

A LETTER FROM DR. SEAN LUCAS

September 3, 2020

My dear Friends:

I've been reflecting on our August Christian Life Conference on parenting and grandparenting we just finished up. What a great conference it was! One of the things that I so appreciated was the way the themes of the conference interwove themselves week-by-week. Some of what I heard:

Our parenting occurs with the larger covenant story of the Bible; our children are ultimately God's children, claimed by him in baptism; God has made precious promises to us as parents, promises that he alone can fulfill; God's grace meets us over and over again as our children reveal broken things in us—received from our own parents—that must be dealt with; we are loved anyways and always and we love our children this same way—even as we discipline them.

Those were some of the things I heard repeatedly. If you weren't able to join us, remember that all of the Wednesday night talks, the Saturday seminar, and Sunday morning panel are on our YouTube channel, which you can find by simply going to YouTube and typing IPC Memphis in the search bar.

One thing, though, that we were unable to cover was the significance of Sunday in discipling our children. Sara and I touched on it a little bit—"Sunday is the best day of the week"—but there was much, much more to be said. One thing is this—our love for corporate worship and Jesus' church is more caught than taught. You might tell your children that you love Jesus and his church, but you tell them far more through your own commitment to weekly corporate worship. If you are willing to miss corporate worship for vacations, ball games, hunting trips, travel sports, and other activities, your children will figure out by your actions what you really value and will follow accordingly.

Of course, we have been dealing with COVID-19 for the past six months. And yet, IPC has had in-person corporate worship since the last Sunday of May; it has been striking who has been here and who has not been here. Again, everyone has to sort through what they are comfortable with from a health perspective—I've said that before and will continue to say that. And yet, when I and the other pastors look on social media and see families at the beach or at weddings or family gatherings—all together, unmasked, having a good time—while at the same time not seeing you at church, we worry about what that is teaching your children and grandchildren about your own commitment to Christ and his church.

For some of you with smaller, wiggly children, coming to corporate worship—or even sitting through the Livestream at home—is a chore. I remember those days and am completely sympathetic. One of the most difficult things to do is parenting in the pew. There are some good resources to help you think that through: most notably the classic little book by Robbie Castleman, *Parenting in the Pew: Guiding Your Children into the Joy of Worship*. One thing I'd simply observe is that the loss of sermon attention you might experience for a year or two is significantly offset by teaching your children how to sit and participate in corporate worship. Also, one area of growth for all of us is welcoming our little ones with their wiggles and squeals into corporate worship, which I would think is part of what we promise when we hold up our hands at their baptisms.

I do hope, though, with nursery care restarting on September 13, that more of you will find your way back to corporate worship in the weeks ahead. We really do believe that not only is Sunday the best day of the week, but corporate worship is God's means of preserving our souls and enabling us to make it to heaven safely. Six months away from incarnational, in-person corporate worship is a long time. It is time to come back home.

In the grip of God's grace,

