

A Light in the Valley

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. (Matthew 5:16)

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Rearing Godly Children in Difficult Times

by: Paul Earnhart

It is not uncommon today to hear older Christians who have already reared their children comment somberly in the presence of young prospective parents, "I certainly wouldn't want to be bringing up children in times like these." It may be innocently done, but it is not helpful. These already anxious young people do not have a choice of times in which to rear children. For them, it is now or never.

Candidly, from the short term perspective, these are certainly not the best of times for the family. Much has happened in this century that serves to tear at the fabric of domestic life. We have become a city rather than a rural people, living in the anonymity of teeming urban anthills where no one knows or cares who his neighbors are. Our increasing mobility had made us a "nation of strangers" and the once supportive influence of an extended family of grandparents, uncles and aunts, has been lost. Even the homemaker mother

has been gradually disappearing before the increasing power of industrialization. Today, for the first time, most American women of childbearing years are working outside the home.

Along with these important social and economic changes, there has been a significant philosophical shift. Our society has been increasingly secularized. Biblical values that once had at least some influence on our institutions have been largely set aside. From a world in which certain values were cherished, even though often violated, we have moved to one which denies that absolute values exist. Out of the passionate individualism, which arose during the Vietnam War era, has come a hedonistic pursuit of personal fulfillment which is heedless of the consequences to others. Marriage and family commitments are seen as less important than the "finding of oneself." Drug abuse and mindless sensuality abound.

And to this already frightening equation

must be added the insidious factor of television, which has the ability to instantly, universally and powerfully infiltrate this moral and spiritual corruption into every American mind.

But if this analysis of our times is accurate in the short term, it certainly does not obtain for the long one. From a wider perspective, current circumstances do not present nearly the challenge to rearing children that past ages have. A few examples will suffice to make the point.

How would you have liked to rear children in the days of Noah, when the whole world was convulsed by violence and every human heart, save two, was wholly set on evil? In spite of the loneliness of their task (you think you're in the minority!) and the ridicule, which it must have brought, Noah and his wife reared three sons not only to trust the true God in the midst of a moral cesspool, but to influence three young women into the same commitment.

What chances of nurturing children in righteousness would you have given Jewish parents during Israel's abject bond servitude in Egypt when even your infant children's lives were under threat from an all-powerful state? Amram and Jochebed reared two sons and a daughter in these very circumstances. In order to save the life of Moses, they were compelled to sacrifice the joys of seeing their youngest child grow daily into manhood and were not even allowed to openly claim him as their own. But the little time they were granted with that son was so well used that he never forgot who he was and, at last, chose affliction with God's people over the pleasures of sin (Hebrews 11:24-25).

The New Testament world was no great advance over that of the Old Testament. Fully half the people of the first century Roman Empire were slaves. Human life was cheap and murder was frequent. Divorce was easy and generally accepted. Unwanted infants were simply exposed to die and the females were frequently saved by the enterprising and reared as prostitutes. Every variety of corrupt pagan religion and superstition flourished and was woven into the work-a-day world of all the people. Devotion to some god or goddess was linked to every job and every social occasion. And yet in a world like that, in the midst of an intensely pagan city, a young Jewish girl, married to an unbelieving Greek, reared her son to be one of the great gospel preachers of the early church. With no synagogue in Lystra and only her mother to help with Timothy's spiritual training, Eunice not only succeeded in rearing a godly son, she succeeded magnificently!

And so, when anxious young people approach me with concern and ask if I think it is possible to build solid marriages and rear godly children in these “difficult times,” I simply take them by the hand, look them in the eye, and tell them, “Absolutely!” All that is required is that they be willing to pay the price of a surpassing love for God and a deep love for one another which guided the parenting of those successful fathers and mothers who have gone before us.

The Bible is Understandable

by: Dwight McGee

The multitude of different church buildings downtown in every city stands as a sad reminder of religious division and confusion. In man’s loss of unity, he is tempted to blame God and His word, the Bible. Men conclude that, since we do not understand the Bible, then the Bible cannot be understood. This is a most serious and fundamental error. Furthermore, it is a personal attack on either God’s goodness or His ability to communicate to men. The Bible declares plainly that it can be understood.

The Bible gives a man all the truth that he needs to please God: “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (II Timothy 3:16-17). Even though we do not have the complete record of what Jesus did on earth, we have what we need to understand, believe and be saved. “And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name” (John 20:30-31). It is the truth that will make us free as Jesus said, “If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:31, 32). Jesus has provided that truth for us today in the pages of the Holy Bible.

It is clear from the Bible itself that God intended for us to understand and obey it. Paul said, “Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is” (Ephesians 5:17). He also made it clear that God’s revelation of the Bible

through Him could be understood upon reading. “... How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ)” (Ephesians 3:4).

Some parts of the Bible are more difficult than others. Peter said, “...Even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; as also in all his epistles speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction” (II Peter 3:15-16). Even though it takes more study to understand some of the scriptures, you will notice in this passage that God neither condoned or excused the error that was taught because of Bible misunderstanding. He rather pointed out that the misusers of the Bible brought their own destruction. People will be lost in hell because they misuse the scriptures to teach error.

In a time of flooding religious error and misunderstanding of the Bible let us not blame God and His word, but with great determination find the truth revealed within the pages of the Holy Bible and unite on that truth to salvation. May God richly bless our efforts to know and do His will.

Choosing a Church

by: Edward O. Bragwell, Sr.

The New Testament teaches that there is but one church and also that there are many churches. Paul said he persecuted “the church (singular) of God” (I Corinthians 15:9). The record shows that he persecuted Christians in various places. In the same epistle he spoke of “the churches (plural) of God” (I Corinthians 11:16).

In I Corinthians 15:9, he is speaking of Christians everywhere. This “church” is a group term for all saved people. This is the one group or number to which one is added when he is saved. “And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved” (Acts 2:47 NKJV). “And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved” (Acts 2:47 NASB).

In I Corinthians 11:16, he is speaking of groups of Christians organized to worship and work together in various locations like “the churches of Galatia” (Galatians 1:2). The New Testament is clear that one who has been added to “the church” (the body or number of the saved) is expected to join himself to one of these “churches of God” to work and worship together as a unit (Cf. Acts 9:26-28).

This means that a Christian must choose one of these groups to “place his membership.” He is already a member of the universal “church of God” which includes all who have been added to it in the world. Choosing a local church is usually not a complicated process. In many cases there is already a group (church) in his area with whom he can scripturally jointly work and worship as a unit. If there is not, then he can work toward starting one.

In many cases there are several prospective groups, one of which he can join himself, in order to worship and do the work that God has authorized local churches to do. This is the situation in many areas in this country today. So one just saved or has just moved into the area is faced with the task of choosing one of these churches. The task is now a bit more complicated. One cannot join himself to them all, so he may need to “shop around” to find one with whom he can identify. What should he look for? A perfect church? If that is the litmus test, then none of them will pass muster, because all are made up of human beings who are far from perfect. If he were to find such a group, then its perfection would be compromised the moment he joined the group because he is not perfect.

One often makes a mistake in his choice because of the way he prioritizes what he is looking for in a church. He often looks at the characteristics that individual Christians are to have, placing these near the top of his list – friendliness, hospitable, caring, compassionate, and helpful. He visits a church and is favorably impressed when these things seem to stand out. On this basis, he decides that this is the congregation for him. But what about what

Study Opportunities

Sunday Bible Study: 10:00 AM
Sunday Worship Assembly: 11:00 AM

Meeting At

Homewood Suites of Bozeman
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Bozeman, MT 59715

Everyone Welcome!

they do as a church – their corporate worship and work, the kind of teaching and preaching they offer week after week, the nature of their organization, etc.? These become kind of peripheral to the other matters. He salves his conscience by pointing out that while the congregation he has chosen may not be fully scriptural in these areas, they are so much more caring, hospitable, compassionate and personally helpful than the people in other congregation(s) he has considered.

It is great when one finds a congregation that has all the desirable corporate characteristics mentioned above, along with the friendliness, hospitality, compassion, etc. of its members standing out. However, often such is not the case. One needs to understand he can still be friendly, hospitable, and compassionate even if fellow members are not. Being in the same congregation does not make him a party to their personal shortcomings.

But, by joining a congregation, one necessarily becomes a part of its corporate structure and is committed to being a participant in its collective worship and work. But if these are not right, he cannot fulfill his commitment to share in its corporate activities. He cannot afford to be a part of the corporate worship if it is not scriptural. He cannot be a part of the corporate work if it is unscriptural. He cannot be a tied to its corporate structure if it is unscriptural.

A final thought. Christians do not have a lock on friendliness, hospitality, etc. If one is primarily looking for friendliness, hospitality, caring, compassion, and helpfulness, then he can find that among members of religious organizations that do not even profess to follow the New Testament order. It would not be hard to find a group with these qualities, equal to, if not surpassing, many of those professing New Testament Christianity.

So, while we should all strive to constantly improve in all these personal qualities, we must recognize that a group's excelling in such does not necessarily make them a group of which a Christian should be a part.

Philippians 4:8

Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.

The Christian and Social Media

by: David Maxson

“Whoever restrains his words has knowledge, and he who has a cool spirit is a man of understanding” (Proverbs 17:27).

Like it or not, social media is here to stay.

While we shouldn't overreact to the dangers of this new media, we must not ignore them either. There needs to be more discussion about social media. I found online some good rules that I wanted to share:

- Be careful before you hit send (James 1:19-20; Proverbs 10:19; 15:2; 21:23). Could your message be taken the wrong way? Does this need to be kept private? Will it needlessly offend someone?
- Don't vent anger (James 1:19-20; Ephesians 4:26-27; Proverbs 14:29; 29:11). Don't air family problems or church issues online. If you're angry at someone, go speak to them personally. The rest of us don't need to know.
- Never lie (Ephesians 4:25; Colossians 3:9-10; Revelation 21:8). And embellishment is the same as lying.
- Don't glorify self (Matthew 6:5, 7, 16; Proverbs 25:27; 26:12). Hide the good you do. Advertise what is done for you. Give glory to God instead.
- Watch out for ungodly influences (I Corinthians 15:33; II Timothy 2:16-18; II Peter 2:18-20). Beware of worldly ideas, false teaching, filthy language, dirty jokes, and gossip.
- Don't let this become an addiction (I Corinthians 6:12). It can easily take over your life if you're not careful.
- Protect your marriage (Proverbs 7:5-27). The American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers says 81 percent of its members have used or faced evidence plucked from social networking sites in the past five years.
- Use social networking to God's glory (Mark 16:15; Ephesians 4:29; Colossians 4:6; Matthew 5:14-16). There are so many positive ways we can use this new media. Let's use it to advance God's cause, not the Devil's.

Father, protect us from the evils of social media. May you be glorified in every email, tweet, and facebook comment we post this day.

Daily Bible Reading

July 2020

July 1	Hebrews 1	July 17	Hebrews 9:11-28
July 2	Hebrews 2	July 20	Hebrews 10:1-18
July 3	Hebrews 3:1-6	July 21	Hebrews 10:19-26
July 6	Hebrews 3:7-19	July 22	Hebrews 10:27-39
July 7	Hebrews 4:1-13	July 23	Hebrews 11:1-11
July 8	Hebrews 4:14-5:10	July 24	Hebrews 11:12-24
July 9	Hebrews 5:11-6:12	July 27	Hebrews 11:25-40
July 10	Hebrews 6:13-20	July 28	Hebrews 12:1-17
July 13	Hebrews 7:1-10	July 29	Hebrews 12:18-29
July 14	Hebrews 7:11-28	July 30	Hebrews 13:1-19
July 15	Hebrews 8	July 31	Hebrews 13:20-25
July 16	Hebrews 9:1-10		

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