

REFORMING OUR FAMILIES – REFORMING OUR NATION

“Therefore know that the Lord your God, He is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations of those who love Him and keep His Commandments.”
Deuteronomy 7:9

The Bible tells us that God seeks ***“godly offspring...”*** Malachi 2:15. The family is the basic building block of society. The battle for the family is in the very frontline of the World War of Worldviews.

Our Priority

As a parent, one of my greatest desires and priorities is to bring up my children ***“in the training and instruction of the Lord.”*** Ephesians 6:4. I am to ***“train a child in the way he should go...”*** Proverbs 22:6. My greatest concern is that my children grow up to love the Lord with all their heart, with all their soul, with all their mind, and with all their strength. I pray that my children will grow to love, to trust, obey, worship and serve God more consistently and more effectively than I have done.

As teachers we are to: ***“Tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord, His power and the wonders he has done...so that the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born, and they in turn will tell their children. Then they would put their trust in God and would not forget His deeds but would keep His Commandments. They would not be...stubborn and rebellious...whose hearts were not loyal to God, whose spirits were not faithful to Him.”*** Psalm 78:4-8

On the Day of Pentecost the Apostle Peter declared: ***“Repent and let everyone of you be baptised in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the Gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are far off, as many as the Lord your God will call.”*** Acts 2:37-39

“For the Lord is good; His mercy is everlasting, and His Truth endures to all generations.”
Psalm 100:5

As a father I am responsible to ensure that my sons and daughters are raised to become God-fearing fathers and mothers, who will in turn raise God-fearing sons and daughters, who will themselves become fathers and mothers who will love, honour, trust and obey God. We are to raise disciples who will raise other disciples, so that God’s generational blessings are passed down and the chain unbroken.

As parents and teachers our first priority is to ensure that our children will love God and His Word. Some of this can be taught, but most of it is caught. It is not enough for me to teach my children to love and honour God and His Word, it is vital that they see their parents and teachers love God and His Word. Our daily example is, in many ways, a more important teaching tool than our words. So whatever we teach our children, we need to model by example for them.

Identify the Threats

As we consider this vital priority of reforming our families in order to reform the nation, we need to first identify the threats to the family, to our churches and to our society.

In the Book of Judges we read: ***“Another generation grew up, who knew neither the Lord nor what He had done...they followed and worshipped various gods...they provoked the Lord to anger.”***

Who is raising your child? Has the TV become the family altar and the electronic baby sitter? Do you recognise the threat that the exploitative pornography industry poses to your child? All too many parents have allowed a Secular Humanist Department of Education, Planned Parenthood and Love-life to use their children as play dough in the experiments of social engineering.

“My people are destroyed from lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you as My priests; because you have ignored the Law of your God, I also will ignore your children.” Hosea 4:6

In rural Africa threats to children often slither, sting or bite. I, and other Frontline Fellowship missionaries, have found scorpions in our sleeping bags, and snakes in our houses. One of our fears is that our inquisitive and adventurous children will encounter deadly green mamba snakes while burrowing through tunnels and exploring in the bush.

In Sudan, parents have to warn their children not to touch unexploded bombs. Children walking to the well to fetch water in the Nuba Mountains, have been crippled by landmines, or even captured by Arab slave traders. Most of the Christian schools in Sudan have been bombed by the National Islamic Front government Air Force. At one Christian school, that I have ministered in, in the Nuba Mountains, in Kauda, nineteen children were killed and three crippled in just one aerial bombing raid.

Those kinds of threats to the lives, liberty and limbs of children are very visible and tangible. However, the more subtle threats to our children in the cities and towns are no less dangerous than those faced by Christians in Sudan. **Do you recognise the threats posed to your children?**

The South African Police Services (SAPS) Child Protection Unit (CPU) revealed in a booklet that they published *“Talk About Children at Risk”* that South Africa was *“fast becoming known as the premier sex tourism destination of the world, particularly because children’s bodies are plentiful and cheap. It is common knowledge that this country is a world leader in the spread of HIV/AIDS.”* Foreign paedophiles visit many parts of Africa in search of young bodies.

The CPU police report noted that: *“In 1996 the Films and Publications Act was passed, legalising pornography for the first time in the history of the country. This made it possible for child abusers, rapists and paedophiles to obtain all the materials they needed. Statistics tell the story as South African Police Service records show that **child rape increased...over 400%.**”*

This police report further stated that: *“Research with child sexual offenders reveals that **all** have used child pornography.”*

The US Attorney Generals Commission on Pornography concluded that: *“pornography plays a significant role in the occurrence of rape and child abuse...Pornography is the theory – rape is the practice. Pornography is a manual for rape and child abuse.”*

Our mothers, sisters, wives and daughters are precious and they deserve to be respected and protected. Any true man should be willing to do anything, even give his life, to protect his mother, sister, wife or daughter. Parents need to be prepared to protect their children from all threats.

There are other far more subtle threats to our children. The theory of *evolution* is often propagated by films, in many children’s books, and in state school textbooks. Evolution is an attempt to abort God retroactively. To kill God in the minds of children. Evolution destroys all meaning, purpose, direction, justice and hope in life: *“You came from nothing. You are going nowhere. Life is meaningless!”*

The Bible says: ***“The fool says in his heart, there is no God. They are corrupt, their deeds are vile; there is no one who does good.”*** Psalm 14:1

Secular Humanist education attempts to kill God by eradicating Him from the classroom and from the minds of the next generation. By eliminating the Bible as the basis for all knowledge, humanists

remove the very foundation of Truth. They prohibit the only objective standard by which reality can be evaluated.

“See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world, rather than on Christ.”
Colossians 2:8

Some time ago the principal of a state school showed me an official letter sent to every school in the country by the Minister of Education. It complained about the habit of too many teachers coming to school late and leaving early to go to shebeens and brothels, often returning drunk, or failing to return at all! The Minister of Education also warned against *“the prevalent practice”* of teachers forcing students to have sex with them! This was *“demeaning”* and *“an abuse of authority”* he claimed! That this child abuse was commonplace in government schools was a terrible indictment, but that the Department of Education was not firing and prosecuting these child abusers and rapists, was, if anything, more shocking.

By the time the average child graduates he or she will have spent 15,000 hours in school. **What values and world view will he or she have learnt during that time?**

Nearly 500 years ago the great German Reformer, Martin Luther, warned: *“I am much afraid that schools will prove to be wide gates to hell unless they diligently labour in explaining the Holy Scriptures, engraving them on the hearts of the youth. I advise no one to place his child where the Scriptures do not reign paramount. Every institution in which men are not constantly occupied with the Word of God must become corrupt.”*

Entertainment or Exploitation?

Do you approve of adultery and fornication? Would you enjoy watching criminals beat their victims senseless? Could you regard graphic violence or brutal murders entertaining? Would you want your children to learn from immoral or occultic teachers?

“Of course not!” we would be indignant at such a suggestion. Yet, how often don't we spend time unthinkingly watching such evils on TV? And how often do our children sit in front of the TV and watch such programmes? Have you noticed how many of the childrens' cartoons depict graphic violence, immorality and occultism?

Which of us would allow a stranger to come into our homes and reorganise our furniture? Yet daily we allow strangers, on the television or through magazines and music, to reorganise our thoughts. Surely none of us would tolerate a stranger coming into our home to teach or influence our children! Yet most parents allow strangers to be their single greatest influence on the mental and emotional development of their children – through TV!

One of the most serious threats to our children comes through the entertainment industry. Superficial, sensational and immoral material predominates in the modern entertainment industry and it is producing an increasingly superficial, selfish, mindless and immoral society. In households with television, the average child sees between 15,000 to 30,000 hours of television before leaving school (*Nielsen Media Research*). By the time he or she leaves school the average student will have seen up to 480,000 sexual acts or references to sex depicted on TV (*US News and World Report and Media Research Centre*).

During his high school years the average student listens to about 10,000 hours of music, much of it filled with sensual, immoral and occultic lyrics. The influence of parents and churches in the upbringing of most children today is declining at an alarming rate. The disintegration of many families, absentee parents, and a general absence of discipline have created a vacuum. Violent and immoral films and videos, throbbing and pulsating noise masquerading as music, and

pornographic magazines, MMS, "My Face", "Space Book", iPods and the Internet are filling the void in the aimless and meaningless lives of all too many young people.

"Since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, He gave them over to a depraved mind..." Romans 1:28

Researchers have observed that the negative effects of television addiction include: *"Increased passivity, an increased tendency to be satisfied with being a spectator, decreased capacity for communication, a disturbing loss of parental control over the upbringing of their children, a progressive loss of commitment to standards of right and wrong, and a conditioning to accept standards of behaviour they previously rejected."*

"Their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened." Romans 1:21

"They perished because they refused to love the Truth and so be saved...all will be condemned who have not believed the Truth but delighted in wickedness." 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12

What we see influences what we think, and what we think influences what we become, and what we do. Ideas have consequences. Actions flow from thought patterns. **What form of education is moulding your thought patterns?** What entertainment and news media is filling your mind?

"Be very careful, then, how you live – not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil." Ephesians 5:15-16

"Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things." Philippians 4:8

Mutilating Bodies and Rotting Minds

The selfishness and short-sightedness of modern society is also seen in litter-strewn, graffiti-vandalised communities. The filth, pollution and destruction of our environment, in which our children play and grow up, is also reflected in the self-mutilation and body piercing of a growing number of confused young people. Pierced noses and eyebrows, tongue studs and belly rings, along with acid rock, rap, hip-hop and rave should be a wake-up call to any parent or teacher. Incredibly, however, all too many parents seem oblivious to the sullen, self-destructive, rebellious attitudes that go along with this kind of body mutilating, mind rotting and soul destroying subculture.

So what is the solution?

The solution to all these threats are found in the Bible. Deuteronomy 6:2-9 is one of the most important passages in the Bible. It contains one of the most important statements in the Old Testament: ***"Hear, O Israel: 'The Lord our God, the Lord is one.'"*** It presents the most important command: ***"Love the Lord your God, with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength."*** And it emphasizes our first priority in obeying that command: ***"These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates."*** Deuteronomy 6:7-9

Make Disciples

As parents, we are responsible before God to disciple our children. From the time we wake up, to the time we go to sleep, the Word of God is to govern our conversation and our actions. At home,

or on the road, we are to talk about God's Word. We are to teach our children to memorise Scripture, especially the Ten Commandments. Everything we do with our hands or think with our minds is to be ruled by the Word of God. Our goal is to ensure that: ***"Your children and their children after them may fear the Lord your God as long as you live by keeping all His decrees and commands."*** Deuteronomy 6:2

Identifying Idolatry

This passage of Scripture is monumentally important. It comes straight after the restating of the Ten Commandments. In the Second Commandment, we are solemnly warned: ***"You shall not make for yourselves and idol in the form of anything...you shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the sin of the fathers to the third or fourth generation of those who hate Me, but showing love to thousands who love Me and keep My commandments."*** Deuteronomy 5:8-10

We must recognise the threat of idolatry. Rock idols, pop stars, Hollywood idols, sports idols, sex idols, even political idols are objects of reverence and obsessive adoration by all too many. The consequences of tolerating idolatry are devastating to the next generations.

Multigenerational Blessings

Yet, if we will be faithful in loving God and obeying His commandments, the result will be an unimaginable outpouring of God's blessings upon our children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren – ***"to a thousand generations."*** What we do now will affect eternity.

"Know therefore that the Lord your God is God; He is the Faithful God, keeping His Covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love Him and keep His commands." Deuteronomy 7:9

Are you doing everything possible to ensure that your children are learning to love and obey God?

Are you disciplining your children, or grandchildren, by instruction and by example?

Do you regularly pray for your children?

Do you regularly pray with your children?

Are you regularly reading the Scriptures to your children?

Are you training your children in Scripture memorisation?

"Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve...but as for Me and My household, we will serve the Lord." Joshua 24:15

Witchcraft Repackaged

Yet all around us we see children, even with Christian parents, who are growing up with more enthusiasm for Pokémon and Harry Potter than for the Lord Jesus and the Bible. ***"Another generation grew up, who knew neither the Lord nor what He had done..."***

We are commanded in Scripture: ***"Only be careful, and watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them slip from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your children and to their children after them."*** Deuteronomy 4:9

"Their children, who do not know this Law, must hear it and learn to fear the Lord your God..." Deuteronomy 31:13

Failures Never to Forget

The Bible includes many frightening examples of tragic failure by Christian leaders to adequately disciple and discipline their children in the ways of the Lord. The High Priest **Eli** failed to restrain his sons (who were priests) from dishonourable and disastrous conduct (1 Samuel 3:13). The children of the Prophet **Samuel** also behaved in a most disgraceful way, accepting bribes and perverting justice (1 Samuel 8:3).

King **David's** failure to discipline his rebellious sons, Amnon and Absalom, had the most disastrous consequences for the kingdom, even leading to civil war.

Of the stories of the Exodus from Egypt, and Israel's wandering in the wilderness, the Scriptures says: ***"These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us..."*** 1 Corinthians 10:11

A Word of Warning

The Scriptures also warn us of a time that will come when: ***"People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying it's power...always learning but never able to acknowledge the Truth."*** 2 Timothy 3:2-7

This description could so accurately be applied to much of what is going on in our society today.

Raising God Fearing Children

In the light of the overwhelming pressures which assail the family, and the relentless temptations which surround young people in the lust-saturated media of today, parents must take extraordinary steps to ensure that their children are raised in the love and the fear of the Lord. We need to lay solid foundations and good habits which will discipline, disciple, strengthen and prepare our children for lives of godliness and productive service in our congregations, communities and countries.

It is essential that we establish Bible-based homes. There are many ways we can do this. Firstly we can establish the principle of the **Bible before breakfast**. Encourage each member of the family to conduct their personal Devotions before breakfast, or read a passage of Scripture or a Devotional passage together as a family before breakfast.

As evening meals tend to be the most important time of fellowship in most families, it would be ideal to establish the principle of **Scripture before Supper**. This could include reading a chapter of the Psalms or Proverbs every night, or working through some kind of Devotional book. In our family at the moment we are working through C.H. Spurgeon's *Morning and Evening*.

Some families may prefer **Devotions after dinner**, which could be done around the meal table, in a bedroom, or in the lounge. The important thing is that Scripture, Psalms, Hymns and prayer should be a daily part of every Christian home. This does not mean that these family Devotions need to be long. In fact, particularly in families with small children, it is wise to keep family Devotions short, cheerful and focused. Children thrive on repetition, and so one could incorporate basic memorisation of the Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments and the Apostles Creed. Even three or four-year old children can memorise the Lord's Prayer and some basic Scriptures.

One of the most important times for any Christian family with children should be **Bible stories and prayer before bed**. This should be an enjoyable and vibrant time of fellowship, either cuddling up to you on the couch or on the bed, using colourful storybook pictures if possible and regularly asking questions and involving the younger children in these great stories from God's Word.

Taking Control Over Our Time

Now many parents will protest that they don't have the time for all this. Well, actually you will have the time - if you ruthlessly cut down on television and newspapers. In the light of eternity, what good have the multiplied hours spent each week in front of the TV set and pouring over your local scandal rags done for either you or your children? Cut out TV and you will have enough time to disciple your children.

A Christian Calendar

From the earliest, we need to teach our children a love and respect for God's Word, for His Church and for the Lord's Day. Children thrive on routine and rhythm. That is why ensuring that our calendars reflect our Faith is most important. Habits and routine are a vital part of discipleship. We make time for those things we deem important. God has decreed that we work six days and give the seventh to rest and worship. It was so important to God that He gave us His example to follow, by resting after He created the universe. As Christians, we should repent for allowing the Lord's Day to become so encroached upon and desecrated by shopping, sports and worldly entertainment.

Sir Winston Churchill said: *"Sunday is a Divine and priceless institution, the necessary pause in the national life. It is the birth right of every British subject, our responsibility, privilege and duty to hand on to posterity."*

The great British abolitionist and Member of Parliament William Wilberforce wrote: *"There is nothing in which I recommend you to be more strictly resolute than in keeping the Sabbath holy; and by this I mean, not only abstaining that day from all unbecoming sports and common business, but from time consuming and frivolous conversation, which often leads to a sad waste of this precious Day."*

The Reformer of Geneva, John Calvin, declared: *"The city will be safe if God be truly and devoutly worshipped, and this is attested by the sanctification of the Sabbath..."*

Respecting Authority

It is essential that we teach our children respect for authority. Starting with their parents, and then for grandparents, uncles and aunts, authority in the church and in society. Respect for God, respect for people and respect for property are foundational to Christian civilisation.

Bible Memorisation

Scripture memorisation is a vital tool in discipleship. ***"How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to Your Word...I have hidden Your Word in My heart that I might not sin against You."*** Psalm 119:9-11

"Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path." Psalm 119:105

Building On the Rock

If we build our children's lives upon the Rock of God's Word, then they will stand in the storms of life that most surely will assail them (Matthew 7:24-27).

These principles of: respect for authority, for the Lord's Day and for the Lord's House, love for God's Word, the Bible, and for God's people; feeding our children's hearts and minds with examples of excellence from Scripture and Christian history; ensuring that they receive the Bible before breakfast, Scripture before supper and are sent to bed only after Bible stories and prayer, with much of the Scriptures stored up in their hearts through Scripture memorisation will ensure that... ***"When he is old, he will not turn from it."*** Proverbs 22:6

Daily Discipleship

Let us disciple our children by word and deed, by our lives and by our lips, by education and by example – consistently.

“Let the Word of Christ dwell in your heart richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom and as you sing Psalms, Hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, whether in word or in deed, do it all in the Name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.” Colossians 3:16-17

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