

RAISING GODLY CHILDREN IN A GODLESS SOCIETY

Introduction

When you heard/read the title of this lesson, I hope the theme song for "Mission Impossible" did not immediately start playing in your head. I say that because it really isn't impossible but, admittedly, it is growing more difficult with every passing day. We surely need God's help to accomplish it, but we are assured in Mt. 19:26 that, with Him, all things are possible – so IT CAN BE DONE! Let's delve now into this most timely and needful study.

A Godless Society

Let us begin by briefly establishing that our present-day American culture is largely (capital G) Godless, but it is not (small g) godless. To clarify, it is the former because it has little to no interest in the things of the true and living God (Jehoveh); indeed, our society is working tirelessly to eradicate Him, His Word and His influence from the world. But like the pagan peoples of the Old Testament, American culture is not (small g) godless. Its gods include many non-Christian deities, power, pleasure, money and man himself, to name a few.

How has this happened? The short answer is: Satan, as the god of this world (II Cor. 4:4), has been increasingly successful in influencing and controlling people's minds. Evil has also succeeded because good people have not been heard from enough. Paul tells us in Eph. 6:12 that "...we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." It is into this environment that children are born today.

About Children

In Gen. 1:28, God told Adam and Eve to be fruitful and multiply, and as they say, the rest is history. Truly, the bringing forth of new life is a miracle, and the sanctity of that life should be as undisputed in our society as it is in the Word of God. He says in Ps. 127:3-5 that "...children are a heritage of the Lord: and the fruit of the womb is his reward. As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them..." We know Jesus loved little children and spoke protectively of them in Mt. 18:6. They are precious, they represent the future of our Churches, and they are ours to protect and develop. (See Article XX, Of The Sanctity of Human Life, in the Bethel Missionary Baptist Association Minutes' Articles of Faith.)

Raising Children To Be Godly

There are many influences that come to bear on the development of children. It is important here to remember that our “mission” is not just raising children, or raising children who are successful and happy – but raising children to be Godly. Webster’s 1828 definition of Godly is “to be like God; pious; reverencing God, and His character and laws; righteous.” Clearly, this is a very tall order, but something that can be done with God’s help. Let’s look now at some of the factors that are key in achieving this goal:

Parents – Kids generally learn and copy what they observe in their parents (like father, like son), so if we want to produce Godly children, we need to start with Godly parents. We’re talking about saved parents, who agree on the value of a devout upbringing, and who are determined to “bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord,” while not provoking them to wrath. Eph. 6:4

Salvation – If being Godly means being righteous, as defined above, then our children’s only hope at being Godly lies in being saved by grace through faith. Eph. 2:8 Parents must make it a priority to seek their children’s salvation, taking every possible opportunity to expose them to the Gospel from an early age (II Tim. 3:15). Truly, the greatest thing that parents can give a child – better than an Ivy-league education, a fat trust fund, or a prestigious name – is to diligently pray for and pursue the salvation of that child’s eternal soul.

Consistency – An effective method of training is repetition. It is crucial that key behavior/information be repeated regularly and frequently (Dt. 6:5–9). This includes consistent Bible study and prayer, church attendance (including evening and mid-week services), and discipline. Kids need to learn that when the church doors are open, we should all be there. The truth of absolute right and wrong should be taught by consistent reinforcement and correction. It is crucial for parents to be agreed and to present a unified front. See these scriptures concerning discipline: Prov. 13:24; 19:18; 22:6; & 23:13.

Authority & Boundaries – This is a commonly neglected area of child-raising today. As the first authority figures that children have, parents sometimes allow children to be disobedient and dismissive of their instructions. This can lead to disrespect for the authority of teachers, elders, police, future bosses, and more importantly, for God, His Word and His Church. Children must not be left to do as they wish, but rather be guided and molded. Prov. 29:15

Authority & Boundaries (Continued)

Enforcement of boundaries such as curfews, and limited use of phones, computers, video games and social media are important for their physical and social well-being. And, it is important for children to be taught respect for the House of God. This means training them to sit quietly and listen, rather than be up getting a drink or going to the bathroom multiple times; and to avoid running or being loud and rambunctious – before, during and after services. I Tim. 3:15

Education – We understand that education is needful for individuals to function and be productive members of society. However, as Christian parents, we must be aware of non/anti-Christian influences that control the world's educational institutions. Too many times, the agenda of these individuals is not to educate, but to indoctrinate – and the doctrine they are preaching is often in direct conflict with the values and beliefs we hold. Therefore, it is extremely important for parents to carefully evaluate school options and choose one that will undergird, rather than undermine, their religious beliefs. Private, church-based, and home-school options should be given careful consideration.

In addition to secular learning, we have agreed in our Church Covenant to religiously educate our children. This goes much further than just the plan of salvation. The Bible, Articles of Faith, Church Covenant, rules of order/procedure, and church history are much needed objects of training, and these can be provided through Sunday School, Bible Study, and family devotions.

Marriage – While the Bible does allow a single lifestyle, in most cases, people need a marriage relationship. Proper training of our children would be incomplete without teaching them the purpose and limits of dating, and the need to seek God's will in choosing a spouse. The Lord's Church has suffered from the lack of emphasis on marrying a saved person to avoid being unequally yoked together. II Cor. 6:14 Better still is the choice of someone who is also a member of the Church (ours or a sister Church).

Appreciation for Work – Although the necessity of work was part of God's curse in Gen. 3:17-19, the performance of honest work by able-bodies is an honorable thing, and instilling a healthy work ethic is an important aspect of child-raising. We must teach against the "something for nothing," entitlement mentality that is spreading in our nation. I Th. 4:11; II Th. 3:10; I Tim. 5:8

Purpose in Life – Ultimately, we want to raise children who are not only Godly in their living because it is the right way, but because it results in their lives bringing more honor to God. Rather than viewing their lives as their own, to live as they choose, they need to be taught that the gift of life comes with a divine purpose, and that after being saved, they have the capacity to fulfill the plan God has for them – a plan that will not only bring Him honor, but will bring them joy and fulfillment that cannot be found in the world. Heb. 13:20–21

Passing It Along – If the Lord tarries, the current generation will eventually pass from the scene of action. If we do not raise Godly children with a heart for serving the Lord, for knowing and obeying His Word, and for sustaining the work of His Church, then the future of our local churches may well be in jeopardy. That prospect should motivate us as parents to raise Godly children, and when our children become parents, it should motivate them to do the same. Dt. 4:9 & II Tim. 1:5

Closing Thoughts

As parents, we have a narrow window of time during which we can mold and shape the children God has entrusted to us. Those 18 or so years fly by so swiftly. We turn around once and they are taking their first steps. We turn again, and they are learning foreign language and chemistry. One final turn and they are moving out and starting a family of their own. That being true, if we want their lives to be ones that are dedicated to honoring and serving God, we have to start early. We must make the training and development of our children a high priority, and ask God to help us be successful in this wonderful undertaking. It is not so much the profession they will perform, or the station in life they will occupy that should concern us – but rather HOW they will live their lives. May we raise them to be Godly men and women who love the Lord, His Word and His Church, and who are intent on fulfilling His will in their lives. If we achieve this, then surely God will be able to smile on our endeavors, and we can know the satisfaction of a “mission accomplished.”

Recommended Resources for Parents

- The Holy Bible by Almighty God
- Shooting for the Mark: Aiming for Excellence in Parenting by Elder James Keen, c. 2015.
- Raising Godly Children in an Ungodly World: Leaving a Lasting Legacy by Ken & Steve Ham, c. 2006, Master Books.