

Who Has Your Child's Attention?

Children absorb information and influences from their environments. In this electronic, information-rich age, we should, more than ever before, be discriminating about what our children learn and where they learn it.

As a parent, it is up to you. You must decide, as far as it is in your power, what you want your children to hear, see and experience.

Watch what your children view on television. Many "children's" programs today feature ghosts, sorcery, witchcraft, violence or obscenity in some form or another. Yet for some children, the television has become a babysitter!

We can teach our children all we want when we are there with them, but if we put the television in front of them to make things easier for us, then we will undo all the good we have done. Professional communicators in the electronic media gear their programming to capture and hold our attention.

Satan skillfully uses the secular media in his diabolical plan to catch our children and involve them in things outside God's kingdom. He uses the mesmerizing power of television and other media to teach them a perspective and attitude about life that is different from the pure perspective of the Word.

When children watch gory, horrific scenes on television (or on other visual media), they lose their inner knowledge that the weird, the monstrous and the evil are inherently wrong. When we let our children feast on godless TV and video offerings, they will develop a taste for this new "food." They will lose the ability to discern the distasteful, the ugly, the disharmonious and the obscene, and they will lose the desire to avoid these things.

An early result of this ungodly diet of entertainment is that our children want to experience everything in a heightened sort of way. The music must be loud, the colors must be bright, and the action must move quickly. Everything must be experienced in an extreme way because this is what the media has fed into their lives.

Today we are reaping in our nations what we have sown in the past—violence, lewdness, drug abuse, pornography, profanity and vulgarity. Jeremiah 10:2 warns us, “Thus saith the Lord, ‘Learn not the way of the heathen’” (KJV).

Forming Godly Character We must not let ungodly teaching mold the minds of our seed. Our children are too impressionable, too vulnerable and too precious for us to subject them to the influence of the world’s humanistic and ruthless media.

Our children are being subtly and carefully schooled in humanist philosophy. Its doctrines include the teaching that parental guidance and rules hold only a secondary place. They teach the rights of the child to oppose adult scrutiny of his or her behavior.

The result is that the children acquire twisted, self-centered conceptions of “equal rights” (children can decide their destinies and paths just as freely as adults—or parents) and of the supremacy of individual choice and decision-making.

I have found that ungodly teachers are themselves unable to guide our children. Or they reject the opportunities to guide students by offering them a “choice” at crucial times in their academic, moral or vocational development.

Colossians 2:8 speaks directly to this type of subtle teaching, which can steal the minds and hearts of an entire generation: “Beware lest any man spoil you [and the next generation] through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments [principles] of the world, and not after Christ.”

The word “spoil” may be translated “to steal away the best that you have.” Vain philosophies and humanistic ideologies will captivate and destroy the best that we have—our children.

Psalms 1 offers concerned parents some good advice about controlling what their children listen to, the company they keep, whose advice they seek and how they spend their leisure time. “Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; but His delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night” (vv. 1-2, NKJV). These Scriptures provide a sweeping summary of negative, self-indulgent activities, as opposed to meditation, delight and total absorption in what pleases God.

Romans 16:19 says, “I want you to be wise in what is good, and simple concerning evil.” The word “simple” in this verse means “ignorant of, inexperienced in, or unsullied by” what is evil. It is a naive parent who believes the myth that a child needs to be exposed to evil in order to choose the good.

Our constant prayer, as parents, must be: “Father, help us to be wise in the formal and informal education of our righteous seed. Help us to carefully guard our children’s minds and to screen out, whenever possible, those influences that do not give life to our children.”

Teach the Word to the Young Isaiah the prophet rebuked “the drunkards of Ephraim” (Is. 28:1), who led the nation of Israel. Noting that their love for strong drink caused them to err in their vision and stumble in judgment, he mentioned the necessity of teaching God’s Word patiently and simply to the very young.

He wrote: “Whom will he teach knowledge? And whom will he make to understand the message? Those just weaned from milk? Those just drawn from the breasts? For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept. Line upon line, line upon line. Here a

little, there a little" (Is. 28:9-10).

Wise and righteous leaders can be raised up only through this type of thorough grounding in God's unchanging Word. We are not to neglect to teach our children.

The seemingly endless repetitions of elementary lessons lay the foundation for sound doctrine and the fear of the Lord that is so necessary for successful living. These things combine to form a spirit in our children that is naturally turned toward spiritual things, providing for a holy lifestyle and a rich spiritual inheritance.

Some time ago, while in Europe, I attended a baptism service conducted by a friend for the 19-year-old son of a minister. I had to wonder, Why had he waited so long?

I learned that the boy's parents, although they were ministers of the gospel, had not introduced their son to the scriptural truths about water baptism until his teens because they felt that "this decision-making activity should be postponed until the child was much older."

He was now 19. His parents and teachers had waited until this young man had reached a certain level of maturity to introduce some truths requiring individual decision-making. "In his own time, he would make his own decisions," I was told.

This sort of reasoning sounds very noble and sophisticated, but it is contrary to God's Word and to common experience as well. The spirit of a young child is naturally open to spiritual truths. His or her ability to grasp the things of God has little to do with stages of intellectual development or with the acquisition of social maturity.

The enemy wants to steal your righteous seed. Satan will do all in his power to steal your child's soul long before he is 18 or 19—the time when we expect him to have come to some developmental age of accountability. The enemy has no problem

advancing his particular worldviews or “religious” views on our children.

It’s time for us to stop apologizing for our beliefs and faith in Christ. Either we are right or we are not. It is time for us to take a stand and raise our children accordingly, without apology. We need to be alert to the tricks of the enemy.

The Word of God is straightforward and totally clear: “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it” (Prov. 22:6).

One of the meanings of “train” in the Hebrew is “to touch the palate.” This word may also be used to describe the technique used by mothers to train infants to appreciate and swallow solid food. Furthermore, the concept of “touching the palate” refers to the process of introducing new types of food to an infant—or “touching his palate” with what he needs.

Whatever food is first introduced to a baby and given faithfully to that child will often become that child’s food of choice. My baby granddaughter has not been fed very sweet foods. She is comfortable with the taste of vegetables and appears to be nauseated when fed highly seasoned foods.

Whatever a baby is constantly fed will often become that child’s favorite food in later years. For example, Italian or Mexican or Jamaican babies grow to love the foods that are associated with their culture.

The same principle is true in the spirit realm. Give your child a diet of spiritual milk in infancy, and you will ensure a lifelong preference for spiritual food!

Raising Righteous Offspring God spoke in detail about child-rearing through the psalmist in Psalm 92:13-15: “Those who are planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bear fruit in old age; they shall be fresh and flourishing, to declare that the Lord is upright;

He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in Him.”

This means that we are to plant our children in the Word of God. The problem with many children is that they are not rooted or planted anywhere.

Children who are planted in the house of the Lord will “flourish in the courts of God.” As we plant our children in the church or in a Christian school or in a biblically sound education program, they will flourish in our nations. When they are old, they will still show forth fruit—the fruit of the Spirit!

I urge you to plant your children in the house of the Lord and in the Word of God. If you do this, your children will literally “declare that the Lord is upright.”

God is looking for living testimonials of His glory and faithfulness. When our children are planted and rooted in God, they become living testimonies of His faithfulness in a faithless world. Their lifestyles reflect a prosperity and favor that is both supernatural and natural.

Proverbs 24:4 promotes acquiring godly knowledge and wisdom with an outstanding promise of reward: “By knowledge the rooms are filled with all precious and pleasant riches.”

Sometimes we selfishly fix our attention and affections on our efforts to preserve ourselves and our own seed but think little about being a testimony to God. I pray that our sons and daughters will rise up to be a testimony—not to any particular ministry or household but to God’s faithfulness!

God is vitally interested, for His own sake, in raising up living monuments in this godless world—monuments to His supernatural ability and to His desire as a heavenly Father to provide for all His children. His desire should be our desire as well.

Read a companion devotional.

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