

# Biblical Anthropology

*Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion"  
(Genesis 1:26 ESV)*

*When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in  
place, what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him?  
(Psalm 8:3-4 ESV)*

## **Fruitful and Multiplying (In A Fallen World)**

**February 18<sup>th</sup>, 2024**

**Genesis 1:27-28; 3:16**

**Rev. Paul Carter**

### **Introduction:**

Good morning everyone! If you have your bible with you, I would love for you to open it now to Genesis 1:27; that's on page 1 in the church Bibles. This morning we are talking about being fruitful and multiplying in a fallen world. As many of you probably know, the fertility rate in the Western World has been falling since the 1960s. As we have become RICHER and as we have abandoned Christianity we have become more individualistic and less oriented toward marriage and family. Last Sunday I showed you a chart depicting the precipitous decline in fertility rates in America over the last 20 years: (Display chart)

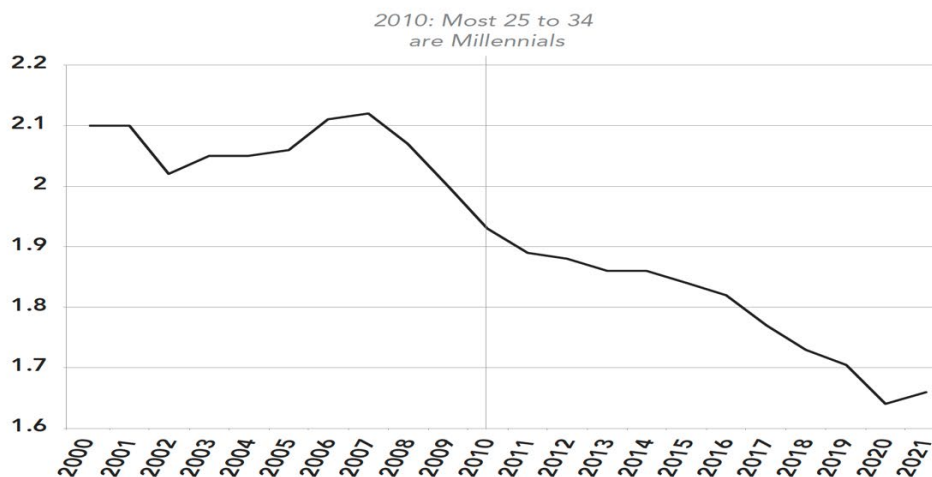


Figure 5.32: Total fertility (estimated number of children per woman), U.S., 2000–2021

Source: National Vital Statistics, CDC

If this was a roller coaster at Canada's Wonderland, not many of you would be brave enough to go on it. Fertility rates are TANKING in America and they are actually significantly worse here in Canada. Two weeks ago the CBC ran an article stating that Canada's total fertility rate dropped to its lowest point in more than a century of data-keeping in 2022, hitting just 1.33 children per woman<sup>1</sup> - so that would take it literally OFF THE CHART. That chart I just showed you bottomed out at 1.6. We're now at 1.33.

## Canada's 2022 fertility rate lowest on record, StatsCan reports

The rate of 1.33 children per woman is the lowest total fertility rate in more than a century



Peter Zimonjic · CBC News · Posted: Jan 31, 2024 12:49 PM EST | Last Updated: January 31



In 2022, the total fertility rate in Canada hit a low of 1.33 children per woman. (Dragan Grkic/Shutterstock)

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/statistics-canada-total-fertility-rate-2022-1.7100404#:~:text=Social%20Sharing-,Canada%27s%20total%20fertility%20rate%20dropped%20to%20its%20lowest%20point%20in,woman%2C%20Statistics%20Canada%20said%20Wednesday.>

Just so that you can understand what we're dealing with here, 2.1 is replacement level, meaning if you want your population to stay at about the same size you need the fertility rate to be 2.1 but we're nowhere near that, which is why Canada brought in a million immigrants last year – because if they hadn't the economy would have collapsed.

You can't stop having babies and expect your society to continue – that's literally not possible, but that is where we are now, here in Canada, and that's where we are now in most of the Western world. So we're going to talk about being fruitful and multiplying in a fallen world – and for the sake of human civilization, I pray that we'll all be listening. We're going to begin at the very beginning; Genesis 1:27-28. Hear now the Word of the Lord:

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

28 And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” (Genesis 1:27-28 ESV)

This is the Word of the Lord, thanks be to God!

All throughout this series we've been dealing with BIG PICTURE ISSUES – who are we? What are we supposed to be doing? How do we relate to God, each other and the world? Those are BIG PICTURE QUESTIONS – and we'll carry on with that approach today, but I also know that PARENTING is not just a big picture issue; it's also an immediate concern, so NEXT week we will do a bit of an excursus message and we will talk about some WISE PRINCIPLES for PARENTING in a fallen world – that will push our singleness message to March 3<sup>rd</sup>, in case you are inviting friends for particular topics. Today we're going to build the frame. We'll talk about God's good design, this fallen world and our glorious hope.

Let's begin with God's good design.

**God's Good Design**

As we just read, IN THE BEGINNING God created them male and female and he blessed them and said:

“Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it” (Genesis 1:28 ESV)

The first command given to human beings was to be fruitful and to multiply so as to fill the earth with image bearers who love God and lead creation. That was and is our mandate as a species.

This is who we are and this is what we are supposed to do. The ethicist Oliver O’Donovan says that human beings are:

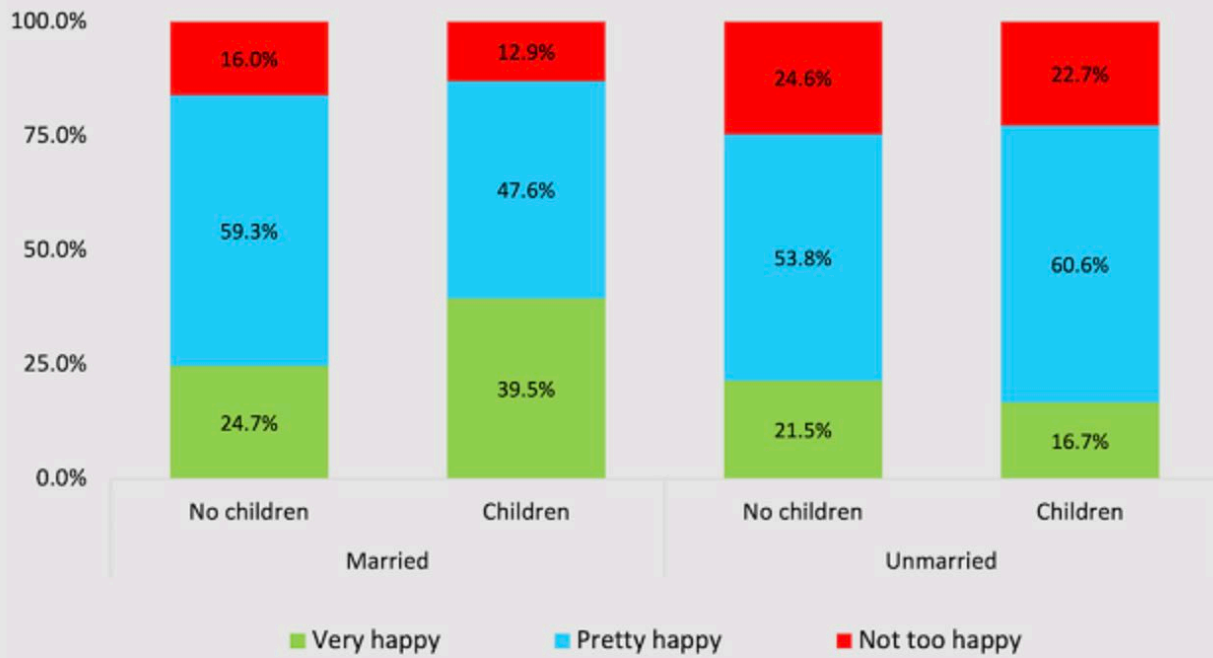
“clearly ordered at the biological level towards heterosexual union as the human mode of procreation. It is not possible to negotiate this fact about our common humanity; it can only be either welcomed or resented.”<sup>2</sup>

You can’t argue with biology, O’Donovan says. You were made to do this – your biology is ORGANIZED around this function - so by and large, if you work WITH the grain of this reality, you are going to be happy, but if you try to IGNORE or RESIST or REJECT this reality, you are going to be frustrated. There is a ton of evidence to back that up. I mentioned last week that in study after study, the happiest people in the world are married women with children. The second happiest people in the world are married men with children. (show these two slides).

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<sup>2</sup> Oliver O’Donovan, *Transsexualism And Christian Marriage*, 6.

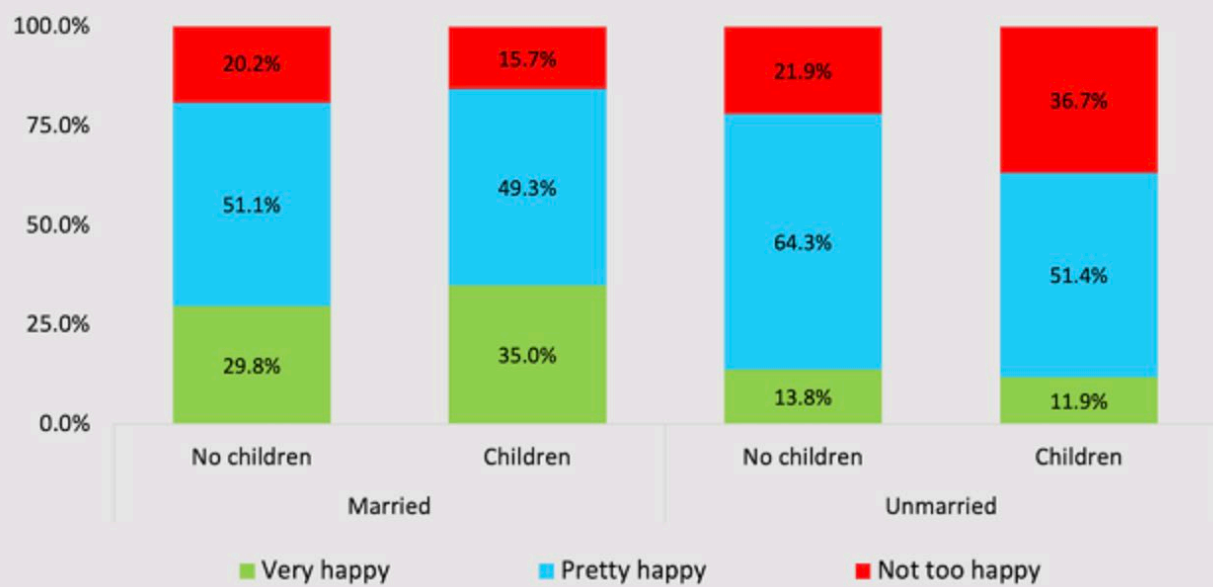
### Women's Happiness by Marital Status and Children, Ages 18-55



Based on women ages 18-55. Source: General Social Survey, 2022

Institute for **Family Studies**

### Men's Happiness by Marital Status and Children, Ages 18-55



Based on men ages 18-55. Source: General Social Survey, 2022

Institute for **Family Studies**

It's really important for us to see this. When we do what God created and intended us to do we feel fulfilled and happy. Obedience is good for us! Working in line with our DESIGN is good for our physical and mental health. We were made for this. I mentioned last week that a man's body has been optimized for production and protection and a woman's body has been optimized for reproduction and nurture. Those are FACTS. According to studies you can find with a simple Google search:

"In upper-body strength, males have on average 75 percent more muscle mass and 90 percent more strength than females. They have higher bone density and more fast-twitch muscles, which enables them to react more quickly."<sup>3</sup>

That makes men GOOD at going out into the untamed world to gather up supplies. And there are FACTS about MOM's body that make her really good at raising and nurturing little ones inside the nest. Mom's got MAGIC GLANDS and SUPER HORMONES that men don't have. Those are FACTS – and we used to rejoice in those FACTS because those FACTS seem engineered for the benefit and well-being of CHILDREN. Two Princeton sociologists were honest enough to go on record acknowledging this very thing; they said:

"If we were asked to design a system for making sure that children's basic needs were met, we would presumably come up with something quite similar to the two-parent ideal."<sup>4</sup>

This is a good design, folks! When a man and a woman come together, bringing their various strengths and capacities, for the purpose of having and raising babies, people and societies flourish. Thanks be to God!

So we need to embrace this GOOD DESIGN but we need to do that with the understanding that we live now in a fallen world.

## **This Fallen World**

In a fallen world things don't always go the way they should and nowhere is that reality more obvious and more painful than in the area of childbearing. In fact, that was the first thing God

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<sup>3</sup> Nancey Pearcey, *The Toxic War On Masculinity* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2023), 84.

<sup>4</sup> Sara McLanahan and Gary Sandafur, *Growing Up With A Single Parent: What Hurts, What Helps* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), 38.

said to the man and the woman when he was spelling out the consequences of their sin and rebellion. He said to Eve:

“I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in **pain** you shall bring forth children.” (Genesis 3:16 ESV)

After the fall it is going to be HARDER and MORE PAINFUL to bring human beings into the world. We see that reality played out in the story Cain and Abel – the first children born to Adam and Eve. Flip forward in your Bible probably just two pages to Genesis 4. The story of Cain and Abel is characterized by DIFFICULTY, DIVISION and DEATH. Eve’s two sons took two very different roads in life. One son loved to worship God, and the other son resented it.

Moms and dads you need to hear that.

Two children raised in the same home by the same parents in the same environment – and one was a worshipper and the other was a murderer.

That’s reality in a fallen world!

You don’t get to control outcomes in a fallen world. In a fallen world every human being has to decide whether to be reconciled to God or whether to persist in rebellion. Your kids will have to make that choice and you can’t make it for them, no matter how hard you try.

That fact will bring great PAIN into your life, brothers and sisters. And don’t quote Proverbs 22:6 at me. The only people who quote that passage as if it GUARANTEES that if you raise your kids right they will all follow the Lord are people whose kids are 4 years old. PROVERBS don’t work that way! Proverbs tell you how things SHOULD GO and how things OFTEN DO GO if you follow principles of wisdom. But they’re not promises. They are principles and principles are RESISTED in a broken and fallen world. That’s why we have the Book of Job in the Bible and that’s why we have the Book of Ecclesiastes in the Bible because in a fallen world a great many things are happening that should not be happening!

That’s REALITY – and that reality WILL BREAK YOUR HEART as moms and dads.

The Old Testament prophets LAMENTED this fact in their writings. The prophet Micah said:

6 for the son treats the father with contempt, the daughter rises up against her mother, the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; a man's enemies are the men of his own house.

7 But as for me, I will look to the LORD; I will wait for the God of my salvation; my God will hear me. (Micah 7:6-7 ESV)

That's reality in a fallen world! Sometimes your kids are going to be at war with God and sometimes they are going to be at war with you.

Can I just speak to the Boomer and Gen X parents out there for a moment? As a pastor and as a friend I just want to tell you that whether you did everything right or whether you made some mistakes, like the rest of us – you are not ultimately responsible for your child's rebellion against their Creator. You don't have that much power. You can't make faith and you can't make rebellion. Every human being will have to answer for their own disposition toward God. No one on Judgment Day will be able to stand before their Creator and say:

“My dad spent too much time at work” or “My mommy didn't hug me enough” or “My parents got divorced when I was a child.”

Those things are FACTORS but they are not FATE. Moms and dads, we'll all have to answer for our actions and choices, but you need to understand that you were NEVER in a position to control the outcome of your child's life.

In a fallen world DIFFICULTY and DIVISION are par for the course. Some of your kids are going to take the highway that leads to life and some of your kids are going to take the road that leads to death and destruction. You can teach them, love them, restrain them, correct them, pray for them and encourage them but you can't control them and you need to know that.

And young couples, if I could speak to you for a moment. You need to know that your infertility is NOT due to your personal sin. Sister, brother, we live in a fallen world, so you don't need to be



carrying that guilt. In John 9 when the disciples saw a man who was born blind they asked Jesus: “Who sinned? This man or his parents?” And Jesus said:

“It was not that this man sinned, or his parents” (John 9:3 ESV)

That’s not how DISEASE WORKS in a fallen world!

All disease is the result of OUR SIN as a group – not your sin as an individual - so don’t be asking in your heart. “Are we struggling to have a baby because of my sin or my husband’s sin?”

Neither.

In a fallen world ALL OUR BODIES ARE GROANING – we all have FRUITS OF THE FALL ripening in our bodies. Some have MS. Some have cancer. Some have diabetes. And some have infertility; that’s an US thing, not a YOU thing and you need to know that. In Genesis 3 God said that parenting would be difficult now and it is. It is difficult to bring a child into the world and it is difficult to raise that child once he or she is here. The whole process has been affected from start to finish and in the mysterious Providence of God some of us experience a larger portion of that difficulty than others.

Being fruitful and multiplying in a fallen world is harder than ever, but the design is good, the joy is real and the process is worth it. This is still who we are and this is still what we were created and intended to do.

So what changes as we enter into the New Testament era?

We expect a change, don’t we? We’ve been expecting a change since Genesis chapter 3. In Genesis 3:15 God said to the serpent, in the hearing of the man and the woman:

“I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.” (Genesis 3:15 ESV)

Right after the fall God promised that salvation would come – in the form of a human baby, and so of course, when we begin to read the New Testament we're not surprised that it begins with the story of a human baby.

## **Our Glorious Hope**

An angel appears to Joseph in a dream and says:

“Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. 21 She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” (Matthew 1:20-21 ESV)

This is the child we've been waiting for! Our Savior! Our Lord! Our glorious HOPE! He will reverse the curse! He will take away our sin, he will heal our hearts. He will fill us with his Spirit, he will lift us up out of the depths to which we have sunk and he will bring us home to God!

He will do it!

He will fix what is wrong with us! He will make every sad thing untrue – even the sad things that hit us closest to home - but not right away. In Matthew 10 Jesus said something really unexpected. He said:

“Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. 35 For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. 36 And a person's enemies will be those of his own household.” (Matthew 10:34-36 ESV)

Do you see what passage he is citing there? He is citing Micah 7:6-7! The passage we just read describing the division in families on the other side of the fall! And here is Jesus saying: “Do not think that I have come to fix that. If anything my coming will make that worse! I have come as a sword to divide a man from his father, a daughter from her mother and a daughter in law against her mother in law. I have come to divide human families right down the middle.”

Now what in the world does he mean by that?

He's not saying that he is OPPOSED to God's design for marriage and family – on the contrary, he cites THE GENESIS STORY as normative for human beings. He says:

“Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, 5 and said, ‘Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’”? (Matthew 19:4-5 ESV)

I'm FOR THAT, Jesus says, but I'm playing the long game. I'm making a new family made up of sons and daughters, mothers and fathers, nieces and nephews, uncles and aunties – that will constitute the forever family of God. In that family there will be perfect unity. In that family there will be perfect harmony. In that family there will be love, peace and joy forevermore – and you can only GET into that family if you confess your sins, take up your cross and follow me and if your love for your BIOLOGICAL family keeps you from doing that then you will be left outside. That's exactly how Jesus ENDS that citation from Matthew 10. After saying, I didn't come to glue your biological family back together – he says:

“Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. 38 And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. 39 Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.” (Matthew 10:37-39 ESV)

Jesus actually says, “Sometimes you'll have to LET GO of your family life here in order to take hold of your family life there.”

That's the new thing that we encounter in the New Testament. We discover that the family we are in now is actually NOT our forever family. It's our RIGHT NOW family; it's the family God put us in, but it is not the FOREVER family that is coming. Matthew 12:49-50 says:

And stretching out his hand toward his disciples, he said, “Here are my mother and my brothers! 50 For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.” (Matthew 12:49-50 ESV)

This is MY forever family right here, Jesus says, pointing towards his disciples, and you want to be a part of that.

Jesus locates our glorious HOPE a little further out into the future. The HEALED FAMILY, he says, will be a FEATURE of the WORLD that is COMING, but right now, we live in the overlap of the ages.

So what are the implications of that? That's where I want to end today.

## Practical Implications

The first implication, I hope is pretty obvious:

### 1. **It's still a good thing to have and raise little babies**

It's a very good thing! Jesus loved little babies. He put his hands on them, he prayed for them, he blessed them. And the New Testament is filled with instructions on how to build healthy, happy marriages that will be safe places for little ones to enter this world. And there are instructions given to parents – fathers for example are told to bring up their children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord – Ephesians 6:4. So even though the world is fallen and even though our families can still be divided – this is still who we are. We're still male and female. We're still given the capacity and the desire to be fruitful and to multiply and so as a church, we need to help young people with this. We need to make it easier for young people to get married and to find housing. We need to come alongside of them in the pains and trials of childbearing.

Not to let the cat out of the bag, but this is part of what we'll be talking about in two weeks when we have our talk about singleness because in every family for most of human history, there have been single aunties and uncles and widowed grandmas and grandpas who played a PIVOTAL ROLE in the raising and nurturing of our children. For most of human history being single didn't mean travelling and having commitment free sex, being single meant coming alongside of weary and exhausted parents in the mission of having and raising kids – we need to recapture that. We need to RENORMALIZE THAT in the church. Listen, in the Providence of God there may be some people in here this morning who haven't been blessed with marriage and children

BECAUSE God intends for you to be the world's greatest auntie. He intends for you to be AWESOME UNCLE FRANK. There is no such thing as a childless person in the family of God – not if we really understand what the church is. There is a role for you to play in our collective mission as human beings.

And that leads us to our second implication:

## **2. It's really important for the church to look like a family**

Because according to Jesus, we ARE A FAMILY. We are THE FAMILY that people are being born again INTO. Jesus said:

“Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel, 30 who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life.” (Mark 10:29-30 ESV)

Did you catch that? Jesus said that if you leave it all behind to follow him, you get eternal life in the age to come AND you get houses, brothers, sisters, mothers and children NOW, with persecutions. So he's saying, it is going to be HARD to walk on the way that leads to life, but the good news is, you get a family. You get US.

Do you understand that?

We are part of the package! We are the forever family of God, so when people are born again they are born again into God and into us, so moms and dads, let me press on you for a second; this means that not only do you want your kids to love Jesus, you want your kids to love us. You want them to think of US as their extended family. That's part of the process, so for some of you that's going to mean loosening up a little bit. Some younger parents today are a little TOO POSSESSIVE when it comes to their children. They want to be everything to their kids. But you're not supposed to be everything to your kids. There are supposed to be other voices speaking into the life of your child. That's a good thing. You want that positive reinforcement –

so you need to let us in. You need to let us play our part, because your kids need the experience of WIDER TRIBE.

And to flip that around, some of us in the wider tribe need to step up and join the process. We need to volunteer for VBS and for Prospectors – we need to BE those aunties and uncles. It takes a family to raise a family – that’s what I’m saying and that’s what we have here in the family of God.

And that leads us to our final implication:

### **3. It’s absolutely critical for us to evangelize and disciple our children**

This is why we do not baptize babies in this church, because we can never ASSUME the salvation of our children. Our kids are not going to enter the Kingdom of Heaven simply because they are our kids. They need to be BORN AGAIN! Jesus said that in John 3, he said:

“Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.” (John 3:3 ESV)

So that’s the goal for us as parents! We want our children to be born again! We’re ultimately not in the behaviour management business; we’re in the making disciples of Jesus Christ business - can you say amen to that?

Now what’s the old saying? You can lead a horse to water .... but you can’t make him drink, right?

Some of us hear that and we think: “Well, I guess there is nothing I can do. The kids going to do what the kids going to do.”

No!!!!

There IS something you can do!! You can lead your horse to water! You can bring your child to the feet of Jesus Christ. You can do that by teaching them and you can do that by praying for them. And we can come alongside of you in that.

At the end of the day, parenting is just disciple making at the cellular level.

It takes a mom and a dad – absolutely – and it also takes a church.

We were made for this – and we were made for each other - thanks be to God.

Let's pray together.