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Child-rearing: A Father is an Educator (Eph 6:4)

Introduction – Here is another inescapable fact. While not all fathers receive a paycheck for teaching, all fathers are, by definition, educators. It is not an issue as to whether or not they are educating (in the biblical sense of the word) their children, but how well they dispense their calling and responsibility handed to them by their heavenly Father.

Fathers and Mothers at Trinity: In the name of the Lord, the elders commend you for your faithfulness, for evidence of your understanding, obedience, and repentance from our cultural abdication in this area. As has been said before, we are rebuilding the ruins (educationally and culturally). We must be patient and we must continue to look to the Lord as the Architect for our work.

Some Preparations – That which Paul commands of fathers in Eph 6:4 is based upon the scriptures. “Schooling” cannot be separated from the overarching command to parents to train their children up in the Lord.

Abraham, the Father/Teacher (Gen 18:19) – The covenant required Abraham to teach his children and his household. The scope of that teaching was to cover how to keep the way of the Lord in righteousness and justice. In other words, it covered all of life.

Educate the Next Generation in the Lord (Deut 11) – The Lord told the people of Israel whom He had delivered over from Egypt (a symbol of our deliverance from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God) that they had the responsibility to pass everything on to their children. God laid the charge upon them (vv1-2), and directed them to instruct their children in every area of their lives (vv18-21). He then reminded them of the blessings of obedience and the curses of disobedience in just this area (vv26-28).

The Impossibility of Neutrality in Education (Prov 1:7, Matt 12:30) – Never forget this (because we are constantly barraged with the antithesis). There is no neutral ground for studying truth, goodness and beauty. The assumptions one brings to the study of anything is either submissive to the Word of God or in rebellion to it. This is why education is one of the most religious things we all do (pagans, atheists, “pluralists,” or Christians).

Education in Worship (Ex 12:26-27) – When God instituted the services of sacred feasts (and this service of worship is one), He intended for it to be a means of education for our children. It is not simply a reminder. This service settles us in a certain kind of view of the world and all that God has done and is doing in it. It is here that we hear in a myriad of ways that “Jesus is Lord of that too. He created it, He redeemed it, and He is Lord over it.” You cannot separate education and worship.

Then Turn to the Lord in Everything (1 Chron 28:9-10) – As David instructed his son, so we are to exhort and admonish our children. God knows everything; He knows your heart. As they grow up, these words of encouragement and warning (v9b) will make sense in light of the way they have worshiped and lived with us.

Bring All of This to Ephesians 6:4 – This is a weighty command echoing down to every generation. It is critical to the furthering of the kingdom. Consider three words in this command.

Provoke – Because of your position, fathers are able to discourage their children like no one else can. God warns you of this and tells you not to do it. Children are provoked when to drift from the Lord when they do not grow up in a home with loving, biblical discipline. They are provoked to run away when they grow up in a home with harsh, unloving, arbitrary discipline. They are provoked when they see outright hypocrisy. They are provoked when they see through a hypocritical perfectionism.

Training – Harkening back to all God has said to His people, Paul uses this Greek term, *paideia*, which meant not only “training” but the complete enculturation of the mind, body, soul, and strength of the child in the Lord.

Admonition – The Greek term, *nouthesia*, is the same in some ways. But it can also emphasize the idea of faithful warnings, personal exhortations, and loving counsel. It’s the stuff of the Book of Proverbs – practical, biblical, God-fearing wisdom for life.

And So – This needs to be spread out everywhere in the life of the church, the culture of the kingdom of God, and in the homes of all Christians.

An Explicitly Christian Education – Especially in the formative years, we must show them that every thought, every fact, everything is brought captive to Christ. Don’t put them in a place where this is denied or hidden.

The Sin of Abdication – Seek out the best educational helps possible, but simply writing a check won’t fulfill your role. *Paideia* and *nouthesia* requires thoughtful, ongoing oversight, discussion, and example.

Servants to Little Ones – Jesus said, “Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends.” Your children are

your friends. They are your brothers and sisters in Christ. Bringing them up in the training and admonition of the Lord is a huge sacrifice. This is what it means to be a father. It is what it means to reflect the love of our heavenly Father and of His Son, who laid down His life for us.

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