

Raising Children of Light in a Culture of Darkness

“I do not want to drive across a bridge designed by an engineer who believed the numbers in structural stress models are relative truths.” –R.C. Sproul

I was delighted to speak on Sunday at Faith Christian Center in Arlington, Texas. I joined that community of believers in celebrating the 25th anniversary of the church’s affiliated school, St. Paul’s Preparatory Academy. The topic of my discussion was “How to Raise Christian Children in Today’s Culture.”

As I was preparing my remarks, it occurred to me that raising children to both love and faithfully serve the Lord and Creator of the universe, Jesus Christ, is not unlike the primary goal of the late Dr. Jerry Falwell, founder of Liberty University.

In 1971, Dr. Falwell launched Liberty—now the world’s largest Christian university—and quickly got about the business of “training champions for Christ.”

I submit that “raising Christian children in today’s culture” and “training champions for Christ” are one and the same and that both fruitful endeavors stem from the same rich soil: truth.

But what is today’s culture, exactly? What is a champion for Christ? And perhaps most importantly, what—or Who—is truth?

Merriam Webster’s defines *champion* as “someone who fights or speaks publicly in support of a person, belief, cause, etc.” It is not merely a passing suggestion that Christian parents and educators train champions for Christ. It’s a command given us by God Himself: “Start children off on the way they should

go [train them], and even when they are old they will not turn from it" (Prov. 22:6, NIV).

We faithful are additionally tasked with an unambiguous calling on the way we (and our children) should go: "[Jesus] said to them, 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned'" (Mark 16:15-16).

The apostle Paul admonishes in Romans 1:16 that we should not be "ashamed of the gospel," but rather should "do [our] best to present [ourselves] to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15).

In addition to leading by example, this means steeping Christian children and young people in the "word of truth"—the Holy Scriptures—and equipping them in love to champion (to "fight or speak publicly in support of") the infallible, unchangeable and absolute truths found therein.

This is so even when the absolute truths of Scripture have become unpopular in a world that prefers the absolute lie of relativism.

Indeed, though some may wander the prodigal's path for a time and still others may remain lost, we can only then—having obeyed the command to train our children in the way they should go—release, hope, pray and have faith that the Holy Spirit will be that eternal light to illuminate temporal life's perilous path—that Christ will be a lamp unto the feet of our beloved.

Jesus commands His followers to be His hands and feet—to be salt and light in a rotting world that loves darkness (Matt. 5:13-16).

True, salt preserves, but in an open wound, it also burns.

Today's relativist culture is an open wound.

True, light's bright glare can be illuminating to those eager to see. But it is also blinding to those whose eyes have become adjusted to darkness. When the light of Christ is shined, it sends lovers of evil scurrying for the shadows.

For this reason, Christ warned, "You will be hated by everyone because of me, but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved" (Matt. 10:22).

In a culture that slaughters the unborn, mocks purity, celebrates sexual sin and makes a joke out of the institution of marriage by imagining sin-based counterfeits, it remains a daunting task for Christian parents to raise children with both the courage and conviction to stand unashamed for God's truth. From an earthly standpoint, it seems counterintuitive to both welcome and find joy in being hated by the world.

Even more, for young people who might prefer popularity over principle—at least for now—the prospect of being "hated by everyone" lacks a certain level of appeal.

That's OK. Stand strong, parents. Persevere.

Because ultimately, that's the price of admission.

It boils down to instilling in our children a biblically orthodox Christian worldview—that is to say, absolute truth. Anything else is nothing at all. Anything else is relativism, which holds that there is no absolute truth and imagines, absolutely, that, as theological giant Francis Schaeffer often described, "man is the measure of all things."

As history has proven, when man is the measure of all things, all things can, and usually do, go horribly wrong. Consider, for example, the hundreds of millions killed under the relativist regimes of Hitler, Stalin, Mao, et al.

Indeed, train your children in "the way they should go, and

even when they are old they will not turn from it.” They will use God’s Word, the true measure of all things, as they endeavor to actually measure all things.

Funny thing, absolute truth. It’s absolute. It’s like a buoy pulled beneath the lake’s surface and fixed tight with rope. With time, and against the tide of Christ’s love, that rope—the lie of relativism—eventually rots. It snaps under its own weakness, hurling the buoy, truth, from cold darkness to warm sunlight.

If steeped in Scripture, children—even the prodigal child—may be pulled under and tied down for a time by relativism’s glittery allure. But when the relativist rope rots, fear not, for those who have been fastened to “the way, the truth and the life”—who is Christ—will burst back into the light.

And then what champions they will be.

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