted to commit to supporting them tomorrow.
- By not seeking to make them dependent upon you for their identity – a common tactic to gain control over the other person “in order to help them”.
- You cannot have faith for them. “What do you want Me to do for you.” Jesus doesn’t tell the other person what they want.
- Forgive and forget. Let them be someone new today. Not locked in to assumptions about their character.
- Allow people to choose today. Don’t require that they live your expectations of them. Don’t assign a label to yesterday’s choice and require compliance with that label. I am a liar. I am a drug addict. I am a transsexual.
- No social pressure. Always accepted, affirmed and shown affection. No strings attached.
- Trust vs trust and verify.

Even affection, affirmation and acceptance are internal states expressed through action. Actions that require

interpretation. You can tell someone you love them, but they may not hear it as love. You can tell your kid you love them, but they may not hear it as love. There are limits to communication.

You can help or hinder. You can hurt but not heal. You can offer but not demand. You can't determine.

Any part of your life that you don't rule, rules you. 2 Peter 2:19 - they promise them freedom while they themselves are slaves of corruption, since people are enslaved by whatever defeats (makes lower) them.

Grant others the opportunity / freedom to choose. Hope they will choose well. Equip to choose well – maybe only with data and presentation. Prepare yourself for the possibility that they choose poorly. If they are not free – in circumstances, in your expectations, in their understanding of themselves and the world – to choose poorly, then they are not free to choose well. If you arranged to constrain their choices, then you will be judged to the degree to which you stole their freedom, not rewarded for “making” them choose rightly. Because they didn't choose. You chose for them. Their action was not their free expression of the truth as they understood it, but rather their living in light of whatever lie you used to control them.

Psalm 78. Fathers teach your children, that they would not be rebellious like their fathers. I don't want my kids, or my guys, to follow me and keep up with me. I want them to get where I am so I can shove them forward and they can go farther. I want the old sayings that are dark to me though I pass them on, to become light to them. Not a return to the garden, but progress to the new earth. New and higher songs. New and richer truth.

4.17. Detached from the work and it's results. Leaving the results of the job to God alone. To work in God and with Him, to grow in whatever weather He may bring.

9.4 the beginning of this love is the will to let those we love be perfectly themselves, the resolution not to twist them to fit our own image. We do not come to know them as they are: we only deform them.

4.18 To renounce the fruit before I begin so that my work as a father becomes a prayer in itself.