**God-Intended Human Development**

Most of what we know about Jesus is His work during His ministry. The gospels give us some insight into His birth and a single incident in Jerusalem when He was 12 years old. The narratives then jump to about the age of 30 when Jesus began His preaching ministry. One reason Jesus is our perfect High Priest is because He endured all the challenges we face as humans, including surviving the transformation from infancy to adulthood (Hebrews 4:15). The scriptures reduce nearly the entirety of Jesus’ developmental years to a single verse: “And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man” (Luke 2:52).

Let’s face it: As sweet as they are, human young start out small and weak, devoid of understanding, ignorant of the God who created them and with poor social skills. As parents and grandparents, it is our responsibility to help our children to eventually become adults who are wise, healthy faithful servants of God who know how to relate to their fellow man. Ephesians 6:4 tells fathers, “Do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.” Children simply will not learn what they need to know by osmosis. Human beings are perfectly capable of either reflecting the Divine nature on one hand or living like brute beasts on the other, and, more often than not, the difference is the guidance and training of loving parents (or lack thereof).

Healthy human development must include growth in four areas:  **Intellectual** (wisdom), **Physical** (stature), **Spiritual** (in favor with God) and **Social** (in favor with man). This is God’s definition of a well-rounded person and He should know. He designed us the way we are and gave us clear instructions on how to get the most out of this human existence, both spiritually and physically (1 Timothy 4:8).

The irony is that healthy development in all areas is crucial to a person’s spiritual wellbeing! Yes it is critical to raise our children with a deep love and respect for God, but they also must have the ability to read and study His word, comprehend what they read and make proper application to their lives. They must realize that taking proper care of the body God has given them truly glorifies Him. They must be taught to live at peace with others and have the social skills to be able to teach and influence others in a positive way. Deficiencies in any of these areas will render a person less effective in God’s kingdom.

Over the next four weeks, we will examine what the scriptures have to say about each of these four areas of human development. We will consider the relationship between each asset and a person’s spiritual health. Providing for our families involves so much more than simply putting food on the table. It is our job to see that they get the instruction, guidance, discipline, love and example they need to become disciples of Jesus with characters that emulate that of their Teacher. We must help them to “increase in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man.”

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