

Dear GOD



Connect group questions

Dear God, my kids don't want to know about you

1. Is this question a real and current one for you right now? If you feel you can, share with the group.
2. Why might this issue be the most difficult of the 'Dear God' series?

Mark said that we need first to do some Biblical theology together, before looking at some practical implications. "Biblical Theology" looks at the sweep of God's purposes throughout the Bible's story line.

COVENANT KIDS

Mark said that in the relationship between the old and new covenants between God and his people, some aspects continued, and others didn't.

3. Under the old covenant, how were kids raised with regard to their relationship with God?
4. Under the new covenant, how are kids to be raised with regard to their relationship with God?
5. When we read in Acts 2:39, Peter assure people that God's promises are to us and to our children, who is he talking to and what does he mean?
6. When we read in Acts 16:15 and 16:33 that whole households were baptised, who do we understand was included as being part of the 'household'?
7. Imagine a young Jewish dad under the old covenant, holding off circumcising his boy because he intends to wait and see if he wants to become a Jew. What is the rest of the family saying to him?
8. A young Christian dad, under the new covenant, is holding off baptising his kids, because he wants to wait and see if they want to be Christian. What would you say to him, if what Mark is arguing, is correct?

AT HOME

9. If kids in a Christ-honouring home, are recipients of God's promises, and the kingdom of God belongs to such as theses, what are the implications for how we raise them?
10. What was Mark and Susan's approach if kids didn't want to go to church with them as a family? Do you find Mark and Susan's approach helpful or from another planet?

LEFT HOME

11. How ought we relate to adult kids raised in a Christ-honouring home, who never attend church?
12. What if you weren't a Christian when your kids were at home, or you realise you weren't all that intentional with them? What did Mark suggest you do? (You may find it helpful to reread this section of the message).
13. How might you show your kids how precious and important the Lord Jesus is?
14. How did Mark suggest we handle the pain and burden we feel - both for Christians kids who are disobedient and for non-Christian kids we love, who we'd love to see come to know Jesus?
15. What will you take away from this message?

Pray that we'll claim God's promises for our kids who grew up or are growing up in a Christ-honour home. Pray that we'll trust the Lord also for children who did not grow up knowing the Lord.

Date: 15th September 2019
Services: 730, 930 Tewanin and Peregian
Series: Dear God
Title: My kids don't want to know about you
Passage: Acts 2:36-41, Acts 16:29-34
Outline:

1. **Covenant kids**
 2. **At home**
 3. **Left home**
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INTRODUCTION

- “Dear **God**, my kids don't want to know about you.”
- Two **things** to say as we **begin**:
- Out of all the topics in our 'Dear God' series, this one will be the most **difficult**. [Brothers and sisters at Tewanin, I wish I could be with you in person this morning... dealing with such an **important** matter and such a **personal** matter via video is not ideal! Please do make contact with me if you'd like to talk more]
- And the second thing to say is – to really get a hold of this – **I'm** going to have to work hard – and **you're** going to have work hard. No sleeping this morning!
- I will work hard at communicating in **clear** and **accessible** ways... but **you** will need to work hard **too** – to **process** all that I am **saying**. //
- Now – why do I assume that this is the most difficult of the subjects we've covered in this series?
- Because
 - It's **personal**
 - Everyone can **relate** to it
 - Many of us are dealing with this right **now** – either because we have kids at home right now who don't want to come to church any more or because our **grown up** kids are not at all **involved**...
 - And **hard**... because I'm going to present you with an understanding of how we and our children relate to God, you may never have **considered** before. //
- So what we need to do this morning is some good **Biblical theology** to help us see how **God** sees raising kids, fits in with **his** plans... and then we'll look at some **practical implications**.
- So **broadly** speaking – here is where we're headed:
 1. **Covenant kids**
 2. **At home**
 3. **Left home**

1. COVENANT KIDS

- What on earth do I mean by **that**?
- Every time we share the Lord's supper, we remind one another that when Jesus died, the shedding of his blood, ushered in God's **new covenant** with us... the **new covenant** promised and outlined in **Jeremiah 31** among other places.
- That this IS a **new** covenant, reminds us of course, that there was an **old** covenant.
- God has **always** related to his people by a **covenant** – or **agreement**...

- **Basic** to both the old and the new covenants is that God has **covenanted** with us – **pledged** to us – committed to us - to be both *our* God and the God and Father of our **children** – and that **we** – by his **grace** will be his **people**.
- When **Apple updates its software** – or **Foxtel** puts out a new box etc – **some** things stay the **same** and some things are **different**... there is both **continuity** and **discontinuity**.
- Similarly in God's old and new covenants, some things remain, others are renewed. There is discontinuity and continuity.
- It is clear that what **continues in the new covenant**, is that **children of believers** are included as **recipients** of the **promises of God**... //
- Let me explain:
- Under the **old** covenant, children were brought up in relationship with God from **Day 1**.
- Children were **recipients** of **all** the promises of the covenant.
- Adam and Eve's **sons**, were never invited to **enter** relationship with God... they were **raised** in it
- The **children and grandchildren of Noah** – entered the **ark** and received all the **blessings** of **safety** and **protection** through the flood which **Noah** received
- The children of all the **patriarchs** – **Abraham, Isaac, Jacob**... etc... all were **included** in God's **promises**... they were identified as God's **people** from the **earliest** of ages.
- **Moses**... as a child... was protected from the cruelty of Pharaoh but raised knowing all the time that he was an Israelite...
- And when he led **Israel** out from under the cruel **slavery** of the **Egyptians**... it wasn't only the **adults** he led out of Egypt – it was **all** the families... whole households - because the **children** were **recipients** of the **promises**... they were part of the family of God.
- **Joshua** and his family – crossing over into the promised **land**... the kids did not have to **prove** their **faith** or go forward at the end of a **rally** – no – they were taken across the **Jordan** and into the **promised land** because they were **members** of God's **covenant family**.
- **Samuel** as a young prophet-to-be, served in God's temple from when he was **weened**... a **recipient** of God's **promises**.
- All the way through to **King David**... son of **Jesse**... chosen to be king when he was only a young boy... because he was part of **God's covenant family** – an **inheritor** of **all** the **promises of God**... //
- The sign of **circumcision** given to males on the 8th day – was a sign of God's **promises** to the **child** – **NOT** a pledge of **faith** of the child to **God**!! – it didn't **make** them an **Israelite** – but was a sign of God's **promises** to **them**... //
- Now the **sign** is different under the **new covenant** – the new covenant sign is **baptism**... but **again** – given even to **children** – as a sign of God's **promises** to them and that they are part of the **covenant family** of **God**.
- So here in **Acts 2:39** – Peter proclaims that under the new covenant – God's promises are **still to us AND TO OUR CHILDREN**...!
- And then in Acts 16 we read this of Lydia - ¹⁵ *When she and the **members of her household** were baptised, she invited us to her home. "If you consider me a believer in the Lord," she said, "come and stay at my house." And she persuaded us.*
- And in the same chapter... we read **this** when after the **earthquake** the jailor realised Paul had not escaped v29 - *The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. ³⁰ He then brought them out and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"*

³¹ *They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved – **you and your household**."* ³² *Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house. ³³ At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and **all his household were baptised**. ³⁴ The jailer brought them into his house and set a meal before them; he was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God – **he and his whole household**.*

- And there is another reference in 1 Corinthians 1 from the apostle Paul, baptising the **household of Stephanas** //
- whole **households** would have included... children **young** and **old**... even **servants**... **serving** and **living** under the **roof** of the **master**!
- Under the **old** covenant – **children** of Israelite families were never encouraged to make a decision to **become God's children** – they were simply **raised** that way from **Day 1**.
- Can you imagine the family of a boy – holding off **circumcision** and the rest of the family asking the dad – “hey – why haven't you circumcised your **boy**?” – and the dad answers – “well – we're just going to wait and see if he'd **like** to be a Jew first – and then if he does - - we'll **circumcise** him... !”
// **Unthinkable!**
- Now we see this same principle in **other** aspects of life – for example – children born into my household... were all called “**Calder**”... I never asked them whether they'd like to join the **Calder family** – they were just **in** the family from **day 1**... and Susan and I raised them in **Calder ways**.
- In the **same** way, having been born in **Australia** – our kids are also **Australian**... I've never asked them whether they'd **like** to be **Australian** – they've been raised **as Australians** from **day 1** – that's **who they are!**
- And they've born into a **Christ-honouring household**... I've never **asked** them whether or not they'd like to **live** for **Jesus**... we've just **raised** them in **relationship** with **Jesus** from **Day 1** – that's **who they are!**
- And of course, it made perfect **sense** to **baptise** them because **baptism** is a sign of God's **promises** to **them** – not a **pledge** of **their** faith to **God!** *The promises, says Peter, are to us and to our household.*
- If our children were to make a “**decision**” regarding following the Lord Jesus, it **sadly** would have been a decision, not to **become Christian**, but to walk away from Jesus... to **LEAVE** God's covenant family....
- ...just like one day, our daughter Emily, **left** the **Calder** family to become a **Moman**...
- ...and one day, **one** of them might renounce **Australian citizenship** to become a citizen of **another country**. ///
- But **covenant kids**, are children born into **Christ-honouring households**.... they receive all the promises of God... and they are raised to **know** and **love** and trust and **serve** the Lord Jesus from **day 1**. //
- Now – please note - I'm not saying – and the Bible is not saying – that they are **automatically saved**... but rather as we saw last week – as they **declare** with their mouth '**Jesus is Lord**' and believe in their **heart** that **God** raised him from the **dead**', they will **demonstrate** that they **ARE** saved - rescued! ///
- So having laid that **ground-work**... let's then see what this means for kids:

2. AT HOME

- This means, that we don't **evangelise** our **kids**.
- We don't sit across from them at breakfast and ask, 'have you become a **Christian** yet?'
- We don't even pray that they will **become** Christians!
- Rather, we raise them in relationship with Jesus from **day one** – **just** as we raise them in relationship with their **grandparents**.
- We pray that they will grow **strong** and **clear** and **keen** in their relationship with Jesus and do **everything** to enable that to **happen**.
- So, with **our** children, we **prayed** with them, read the **Bible** with them, talked about **Jesus** with them **all** the time.
- There was **never** a time when they **didn't** know the Lord in their lives.
- If **you** are parents of **young** children, I urge you to **claim** the promises of God for your **children** – **that they can know and love him now**.

- Jesus taking the children in his arms and declaring that the kingdom of God belongs to such as these, is a sure sign that our kids can be in a relationship with him from the earliest of times!
- Know and revel in the fact that because **YOU** are a child of God; **your kids** are **precious** and **important** and **part** of God's **covenant people**. //
- I know not **everyone** in our church is from **traditions** in the church who **baptise** children – but this is **why we** do.
- We are **claiming** God's **promises** which extend to **us** and to our **children**.
- In **faith** and **trust**, we are marking our children **out** as **belonging** to **God**.
- Of **course**, they will grow to take **hold of** and **own** and **proclaim** their **own** trust in Jesus one day!
- But if the kingdom of God **belongs** to such as these, then we take God at his **word** and give them the **covenant sign** of their **relationship** from **day one**.
- **Ours** is the **joy** and the **responsibility** to encourage and **nurture** their relationship with Jesus at **every opportunity**. //
- **Teach** your kids about **Jesus** every **day**!
- Make the **Sunday** gathering an **unbreakable habit** to show that there is simply **nothing** more **important** or **significant** on Sunday than **gathering** with **God's people** and **hearing** God's **word**! //
- I well remember Philip when he was only 4, as we were walking along a beach hand in hand one day, turning to me and saying, "Daddy, God made all this for us". And I was thinking – **thank you Lord**. He **already knows** you and your **love** and your **power** and the **beauty** of your **creation**.
- then when Philip was in Year 7 – other guys giving him a hard time for not playing rugby – I asked him 'how do you handle that?' – he said, "I just pray and the Lord helps me through".
- Even as a young man – WIN – **Bundaberg** – wanting to return to the Sunny **coast** – didn't get a job back here he applied for... His **comment**? "If **this** is where God wants me to be, this is where I **need to be**"
- The impact of **raising** him in that **relationship** – seen at **every point** in his **life**.
- The **best** thing we can **do** for our kids... is to **claim** God's **promises** are **theirs** as well as **ours**, and then **raise them** in that **relationship**..
- What if they are **already** pushing back on that?
- I can't tell you how to raise your kids... but Susan and I were **very clear** – our **house**, our **roof** – our **rules**. **Calders** are in **church** on **Sundays**. Not negotiable. **Calders** say **thanks** to God at meal **times**. **Calders** go **on** about Jesus! **Calders** pray and read God's **word** at **bed** time. **Calders** love **Jesus** and serve one another. That's who we are. Not **negotiable**. ///
- But – there's **another** challenge isn't there – what if your kids have left **home**?

3. LEFT HOME

- what if you have **adult** children who don't want to **know** about Jesus and in fact are very **anti**?
- And what if you weren't even **Christian** when you were **young** or didn't really have a **clue** what you were doing?
- What if you now realise you weren't actually very **intentional**, but just sent the kids to **Sunday school**?
- And what if you **WERE** intentional - you **read** the Bible with your kids; you **taught** them about **Jesus** all the time; you sang **Colin Buchanan songs**; you **prayed** with them; they were **very involved** in church – but **now** – **nothing**!
- What do you do **then**? //
- So **many scenarios** /// I can't possibly cover them **all this morning**...

- But **generally speaking**:
- You keep **praying**.
- You **don't beat yourself up**.
- You **repent** of anything you **neglected**. God will meet your **repentance** with his **mercy** and **forgiveness**.
- You keep **loving** them **unconditionally**.
- You don't **hassle** them, yet you assure them you're still **praying** for them and you take opportunities to **encourage** them where you can.
- If you were a Christian when they were young, you **still** trust they are **recipients** of God's **promises**.
- When Susan's **brother** went off the rails as a young person, Susan's dad Frank – whom some of you have met – never treated him anything **other** than as a **Christian**...
- He would tell his Son – “as a child of **God**, the Lord **expects** better of you” ...
- When Stephen **did** eventually return to the Lord – like the prodigal son – he said one of the things that had impacted him the **most** was that his dad always still treated him as a **believer**... he had never **given up** his **faith** – **rather** – he just **knew** he was being **disobedient**. //
- If your kids were raised in a **Christ-honouring home** – **claim** the promises of **God** for **them** – still **talk** to them and **love** them as **believers** – and pray that like that **prodigal** son – they will soon return **home** into the **loving embrace** of the **waiting Father**. //
- offer the **same unconditional, welcoming** love that the Father **offers** in **Jesus' story**.
- Keep **alert** and on the **lookout**, so to speak, for them to come running **home**.
- Keep **praying** that they'll come **back** to **you** and **back** to our **heavenly Father**.
- Show them how **good** it is to be in **relationship** with **God**.
- Practice **loving** and joy-filled **hospitality**. Show them by **your** welcome, the welcome they can expect if they come back to God. //
- If you **weren't** Christian when raising your **kids**, you can trust that the Lord will use your trust in him **now** to **witness** to **them**.
- As you continue to live such radically **different** lives from the **world** in front of your **kids**, they will see in your lives that your **money**, your **travel**, your **retirement plans**, your **golf** etc, are **not** the most important things in your **life**, but **rather**, your **relationship** with the Lord Jesus **is**!
- And pray that the Lord will give them a **curiosity** and **interest** in what **drives** you – and a **dissatisfaction** with the things of the **world** which are currently driving **them**! And have an answer ready for them when they ask! //
- The Lord knows your **pain** – he knows the **burden** you **feel** for your kids... I think the story he told of the prodigal son, reveals that he knows our pain through and through!
- What were we encouraged to do a couple of weeks back? To **pour** out our hearts to him, for **he** is our **refuge**... /

- “Dear God, my kids don't want to know about you” ...
- A very **painful** topic for many **among** us... //
- Painful for those with young children who seem **already** to be wanting to break free of God's **family**...
- Painful for those with **older** children, who though you know you did your best, made that painful decision to **leave** God's family...
- Painful for those with older children who aren't believers because you didn't **know** Jesus when you were young... and so you never had the opportunity to **raise** your children in the **Lord**...

- And yet... and yet – **affirming** and **inspiring** and **strengthening** I pray... to understand how God's **covenant** promises are to **us** and our **children** – and that our children **remain** in God's covenant **family** – until they **decidedly leave**...!
- **Strengthening** for those who are raising **young** children **now** – your children are **precious** and **important** to the **Lord**... your work in **raising** them in Jesus is not in **vain** – and raising them this way, is the most precious thing you can do... **don't give up** – make **clear** to them the joys of being **God's covenant kids**... show them all the beauty of God's love for them...
- *For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off – for all whom the Lord our God will call.*