

In search of...

Truth & Right

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Pagan Children

Every imperfect and normal family wants their children to turn out right. So, we establish goals for character development and try to create an environment where our children can mature. Church, school, sports teams, family relationships ... each of these provides a context where our children can learn to "love your neighbor as yourself." Unfortunately, our "good" objectives might have absolutely nothing to do with the gospel of Jesus Christ. And we inadvertently end up raising pagans instead of Christians.

Too many times, (Christian) parents have it as their goal to make their children good and moral. It is as if the entire purpose of their family's spiritual life is to shape their children into law-abiding citizens who stay out of trouble. The only problem with this goal is that it runs in stark contrast to what the Bible teaches. The gospel is not about making bad people moral, but about making dead people alive. And so, if we teach morality without teaching about the transforming power

of the Gospel and the necessity of a life fully surrendered to God's will, then we are raising moral pagans. And sadly, we end up teaching the wrong thing because we have the wrong objectives.

Consider for a moment, Veggie Tales. This is a wonderful cartoon. But, Veggie Tales creator, Phil Visser, in an interview stated that he had, "spent 10 years trying to convince kids to behave Christianly without actually teaching them Christianity." He admitted that he was not teaching Christianity, but morality. And, what I learned is that the "American Christian" is a combination of Protestant work ethic, the American dream and the Gospel. And, we have intertwined them so completely that most cannot tell them apart anymore. And so, the Gospel has become a gospel of following your dreams and being good so God will make all your dreams come true. Is this true? Is this how we really feel? Most do.

So, What is your objective?

Do you teach your children/grandchildren to be good because the Bible tells you to or do you teach them that we will never be good enough without Christ and the sacrifice he gave? Do you see the huge difference here? You see, one leads to moralism and self-righteousness, while the other leads to brokenness and how Christ is everything we need. Far too often, parents are encouraging moral behavior in their children so God will bless their pursuits. But, consider as parents and as grandparents, what is the key objective for your children and/or grandchildren? Is it their happiness and their accomplishments? Or, is it for your children and grandchildren to intimately know a God who has everything they need?

Well, if I have your curiosity started, let me suggest some things that we can do as parents and as grandparents to create an environment where God can get to work in our homes and it starts by asking yourself this question: "Do you want to raise good kids or fully devoted followers of Jesus?" Now, if you want your children to be happy and fit into society, there is nothing wrong with that. But, keep in mind that pursuing personal happiness and building up the kingdom of God is at complete opposites and no one can successfully follow both. We should realize that raising children should be done so that they find their part in God's agenda. If we don't, then we are raising children like the rest of the world with a little Christianity sprinkled in for good measure. So, set some parenting goals.

Second, remember that Christ did not come to make bad people good but to enable dead people to come to life. Allow them to seek Christ. Most people of the world who claim to be Christians are practicing a form of self-righteousness. So, be sure that your children are seeking to be Christ-like and to produce the fruit of the faith. Give them all the opportunities to become alive through the transforming that Paul speaks of in Romans 12.

You see, number three you must help your children and grandchildren to fall in love with Jesus. I don't mean, that you regularly bring them to church or how they were involved when they were growing up. Here's the problem: Too many of our children fall in love with the church (and all its activity) instead of falling in love with Jesus. They like the trips, the events and the group and the experiences they have. But they don't personally get to know Christ. We must teach our children to walk in a relationship with Him, where they listen to His voice and where they find Him leading their lives. This all happens because of love, not because of religion. And, the best way for your children and grandchildren to learn this is by watching you. And, they will learn what Christianity looks like by seeing your Christian life in action. And, if your life does not regularly reflect joy in your relationship with God, your children and grandchildren will have a hard time embracing God themselves.

Fourth in our consideration, is to make sure that everyone has an accurate view of the Gospel. Oftentimes, the youth

are told stories until they become adults instead of seeing the Gospel for what it really is. So many parents look at the Gospel and just push baptism and as long as they are baptized and have good morals, that is enough. This is a very incomplete view of the Gospel and when we treat the Gospel like this, as a check box to be marked off, blunt as this sounds, it produces many church-goers but not Jesus followers.

Fifth, by all means, teach your children and grandchildren to DAILY submit themselves to God. This is the ONE thing that is missing in most Christian homes. We miss the fundamental realization that our lives are no longer our own. We have been bought with a price. He died for me and so I will live for Him. Well, this may mean that parents help their children to lay down their wants in order to serve and bless the people they are around. It means we teach our children to ask, "How does God want to use your life for his purposes?" instead of asking, "What do you want to be when you grow up?" Do you see the huge significance?

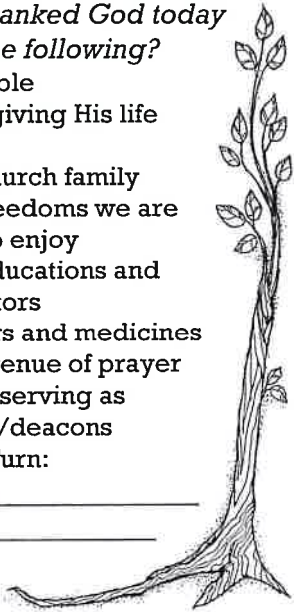
We need to remember, as Christians, that it is not about them. It is about Jesus and making His name great! And so, our homes must be an environment that personifies the love and compassion of Jesus. And, this is not easy. Your children and grandchildren will get it wrong. And, you as a parent or grandparent will also get it wrong. But, all our actions should be a reflection of God's love for us so that our children will have a lasting faith.

Robert Notgrass

**DEAR GOD,
I WANNA TAKE A
MINUTE. NOT TO ASK
FOR ANYTHING FROM
YOU, BUT SIMPLY TO
SAY THANK YOU,
FOR ALL I HAVE.**

*Have you thanked God today
for any of the following?*

- The Bible
- Jesus giving His life for us
- Our church family
- The freedoms we are able to enjoy
- Our educations and educators
- Doctors and medicines
- The avenue of prayer
- Those serving as elders/deacons
- Your Turn:



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Monthly Challenges

DIRECTIONS: Each first Sunday of the month, we will have challenges that you should attempt to complete by the end of the month. If we all, as members, complete these challenges, our church will grow in spirit and in number.

1) MEMORIZING BIBLE FACTS

2 Cor. 4:6 "For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

It is important for Christians to have knowledge of God's Word. This month, our challenge will be to memorize some facts from the Scriptures so we can recall them at a moment's notice. Here are some things we should commit to memory:

- a) **The twelve sons of Israel-** Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Issachar, Zebulun, Joseph, Benjamin
- b) **The apostles of Jesus-** Peter, Andrew, James, John, Philip, Thomas, Matthew, Bartholomew, James, Simon, Thaddaeus, Judas, Matthias, Paul
- c) **God's promises to Abraham-** The Land promise, Gen. 12:1; The National promise, Gen. 12:2; The Spiritual promise, Gen. 12:3
- c) **The organization of the Lord's Church-** Jesus is its founder & owner (Matt. 16:18) and head (Col. 1:18). As such there is no earthly headquarters (John 18:36). Local congregations are overseen by a plurality of elders (1 Pet. 5:1-3). Deacons are to serve and minister to the needs of the congregation, but do not have an authoritative role (1 Tim. 3:13).
- d) **The plan of salvation-** Believe, Heb. 11:6; Repent, 2 Pet. 3:9; Confess, Rom. 10:9; Immersion, Acts 22:16; Remain faithful, Rev. 2:10

2) USING YOUR BIBLE IN THE WORLD

Share the following verses with someone who does not attend this congregation at least twice this month:

2 Corinthians 5:6-10

6 "So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, **7** for we walk by faith, not by sight.

8 Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. **9** So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. **10** For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil."