

A HOUSE FOR GOD



BUILDING A
KINGDOM-DRIVEN
FAMILY

ANDREA SCHWARTZ

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*To my husband, Ford,
who relentlessly encourages me
to boldly pursue the Kingdom of God*

Other books by Andrea Schwartz

LESSONS LEARNED FROM YEARS OF HOMESCHOOLING

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TEACH ME WHILE MY HEART IS TENDER

Read Aloud Stories of Repentance and Forgiveness

FAMILY MATTERS

Read Aloud Stories of Responsibility and Self-Discipline



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FOREWORD

by Martin G. Selbrede

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to Christian outreach and ministry. The Body of Christ fits itself to the needs and burdens at hand by matching the appropriate gifts to the specific problems confronting it on an ever-shifting battlefield. Vigorous application of the Word of God begins when (1) needs are perceived, (2) then translated into opportunities to apply the whole counsel of God (whether explicitly or by good and necessary inference), (3) the dimensions of the cultural war are properly gauged and assessed, and (4) a stand for truth is made. That stand may occasionally be a courageous one, requiring clarity and forceful delivery. Sometimes the stand being taken must be a cautious one, in acknowledgment that further study of Scripture may shed additional light upon matters of ongoing controversy.

Anyone who rides into battle informed by these values does a service for the Kingdom of God. They represent their King's crown rights with faithfulness. They serve His people with undivided hearts. Among these are men and women "who build the old waste places ... raising the foundations of many generations" (Isa. 58:12). This by no means guarantees their work to be infallible, but it does mean that to the extent their labors conform to Scripture, they are true ministers of reconciliation, "for God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself" (2 Cor. 5:18). And *that* is a worthy task for His ambassadors despite the fact that all see through a glass darkly.

We are to bring as much light to bear as we can in a dark world, “for the darkness is passing away, and the True Light is shining already” (I John 2:8).

One result of bringing “all things in subjection under His feet” (Heb. 2:8) is that the crooked places in our lives are made straight once again. “The entering in of Thy Word giveth light” (Psa. 119:130), not only light from darkness but also healing from spiritual illness. When God’s people are properly equipped with the *whole* counsel of God, not merely a list of talking points, they become more than conquerors through Christ. Then the Word of God becomes like a hammer (Jer. 23:29), one that crushes the problems that oppose our growth into fine powder.

When the faith is taught as a system, rather than piecemeal, our hearts and minds can anchor themselves upon the immovable truths that His Word frames within us. Invincible steel beams and girders, not a frail scaffold of balsa wood, are what we need for our spiritual foundation in today’s climate of cultural warfare. The only weapons that are effectual in such a battle are the spiritual ones, and the only wise counselors are those who direct us to the proper armory. This is a battle that cannot be fought with fleshly means. It must be fought with the Truth.

Among the most principled warriors in today’s battles is Andrea Schwartz. Her writings are textbook examples of St. Paul’s maxim, “taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ” (2 Cor. 10:5). And while this in itself makes her work worthy of praise, her ministry is just as important for the fruit it continues to bear in actual lives. Her articles are “good words in due season” (Prov. 15:23) that speak to issues that few Christian theologians ever get around to addressing, especially from within the framework of the *whole* counsel of God. Further, she doesn’t just hide behind her pen (as if a ministry can be reduced to a mere blog) but she conducts actual mentoring with real women using some of the most world-view-strengthening resources available to the serious Christian.

Consequently, she has set her sights rather high. In so doing, she has not made things easy on herself. Moreover, by pressing the entire Word of God as the framework for healing lives and building our culture, she has limited the appeal of her ministry to those who recognize that modern evangelicalism “heals the wound of God’s people slightly” (Jer. 6:14; 8:11). Her mentoring program doesn’t involve leading women through some shallow paperbacks, but through a massive 800-page hardback book about the application of God’s law to society. This raises eyebrows, of course, but as our Lord said so succinctly, “wisdom is justified of her children” (Luke 7:35). The results speak for themselves: these Christian women have gained a life foundation, and skills in applying Scripture, that are second to none.

This same mindset informs Andrea’s choice of topics as a noted Christian essayist on the topics of homeschooling, childrearing, family, gender roles, and more. The anthology you have in your hands is representative of the various ways in which Andrea develops the consequences of applying our faith without compromise. The essays are written with one aim in mind: the edification of the reader. Even when working through a controversial topic, this goal remains central.

But to extend the implications of Scripture into the home through the wife and mother of that home necessarily translates us from a backdrop of peace to a cultural war zone. One cannot take a stand without gaining the attention of detractors desiring to promote a competing agenda. Some hostility toward Andrea’s work comes from expected quarters (*viz.*, from those who promote humanism), but some of it also comes from within the household of faith.

For those who seek to “loosen even the least of these commandments and teach men so” (Matt. 5:19), the answer to their criticisms must be sought in exegetical work done by trained theologians who respect the Word of God and submit to the Scriptures. But other critics have agreed with Andrea on the *general* principle of applying

the whole counsel of God, but disagreed with her *specific application* of this principle. The matter of this “loyal opposition” (the name of one of the essays herein, but on a different topic) is worth examining.

The fact of the matter is, the renewed push to apply *all* of Scripture to our lives is fairly new: such an emphasis is in its infancy (which is remarkable in itself considering all the Bible has to say about “living by *every* word that proceedeth from the mouth of God”). This means that for nearly two centuries, the doctrinal pendulum in Christendom has swung quite far in the direction of accommodating humanism.

When someone therefore tries to swing the pendulum back in the direction of acknowledging the Bible’s authority, there is always the risk of overshooting the target. But in the effort to swing the pendulum back to its proper position, it is better to overshoot the target a bit and correct course later than to do nothing. Left to itself, the pendulum will only drift farther into compromise because cultural forces are always centrifugal, always pointed away from God’s standard. Somebody needed to start the pendulum heading back in the right direction. Sanctified scholarship will later help us position the pendulum more precisely.

We don’t need to criticize the one who reversed the pendulum simply because in one or two areas the pendulum swung back a bit too far. We should be grateful that God sent *anyone* to reverse the decline in the application of Scripture. As Warfield noted in the early twentieth century, spiritual life would one day need to arise from outside the bounds of the institutional church. We would do well, then, to call the critics to do better than merely shooting the messenger. Theologians committed to the Scriptures need to *grapple with one another* to set each doctrinal pendulum into the most biblically sound position they can determine.

As for the faithful messenger, Andrea Schwartz, who worked for years in ditches that no theologians would frequent, the critics should extend their deepest gratitude. She took hold of the pendu-

lum because it was itself a victim of theological neglect by a lukewarm church. For theologians to disparage her zeal reflects badly only upon themselves.

Most importantly, moving the massive pendulums that govern the social engines of mankind closer to where God has ordained their resting point can only serve to heal what is crooked in our culture, in our families, and in ourselves. Few Christians have gone as far as Andrea Schwartz has in these respects, nor been so sacrificial and gracious in sharing the whole counsel of God with those who would most benefit by it, those otherwise bypassed by the modern church.

I agree with many of Andrea's positions, and in those cases where I differ, I am still in strong agreement with her goals. Hers is a book that will make any reader—male or female—think, and to think about issues they've not likely given much thought to. As such, this volume is the death knell to spiritual complacency, renewing our love for our King and His Word upon its every page. For these reasons and more, I am honored to remand this volume into your hands.



1

TEACHING WHAT IS GOOD

*But as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine. **Older men** are to be sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, in love, and in steadfastness. **Older women** likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good, and so train the **young women** to love their husbands and **children**, to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own **husbands**, that the word of God may not be reviled. Likewise, urge the **younger men** to be self-controlled. Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works, and in your teaching show integrity, dignity, and sound speech that cannot be condemned, so that an **opponent** may be put to shame, having nothing evil to say about us. **Bondservants** are to be submissive to their own **masters** in everything; they are to be well-pleasing, not argumentative, not pilfering, but showing all good faith, so that in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior. (Titus 2:1–10 ESV)*

At some point each of us fits the description of one of the persons mentioned in Titus 2. We are either needing instruction or giving

instruction, and sometimes both at the same time. The prerequisite to fulfilling each of these roles in a righteous manner is an understanding of the law of God and having a humble spirit. Paul's words presuppose that a covenant community is a necessity in the life of a believer. And, of course, it matters what doctrine holds this community together.

Today the word mentoring is thrown around quite a lot both in Christian and non-Christian circles. It is important to be clear what makes for a godly mentoring relationship and what the goals are for deeming one as successful. First and foremost, there must be true fellowship.

Fellowship is only properly understood in terms of a common bond to Christ. Without this bond, it isn't accurate to categorize all relationships among people as fellowship. If the unifying factor of our Savior (our "Fellow") is missing, it is more correct to classify these sorts of relationships as *associations*. In our day, not all who profess belief in the King of kings have an allegiance and faithfulness to every word that proceeds out of His mouth (the law). That is why Christians often have less "fellowship" with folks they attend church with for years, but attend a conference miles away from their home and have almost "instant fellowship" with other attendees.

For a mentoring relationship (for that is what Titus 2 suggests) to be beneficial to both parties, each person must have an allegiance to the law-word of God and be attentive to the leading of the Holy Spirit. Mentorship is a two-way street. In the same way that a homeschooling teacher benefits as much, if not more, from instructing her students, a mentor's involvement with mentees enhances and deepens her own faith. And the comparison to teaching is not an idle one, as the older woman/younger woman relationship involves not only instruction, but care and concern. The words of Titus 2 are specific applications of other passages that instruct the Body of Christ to care for one another (Gal. 6:10; Matt. 25:31–46, etc.), and

caution must be taken by those who would place themselves in the role of teacher or counselor.

Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God. Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing. (James 1:19–25)

Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness. (James 3:1)

To be clear, these relationships are meant to encourage biblical self-discipline and self-government on the part of the younger person in the relationship. Thus, those who would step up to the plate to act as mentors, must be grounded in God’s law-word, and outwardly demonstrate such by their fruits, so as to enhance the Body of Christ rather than undermine or corrupt it.

Initiating a Mentoring Relationship

As I’ve assumed the “older woman” role with women I’ve mentored, there were times that I was approached and asked formally to be a mentor. In other cases, the relationship was established by regular interactions where a woman would ask for my advice. At other

times, I saw a need and inserted myself into a person's life so as to test the waters to see if the woman was open to having a mentor.

I have established ground-rules in these relationships. First and foremost, I only want to deal with women who are serious about applying the faith to all aspects of their lives. I am not interested in dilettantes who merely want to hear themselves talk and use me as a sounding board to gripe about those they think are the source of their problem.

This is not to say that I avoid women who have serious issues in their lives. I relish the opportunity to assist, but only if I sense willingness on the part of the mentee to learn and apply what has been learned. Instead of attempting to "fix" the situation (a mistake I made early on), I use our times of conversation to listen and teach what the Word of God has to say about circumstances surrounding the problem(s). Sometimes rather than approach the issue head-on, I will have a woman read a particular article, essay, or book that will give her a context for her circumstance. Weeks or months may go by before we interact again. In the interim, I expect her to address some of the surface issues that we've talked about in order to eventually deal with the deeper ones.

There comes a point in the relationship when, in addition to being mentor and mentee, we establish a genuine friendship. It is a friendship that is mutually beneficial in that I often learn from her and put into perspective how many of my earlier choices and decisions as a young mother were ill-advised and at times self-serving. I am not shy in sharing my own shortcomings and how I was helped by those who mentored me.

Advice for Mentoring

Reading and digesting Rushdoony's first volume of *Institutes of Biblical Law*¹ is a must when it comes to being a Titus 2 Mentor.

1 While not every woman who seeks counsel from me ends up reading and

This allows the counselor to avoid bringing in personal biases and attitudes when hearing a woman explain her circumstances. The goal must always be to enable her to be more like Christ rather than more like me. The pride factor must be acknowledged. Who of us doesn't want to be looked up to as an expert, full of wisdom? Learning to actively listen and ask appropriate questions, and patiently listening for the answers, is the method by which the mentor helps another discern sin—either by her or against her. Even though there are times and situations that may not have an obvious solution, helping another bear her burden and helping her see the Lord's hand in a particular trial is a vital aspect of mentoring. The goal is to: *Show myself in all respects to be a model of good works, and in my teaching show integrity, dignity, and sound speech that cannot be condemned* (vv. 7–8).

Advice for Being Mentored

You should assess the spiritual maturity of the person you are considering as a potential mentor. You will be baring your soul to this person, often revealing personal issues and private concerns. Spend time observing her behavior, her speech, and the fruits of her efforts, such as how her children behave and how she interacts with her husband, etc. Take note of her commitment to Scripture and gain assurance that her *modus operandi* is to steer you toward God's Word. Make sure that she will not indulge in "pity parties" with you.

digesting volume 1 of Rushdoony's *Institutes*, those who do experience a richer understanding of God's Word and are better able to assume the role of a Titus 2 mentor in the future. For those who find the sheer size of the book intimidating, I encourage them to take it a section at a time, while making use of the research portion of the Chalcedon website (chalcedon.edu/research/) and listen to corresponding lectures for each section.

Some Personal Examples

During my early years in the faith, I had some bad experiences with mentor-types and some exceptionally good experiences as well. There were those who wanted to remake me into their image. Those interactions were often stifling and my husband was adamant that I discontinue those relationships. On the other hand, when I was regularly interacting with someone of genuine wisdom, he was eager for me to spend time discussing problems I faced.

#1

Within the first year or so after my conversion I began a mentoring relationship with an older woman at an evangelical church. Having lost my mother while in high school, this was my first experience with someone much older than I taking a particular interest in me. It was awkward but nice. She didn't shy away from the circumstances of my life prior to my coming to faith in Christ. I came to understand that my husband and I were of special interest to her because of some activities her son was involved with.

Immediately she put me on her program of daily devotions, her Bible study program, and Scripture memorization. Since her husband was not a church-goer, and her son had left the faith, her advice and guidance was much more about transforming me into the sort of persons they were not. Any time I failed to attend all church functions, and keep up with my "quiet time," and doing my memorizing, I felt as though I was failing Christ. My husband could see that I was changing, but not in a way that was genuine to me. After some intense discussion between the two of us, he helped me realize that

this woman was attempting to remake me in *her* image, rather than allow me to hear from the Holy Spirit.

#2

Years later, when my family became close with the Rushdoony family, Mrs. Rushdoony (Dorothy) assumed the role of my spiritual mother (mentor). At the time I had two children. It was a very organic process that blossomed as our friendship developed. In many ways, she became like a grandmother to my children. I knew this was a woman who would “tell it to me straight” and had as her concern that the law-word of God would be honored and applied in her life and mine.

Dorothy was not one to engage in “pity parties” or anything of the sort. I knew that I should come to her only after I had consulted the Scriptures and prayed about any adverse circumstance I found myself in. She never took sides—that is, other than the Lord’s side—and would help me work my way through whatever was troubling me. I still remember one of the most pointed conversations I ever had with her (or anyone else for that matter) as I bemoaned the fact that I was failing to get pregnant after my husband and I had determined to have another child. Her response: “What makes you think that you create eternal life?”

She correctly spotted that I was feeling sorry for myself and was eager to have someone sympathize with me. But she cared too much for me to let me off the hook so easily. You see, Dorothy had wanted to experience pregnancy all her life and had accepted the reality that it wasn’t God’s plan for her. Rather than bemoan her own situation, she was concerned to return me to the

straight and narrow road of being content in whatever circumstance I found myself in.

What a delight it was when I called Dorothy early on the morning of June 2, 1992, to let her know that a baby girl named after her had been added to our family.

Out in the Open

Married women should not hide their involvement in a mentoring relationship from their husbands. The mentoring relationship is meant to be compatible with a woman's marriage since the duty of a Titus 2 woman is: *to teach what is good, and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled* (vv. 3–5).

That said, there are times when conflicts within a marriage can make it difficult for a woman seeking help to announce to her husband she is seeking counsel. It is here where the mentor must tread carefully, so as *not* to disrupt the order of the family while providing guidance to assist in repairing the breach. When at all possible, I attempt to use hospitality to develop a relationship between us and the couple. Just having a younger couple witness the interactions of those married (in our case for almost four decades) and hear stories of how we've dealt with inevitable differences of opinion helps tremendously to open up fruitful communication between them.

In a like way, mentoring unmarried women is not designed to usurp parental responsibility. A mentor is not a secret relationship and is not meant to replace a person's mother or father should they still be alive. This is important because many a family breach can be rectified with the help of a mentor. The command to honor one's parents has more to do with the calling of mother than the personality of one's mother and an "older woman" can often help a woman re-establish a good relationship with her mom.

Sowing and Reaping

After years of parenting, many of us acknowledge that if we were given the chance to do things differently with one or more of our children, we would. Often, one or more of our children stray from or abandon the faith of the family and this can be a source of continual grief. But, since God has called us to minister to the Body of Christ, there are other “sons and daughters” who can benefit from the lessons we have learned and we can make a valuable contribution in their lives. Along the way, God, in His mercy, may well have a mentor/friend come into the lives of our prodigal ones and help them by assisting and counseling them back to faithfulness: *For here the saying holds true, “One sows and another reaps”* (John 4:37).

In the end, Titus 2 is really a call to community, a community that builds each other up while dealing with the real dynamics which occur when not fully sanctified people interact with each other. It is a good reminder that interactions among brothers and sisters in the faith are to reflect that they share the same Father and that the sacrifice of His Son (our Brother) unites us even when personality clashes and differences of opinion occur between us. This perspective directs us to “act like family”—a godly family—with each other. And, the reason is given to us:

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.

*Declare these things; exhort and rebuke with all authority.
Let no one disregard you. (Titus 2:11–15)*



2

CHEAPENING THE FAITH

In my almost six decades of life, I've had to deal with sickness, deaths of loved ones and friends, economic ups and downs, and my share of heartache (both given and received). When I came to the understanding of my total inability to save myself, was converted, and embraced the Christian faith, I gravitated towards authors and mentors who took seriously the call to disciple the nations. Through the years, I have had the honor of knowing committed missionaries who, despite the hardship and peril of their callings, embraced the Great Commission with vigor. There have been many heroes of the faith in the history of Christendom, and these men and women serving in dark places are among them.

Recently while dining with a visiting African missionary, I was asked to direct him to a good, local Christian bookstore. Sadly, there was not one to recommend. I was embarrassed at what passes for American Christianity, knowing that to a man who has been ambushed, threatened, and imprisoned for his faith, the offerings at the local store would appear as shallow as they are.

Today a catalog from the store I could not recommend arrived in my mailbox. This thirty-two-page offering instructed me on its cover to *Share the Joy*. A quick perusal confirmed why this store was not what my missionary friend would find useful. In addition to the lukewarm fare of broadly evangelical "theological" and

“doctrinal” books, there were pages advertising romance novels, knick-knacks, Bible editions of board games, and the newest offering in vegetables teaching God’s Word to children, *The League of Incredible Vegetables*. Is this where those who wish to learn more about the Christian faith are supposed to shop? And we wonder why Christians in Africa and China feel the need to come and evangelize the West!

Here are some of their new Bible offerings and descriptions with my emphasis added:

- *The Tiara Bible*: Embellished with *glitter and sparkling “jewels,”* this Bible includes a 24-page full-color “*princess*” insert, maps, time lines and other special helps developed for girls aged 7–11.
- *The Sequin Bible*: With larger easy to read type and the full *International Children’s Bible translation text*, girls aged 7–11 will love this Bible embellished with sequins and glitter!
- *My Beautiful Princess Bibles*: The popular *New Living Translation* with special notes and features for little girls aged 3 and up! Over 500 highlighted verses, 24 full-color pages with *love letters from God* and beautiful prayers, plus favorite females of the Bible highlight this unique “*princess*” themed Bible.
- *The Voice Bible*: The *new faithful dynamic equivalent translation* that *reads like a story* with all the truth and wisdom of God’s Word brought to life through compelling narratives, poetry, and teaching. A *collaborative work* of more than 120 scholars, pastors, writers, musicians, poets, and artists. *The Voice recaptures* the passion, grit, humor and beauty of Scripture!

I could list more, but you get the point. There are “Bibles” designed for every consumer type. Will reading these “Bibles” and

other “Christian” offerings create Christians who will change their culture? Will children raised on this fare grow up to be strong enough to go overseas to minister God’s Word in places of great hardship, and maybe martyrdom?

The majority of professing Christians continue to use the state schools for their children’s education, and then hand them off to children’s church and Sunday school classes to learn the faith, so it is little wonder that we don’t see much evidence of American Christians changing culture. We’ve taught them that Christianity is a “feel good” religion and neglected to teach them of the sacrifice of martyrs throughout the centuries of Christendom. We also fail to let them learn of the hardships of missionaries who are currently serving Christ in difficult circumstances.

It is time for a change: no more happy stuffed animals sticking their smiling faces out of the ark; no more sentimental morality stories that never mention Jesus Christ; no more enticing children with vegetable-people or glittery trinkets to teach them about their Creator and Savior; and no more marketing ploys that communicate that *gimmicks* are needed to engage people in the life-changing effect of the Word of God.



3

THE FAMILY'S ROLE IN HEALTH CARE

*Thou shalt therefore keep the commandments, and the statutes, and the judgments, which I command thee this day, to do them. Wherefore it shall come to pass, if ye hearken to these judgments, and keep, and do them, that the Lord thy God shall keep unto thee the covenant and the mercy which he sware unto thy fathers: And he will love thee, and bless thee, and multiply thee: he will also bless the fruit of thy womb, and the fruit of thy land, thy corn, and thy wine, and thine oil, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep, in the land which he sware unto thy fathers to give thee. Thou shalt be blessed above all people: there shall not be male or female barren among you, or among your cattle. **And the Lord will take away from thee all sickness, and will put none of the evil diseases of Egypt, which thou knowest, upon thee; but will lay them upon all them that hate thee.** (Deuteronomy 7:11–15, emphasis added)*

The Bible is clear that the family and the church (Levites) comprise the God-ordained jurisdiction for all matters encompassed by the term health. The modern concept of socialized medicine is

anathema to Scripture. Because pastors refuse to teach the whole counsel of God, and families do not exercise their God-given roles, God's people are suffering from diseases and disabilities that might possibly be prevented if God's teachings on diet and health were obeyed. These very important areas have been outsourced from God's ordained spheres of authority and handed over to (at worst) the ungodly or (at least) a paradigm created by the ungodly. As Rushdoony notes, the results are not good.

Because the family is the womb of life, it is also the locale of basic government. It is man's first church and state, his first school and vocation, the first economic realm, and more. The further away from the family that man's basic government is placed, the more dangerous it becomes. Sometimes the church, and certainly the modern state, seeks to arrogate to itself powers which properly belong to the family. The result is the impoverishment of society.¹

Just as the Christian family has made great strides in home education, so, too, the family must regain its proper role in matters relating to health and wellness. As this occurs, the wife/mother, under the auspices of her husband, will serve as the watchman on the wall, being the gateway by which information, practice and habits are examined, taught, and put into practice within the framework of a biblical worldview.

The Health Manager of the Family

Proverbs 31:27 states that the worthy woman looks well to the ways of her household. Much has been written about a woman's preparation for marriage regarding sexual purity and marital submission.

¹ R. J. Rushdoony, *The Institutes of Biblical Law, Volume 3: The Intent of the Law* (Vallecito, CA: Ross House Books, 1999), 110.

But little time is devoted to the preparation needed to assume the responsibilities of looking well to the ways of her household, especially in matters of health. 1 Corinthians 6:19–20 states:

Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

The woman of the house is in the best position to teach her children how to glorify God in their bodies by providing the theological and practical framework of this mandate. Books and good counsel from reliable practitioners on the subject of health and nutrition are a must. So too is regular contact and communication with other wives and mothers utilizing the Titus 2 mentoring model.² Unless we reclaim this area, we will enshrine the state as the determiner of what is best for our children nutritionally and medically and lay the foundation for even more statist tyranny in our families.³

The goal of the state is control and the restriction of change to the state. Instead of the individual or family as the source of innovation, change, and entrepreneurship, we then have the state in control of all these things. The state, however, when it becomes this powerful, becomes a vast bureaucracy, and it gives us a frozen, pre-arranged world, not a future.

The family is the true well-spring of the future, not the state, and woman is the key to it.⁴

2 For more information, see www.titus2mentoring.com

3 Regardless of one's view on the propriety of vaccinations, to cede to the state the decision of what is appropriate in the way of medicine and disease prevention from parents for their children is a direct assault on God's order and the institution of the family.

4 R. J. Rushdoony, *The Roots of Reconstruction* (Vallecito, CA: Ross House Books, 1991), 218.

Dietary Laws of the Bible

As the family seeks to honor God by applying His law-word over every area of life and thought, we need to reexamine the biblical dietary laws. We also need to look at the rationale given by believers who no longer observe the dietary laws as outlined in the first five books of the Bible. Rushdoony, well aware that the account in Acts 10 has been used to negate these laws, says:

To what extent are the Mosaic dietary laws still valid for us? Acts 10 is commonly cited as abolishing the old dietary restrictions. There is no reason for this opinion. Peter's vision did not instruct him to eat pork, dogs, cats, or the like: it prepared him for the coming of Cornelius' servants. The Gentiles were to be received into the kingdom: "What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common" (Acts 10:15). Peter did not see the meaning of the vision as a permission to eat forbidden foods. Rather, he said, "Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company or come unto one of another nation; but God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean" (Acts 10:28). There is no evidence in the chapter that the vision had anything to do with diet; it did have everything to do with the Great Commission and the admission of Gentiles into the kingdom

[T]he dietary laws are not legally binding on us, but they do provide us with a principle of operation. The apostles, as they moved into a Gentile world, did not allow diet to be a barrier between them and the Gentiles. If they were served pork or shrimp, they ate it. On their own, they maintained the kosher rules as God's rules for health and life . . . With reference to our salvation, the laws of diet have no significance, although Phariseeism gave it such a significance (Gal. 2:16).

With reference to our health, the rules of diet are still valid rules

Our observance of these dietary rules should never be to place a barrier between ourselves and other men but for our health and prosperity in Christ.⁵

Food for Thought

As the Apostles' Creed states, God is the maker of Heaven and earth. He knows what is best for His creation. Exodus, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy outline a diet sanctioned by God and beneficial to us. These laws are the laws of *life*, and include, among other things, the prohibition of eating unclean foods, blood, and fat.⁶

The health benefits from following the dietary laws are well-documented. As in all areas of obedience, there is a greater principle at stake:

The dietary laws are reminders that we are creatures, if we need reminding. They tell us that the totality of our lives is to be governed by God and His Word. It is the tempter who tells man, "Ye shall be as God" (Gen. 3:5), and it is the essence of sin to revolt against creatureliness. Those whose spirituality lifts them above the dietary laws are too spiritual for the God of the Bible.

God gives us guidelines to make life simpler and better for us, but we like to complicate everything and then whine about it. If you don't like the dietary laws, perhaps you don't like the God who gave them.⁷

5 R. J. Rushdoony, *The Institutes of Biblical Law* (Phillipsburg, PA: The Craig Press, 1973), 301–302.

6 For a more complete discussion on the topics of diet, hygiene, and quarantine, see Rushdoony's commentaries on the Pentateuch.

7 R. J. Rushdoony, *The Institutes of Biblical Law, Volume 3: The Intent of the Law* (Vallecito, CA: Ross House Books, 1999), 86.

Jordan Rubin, in his book *The Maker's Diet*, acknowledges the reality that God's laws are always for the benefit of his people.

God gave His moral law and His dietary guidelines to the Jews at the same time. The moral guidelines preserved spiritual purity, social order, family stability, and community prosperity. These proven "laws" were used by America's founders, who established the Constitution on proven principles from the commandments God gave the Israelites thousands of years ago.

Just as the moral guidelines preserved the culture of Israel, so the dietary guidelines preserved their physical health. God's dietary guidelines are not some narrow-minded religious exercise meant to set apart certain people from their neighbors. They were given by a loving God to save His people from physical devastation long before scientific principles of hygiene, viral transmission, bacterial infection, or molecular cell physiology were understood!⁸

The Scriptures speak to more than diet when it comes to health. Leviticus 15:1–33 gives specific instructions regarding hygiene and quarantine for illness. Today most would consider these private concerns. Yet in God's economy, these are matters for obedience and covenantal living. Applying these laws provided near-immunity to the Jews from plagues and epidemics over the centuries.⁹ Obedience not only serves the health of man, but acknowledges God's preeminence in all things.

If modern man wants to eradicate illness and disease, he would do well to consult his Creator. Reconstructing nutrition and lifestyle choices is a precursor to health.

Sickness and death exist because this is a fallen world. They are *in origin* the results of sin; as we contract ailments, these may or

⁸ Jordan S. Rubin, *The Maker's Diet* (Lake Mary, FL: Siloam, 2004), 35.

⁹ R. J. Rushdoony, *Leviticus* (Vallecito, CA: Ross House Books, 2005), 149.

may not be the results of sin. A disease contracted can be a consequence of sin, as are the majority of cases of sexually transmitted diseases. A cold or the flu *may* be a result of carelessness, and it may not be; we live in a world which, being fallen, exposes us to some hazards. Thus, particular instances of sickness cannot be *per se* defined as immoral; to do so is immoral. What must be stressed is that holiness requires the wholeness of person which sets forth the total health of man.

*The quarantined persons are not, if godly, separated from God; they are separated from the covenant community in order to preserve the general health and the working ability of society.*¹⁰

We must restore the original jurisdictions over medicine and health. Modern medicine does not bear much resemblance to the biblical models for caring for the poor and the sick. We've lost much because we've abandoned the truth that God's law is operative over every area of life and thought. By failing to learn and apply God's law, we have forfeited dominion in the area of health.

*[W]hen the state is maximized, Biblical law is minimized. God's law provides us with government and with means of government in all spheres of life: personal, financial, educational, ecclesiastical, vocational, societal, and also in the civil realm. Because government in these areas is preempted by the modern state, God's law is minimized, and in large part declared to be obsolete.*¹¹

The fact that recent studies have shown that obedience to God's dietary laws strengthens our immunities should not blind us to the fact that though this may be a new "discovery,"

¹⁰ Ibid., 151.

¹¹ Ibid., 152.

*it is also an affirmation of God's law, namely, that obedience gives health, prosperity, and fertility.*¹²

Dr. Mom

Modern medicine has lost much hard-won knowledge by dismissing as old wives' tales what women knew and shared with each other. With women now seeking careers outside the home, this transmission of information and apprenticeship training were all but lost.¹³ The people of God need to return to a family-centered model in the governance of life in society. A more biblically-informed model would be for pre-married women to serve as a volunteer army assisting fellow believers in childbirth, helping mothers who are ill care for their children, and learning the use of herbs, essential oils, and specific nutritional paradigms. Exposure to such opportunities prepares young women to soon bless their own future families.

For many years, my role as a wife included caring for my husband's elderly mother as I saw her through two cataract surgeries, two mastectomies, two hip replacements, and congestive heart failure. Helping my mother-in-law enjoy her remaining days (she was seventy-six when we met and eighty-nine when she died) involved understanding her ailments and conditions and helping her avoid hospital stays and unnecessary procedures. For this I made ample use of my father's old-time doctor wisdom.

She was once experiencing shortness of breath because of congestive heart failure. I was advised to call an ambulance to take her to the ER. Neither my mother-in-law nor I welcomed this option, so I called my father. He told me to get her out of her bed and into

¹² Ibid., 142.

¹³ Blogs and websites have been useful ways for women to share their acquired knowledge. Among such are: The Common Scents Mom at: yoursacredcalling.com/commonscentismom/; Renée DeGroot's www.culinaryreformation.com; www.foodrenegade.com; and www.thenourishinggourmet.com.

a rocking chair. He said that position would relieve her symptoms. And it did! I have shared that advice with many over the years. How many more pearls of wisdom remain unknown because we think ourselves insufficiently competent to apply such strategies at home?

Finding a Balance

Dr. Jo Loomis,¹⁴ who holds a doctorate in nursing practice, believes that basic training in first aid, along with a good working knowledge of disease prevention practices (e.g., regular hand washing, getting sufficient sleep, and utilizing the practice of quarantine for contagion) are fundamental to running a household well. She advises mothers to study current accepted practices of medicine (traditional and alternative), reading from proponents and detractors alike to build a foundation for determining what advice to follow or when to seek out other opinions (Prov. 11:4). Raw knowledge is easily acquired, but understanding and discernment to evaluate perspectives and protocols come with experience. A huge component is finding health care practitioners who can be used as sounding boards and counselors.

Loomis recommends resources that provide a balanced, common sense approach for parents in their interactions with pediatricians,¹⁵ thereby avoiding the two extremes of adoring doctors as gods or distrusting them as subversives.

¹⁴ Dr. Jo Loomis is a long-time friend and colleague. Along with her doctorate in nursing practice, she is a registered nurse and a certified nurse practitioner. She is an associate professor and the coordinator of the Family Nurse Practitioner Program at the University of San Francisco.

¹⁵ An example of such is Robert W. Mendelsohn, M.D., *How to Raise a Healthy Child ... In Spite of Your Doctor* (Chicago: Contemporary Books, Inc., 1987). Speaking from years of experience as a pediatrician, he warns parents about viewing their pediatrician as a god, but also notes that they are not, usually, without compassion or a desire to truly help their patients.

Select a practitioner who is a good listener, willing to allocate ample time for consultations, offering alternatives to treatment, discussing pros and cons of each treatment, and acknowledging the role and responsibility of individuals and parents in making decisions. Loomis warns against putting too much credence in information acquired “through the internet” without good discernment to temper it, e.g., just because something is “natural” does not necessarily mean it cannot have detrimental effects or adversely interact with other medications or supplements.

By teaching herself and her family good habits of health and well-being as well as diet, the mother can identify situations requiring further intervention, making her interactions with carefully selected physicians more fruitful.

My family had a pediatrician who approached our relationship as partners when it came to my children’s healthcare. He would always encourage me to call him, even at two in the morning: “Call me. I can most likely give you a course of action or settle your concerns. Then we can both go back to sleep.” He once said that we could put my son on antibiotics. I asked him how long before we’d see improvement. “About two weeks.” And without antibiotics? “About fourteen days.” He was informing me that taking an antibiotic wouldn’t necessarily change the course of the illness, providing me with enough information to make the best decision for my child.

Conclusion

Man was created by God and given a mandate or command to subdue the earth and to exercise dominion over it. This meant ruling, trampling down or possessing and mastering every aspect of this world, religiously, scientifically, agriculturally, and in every other way. Man was created in

*God's image to develop God's creation, the earth, by perfecting or completing it under God.*¹⁶

Health matters because we have been placed on earth to serve the Lord God and further His Kingdom. While we acknowledge that illnesses, aches, and pains are realities of a not-fully sanctified life, we should do all within our power to remain healthy and *in the game*, so that we may provide and care for our families while ministering in Christian charity to those around us.

¹⁶ R. J. Rushdoony, *Salvation and Godly Rule* (Vallecito, CA: Ross House Books, [1983] 2004), 45.



4

HOMESCHOOLING DADS SHOULD RECONSIDER THEIR DECISION

There is nothing sadder than the look on a homeschooling mother's face when she reports that her days as a home-educator are over, and her children are going to public school. With a look somewhere between grief and horror she explains that her husband wants it that way. Now, don't get me wrong; I realize that homeschooling often means a one-income household and that means the financial support rests solely on the shoulders of the dads. But, the reasons are not always financial. Whatever their "good" reasons are, they seem oblivious to how profoundly this change-of-course compromises their wives.

I am not disputing the fact that wives are to submit to their husbands in the Lord. But, I wonder how many husbands realize that they are delivering a potentially fatal blow to their marriages. In many cases, were I to snap a picture of their wives and place a caption underneath, the caption would read, "I feel betrayed. I feel trapped. I feel abandoned."

Why should there be such a grave reaction to the decision to educate the way the majority of students in America are schooled? Because for mothers who have dedicated themselves to their children's education, homeschooling is much more than a nice choice.

It is a lifestyle. It is the means by which they exercise their callings under God, to transmit Christian culture to their children.

This is a call for other homeschooling dads (whether casual acquaintances or from local homeschooling groups) to intercede and speak directly to these men. This is a call for the pulpits of America to stop appeasing the enemies of God and preach that only Christian education (not just on Sundays or Wednesday evenings) must be the norm for Christians, not the exception. These forlorn women need your help and so do their children.

I've observed the results on children when they go from the homeschooling environment (complete with co-ops and extra curricula activities) to a public school setting. Here are some observations:

- Their enthusiasm for learning wanes.
- They learn that knowing/offering the correct answers and interacting with their teachers alienates them from their “peers.”
- They become “socialized” and tend to look adults in the eye less and less.
- They begin to deceive when it comes to assignments and grades.
- Their family is no longer a top priority.
- They become alienated from their sisters and brothers.
- They begin to doubt the validity of the Christian faith.

So, to these myopic fathers who only see the bottom line financially, or are tired of having to explain to others why they've homeschooled, I urge you to look at your wife and see what is happening to her. I urge you to reconsider your decision.



5

HOW I JUDGED A TATTOOED MOTHER AND THEN HAD TO EAT MY WORDS

There's nothing quite like witnessing the power of God in someone's life. And there's nothing quite like being on the receiving end of having to "eat my words" (actually they were thoughts) along with my preconceived notions and attitudes! I incorrectly judged a book by its cover and gained a better understanding of the passage:

Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven—as her great love has shown. But whoever has been forgiven little loves little. (Luke 7:47)

I recently spoke at a homeschool conference, and while in the exhibit hall, I observed a slender, petite woman covered in tattoos on her back and front. She walked about looking at various curriculum offerings completely oblivious to outside opinions—especially mine—and I assumed that her "fashion statement" was all about showing off her bodily artwork. I made all sorts of mental value judgments about her.

How She Won Me Over

The next morning, I spoke at my workshop “Equipping Parents for Kingdom Advancement,” which is a talk I give about the necessity for parents to know God’s law and be able to apply it. As I looked up at my audience, there was the tattooed woman sitting bright-eyed and attentive.

She was not shy. She asked insightful questions and was nodding in agreement to much of what I had to say. I could tell my attitude was changing from criticism to curiosity. After all, nothing wins over a speaker like an attentive audience member!

As with most of my talks, I made book suggestions for my listeners, and to my amazement, while I was talking with other workshop attendees, my tattooed listener headed straight for the Chaldeon book table and purchased Rushdoony’s *Institutes of Biblical Law* and *The Philosophy of the Christian Curriculum*—both were books I suggested in my workshop. Wow!

What We Need to Do and How We Need to Do It!

When I returned to the booth, she was still there and gave me a gigantic hug. She thanked me for my inspiring and practical workshop and explained that she and her husband had recently watched Colin Gunn’s documentary, *Indoctrination*, and decided to obey God by removing their children from public school! They came to this conference to find out *what they needed to do and how to do it*.

She told me her story about how God had delivered her from a past of alcohol and drug abuse. That, of course, is always delightful to hear, but I was struck at how she kept saying over and over that the Lord was in their decision to homeschool and that He had directed them to this conference to show them what to do and how to do it. Her look of anticipation, resolve, and hope was an inspiration to me!

I've witnessed many people over the years experience the discovery of obedience to God through Christian education, but this woman was especially memorable because I realized that God truly does look upon those whose hearts and minds are turned towards Him regardless of what they look like.

For the eyes of the Lord range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him.

(2 Chronicles 16:9, NIV)



6

CHILDREN IN CHURCH

I have been seeing a number of Facebook posts about children in church. One, entitled “Parents, Please Remove your Crying Children!” was a clever device that equated disliking children’s disruption of worship to having a disdain for children in general. The author concluded the piece with these words:

So, the next time you hear a baby crying in a church service (or other public meeting), if you catch yourself wishing the parents would remove their child from the room, ask God to forgive you and change your heart about those wonderful little creations of His. You might even offer to hold that little one for a few minutes and give those parents a little unexpected blessing!

The problem with this perspective is that it pits one group in church against another. Does anyone really want me to rejoice when a child is being disobedient, defiant, and rebellious in church week after week and the parent(s) are obviously not making much progress in correcting and training them? Would the same standard hold for a person who was hard-of-hearing repeatedly yelling out during the sermon, “Please speak up because I can’t hear you”? Or, how about someone who has bad allergies and sneezes and

coughs during the service to the point that it is hard for anyone to hear?

I make these analogies because these issues do not center on loving or hating children. Anyone who knows me knows I enjoy being around children and relish the opportunity to do so. Just because some parents won't (or don't know how) to train their children how to make it through a worship service, does not mean that those who notice and are frustrated about it week after week hate children.

The issue is one of courtesy and care for others. Romans 12:10 tells us that we should outdo one another in showing honor to each other. In the case of a worship service, especially during the preaching of God's Word, parents with children who are crying and disruptive should have a plan in place to deal with it. Otherwise, the disruptive child is given precedence over the pastor who has prepared his sermon to exhort his congregation. Along with the competition from the little ones, the preacher is often trying to be heard over the "shhhh's" and struggles that are going on in the pew.

If we truly want children to worship alongside their parents (and I believe we should want this) training must take place during the week. Parents must give the little ones practice sitting quietly and obeying when they are told to refrain from making noise. There are very good reasons to do this, quite apart from a church worship service.

Many will remember the scene in the movie *The Sound of Music* when the Von Trapp family is hiding in the abbey's graveyard and the Nazis are looking for them. The littlest child says to her step-mother, "I'm scared! Should we sing about our favorite things?" to which she is told that she must keep very quiet. I wonder how many of the little ones (and I'm not just talking about infants) would be able to obey without fussing or questioning when it really matters? The importance of training children to listen the first time (rather than counting to two or five or sixty-six) is as much for their

protection as it is for preventing any one's potential discomfort. Part of the promise of the Fifth Commandment is a long life for honoring one's parents. It's never too early to teach this to children.

Finally, let me acknowledge that the situation of a family with little ones getting to church on time, trying to figure out a nap and feeding schedule, and making sure everyone is dressed etc., is very real. (Been there and done that.) Mothers should not have to bear the burden of dealing with noisy children on their own. Fathers and older siblings should consider it their responsibility, too. There are many things that can be put into place (strollers in the back to soothe a tired child; incentives offered by the elders to acknowledge children who are well behaved during the service; other members of the church body willing to be with crying children so that parents can hear the sermon, etc.). This is not an insurmountable problem. After all, we're bigger than they are and hopefully smarter and more creative, too.

It doesn't take a village to raise a child, but it does take the family of God to heed and practice the command of Romans 12:10. In doing so, we'll see a harmony of interests instead of a conflict of interests.



7

IS THE STATE GETTING INTO THE HOMESCHOOLING BUSINESS?

I realized it was “back to school” season when in today’s mail there was an advertisement for a tuition-free virtual public school, serving kindergarten through the twelfth grade. The text heralded the following:

At _____, your child will receive a high-quality, accredited public school education from home—tuition-free! Our comprehensive virtual school, serving kindergarten through the 12th grade, is a leader in online learning in California.

Utilizing a curriculum that meets rigorous state education standards, students at _____ have the flexibility to learn at home with a uniquely individualized learning program that features:

- Talented state-certified teachers who pride themselves on their availability to their students*
- Engaging, interactive technology that makes learning fun*

- *An award-winning curriculum developed by leading educational experts*
- *Parental involvement and social opportunities*

Our dedicated teachers, experienced in online learning, will work with you to create a personalized learning plan that focuses on your child's strengths and needs, to foster a love of learning.

Testimonials followed from both a parent and student, along with the expected happy-people photos. Upcoming in-person or parent-led sessions were listed on the pamphlet. The notice on the front warned, “Enroll now to ensure your spot for fall 2013!”

Don't be snuckered into thinking that the benevolent state has you and your children's interests in mind, and that you will be “safer” in a state-approved homeschooling situation. Not only is it *not* free (taxpayers foot the bill), but this is the means by which your local school district is willing to bargain to get the federal funds that accompany education. If they can't get the funds for having your child's body all the time, they will settle for less by offering perks with parents and then split the difference.

The “Child Catcher” from *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* lured children with candy. The modern child catchers entice parents with the offer of free books, computers, and “expert” instruction. The end is the same for both: captivity!



8

READING COMPREHENSION

Early on in my homeschooling career, I had an ISP leader who was interested in helping parents become better teachers for their children. He pointed out to us rookies that the two most important areas that were essential to learning were listening comprehension, followed by reading comprehension. He explained that this is how we receive most of the information in life and that these are the areas in need of development.

That makes perfect sense to me, but what continues *not* to make sense is the artificial way that reading comprehension is measured by standardized testing. This was made clear to me when speaking recently to a concerned mom. She said that her son who had begun reading at the age of four, no longer liked to read. He hadn't been doing well on his "timed comprehension tests" and she was beginning to think that he might have some sort of learning disability, and needed to be tested.

Now, I ask you: When other than during a standardized test is anyone required to read a selection (taken out of context) and expected to come up with "right" answers out of a multiple choice grouping? This is hardly a skill that translates into real life. While it purports to identify those who are reading well and those who aren't, I submit it actually produces non-thinking individuals who aren't given time to stop and consider the veracity of what they read

and whether or not there are other possible answers than the ones provided.

An example:

I randomly picked the following paragraph from Chapter 6 of the children's book *Bell Mountain*. This is the sort of paragraph that might appear in a reading comprehension test.

In all his life Jack had never been more than a mile or two away from his hometown and had never been taught about maps and geography. He could see the mountain from his own backyard. All he had to do, he thought, was to keep on walking toward it until he got there, and then somehow climb it. He thought it might take a day or two to get there and maybe another day for the climb. Had he been left alone to act on such notions, he surely would have come to grief.

Next come the questions, devised by some educator to determine if a student understands the material. Keep in mind that the selection itself poses more questions than it does answers. Nevertheless, the questions might read something like this:

1. *What does it mean to come to grief?*
 - a) *arrive at a destination*
 - b) *become sad*
 - c) *become worried*
 - d) *become discouraged*

2. *What notions might cause Jack to come to grief?*
 - a) *hunger*
 - b) *lack of sleep*
 - c) *walking to the mountain*
 - d) *inability to read a map*

3. *How long did Jack think it would take to climb the mountain?*

- a) *3 days*
- b) *1 day*
- c) *2 days*
- d) *none of the above*

Consider the anxiety this sort of exercise may produce. The student has a limited amount of time to “get the right answer.” Since the selection is taken out of context, it is likely that the student will begin to imagine things about Jack and where he lives etc. But, the student doesn’t have time for this. He must attempt to figure out what “they” want. (This is the proverbial “they” who seem to show up everywhere!) So, now, without context he has to conclude things that may or may not be accurate according to the actual story—just according to the test author. Is it any wonder that some children end up with a dislike for reading? Is it any wonder that grades end up being the real end of learning rather than comprehension?

My point isn’t that all children are unable to tackle such questions. Some can, and do quite well at it. But the question remains: Are they learning how to understand what they read and interact with the material, or are they being conditioned to accept limited choices, some of which aren’t good ones? (I challenge you to ask others to take this reading test. You will discover that people who can read quite well might have differing answers—answers they will debate given the opportunity. Sadly, most test takers don’t even get a chance to justify their answers.)

Standardized testing is used to measure the effectiveness of teaching and the acquisition of knowledge. Since it would be difficult for a teacher in a classroom setting to take time with all students to ascertain their reading comprehension, this method overlooks the fact that some very intelligent and imaginative children will recoil

against these constraints. That is why one-on-one learning is the most effective and productive way to teach and to learn.

The homeschooling setting, with the parent/teacher having first-hand knowledge and experience with her child can find more personalized ways to determine how well her student comprehends the material. Additionally, she can pose questions for thought and discussion that don't have to be crammed into a multiple choice format and can discover if there are real impediments in the child's ability to learn.

Just as the high incidence of dyslexia and ADD can be attributed to failing to teach children how to read with a dedicated phonetic approach, so, too, can the use of such artificial measurements to determine comprehension. Unfortunately, few parents properly assign the cause of their children's problems and end up having them labeled with a disability or, worse yet, put on drugs.

Expose children to worthwhile material—either reading to them aloud or providing them with good books to read themselves—and you will see their desire to learn become greater rather than less. Could it be that homeschooling is so effective (despite the fact that few homeschooling moms have a teaching credential) precisely because it doesn't have to rely on contrived means to discover if children are learning? That will become obvious as they hunger and thirst for more.



9

THE CHALLENGES OF FAMILY LIFE

When we come to faith in Christ, many of us hope that the practice of living out the faith will be a simple one. After all, the bottom line to Christian living is to fear God and keep His commandments (Ecc. 12:13). However, since our sinful natures have to be acknowledged by us and renewed by the Holy Spirit, we must work to become separated unto God—to become holy. Eventually, we come to understand that the process of our sanctification does not happen on auto-pilot, but must be lived out in a deliberate, self-conscious manner, without relying on gimmicks or simplistic formulas.

I recall the first time this was driven home to me. I was new to the faith and I was being discipled by a somewhat overbearing woman who made it seem as though all I had to do was memorize enough Bible verses and I would be safe from problems and trouble.

One day I decided to walk, rather than drive, from my apartment to the grocery store across the street. This turned out to be a bad idea because I purchased more than I could easily carry. I exited the store with two paper grocery bags full of ingredients for our spaghetti dinner. As I was approaching the home-stretch, my arms got weary and I became concerned that either my arms or the bags were going to give out. So, applying what had been drilled into me, I repeated with confidence, “I can do all things through Christ

who strengthens me.” Immediately, and I mean immediately, one grocery bag gave out and splatterings of spaghetti sauce, complete with glass fragments, were everywhere! “But,” I said to myself, “I thought I could call upon the name of the Lord and be safe!”

My understanding of the faith has matured and deepened since that excursion. I now understand that God is not impressed with my incantations or a help-on-demand attitude. Living out the faith in the course of day-to-day living is not something we can do mindlessly, nor can we assume because we are in the Family of God, we get a free pass, exempting us from working out our salvation with fear and trembling (Phil. 2:12).

I have discovered in the course of raising a family myself and witnessing others do so, that often we look for a formula—a sure-fire method—to produce good, respectable children who will become good, respectable adults. We take verses such as “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it,” (Prov. 22:6) to mean that all we need to do is institute a plan of Bible memorization, catechism instruction, biblically-sound textbooks, and all will be well. We incorrectly assume that since we have embraced a “correct” theology that family life can go on auto-pilot. Then, when problems arise (which they will), so, too, does disillusionment and despair.

The answer to these difficulties is not to abandon the Scriptures or to conclude that because child-rearing involves sinful people raising sinful people it is best to remain childless. Rather, we should reaffirm that since the family is God’s primary institution in society, we *must* embrace the full-orbed faith if our families are to impact the culture for the Crown Rights of Jesus Christ. Family life is not an end unto itself, but the primary vehicle to further the Kingdom of God on earth.

Big Families Start as Small Ones

A new family begins when a man and a woman commit to a covenantal relationship in marriage. How these two people structure their relationship will have everything to do with how they embrace and welcome the addition of new members.¹ A biblically orthodox pattern of living needs to be established. Spending time with families with older children from one's own extended family or, in their absence, members of the church family, will help provide realistic expectations when the first child arrives on the scene.

The single most important aspect of preparing for family expansion is to concentrate on learning, understanding and applying the law of God. By incorporating the ultimate Standard of life into one's thinking (economically, socially, nutritionally, etc.), instead of "making it up as you go along," parents can be confident that their decisions and practices aren't arbitrary and will receive blessings from God.

Investing time with a first-born is essential to this process. Too many mothers think leaving their child's early years in the hands of paid providers (no matter how good they may be) is an acceptable choice. When a woman's first child arrives on the scene, along with the normal care and nurturing which is true for all children, an additional emphasis needs to be given as this first child will end up being a de facto leader to younger brothers and sisters. The patterns that are established with a first child, who will be the first to reach maturity, are important because any younger children will use this older sibling as a litmus test for what is "really" allowed as opposed to what are the "stated" rules and regulations of the household.

This child (boy or girl) is to be groomed to assist the mother as more children are added to the family. One of the ways to bring

¹ For example: by learning to live within the means of the husband's income, the wife prepares herself to not have to be in the workplace and remain the mainstay in the rearing of her children. This will put the family on a better footing.

about a unified family is to establish with older children the duties and responsibilities attendant with their position within the family. Birth order may seem accidental to them, but God has a distinct purpose in how He configures families. Making a point to deputize the older children apprentices them for the time they will manage a household of their own. It also gives them an accurate picture of where their loyalties should lie.

The Eyes of the Children Are upon You

It is not uncommon in Christian homeschooling circles to see large families with seven or even ten children. Psalm 127 makes it clear that children are an inheritance from the Lord and a man is blessed with a quiver-full. But that doesn't mean that there aren't problems and situations that are unique to families with many children.

Since the world currently doesn't view children as the blessings they are, big families are often ridiculed and criticized as being irresponsible and careless in an already over-populated world. When it is pointed out that most of these families are self-supporting and not relying on government assistance, the argument is raised that the mother cannot possibly give each child the love and attention it needs. This is a ridiculous argument from a society that has no problem with murdering babies in the womb, or shipping their little ones off to day care, and then to public school (complete with before- and after-school care). Why should anyone believe that these critics have any idea of what nurture, love and discipleship entail?

Large families have the unique opportunity to impart to their youngest members the understanding that they are part of a larger entity while remaining a unique individual with duties and responsibilities in both roles. This involves understanding what according to Rushdoony is a basic question of philosophy—the One and the Many:

Is unity or plurality, the one or the many, the basic fact of life, the ultimate truth about being? If unity is the real-

ity, and the basic nature of reality, then oneness and unity must gain priority over individualism, particulars, or the many. If the many, or plurality, best describes ultimate reality, then the unit cannot gain priority over the many; then state, church, and society are subordinate to the will of the citizen, the believer, and of man in particular. If the one is ultimate, then individuals are sacrificed to the group. If the many be ultimate, then unity is sacrificed to the will of many, and anarchy prevails.²

It is much harder to live successfully as a spoiled brat when a child is one among many in a family. This does not mean that the children in large families are all carbon-copies of their parents or each other. Each comes to the family with a sinful nature that needs to be acknowledged and addressed. As biblical standards are conveyed to each new member, each unique individual is trained in the ways of God and given the chance to learn how to interact peaceably with others.

Large families do have particular issues and problems that aren't faced by smaller families. For example, it is not uncommon for older children to be approaching adulthood as new members are being added to the family. If the parents have not prepared themselves to deal with the new circumstances older children will experience and face, family growing-pains can be debilitating.

Mom may be dealing with the nursing and diaper stage (a stage she is familiar with) just as older ones are learning to drive, finding employment, or attending college (a stage which she isn't familiar with as a parent, but only previously as a daughter). In a fragmented society with extended family often too far away to assist the mother as her older ones are ready to spread their wings, the mother may experience overload and find it difficult to keep juggling all her responsibilities.³

2 R. J. Rushdoony, *The One and the Many* (Vallecito, CA: Ross House Books, [1971] 2007), 2.

3 Depending on the age of the mother, she also may be in the midst of peri-

Conflicts arise that require revisiting lessons that were the hallmark of the Christian education at the core of their homeschool. Parents should welcome these opportunities to re-establish biblical guidelines for themselves and their older children as such tensions arise. This process is played out in front of an attentive audience in large families. Most parents realize that *how* they deal with these realities will become precedent-setting as the younger children grow. The parents' desire to do things in an orthodox, biblical manner is enhanced by the knowledge that the younger ones are paying close attention to how their parents are handling the matter.

Those who thought that their “formula” would prevent problems realize that their families are not immune to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. They discover that the world, the flesh, and the devil are factors that need to be acknowledged and dealt with. It isn't that the parents have failed; it is just that the time of testing has arrived.

I am not making a case for small families. Small families do not mean fewer problems. These problems will arise regardless of family size. But large families have to work these problems out in front of many younger siblings. This is all the more reason for parents to be grounded with biblical solutions.

It Takes a Family to Raise a Family

The foolish humanistic mantra that it takes a village to raise a family has a kernel of truth. Mom and dad cannot tackle this task successfully on their own, for the task is overwhelming without

menopause, the years preceding menopause. If she has not given ample attention to her health and well-being, an adrenal-depleted mother can have additional pressures when her older children are spreading their wings. This is another good reason for mothers to delegate, delegate, delegate when it comes to running their households. The Proverbs 31 woman is not a slave, but an efficient, godly manager who “looks well to the ways of her household,” without being its slave.

assistance. Instead of a village, it takes a *family* to raise a family. That is why the biblical model is the trustee family.⁴

A biblical trustee family is a generational model that is concerned with the health, education, and welfare of its members in all aspects of life. Far from the atomistic model of just the parents and their children, all members of this extended family have a vested interest in the health and well-being of each other. The trustee family has a stake in how children are raised. This is a foreign concept in a day where the prevailing secular model is that young people “do their time” in the family environment until they can leave home and create a life for themselves. This is a recipe for moral failure and future economic woes for the “grown” child, and feeds our statist system by weakening the family. R. J. Rushdoony comments:

Atomistic individualism, because it denies all power to the supernatural, and rebels against the family, claims for itself both sovereignty and power. But, because the atomistic individual is anarchistic only with reference to God’s law, and family law, his need for a framework of reference is concentrated on men at large—collective man, the state. The state becomes his “resonance box,” his stage. Atomistic man calls the totalitarian state into existence as his source of morality, religion, sovereignty, and power. The atomistic individualism of every era, whether in antiquity, the Renaissance, or in the twentieth century, has called into being the omnivorous power of the state as its destroyer, for social atomism is inescapably suicidal. By affirming the totally immanent one, the individual, it creates the greater concentration of immanence and oneness, the totalitarian state.⁵

4 See my book *The Biblical Trustee Family* (Vallecito, CA: Chalcedon/Ross House Books, 2010) and various articles by R. J. Rushdoony on the subject. Go to www.chalcedon.edu and do a search on “trustee family.”

5 R. J. Rushdoony, *The One and the Many*, 249.

Raising and rearing children is an investment in effort, time, and financial resources. Biblically speaking, the investment of feeding, clothing, sheltering, training, and educating offspring should bring a better return than heartache and separation. This is where the trustee model is so important to embrace. Family life is not an end unto itself; it is the foundational means by which the Kingdom of God is pursued. That is the reason that when deciding upon a spouse, you must understand you are not just marrying a person, you are marrying a family. The question must be: Is it a covenantal family that will provide the necessary support (spiritually, emotionally, and physically), and also shares the desire to see God's will be done on earth as it is in heaven?

Where a family chooses to live should take into consideration the kind of familial support that will be available, be it their own family or the family of God. Making use of grandparents, aunts and uncles, friends with older children are all a plus if the people who help share the burden share your perspective on the Faith and its practice.

Clearing the Hurdles

You cannot ultimately determine whether or not your children's names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life, but you can inculcate in them the realities of living according to God's Word and the resultant blessings and curses that will follow from their decisions. Parents should focus their attention on preparing their children for the days of testing, using church life, academic pursuits, the arts, sports, and other activities as the milieu in which these lessons are taught.

Having a vibrant understanding of *how* the law of God applies across various disciplines and issues will prepare them to address the challenges their future children will face as they expand their circle outside of family life. When the inevitable "butting heads" occurs, it is wise to make use of the extended family (both biological and the family of God) to act as buffers to assist in unjamming

the loggerheads. It is not a “given” that there will be generational conflict. This is a humanistic device intended to weaken the family, the culture, and set the stage for tyranny.

There is a formula that works in families, but it cannot be reduced to isolated Bible verses or wholesome curriculum choices. Raising a family is a top-down transmittal of biblical law (orthodoxy and orthopraxy) and will have a resultant, positive impact in a humanistic culture. Rushdoony explains:

Meanwhile, the economic, political, religious, ecological, and educational crises of the modern world are increasing. Every age has its problems, and many eras have had more difficult problems than the modern age, but the test is the ability of a culture to cope with its problems. The modern age has lost even one of the most elementary abilities of any culture, namely, the ability to discipline its children and maintain its authority. Without this elementary ability, a culture is very soon dead. The modern age gives every evidence of approaching death. This is a cause, not for dismay, but for hope. The death of modernity makes possible the birth of a new culture, and such an event is always, however turbulent, an exciting and challenging venture. The dying culture loses its will to live. A new culture, grounded in a new faith, restores that will to live even under very adverse circumstances.⁶

Rushdoony’s optimism is not ill-founded. As Christians continue to have large families and concentrate their efforts on establishing a realistic approach to transmitting the faith to their children, we will see strongholds being pulled down and the vain imaginations of those who hate the Lord cast aside (2 Cor. 10:4). Now that is a formula for success!

6 Ibid. 389–390.



10

HUNGER GAMES

In my travels as a “circuit-riding” homeschooling mentor and lecturer, I have observed that the institution of the family, by God’s design, is like a well-made machine. Nothing that man has devised serves the function of nurture and care better than this building block of society. The family, however, just like a finely engineered car, needs a tune-up now and again. Failing to do the necessary upkeep will produce a God-ordained institution that functions poorly. There are telling signs that adjustments are in order.

The enthusiasm that usually accompanies the decision to homeschool can over time deteriorate into a sea of overload, self-doubt, and guilt. If the major goal is to do a better job than the local private or public school (grades, test scores, etc.), it won’t be long before the mother/teacher begins to burn out and become convinced she has embarked on a losing proposition. A homeschool will *never* run like a day school. In fact, it cannot and should not. Instead of divorcing the acquisition of knowledge and wisdom from the day-to-day activities of family life, homeschooling allows for individualized learning and maturity to occur *within* the context of family life.

The best evidence of a well-functioning homeschool is the hunger and thirst for righteousness (Matt. 5:6) on the part of the chil-

dren who with their parents express an appetite to seek first God's Kingdom and His righteousness (Matt. 6:33).

Hunger and Thirst

How do we apply the concepts of hunger and thirst to homeschooling progress? *Webster's 1828 Dictionary* defines the terms clearly:

Hunger: 1. An uneasy sensation occasioned by the want of food; a craving of food by the stomach; craving appetite. Hunger is not merely want of food, for persons, when sick, may abstain long from eating without hunger, or an appetite for food. Hunger therefore is the pain or uneasiness of the stomach of a healthy person, when too long destitute of food. 2. Any strong or eager desire. *v.i.* To feel the pain or uneasiness which is occasioned by long abstinence from food; to crave food.

Thirst: 1. To experience a painful sensation of the throat or fauces for want of drink. 2. To have a vehement desire for any thing.

R. J. Rushdoony points out in his book on the Sermon on the Mount referencing Matthew 5:6 that

Righteousness is the same word as justice; thus, it is the desire for righteousness or justice which our Lord speaks of here ... To be the blessed of the Lord means that we hunger and thirst after justice. The image is of intense physical craving, of a passion for righteousness or justice, which consumes our being. Apart from God's justice, for there is none

other, we are starved and parched. Only His justice can fill and satisfy us. The promise is that we “shall be filled.”¹

Do you and your children manifest a craving to be filled with God’s justice? We are told in Ecclesiastes 12:13 that the whole duty of man is to fear God and keep His commandments. If this is not the focal point of Christian education, then what is?

Many say they attempt to get their children interested in spiritual matters, but the children don’t seem to have an appetite for the instruction. That is the precise reason why Christian home education is needed in our day. Children are deemed unable to understand the truths of Scripture unless they are taught moral *stories* by vegetable characters that don’t reference God as He has revealed Himself. Not only does this underestimate children,² but it also reduces the appetite for real Bible teaching. Just as improper nutritional choices cultivate a desire for junk food, children raised on “junk food” Christianity will shun the good food of the Word.

The environment of the Christian homeschool can immediately correct attitudes and ideas antithetical to a biblical world and life view. By avoiding negative influences and temptations that arise in most classroom settings (e.g., back-talk, bullying, and moral compromise) the children aren’t hampered by conflicting standards of behavior.

Identifying Their Calling

Young children thrive on imitating their elders, wanting to do the tasks they see their parents or older siblings perform. From the outset, the homeschooling mother should be self-consciously modeling

¹ R.J. Rushdoony, *Sermon on the Mount* (Vallecito, CA: Ross House Books, 2009), 23–24.

² Mark 10:15 instructs us to receive the Kingdom as a child, not to receive it childishly!

behavior she wishes her children to emulate. If she complains about cooking, laundry, cleaning, reading, or studying, guess what? They will learn to parrot those attitudes. However, if, as she is carrying out all these functions, she explains how and why she is performing them, she is not only actively engaging her children in the importance of *calling*, but she is investing for the future time when she can delegate these tasks to them.

Another basic function of the family is motivation and guidance. The child is provided with the best kind of guidance, because the family is most interested in him, and the child is, in the Christian family, given the highest kind of motivation for his own future and present development.³

Motivation is a key component in obtaining cooperation and participation, whether in household responsibilities or academic learning. If the homeschooling teacher always has to entertain or coerce her children, she will become exhausted and frustrated. For this reason, the children need to understand why homeschooling is the family choice and for what purpose they are learning any given subject or task. When tied in to glorifying God and keeping His commandments, grumbling and complaining are rightly understood as offenses against God.

Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure. Do all things without murmurings and disputings: That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world;

³ R.J. Rushdoony, *Law & Liberty* (Vallecito, CA: Ross House Book, [1984] 2009), 101.

Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain. (Phil. 2:12–16)

How do you know if an activity is producing the results you desire? As my husband used to counsel me, *inspect what you expect*. This involves making sure your children know the expectations you have for them regarding their household chores and subjects you wish them to study on any given day. Bypassing this step usually results in the teacher and student having conflicting standards for excellence. It takes prep time and regular inspection on the part of the teacher, but will lessen over time as her children learn not to cut corners and to apply diligence to their work.

Incentives should be tied in to expectations for the student when it comes to academics. Studying the material in a cooperative fashion should hold just as much weight as grasping the material. At what point and how easily the material is grasped is secondary to the approach the student takes. That is why grades or marks cannot be the goal of learning. It is the acquisition of knowledge, properly understood in the greater context of God’s Kingdom, that produces wisdom. How well the student can articulate what has been learned and how well he applies it to life are the yardsticks to measure success.

Fruit of the Spirit

Galatians 5:22–23 defines the Fruit of the Spirit as love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. These should serve as the objective evidence of godly learning: Are the children manifesting these attributes? In all areas of life and thought, the claims of Christ must be impressed upon the students. This standard should be the focus as a biblical worldview is taught throughout the academic subjects covered. If not, even if you have a “straight A” student, you don’t necessarily have a godly

one. Likewise, if your student struggles with some aspect of the curriculum, the Fruit-of-the-Spirit mindset will allow him to persevere in the pursuit of excellence.

All children need to understand that they were created to glorify God by carrying out His laws and commands. They will not do this naturally because they enter the world selfish and self-centered due to the stain of inherited sin. Only through training will they embrace their calling as son/daughter and brother/sister. Along with learning their native language and gaining self-discipline of bodily functions, obedience to parents is the first major trait that needs to be ingrained in a child. Next, the child should be working on becoming a useful member of the family, seeking ways to love one another with brotherly affection, and outdoing one another in showing honor (Rom 12:10).

Jay Adams, noted biblical counseling author, has this to say about the Fruit of the Spirit as it applies in family life:

To be self-controlled ... is said to be a fruit of the Spirit (i.e., the result of the Spirit's work) in a believer. This work of the Spirit makes him a sturdy, dependable person to whom others turn for encouragement and help. It makes him the sort of Christian who rarely gets into trouble with others because of indiscretions of word or deed, and who, if and when he does offend, quickly rectifies the situation on his own ... His self-control, then, is not a control that comes from himself but from the Spirit, and it is self-control only in the sense that he is not dependent on other human beings for that control....

Discipline begins in a child's life as discipline by others: much of the work of child training ... has to do with bringing a child to maturity, that maturity consisting of his ability to discipline himself in the ways of God.

The process of child training that the Bible sets forth is one in which the control of parents is gradually replaced by

*the control of the Spirit through the Word as a child matures into a youth, willing and able to follow the Scriptures on his own without the continued, watchful instruction of parents. The mature person obeys not for fear of punishment or hope of reward, but out of gratitude to God who sent the Savior to die for him. He wants to please God rather than his parents, others, or even himself!*⁴

This is the sort of training that is uniquely possible within a homeschooling setting as the instruction given in Deuteronomy 6:4–7 states:

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.

Adams points out that the Book of Proverbs, which is a Hebrew training manual for youth, has as its goal a person who walks according to the law of the Spirit in promoting a self-controlled individual.

*The Book of Proverbs represents the work of the father and mother as bringing the child to this place of independence by teaching biblical truth which shall follow and guide the child throughout life, long after they are gone.*⁵

4 Jay E. Adams, *Handbook of Church Discipline* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1986), 40–41.

5 Ibid.

As a mainstay of our homeschool, I took my children through the Book of Proverbs to show the practical application of the law of God as outlined in the Ten Commandments. In fact, the following passage in Rushdoony's *The Philosophy of the Christian Curriculum* inspired me to challenge my son at the age of seven to begin memorizing entire chapters:

At St. Thomas Episcopal School in Houston, Texas, children in the early grades memorize proverb after proverb, until the whole book of Proverbs is committed to memory. On one occasion, third grade boys were on the playground, when a teacher confronted one boy with an offense committed earlier. The guilty boy immediately pointed to a second boy, saying, "He made me do it." At this point, a third boy stepped up and remarked, "My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not" (Prov. 1:10). This is of course one of the advantages of knowledge of Scripture: it enables us to understand ourselves and others as well as to know God.⁶

As side benefits, this activity was useful for public speaking training, as well as handwriting training (as my son often copied the verses to memorize them). I began this when I noted how he had memorized many commercials verbatim from television and figured we should try the Proverbs challenge.

The Return of the Family

Sometimes families *do* struggle to maintain their calling to educate their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and there *are* many obstacles blocking success. But by reorienting the purpose and mission of their homes and placing biblical standards

⁶ R.J. Rushdoony, *The Philosophy of the Christian Curriculum* (Vallecito, CA: Ross House Books, [1981] 2001), 28–29.

as the umbrella under which all other areas are assessed (academics, sports, the arts, and involvement in church and community activities), they will experience less burnout, especially the homeschooling mother. And while it is true that usurpation by the state is rampant and seemingly insurmountable, there is historically much hope. As Rushdoony notes,

The state has extensively interfered in the family's functions, and it has claimed vast areas that properly belong to the family. Does this mean that the family has been weakened? Does the future portend a decline in the importance of the family? On the contrary, the more the state has interfered, the more it has thereby underscored man's need for the family. The incompetence of the state as family has made more obvious the competence of the family as a family. The prevalence of sickness does not make health obsolete, but only all the more urgently needed and desired. Historically, every period of statism is followed by an era of an intensely family-oriented society as men turn from sickness to health.⁷

⁷ R.J. Rushdoony, *Law & Liberty* (Vallecito, CA: Ross House Books, [1984] 2009), 102–103.



11

PUTTING WOMEN IN THEIR PLACE

In some circles, women are discouraged from interest in theology, sound doctrine, or biblical law; it is presumed that these topics are men's domain. Not only is it deemed unnecessary for women to devote attention to these subjects, interest in them is considered inappropriate. It is assumed that women can function quite well within the home without emphasizing good theology, sound doctrine, or biblical law.

This attitude is further strengthened by women's Bible studies that concentrate on relationships, hospitality, and home management. Too often, in an attempt to exhibit the posture of submissive wives, women dumb themselves down theologically to keep from being labeled contentious (Prov. 27:15).

But how can a woman fulfill her calling as wife and mother if she has no training in the very standard upon which she is to create her priorities and make decisions as she looks well to the ways of her household? How will she be able to advise her husband or prepare her children for adulthood if she has not learned how the Word of God applies to every area of life and thought, and has had opportunities to self-consciously make biblical applications to her life and the lives of her family members? If a woman is to succeed as a helpmeet and joint-heir with her husband, she needs to be equipped with a working knowledge of God's law.

Women's reluctance to delve into a deeper understanding of God's law often comes from a distasteful response from men when women become involved in theological discussions. While it is true that women are to keep silent in the church (1 Cor. 14:34), some extend this to mean that they should maintain silence in general when it comes to matters of theological application. R. J. Rushdoony was a great theologian who was also very down to earth and practical in his understanding of the conflicts between men and women:

One of the chronic problems of men is that too often they react instead of acting. The terms and nature of the problems of life are set by their opposition rather than by themselves, and the reactions are foolish.

This has all too often been true of the reactions of men, Christian and non-Christian, to the women's liberation movement. The results are sometimes painful. Two examples will suffice. In one church, some of the women came together to study Scripture. The women were of varying ages but with a common need to know the Bible better in its application to their everyday problems. The church ordered the meetings ended, although no problem had arisen. The concerns of the study were not ecclesiastical, and the meetings were not a part of the church's work nor limited to church members. By no stretch of the imagination can any text of Scripture be made to forbid women to study Scripture together.

In at least several other churches, the women are held in an unbiblical subjection which treats them as children, not adults. The Bible declares Sarah to be the model wife in her obedience and subjection (1 Peter 3:1-7). We cannot understand the meaning of that without recognizing the fact that, on occasion, Sarah, confident in the godliness of her position, gave Abraham an ultimatum (Gen. 16:5;

21:9–13), and God declared, “in all that Sarah hath said unto thee, hearken unto her voice” (Gen. 9:12), a sentence men rarely if ever used as a sermon text!¹

Christian men often view women through the lens of their current culture instead of viewing them from a biblical perspective. For example, today men often react to the feminist movement without understanding that the feminist movement was a faulty reaction to the Enlightenment and the resultant worldview regarding women. As Rushdoony points out,

Few things have depressed women more than did the Enlightenment, which turned woman into an ornament and a helpless creature. Unless of the lower class, where work was mandatory, the “privileged” woman was a useless ornamental person, with almost no rights.²

Many Christian men fail to realize labeling women as inept ornaments was not always the norm. In seventeenth-century England, as well as early America, women were not relegated to an inconsequential status and were often adept business managers, manufacturers, and insurance brokers. It was not uncommon for women whose husbands were sailors to manage affairs at home for two to three years at a time.³

The Biblical doctrine shows us the wife as the competent manager who is able to take over all business affairs if needed, so that her husband can assume public office as a civil

¹ R. J. Rushdoony, *The Roots of Reconstruction* (Vallecito, CA: Ross House Books, 1991), 215–219.

² R. J. Rushdoony, *The Institutes of Biblical Law* (Phillipsburg, PA: The Craig Press, 1973), 349.

³ Ibid.

magistrate; in the words of Proverbs 31:23, he can sit “in the gates,” that is, preside as a ruler or judge.⁴

By elevating men as creatures of reason and designating women as emotional and, thereby, inferior, the role of women was diminished. In fact, Rushdoony notes:

The more pronounced ... the triumph of the Age of Reason in any culture, the more reduced the role of women became. Just as religion came to be regarded as a useless but sometimes charming ornament, so too women were similarly regarded.⁵

As a result, men viewed women (and many times women viewed themselves) as merely suited to a “pedestal of uselessness.”

The Age of Reason severed a man’s connection to his wife by elevating his own intellect above his very real need for her. Thus, the enemies of Christ began their campaign to destroy the biblical family, which continues even today. As women began to reel against the demotion they had experienced, often from both the culture and the church, a knee-jerk reaction took place in the form of the women’s rights movement. Rushdoony comments,

The tragedy of the women’s rights movement was that, although it had serious wrongs to correct, it added to the problem, and here the resistance of man was in as large a measure responsible. Instead of restoring women to their rightful place of authority beside man, women’s rights became feminism: it put women in competition with men. It led to the masculinization of women and feminization of men, to the unhappiness of both....

4 Ibid., 352.

5 Ibid.

Thus, the age of Reason brought in an irrational supremacy for men and has led to a war of the sexes. As a result, the laws today work, not to establish godly order, but to favor one sex or another.⁶

Biblical Law Is for Women

There are many men today who serve as ministers of the gospel who attribute their introduction to Christian Reconstruction and theonomy to their wives who, having heard R. J. Rushdoony lecture, urged their husbands to hear him speak. These women were much like Mary who sat at the feet of Jesus, eager to learn, understand and apply the Word of God to their lives. Furthermore, there are many husbands who have embraced the teachings of R. J. Rushdoony, read his books, and desired their wives to study his *Institutes of Biblical Law* in order to have a fuller appreciation for the Ten Commandments and their implications.

I began the Chalcedon Teacher Training Institute specifically to address the women in this category. Having been a student of biblical law for over twenty-three years, and having benefitted from the mentoring I received from Dr. Rushdoony and his wife, Dorothy, I felt it was time for me to assume the role of “older woman” in the lives of homeschooling moms and unmarried single women.⁷

Women of Honour

I originally read *The Institutes of Biblical Law* when I was introduced to Chalcedon in the mid-80s. As time went on, I made detailed notes because I knew I would be teaching my children from this text. When I began to formally teach through the book with a group of women in the late 1990s, I completed notes on every single

⁶ Ibid., 351.

⁷ www.ctti.org

section of the book and designed some questions for thought and discussion to ensure that the concepts could be put into action rather than remain academic. Initially, a group met in my living room; however, with the advent of internet technology, much of my teaching/mentoring of late has taken place online making use of Skype or other group meeting software.

One woman, after reading one of my books, asked me if I would mentor her. As we began our study, she confessed that she felt guilty that there were other women that she knew who would benefit from an ongoing study, and the “Woman of Honour”⁸ group was formed. This group spanned three continents (North America, Europe and Africa) with a regular Saturday morning lecture and discussion (at least for me it was morning as we spanned a number of time zones). At times we had as many as twenty-two women join us, with the average attendance being less.

For three and a half years we plodded along, tackling one section of the book at a time. Every week after I gave a brief summary, we would discuss the questions. Some would vocalize answers using a microphone on their computer, while others would submit their answers in the chat box. Sometimes we would take time off due to schedule conflicts. But we would always resume our study of the material.⁹ When we completed the study in the spring of 2012, we all felt a sense of accomplishment and reward that the Word of God had been seated more firmly in our hearts. One participant commented:

I have been privileged to be a disciple under the dedicated, thorough instruction and mentoring by Andrea

8 Rather than use the American spelling (honor), the spelling was used because the majority of the participants spelled it the British way!

9 I used to affectionately refer to these studies as the *Dos Equis Bible Study*, having to assure people we weren't a group of beer drinking women, but a group whose participants needed to have two “x” chromosomes to be included!

Schwartz as we worked through The Institutes of Biblical Law by R. J. Rushdoony.

I have greatly benefited from these studies in that I am learning to question the source and foundation of my (and others') statements, thinking and attitudes as to whether they line up with the law-word of God and biblical precepts contained therein. I am less quick to make assumptions and judge matters according to deceived "Christian," humanistic or worldly thinking.

I think that I am less impulsive and no longer draw on my own thinking but seek wisdom and guidance from continued study and application of His law-word. I am learning to respond to "all of" life's challenges biblically, and to be more articulate in giving an answer for the hope that is in me!

I am grateful for the gold that has been deposited in my heart!¹⁰

One-on-One

Not every woman's schedule fits into a group study, so I have a number of ongoing studies of *Institutes of Biblical Law* on a one-on-one basis with mothers, single women, and occasionally high school students. We function much the same way as I did with the group, but we are able to get more specific with individual application and schedule times that are mutually convenient. That is the key to my approach. I specifically state at the outset that this study is to be undertaken so as to fit into a woman's schedule and circumstances. My process of tackling the 800-page book with a willing student is quite simple: one section at a time, with a commitment to go no further until the implications of God's law-word

¹⁰ Visit www.titus2mentoring.com.

as developed by Rushdoony can be applied to their circumstance and calling in life.

Along with imparting a distinctly Christian worldview to them in the process, my own understanding and insights into the law have become more developed. I have an ingrained sense of how God's law applies to any given situation and, when it is not readily apparent, I am in a position to ask an intelligent question to discern the answer. My goal is to produce women who can not only effectively transmit God's truth in their families, but who can become Titus 2 Mentors¹¹ themselves.

Becoming a Proverbs 31 Woman

For a woman to deliberately fulfill the description of the woman discussed in the last chapter of Proverbs, her actions must be consistent with the law-word of God. Such a woman should not be stereotyped and should find her worth based on her redemption in Christ, not as the world may view her. Rushdoony notes,

Such a woman is very different from the pretty doll of the Age of Reason, and the highly competitive masculinized woman of the 20th century who is out to prove that she is as good as any man, if not better.

A Biblical faith will not regard woman as any the less rational or intelligent than man: her reason is normally more practically and personally oriented in terms of her calling as a woman, but she is not less intelligent for that.¹²

11 The Titus 2 Mentoring program follows the biblical teaching of older women teaching younger women the truths of God's Word and how they can be better wives and mothers.

12 Rushdoony, *Institutes*, 352.

As Proverbs 18:22 reminds us, “He who finds a wife finds a good thing, and obtains favor from the Lord” (Prov. 18:22).

Rushdoony continues:

Important ... as the role of a woman is as mother, Scripture presents her essentially as a wife, i.e., a help-meet. The reference is therefore not primarily to children but to the Kingdom of God and man's calling therein. Man and wife together are in the covenant called to subdue the earth and to exercise dominion over it.¹³

Proverbs 31:30 points out that a woman who reveres the Lord is to be praised. Thus, a dominion-oriented man should desire as a helpmeet someone fluent and experienced in the application of God's law. How can a woman act as a *mirror*,¹⁴ and how can a husband safely trust in her if she knows less than he?

If a man wishes to raise godly children who have a healthy fear of the Lord, he must choose a wife who is a competent teacher for them. To whom will he entrust the training of future ambassadors and soldiers for Christ? Who will instill in his children a healthy boldness to engage the battle rather than retreat from it?

God proclaimed that it was not good for man to be alone and gave him his most suitable helper (Gen. 2:18). The Scripture does not give us a “Gentlemen Only, Ladies Forbidden” mentality, but one in which the absence of women would be a travesty.

The headship of men does not mean the shelving of women. The Pauline epistles tell us plainly how real and extensive the role of women was in the New Testament church. Men who seek to make a woman the mere adjunct of themselves are stupid, foolish, and unchristian. They pass up the wealth of

¹³ Ibid., 353.

¹⁴ See Elizabeth Felleron, editor, *Toward a Christian Marriage* (Vallecito, CA: Ross House Books, 1972), 14–15.

God's way for the poverty of their ego. The churches which relegate women to a limbo of irrelevance are guilty before God. Subordination does not mean irrelevance or incompetence. If this were true, every corporation would be better off if all the staff and employees were fired, and only the chairman of the board remained! It would commonly mean the departure of intelligence.¹⁵

¹⁵ R J. Rushdoony, *The Roots of Reconstruction* (Vallecito, CA: Ross House Books, 1991), 215–219.



12

LOYAL OPPOSITION

For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. (Hebrews 5:12)

The author of Hebrews reproves his listeners whom he thought should have progressed beyond the “milk” of the word. In our day, many debate which aspects of the faith constitute “milk” and “meat.” Some consider the doctrines of election, predestination, or matters of eschatology to be the “meat of the word.” However, I submit that these are actually the “milk” of the word, because they are concepts that, if not grasped, make for a lame and disabled theology. The “meat” has much more to do with skillfully applying the law of God to the complex issues of covenantal life. Without a knowledge and understanding of God’s law, it is impossible to navigate through difficult situations, including those between a husband and a wife.

If there ever was a topic that needs sound clarification and exposition, the submission of a wife to her husband certainly qualifies. Too much of the teaching from pulpits and expositors is not grounded on the law of God, and fails to take certain biblical

accounts at face value. As in every era, many of the attitudes and conclusions are a reaction to something prevalent in the culture rather than a true application of what the Scripture states. And, as Bojidar Marinov points out, many of the prevailing attitudes have more to do with margin notes and/or headings from publishers rather than the actual biblical passages understood from a covenantal perspective.¹

Dealing with the subject of submission is very much like walking on a minefield. It is easy to misstep and end up blown to bits. The solution is not to avoid the topic, but to approach it with fear and trembling (much as we are to work out our salvation), to better comprehend the mind of God and put His law into practice.

Ian Hodge, in a blog piece of April 27, 2013, entitled “Marriage, Submission, and the Helper Who Opposes,” offers another perspective of the meaning of the word “helpmeet,” sometimes also translated as “helper.”

Submission, as it is generally understood, means a person hands over his/her will to the will of another. He/She is to align his/her will with the will of another in perfect union. Thus, in the illustration of St. Paul, there is mutual submission of husbands and wives. But as he explains this in detail he describes the husband's submission as love for his wife as Christ loves his church. A wife, on the other hand, is to submit to her husband in the same way the church is to submit to Christ. (Eph. 5:21ff.)

However, it is possible to read too much into these texts if they are abstracted from everything else Scripture teaches you about man-woman relationships. And the Bible starts in Genesis 2:18 with a recognition that although God created everything “good,” it was not good for man to be alone.

¹ Bojidar Marinov, sermon, “Restoring Jacob’s Reputation,” delivered at Church of the King, McAllen, TX. See churchofthekingmcallen.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/20120205.mp3

So God made him a helper. The word in the older English translations is helpmeet. But neither “helper” nor “helpmeet” capture the not-so-subtle connotation of the Hebrew, ‘ezer kenegdo (עֵזֶר כְּנֶגְדּוֹ). This literally means “help against,” or “the help that opposes,” and has also been translated “the helpmate opposite him.”

You can immediately see why “helpmeet” and “helper” are really inadequate translations, neither of which capture the “opposition” contained in the word kenegdo which means against, or oppose.²

It would be easy to dismiss Hodge’s observation because it is contrary to the customary understanding that a wife’s duty is to submit to her husband’s wishes without complaint or disagreement. This may be in part because of the negative connotation of the word “opposition” which unfortunately is often reduced to meaning defiance or rebellion. But *Webster’s 1828 Dictionary* gives ten definitions for this word:

opposition, *n.* [*L. oppositio.*]

1. Situation so as to front something else; a standing over against; *as the opposition of two mountains or buildings.*

2. The act of opposing; attempt to check, restrain or defeat. *He makes opposition to the measure; the bill passed without opposition. Will any opposition be made to the suit, to the claim or demand?*

3. Obstacle. *The river meets with no opposition in its course to the ocean.*

² Ian Hodge, blog, Biblical Landmarks, entry of April 27, 2013 “Marriage, Submission and the Helper Who Opposes.” See <http://biblicallandmarks.com/wpl/marriage-submission-and-the-helper-who-opposes/>

4. Resistance; as the opposition of enemies. *Virtue will break through all opposition.*
5. Contrariety; repugnance in principle; *as the opposition of the heart to the laws of God.*
6. Contrariety of interests, measures or designs. *The two parties are in opposition to each other.*
7. Contrariety or diversity of meaning; *as one term used in opposition to another.*
8. Contradiction; inconsistency.
9. The collective body of opposers; *in England, the party in Parliament which opposed the ministry; in America, the party that opposed the existing administration.*
10. In astronomy, the situation of two heavenly bodies, when distant from each other 180 degrees.

Hodge makes the claim that part and parcel of the design of a suitable partner for Adam was someone who could serve in the capacity of nine out of ten of Webster's definitions, excepting the last one dealing with astronomy. The declaration by God that it was not good for Adam to be without a partner/helper was precisely because Adam was not complete without his counterpart.

It is wrong to reduce the idea of a woman as a counterpart merely to the physical, sexual function that Eve would serve for Adam. Her importance involves much more, as Rushdoony points out.

The woman is called his "help meet," his mirror; and even as he mirrors God, she mirrors him. He understands his responsibility by looking to God, and he can see how he is fulfilling his responsibilities and proving his obedience in relationship to his wife as she mirrors his nature and responsibility.³

3 Elizabeth Fellersen, ed., *Toward a Christian Marriage*, R.J. Rushdoony, "The Doctrine of Marriage" (Vallecito, CA: Ross House Books, 1972), 14.

This is hardly a description of the wife serving as a rubber stamp to her husband's every mandate. Rather, it presupposes that as the husband's trusted advisor, she not only has the best interests of their family in mind, but of his specifically. Thus she should oppose him when she deems it necessary to honor God and keep His commandments.

Hodge continues,

Now you can also see why so many husbands get opposition from their wives. They were designed by God to oppose him. But their opposition is to be when he strays from the Word of God and begins to falter in carrying out the God-mandated activities in his life. "Have dominion," said God. "And here's your helper to oppose you every time you steer away from this."⁴

A Handful of Examples

There are three excellent examples in Scripture of wives moving in opposition to their husbands and being vindicated because of their actions. In Genesis 21:12, Abraham had listened to his wife to have a son with her maid servant. Years later Sarah recognized the seeds of conflict between Ishmael and Isaac. She told Abraham to send Hagar and her son away. Abraham was not willing to do so. Yet, God sided with Sarah,

And God said unto Abraham, Let it not be grievous in thy sight because of the lad, and because of thy bondwoman; in all that Sarah hath said unto thee, hearken unto her voice; for in Isaac shall thy seed be called.

⁴ Hodge, blog.

In another case, Abigail (1 Samuel 25), recognizing her husband's stubbornness and wickedness, overruled her husband's refusal to supply David and his men with provision. She thereby saved her entire household. Based on some of the prevalent writings about female submission, she would be designated as a rebellious wife. Yet after God removed her foolish husband, she became a member of David's household. Clearly, God (and David) recognized her as godly and righteous.

In each of these cases, one of a God-fearing man and the other of a fool, the role of the wife is crucial to God's plan and order.

The Virtue of Rebekah's Opposition

A vivid example of this appears in Genesis 27. Rushdoony points out that this chapter of Scripture is a sad one. But it is also a very misunderstood one, placing a "bad rap" on Rebekah for deceiving her husband as she instructed Jacob to impersonate his brother so that God's blessing reserved for Jacob would not wrongly be given to her rebellious son.⁵ Upon hearing that Isaac was about to overrule God by substituting Esau, Rebekah acted.

Determined to prevent her husband from sinning by trying to replace God's choice with his, she ordered Jacob to bring in two kids. She knew how to prepare them so as to fool Isaac, so that the blessing would go to Jacob (vv. 5–10).

Jacob doubted whether such a deception would succeed. Esau was a hairy man, Jacob smoother of skin (v. 11). The blind Isaac, in placing a hand on Jacob, would know the difference, and he would then curse Jacob as a deceiver (v. 12).

⁵ In the aforementioned sermon by Bojidar Marinov, he extensively exegetes this portion of Scripture with a covenantal perspective vindicating both Jacob and Rebekah from many commentators' and publishers' negative assessments.

Rebekah's answer was "Upon me be thy curse, my son: only obey my voice, and go fetch me them" (v. 13).

At this point, it is important to understand what Rebekah meant when she said, "Upon me be thy curse." Curses and blessings are covenant facts, blessings for covenant faithfulness, and curses for disobedience. An oath is a personal invocation of blessings and curses for obedience or disobedience. We can only understand Rebekah and Jacob in terms of a knowledge of the meaning of blessings and curses.

Rebekah did not expect to be cursed; she sought to prevent Isaac from bringing down a curse on his own head. Loving Isaac, she wanted to prevent him from coming under God's curse. Loving Jacob, she encouraged him to be bold because he was ordained by God to be blessed. Rebekah feared God and His possible judgment on Isaac, and also on Jacob.⁶

When this account is normally expositied, it is presented with a bias that teaches that Rebekah was a devious woman who did not submit to her husband, and who did not trust God. If it is viewed from a covenantal perspective she, instead, should be viewed as a faithful wife who stood in *opposition* to her husband who was about to disobey the living God.

Rebekah's purposes included, first, preventing Isaac from bringing God's curse on himself. The fact that Isaac was now concerned about Jacob's safety is a sure indication of a change in his stance. Second, Rebekah had enabled Jacob to make a stand, not only to get a blessing already ordained by God for him, but against his ruthless brother. Third, Rebekah wanted a godly wife for Jacob. She was not aware of the religious decline of her family, but its daughters were better than local girls.

6 R. J. Rushdoony, *Genesis* (Vallecito, CA: Ross House Books, 2002), 193.

What Rebekah did was to stand unequivocally for the covenant and its integrity. She feared God's judgment on Isaac and Jacob.

To apply present day perspectives to the events of this chapter is commonplace, but for Rebekah God's covenantal promise was paramount, and she acted accordingly. It will not do to say that her favoritism to Jacob was the reason; her concern was covenantal, and God's promise concerning Jacob was no doubt basic to her partiality to Jacob.⁷

Never does the Bible indicate that a wife is at liberty to violate the covenant in order to be considered a submitted spouse. As joint-heirs, husband and wife must act in unison, each bringing their commitment to God's Word as the starting point to any discussion or decision. In the same chapter of 1 Peter where wives are instructed to submit to their husbands, husbands are told:

Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered. (1 Peter 3:7)

Surely Rebekah would have told her husband of God's revelation to her about their sons, and the selling of the birthright from Esau to Jacob was most likely a known fact. Moreover, Esau had demonstrated covenant unfaithfulness by taking two wives from the Hittites, and the Scripture calls it a grief to both Isaac and Rebekah (Gen. 26:34–35). Most definitely their prayers were hindered as Isaac was disregarding his wife's counsel, thereby treating her with dishonor and failing to allow her to act as his mirror.

Proverbs 18:22 states, "Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good *thing*, and obtaineth favour of the LORD." When Eliezer (Gen. 24) was

7 Ibid., 194–195.

chosen to find a wife for Isaac, he prayed that God would send to him the woman God had chosen for Isaac. God’s providential care in bringing Rebekah to Eliezer is evidence that God had selected Rebekah to be the wife of the patriarch—a selection that served Isaac in good stead.

What About Eve?

Some will argue that part of God’s rebuke to Adam after the Fall was *because* he listened to the counsel of his wife. (Gen. 3:16ff.). Hodge explains:

The problem was that Eve misunderstood her role. She was to keep her man on target to obey God in all things, not derail him into disobedience against God. Yet this is what she did ... Similarly, Adam was supposed to listen to his wife—but not when she was mistaken. And on the issue of the forbidden fruit, she was very mistaken.⁸

Hodge makes the case that Satan approached Eve first *because* of the role God assigned to her. Much the same way that lobbyists will approach (to convince or bribe) a staff member of a legislator to pave the way toward procuring a favorable vote for a particular issue, Satan went to Adam’s trusted counselor. He knew that if he could get Eve to accept his propositions, then Adam would have no one to oppose him when he was tempted.⁹

Striking the Balance

The book of Ephesians instructs both husband and wife to understand their relationship as a picture or reflection of Christ’s rela-

⁸ Hodge, blog.

⁹ Ibid.

tionship to His church. Each has a particular calling in the marriage: “The submission requirement does not mean she gives up her opposition rights. What it means, is that a wife must learn to oppose the right issues in the right manner.”¹⁰

Here is where we get to the “meat” of the Word. For exercising opposition rights must reflect, by way of analogy, how the church is to submit to Christ. While it is clear that the church does not have the liberty to disobey God’s commands, we, as God’s creatures, don’t always understand or agree with His stated or secret will and we are *encouraged* to petition Him with fervor. (Recall the parables dealing with prayer: The unjust judge *and* the neighbor knocking on his neighbor’s door at night are examples to show the people of God how to relate to the Lord in their petitions.) So, too, a wife should carefully choose her opposition for those matters she considers essential to covenantal faithfulness. Her desire to maintain covenantal faithfulness should be exercised with care without destroying the structure of the family. Likewise, her husband should not ignore the petitions of his wife, since God does not ignore the petitions of His church.

In almost four decades of marriage, I have failed in this endeavor more times than I care to enumerate. While my issues had merit, I often overrated the content of my argument and downplayed the way I conveyed it. St. Peter admonishes women,

Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear. (1 Peter 3:1–2)

By failing to make “chaste conversation coupled with fear” a top priority, I often sabotaged my own efforts to resolve certain

¹⁰ Ibid.

important issues because I failed to hold my tongue or use it wisely. Whether or not I considered that my husband was “fighting fairly,” my responsibility was to fear God and keep His commandments (Ecc. 12:13). Peter’s instruction is to foster conflict resolution, not to have disagreements buried.

Hodge comments on the “battle of the sexes” in marriage:

Men do not want to obey God’s commandments fully. Wives do not wish to oppose their husbands on these issues, but are more than happy to oppose them on a host of trivial issues. Men now want to rule over their wives, rather than form a formidable team that is a reflection of the relationship between Christ and the church. With the result that too often men are too busy giving orders to take the time to listen to their ‘ezer kenegdo.

There is a challenge, then, for both husbands and wives. Do men fulfill their duty to obey God’s commandments? Does a wife see her husband as God sees him, help him identify his true calling under God, and support him in it, opposing him when he strays from the path God has ordained for him? If not, it’s time for some changes.¹¹

Learning how to be the virtuous, powerful woman of Proverbs 31 takes humility, maturity, and commitment. Knowing the law-word of God sufficiently and practically is essential for a woman who is to look well to the ways of her household. In the end, a man and woman in the partnership of marriage are the building blocks of a godly society, and only when they are willing to sharpen and challenge each other to faithfulness will their efforts bring about a bountiful harvest.

¹¹ Ibid.



13

LEARN IT, LIVE IT, TEACH IT

Many people act as though the laws of physics are more reliable and predictive than the law of God. I used to tell my children that ignoring the law of gravity (saying you didn't believe in it) wouldn't stop you from falling on your face if you tried to fly off the roof. A physical law would continue to operate in spite of one's ignorance of or disbelief in it. On the other hand, understanding the law of gravity allows benefits such as air travel or safely cutting down a tree. Understanding how a physical law operates allows people to take dominion. Likewise the laws in the Bible are tools of dominion if they are properly understood and applied.

Think of a scenario in which residents of an apartment building race to the roof to escape a fire below. If they are knowledgeable about the laws of gravity they can rule out certain options as being untenable or ineffective. But if they understand that jumping across to a lower building will utilize the law of gravity to help them successfully escape being burned to death, they benefit by that knowledge.

In the same way, a working knowledge of God's law gives righteous options when we face a dilemma or problem. When our thought processes are biblically based and when we have knowledge of God's Word, we can avoid sinful solutions even in dire predicaments. Thus it is not enough to have children learn the Ten

Commandments by heart. They must do more than that. They must learn the implications of God's commands and become well versed and practiced in solving the problems of life using biblical reasoning to sort them out. In fact, parents should spend a good bit of time discussing various situations their children are likely to encounter and prepare them to think through sticky or sensitive situations biblically. The book of Proverbs is an excellent backdrop to this process and should be studied with children from an early age. Rushdoony notes,

The book of Proverbs is essentially a book about the law as the direction and guide of life ... [A]ll direction rests and must rest on God's fundamental torah law, or direction. A parent's law, a teacher's or employer's law, must be an application of God's law. God's law when so applied becomes the fabric of life and the direction of society.¹

When studying literature, history, mathematics, or any other subject, the law of God is the lens which identifies the good guys and the bad guys, and which shows the correct course of action as well as the sinful one. Without the glasses of Scripture, we can forget the reality that there is no such thing as brute factuality.

For a consistent and Biblically governed faith, all the facts of nature and history are the creation of the triune God. The facts of nature and history are totally governed by the God who ordained them and created them and who, by His eternal decree and comprehensive counsel, absolutely undergirds their every detail. All facts are thus God-given facts. As Van Til stated it, "All that may be known by man is already known by God. And it is already known by God

¹ R. J. Rushdoony, *The Institutes of Biblical Law*, vol. 1 (Nutley, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1973), 689–690.

because it is controlled by God.” All knowledge therefore is of God-created and God-interpreted facts.²

Meditation Day and Night

Psalm 119 powerfully shows the reality of the law of God as the fabric of life and the means of sanctification in the life of the believer. The psalmist demonstrates repeatedly his reliance on God’s law to bolster and sustain him. Rushdoony comments,

[I]t is not enough that there be conformity to the law in any formal sense. God must be served “with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart,” or else there is not true obedience at all. Formal obedience is merely the prelude to actual disobedience. This stress on true obedience, on a joyful and heartfelt pursuit of the law’s purpose and order, is basic to an understanding of Psalm 119. The psalmist by faith obeys, and his delight is in the law of the Lord. His only liberty is under law. The law is his mainstay against evil, and his guide and light on his daily path. Life for the psalmist means God’s law.³

This psalm reads like journal entries in the life of David. His utter reliance on the law of God is voiced in almost every one of the 176 verses. These words, inspired by the Holy Spirit, provide God’s people with a way to strengthen themselves in their Christian walk and sanctification.

Parents who desire to obey God, by providing a Christian education for their children, need to arrange the curriculum so that

2 Apologetics: Facts and Presuppositions, Adapted from *Word of Flux: Modern Man and the Problem of Knowledge* (Chalcedon website). See www.chalcedon.edu/topics/apologetics-2/

3 R. J. Rushdoony, *The Institutes of Biblical Law, Volume 2: Law and Society* (Vallecito, CA: Ross House Books, 1982), 231.

the Kingdom of God is the top priority. This is the essence of the direction God gave Moses as He gave him the law. The purpose in the giving of the law was so that the people of God would learn it, live it, and teach it. In fact, as Dr. Miles Jones⁴ has pointed out, God not only gave them the commandments by which to live, He also gave them the means of transmitting them to their children, and ultimately the rest of mankind.

The Sinai Covenant was a teaching covenant. “I will give thee ... commandments which I have written; that thou mayest teach them” (Ex. 24:12). The Hebrews were commanded to teach the word of God and the writing of God. “Thou shalt read this law” (Deut. 31:11). Moses first read the holy writing to the assembled nation of Israel, then Aaron and the Levite priesthood taught reading to the heads of households. Finally, every believer was to teach the word and the writing of God to their children. “And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children ... And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates” (Deut. 6:7–8). The commands to read and write make it clear Sinai was a literacy covenant. Since the letters were also used as numbers, it was also a covenant to teach numeracy as evidenced by God’s many directives requiring mathematics in the book of Numbers, “According to the commandment of the LORD they were numbered ...” (Num. 4:49).

The Lord did not simply command believers to have knowledge of the law but also the ability to read, write, and teach it to their children. Exodus 19:5–6 was a statement that believers would have the task of preserving and carrying the word and the writing of God to others, “for all the world is mine.” Because of this great commission, learn-

4 For a greater insight on this topic listen to my podcast with Dr. Miles Jones available at www.chalcedon.edu entitled “The Call From Sinai.”

ing the characters of the alphabet and their use was a major purpose of the Sinai Covenant. The writing of God exemplified the alphabetic principle of one symbol for each consonant sound of the language. At Sinai, the Israelites received the alphabetic principle of the writing of God as surely as they received the moral principle of the word of God. The word and the writing of God guided the Israelites' path and that of mankind as well. These two principles became the basis of law and literacy in Western civilization.⁵

As we face the self-destruction of humanism, our task is to be prepared, and to prepare our children, to lead in terms of the Kingdom of God. This must include evaluating all subject areas, occupations, political decisions, and family and community life according to God's law-word, and do so deliberately and self-consciously. If we fail to do so and continue to use the old wineskins of humanistic/statist law, the results are predictable.

God's law, in its Biblical statement as well as when faithfully mediated through family, church, state, or school, is the God-ordained means of light, the valid means of prediction. Man, walking by faith in obedience to God's law, walks to a great degree by sight. To walk without law is to walk in darkness.

The mediated law cannot take the place of basic law, God's tora. The mediated law must in fact be identical with the divine torah. Application, not innovation or addition, is the duty of a mediating person or agency . . .

If a man denies God's law or direction, he has denied himself any relationship to God, and "even his prayer shall be an abomination" to God, a moral offense, for to pray to

⁵ Miles R. Jones, *The Writing of God: Secret of the Real Mount Sinai* (Dallas, TX: Johnson Publishers, 2010), 13.

the God whose direction we despise is to add insult to our offenses.⁶

Reconstructing our lives to conform to God’s law not only prevents His wrath, but showers us with His blessing. Thus, instead of a retreatist mentality so prevalent among many professing Christians, or a mindset which equates the Kingdom of God with nationalistic political action, our perspective must include a practical adherence to “every word which proceeds out of the mouth of God” (Matt. 4:4).

[O]ur Lord emphatically declares that the test of faith is a very practical one: do men bear good fruit here and now (Matt. 7:15–20)? “The peaceable fruit of righteousness” (Heb. 12:11) is simply the result of God’s chastening of His sons, to cleanse them of fruitlessness and to lead them into righteousness, and it means results here and now. “The night cometh, when no man can work” (John 9:4). If Christians have a blocked future, then the world is in a fearful condition, because it is Christians who are the light of the world and the salt of the earth (Matt. 5:13–15).⁷

Teach by Example

Teach your children to delight in the law by demonstrating in your own life how the law equips you to avoid problems and dilemmas you face. Parents should share with their children how they reach their decisions and why they pursue certain courses of action. For instance:

⁶ R. J. Rushdoony, *The Institutes of Biblical Law*, vol. 1, 692.

⁷ R. J. Rushdoony, *God’s Plan for Victory* (Vallecito, CA: Ross House Books, [1977] 1997), 17.

- Do your children see that you tithe? Do you share with them how you determine how to distribute it?
- Do your children see that you live debt free? Do they understand how you set aside money for the things you want rather than rack up credit card bills?
- Do your children witness you making choices about what you will read and watch based on applying Phillipians 4:8?
- Do your children see you actively pursuing fellowship with other believers and obeying the Great Commission (making disciples and teaching God's law) with those outside the faith?
- Do you correct your children using God's law as the standard and helping them see how each and every offense is an offense against God?
- Do you share with your children circumstances where you had to make a choice that was difficult because you knew the law must be followed?

A Case in Point

There are many family stories I could share about living out the law of God in real circumstances. However, one stands out as a great example of how the law acted as a lamp and light for my family. It is a story that each of my children heard when they were old enough to understand it, and one that continues to strengthen me to this day. It was one of many times that Psalm 119 became a "personal" psalm in my family.

It was December 1984 and I was pregnant with my second child. The dealership where my husband worked at the time had a Christmas party for the sales people. After the salesmen's dinner, before the men got their Christmas bonuses, the management provided "entertainment." It involved strippers.

My husband was faced with a dilemma. He knew he didn't want to have anything to do with this, but was concerned that if he left,

he might forfeit his bonus which totaled almost \$2,000—money that we could immediately put to good use. Because he was a student of God’s law, who had been practicing its application, he knew that he could not stay. So, he got up and left as soon as he realized what was about to take place. *The wicked have waited for me to destroy me: but I will consider thy testimonies* (v. 95).

He found the nearest payphone (that was before the cell phone revolution) and called me up quite frazzled. He was talking so fast that all I could gather was that he was sorry that he gave up the \$2,000 bonus but he couldn’t in good conscience stay. When I finally heard the story, tears came to my eyes. I told him that I was grateful God had given me a husband who valued his Savior and his marriage enough to do the right thing. *Therefore, I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right; and I hate every false way* (v. 128).

After he got off the phone, there were two other salesmen waiting to talk with him. Each explained that they were uncomfortable with what was happening and knew it was wrong but didn’t want to anger their boss and decided to stay put and not leave. However, when they saw my husband exit, it gave them the strength to do the right thing. *Let those that fear thee turn unto me, and those that have known thy testimonies* (v. 79).

As it turned out, the next day at work his bonus was waiting for him. *My soul hath kept thy testimonies; and I love them exceedingly. I have kept thy precepts and thy testimonies: for all my ways are before thee* (vv. 167–168).

Every Word

We must live by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God (Deut. 8:3; Matt. 4:4). We must learn it, live it, and teach it. This is the real Kingdom work and it is only possible by God’s grace as we take His every law as a command word. As Rushdoony puts it,

God through His law speaks to every man. With the coming of Christ and the new creation, beginning with His resurrection, and continuing in our regeneration, the law is now written in our hearts (Jer. 31:31–34). Every man in Christ must be a walking law and an evidence of the presence of the Holy Spirit. God’s government of the world begins with the self-government of the Christian man.⁸

⁸ R. J. Rushdoony, *Sovereignty* (Vallecito, CA: Ross House Books, 2007), 11.



14

PROVERBS 31: TRANSMITTING THE PRINCIPLES OF BIBLICAL SELF-GOVERNMENT TO THE NEXT GENERATION

But I had something very important. I had a mother who believed in me. And I had a mother who would never allow herself to be a victim, no matter what happened. Never made excuses and she never accepted an excuse from us. And if we ever came up with an excuse she always said, “Do you have a brain” and if the answer was “yes” then she said “Then you could have thought your way out of it. It doesn’t matter what John or Susan or Mary or anybody else did or said.” And it was the most important thing she did for my brother and myself. Because if you don’t accept excuses pretty soon people stop giving them and they start looking for solutions. And that is a critical issue when it comes to success.¹

¹ Dr. Benjamin Carson, Neurosurgeon and the Director of Pediatric Neurosurgery at Johns Hopkins Hospital. This tribute to his mother was part of his address to the 2013 National Prayer Breakfast.

Dr. Ben Carson is an American success story, in spite of his early life of poverty coupled with his own anger and laziness. He credits his mother's influence on his life as the most important grace bestowed on him by God. This illiterate woman with only a third grade education understood her responsibilities in the lives of her sons.

She Who Rocks the Cradle

William Ross Wallace (1819–1881) authored the famous poem, “The Hand that Rocks the Cradle Is the Hand that Rules the World,” in which he praises dedicated motherhood. Each of the four stanzas of the poem repeats the title as a refrain, making the point that a mother's role is vital to the advancement of civilization itself.

The parallels between this poem and Proverbs 31 are most likely intentional given the author's background. Proverbs 31 highlights the attributes of a virtuous woman (vv. 10–31) by demonstrating the fruits of righteous living. The first ten verses of this chapter (often overlooked in discussing the Proverbs 31 woman) demonstrate the kind of influence that a mother sways over her children by instruction and example.

Although there is controversy over the actual identity of King Lemuel, who is addressed in the opening verses of Proverbs 31,² the interesting part, for the purpose of this discussion, is that these words were taught to him by his mother. Verse 2 is the speaker quoting a mother's words to her son, instructing him in the way of being a righteous ruler. Verses 3–9 are warnings against promiscuity, debauchery, irresponsibility in one's calling and the potential

2 Some believe King Lemuel is a pseudonym or other name for Solomon. Some adhere to the idea that it was meant allegorically, applicable to all kings. Others hold to the idea that King Lemuel is a distinct person and king in another realm.

aftermath of such behavior, and a strong appeal to righteous judgment, especially as it relates to those who are poor and/or afflicted.

King Lemuel's mother presented a blueprint outlining the kind of man her son should become and the type of woman he should marry. To teach these things, Lemuel's mother had to embrace and live out (however imperfectly) the portrait she paints.

The question arises, How can sinful women ever live up to the standards of this "perfect-beyond-words" woman?

Many women who come to faith later in life initially find it difficult to view Proverbs 31 as anything but an indictment against us. It is like a mirror reflecting how poorly we measure up to this biblical standard. It is the glorious fact of redemption in Jesus Christ that our former thoughts, words, and deeds have been buried with Christ and we emerge from His resurrection in a newness of life that makes becoming the virtuous woman attainable.

Proverbs 31 provides us with a standard by which we can evaluate our progress in becoming the sanctified persons God wants us to be. It has been said that Proverbs is a commentary on the law-word of God applied to life. So the necessary prerequisite to attaining the status of a virtuous woman must be learning and understanding the law of God.

God's Law—The Key to Self-Discipline

Critics and opponents of Christianity often cite the Bible's view of women as chauvinistic, yet quite the opposite is true. The distorted view of women that we see today is a product of the Enlightenment rather than biblical law applied.³ God's Word gives women an exalted status with the responsibility to manage the home and shape the next generation. It is hard to imagine a higher calling than this.

3 See chapter 11, "Putting Women in their Place."

But the authority of the woman as help-meet is no less real than that of a prime minister to a king; the prime minister is not a slave because he is not king, nor is the woman a slave because she is not a man. The description of a virtuous woman, or a godly wife, in Proverbs 31:10–31 is not of a helpless slave nor of a pretty parasite, but rather of a very competent wife, manager, business-woman, and mother—a person of real authority.⁴

Because of such a high calling, it is obvious that the wife/mother must be prepared to pursue her calling as a chosen profession rather than relying on the “figure-it-out-as-you-go-along” method. As I’ve stated elsewhere, too many women spend more time planning their wedding day and the flower arrangements than they do preparing themselves for the biblical duties that marriage entails. This is no job for amateurs, as Rushdoony notes,

From beginning to end, the Bible makes clear that the Lord requires a total obedience, and that, having given us His covenant grace and law, and climaxed it with the gift of the Spirit, He expects great things from us. The Lord does not call amateur Christians, only full-time professional ones. Nothing is more ridiculous than the idea of many that “full-time Christian service” means the mission field, a pastorate, or some like calling. We are all, whatever we are or wherever we are, called to a full time Christian life and service.⁵

It is the purposeful training in the law-word of God that gives a woman the wisdom to become virtuous. Far from a helpless, weak,

4 R. J. Rushdoony, *The Institutes of Biblical Law* (Nutley, NJ: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1973) 164.

5 R. J. Rushdoony, *The Roots of Reconstruction* (Vallecito, CA: Ross House Books, 1991), 1070.

and irrational individual, as is often her depiction in romantic literature, with God's law as the foundation of her thoughts, words and deeds, the self-disciplined, self-governing Proverbs 31 woman has a genuine foundation by which to demonstrate to her children that she practices what she preaches.

Actions Speak Louder than Words

Note what is not mentioned in verses 10–31. The virtuous woman is not commended for her quiet times of prayer, her Bible study, or her attendance at church functions. Rather, all that is praised is the evidence of her commitment to God by her actions. This highly commended woman is a working woman, self-consciously transmitting by her deeds what is hidden in her heart. In other words, her faith is not a dead one.

As Rushdoony highlights in his *Institutes of Biblical Law* in his section “Marriage and Woman,”

1. Her husband can trust her moral, commercial, and religious integrity and competence (v. 11–12, 29–31).

2. She not only manages her household competently, but she can also manage a business with ability (v. 13–19, 24–25). She can buy and sell like a good merchant and manage a vineyard like an experienced farmer.

3. She is good to her family, and good to the poor and the needy (v. 20–21).

4. Very important, “She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness” (v. 26). The useless woman of the Age of Reason, and the useless socialite or jet-set woman of today who is a showpiece and a luxury, can and does speak lightly, and as a trifler, because she is a trifle. The godly woman, however, has “in her tongue the law of kindness.” People, men and women, who are not

triflers avoid trifling and cheap, malicious talk. Loose talk is the luxury of irresponsibility.

5. *She does not eat “the bread of idleness” (v. 27); i.e., the godly woman is not a mere luxury and a pretty decoration. She more than earns her keep.*

6. *“Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her” (v. 28).⁶*

This is the kind of woman who will oversee the future generation, and the product of the work of her hands will be evidence of the godliness transmitted. She is the one who day-in and day-out instills in her children the principles of Biblical self-discipline and self-government. She is the one who is ready, willing, able, and present, to instruct, correct, guide, and inspire her children to prepare themselves to be active in their service to the Kingdom of God. She is the one who has a vision for an aristocracy of submitted believers actively proclaiming the Crown Rights of Jesus Christ!

The founders of the United States believed in an aristocracy, but not an hereditary one but in the natural aristocracy of ability and talent. Such an aristocracy always rises to the top: the best attitude of a country should be to further its progress to the top rather than to impede it. In other words, superiority asserts itself and governs. If the moral character, if the faith of a people is defective, then the superiority which prevails is of an evil sort, but, if the character be godly, then a godly superiority prevails.⁷

Since the Word of God calls all who bear the name of Christ as members of a royal priesthood (1 Pet. 2:9), the words from King Lemuel’s mother are applicable to any son or daughter in the con-

6 R. J. Rushdoony, *The Institutes of Biblical Law*, vol. 1, 352.

7 R. J. Rushdoony, *The Roots of Reconstruction* (Vallecito, CA: Ross House Books, 1991), 661.

text of their calling. The mother's role is vital in incorporating within the family culture the most important aspects of serving the living God. The call to exercise godly leadership in these verses has a strong parallel to Michah 6:8.

He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.

James 1:27 also echoes these sentiments:

Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

The Crisis of Our Time

With the certain collapse of the humanist state, there is a great need for self-governing individuals, families, and communities to be ready to establish the law of God as the standard for living and governance. God did not fully deliver the Promised Land to the Children of Israel before they were ready to inhabit it (Deut. 7:22). Likewise, we need to be prepared to lead as the opportunities come. As Martin Selbrede explains, we begin this task in our own homes, consistently working to unfetter ourselves from the chains of civil government solutions and handouts.⁸

This practice must begin in the home and give more than lip-service to biblical principles and mandates. Children should witness the faithfulness of their parents in paying their tithes, refusing to live in debt, valuing and sacrificing to provide a Christian education, and refusing to vote for those things the law of God forbids.

⁸ See Martin Selbrede, "Reinventing Leadership" in *Faith for All of Life* (Sept/Oct 2013).

When children see their father and mother cheerfully obeying God's commands and teaching them to do likewise, they will grow to become the kings and queens of a reconstructed society that looks first to the law of God to remedy problems and crises.

Rushdoony encourages us to take heart in our task of Christian reconstruction. His words especially should encourage the woman of the house to silence the belittling voices that whisper to her, telling her that rearing children is below her ability level and she can farm it out to others.

The crisis of our time is a hopeful and heartening fact: it means emphatically that the world is under God's law, that what a man sows that shall he also reap. True, it means times of crisis and judgment, but how else is history cleared of the debris of man's sin and folly? What takes place on television is pale and lifeless when compared to the excitement and development of the world around us. History is the work of God, and it has a good beginning and ending.⁹

9 R. J. Rushdoony, *The Roots of Reconstruction* (Vallecito, CA: Ross House Books, 1991), 883.



15

DON'T TEACH CONCLUSIONS

It needs more than ever to be stressed that the best and truest educators are parents under God. The greatest school is the family. In learning, no act of teaching in any school or university compares to the routine task of mothers in teaching a babe who speaks no language the mother tongue in so short a time. No other task in education is equal to this. The moral training of the children, the discipline of good habits, is an inheritance from the parents to the children which surpasses all other. The family is the first and basic school of man.¹

I often tell parents that one of the *positive* by-products of teaching your children *how* to think biblically (teaching them God's law-word) rather than *what* to think is that, as they mature, they can be one of the many counselors the Bible suggests a person needs to make sound decisions.

One of the most *dangerous* things you can do as a parent is to teach your children to think biblically. Why? Because, once you establish that their chief duty in life is to "Fear God and keep His commandments" (Eccles. 12:13), you have communicated the truth

¹ R. J. Rushdoony, *The Institutes of Biblical Law*, 185.

that *you* and *they* are under the authority of God and governed by the same standard. That automatically invalidates any parental assertion, “My word is law,” and that obedience to the parent must be carried out blindly, without question. This puts a tremendous onus on parents to ensure that the rules they are mandating are, in fact, correctly lined up with God’s Word explicitly or implicitly.²

The goal of education is to prepare useful citizens for the Kingdom of God.³ Part of being *useful* is to be self-consciously and deliberately maneuvering through life, weighing one’s actions and decisions by God’s unchanging standard. When parents (or elders for that matter) demand blind obedience and fail to provide a biblical apologetic for their mandates, they may create a practiced hypocrisy in those under them. Very early on, children learn what things are most important to their elders, and they can become quite adept at giving lip-service in compliance while their hearts remain unchanged.

We continually instruct children that they must *honor their father and mother*. We point out that while they are quite young, this means obedience to instruction and correction. As they mature we must expand on what honoring one’s parents means.⁴ If we do

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- 2 The stewardship responsibility of parents is not given to flawless people. Those who are in the process of being sanctified are the ones training and instructing the children God has given them. This should give all parents a greater impetus to know and apply the law-word of God throughout all areas of their lives. The reality that they, as parents, are not without error should drive them to make sure they are on solid-ground with the rules and regulations of their households. God’s blessings should not be anticipated if they operate any other way.
- 3 See Andrea Schwartz, “Parent-Directed Christian Education,” *Lessons Learned from Years of Homeschooling* (Vallecito, CA: Chalcedon Foundation, 2006), 5.
- 4 A young child demonstrates honor of parents by obedience and compliance. As a person grows into adulthood, embracing the self-discipline that comes about with a practiced application of God’s law-word, honoring becomes respecting decisions and preferences while communicating differences of opinion in a respectful way. Romans 12:10 should be the overriding guideline in dealing with conflict.

not do so as they transition into adulthood, they will never learn how to exercise dominion, and we will never learn how to interact respectfully with the young adults (and eventually mature adults) who are our offspring. Despite the best of intentions, many parents who were rebellious in their youth determine that they will make sure that their children *will not sin* rather than help them deal with the sins that are inevitable in the process of their sanctification. Better to embrace the calling to teach them how to make biblical decisions, rather than trying to construct family life in such a way as to prevent all transgressions at all costs.⁵

The Appeals Process

There must be built into the relationship the means by which children can appeal parental decisions. Part of the parents' duty is to ensure that the means of appeal does not automatically bring about punitive actions against the child. A plan must be in place (and adhered to by parents) that prevents flare-ups, shouting, and harsh words. If we deny this to our children, we have subverted the message of the Scriptures. Aren't our prayers to our Heavenly Father appeals to alter circumstances? By reading God's Word we hear from Him, and in response to our prayers, the Holy Spirit communicates to us. If we fail to establish this principle in our relationship with our growing children, we may be exasperating them (Eph. 6:4) and causing them to stumble (Mark 9:42).⁶

5 By means of analogy: Teaching children phonics is a much more effective and long-term approach to reading rather than attempting to teach them each word in the language. Phonics provides a system to approach unfamiliar words. In a like manner, teaching how to approach life within biblical guidelines is a more Kingdom-driven approach than attempting to teach all potential circumstances they will encounter in their lives.

6 This appeals process serves as a safeguard against parents going too far (becoming dictatorial) in imposing extra-biblical requirements on their children. Tyranny on the part of superiors will certainly provoke God's wrath.

Not all children will want to take the steps necessary for genuine interaction with their parents because it may entail shouting, misunderstanding, and discipline. Often they opt for telling one parent (usually the mom) their grievance(s) and she communicates the upset to their dad. I fell into this trap more than once and I can honestly say nothing very good came out of it. I ended up in the middle of the disagreement and resolution didn't occur because both sides were filtering their opinions and emotions through me. It was a lose-lose situation.

As the expression goes, third time is a charm. By the time my third child was experiencing differences of opinion with her father, I was weary of my previous unsuccessful interventional approach. So I prepared the ground on both sides, dad and child, and encouraged each to express their concerns with the other without me as intermediary, and really listen to each other without assigning the worst of motives to the other person.

Yes, voices were often raised and tears often flowed. Sleep was often deprived because these cathartic moments usually became late night encounters. The situations did not always resolve immediately and there were times when one person would not speak to the other. But, as long as each party in the dispute was honest, and didn't conceal hidden gripes and grievances, resolution eventually occurred.⁷

This policy of open communication is the precursor to conflict resolution in families. Should the problems seem insurmountable, other trusted, believing friends can help keep the molehill from turning into Mt. Everest! On some occasions, I have appealed for assistance to my adult children, and have been grateful that they contributed to the discussion from a biblical foundation.

⁷ Conflict resolution is something that is valuable to learn and practice between husbands and wives, eliminating the shouting and crying so as to better prepare them to deal with the real and expected conflicts that occur with children. Like so many other areas of parenting, a teachable spirit makes this process smoother.

Of course, none of this is a workable solution if God's law is not the foundation upon which a person or family operates. Just using "Bible talk" or frequent quoting of the Fifth Commandment while leaving out the other points of the law is not useful for restoration.

Whereas it is true that the father heads the household, it is under the guidelines of servant-leadership (Mark 10:42–44) and being the foot-washer in imitation of Jesus (John 13:1–17). Both parents need to emulate our Savior, who provided an excellent model for effective teaching and discipleship.

Jesus made ample use of stories, analogies, reproofs, and corrections in His dealings with others. He stated who He was and left it for them to follow or reject Him. He presented to His listeners a confident and unswerving allegiance to God's Word. If parents would emulate how Jesus nurtured His disciples, they would be way ahead of the game in discipling their own children.

Jesus made frequent use of questions, inviting His disciples to reason things out in a context of biblical thought (Mark 8:29, Luke 15:4). He presented Truth and allowed them to come to their own conclusions. Some understood sooner than others (like Nicodemus), and some never embraced His message at all (Judas).

What If My Child Wants to ... ?

A mother recently mentioned to me that one of her daughters expressed interest in someday joining the military. This caused some alarm on her part as she tried to figure out why her daughter had such a desire. Based on how this homeschooled child was being raised, this announcement really took her mother off guard.

In an attempt to help her relate to what her daughter shared, I asked her to consider possible reasons the girl might say this. Mom responded that she thought that her daughter might consider that being a soldier was exciting. As we talked this through, I inquired if as a child she ever had similar desires. She recalled that there was a time in her youth when she was jealous of the chores her brother

was given as opposed to those she was assigned—his seemed like more fun. She told her mother that she wanted to mow the lawn. However, when she finally took a stab at mowing, she was more than willing to return to the chores that were her responsibility. I pointed out that drawing from her own experience could be useful in helping her to understand her daughter.

I suggested that she hear her daughter out and discover what about the military was appealing to her. Since the girl is ten years old, and in no danger of being accepted by any recruiter any time soon, I pointed out she had time to teach a biblical perspective on women in the military, including the obvious physical and emotional differences between men and women, the underreported cases of sexual abuse within military ranks, how being enlisted affects a woman having and running a family, and those Scriptural references that speak specifically to this issue.

She *could* simply tell her daughter, “No. Women shouldn’t be soldiers! Stop talking like that!” Or, she *could* engage her daughter to approach this subject in such a way that her daughter comes to a sound conclusion after an extended time of consideration and reflection.⁸

Those of us who have taken on the role of teacher for our children need to be on our guard to give them the space and opportunity to reach sound conclusions while they are still immature and naive in some areas. If we don’t encourage working out differences of opinion while our children are living under our roof, they will

8 One of my children was determined that she was going to be an astronaut. I knew that that was not likely to happen, but instead of squelching the desire, I used it as an opportunity to let her study and research all she could about the subject, even arranging a tour of NASA in our area. In the process she learned quite a bit regarding aeronautics, rockets, the history of flight, and more. I’m not sure she remembers when the desire for space travel abated, but instead of telling her she was wrong, I allowed her to make that decision on her own.—(Oh, how I wish I had practiced this more with my children in other areas, rather than concluding for them that their ideas were wrong!)

be handicapped when they venture out into the broader society and potentially absorb some of the poison of humanism. Instead of “butting heads,” the potential for helping them reach sound conclusions is augmented if a process already exists within the family to express disagreement and talk subjects out in a God-honoring way.

Teaching is a risky business. What if your students do not really learn the truths you wish to convey? Worse yet, what if they come up with the “wrong” conclusions about what you instructed—perspectives quite different from your own?

If you are a teacher in a day school setting, you might file this under the category of *the cost of doing business*. But if you are a home educator, your graduates don’t migrate away only to return for periodic school reunions. As a parent/teacher you get to see them and interact with them on a regular basis for the rest of your life. You may even be playing with *their* children someday!

It is precisely for this reason that the homeschool needs to be the place where all things are taught from and related to the Word of God. As in the parable of the sower, the homeschooling parent is responsible for sowing *good seed* and must be more concerned with sowing than on the ground the seed lands. Nowhere in that parable does Jesus hold the sower responsible for the ground on which the seeds end up. If your children don’t see eye-to-eye on all matters and concerns, it isn’t a failure on the part of the parent/teacher. By the same token, if children see everything in alignment with their parents without any deviation or disparity, it could mean that both parent and child are mistaken. My point is what *they* end up thinking does not validate or invalidate the teaching you provided. What we are called to be is faithful; the regenerating and sanctifying work in their lives is under the control and jurisdiction of the Holy Spirit.

I have very definite views on current events that my adult children don’t always agree with. Rather than avoid discussion about these topics, we often have lively debates that result in potent food

for thought. Rarely do we alter our positions entirely, but I am continually amazed at how well-reasoned their arguments are. Just recently, after one such dialogue with my son via email, I inquired, “How did you get to be so smart?” His reply, “My teacher made me think too much!!”

R. J. Rushdoony exemplified teaching the Word of God rather than merely transmitting his own conclusions. His writings and lectures did not have persuasion as a focus. No, his work and mission were much more vital than that. He was convinced that if he presented the Word of God faithfully, the Holy Spirit would lead his listeners into all Truth. We homeschooling parents can learn a lot from him, not only from his message (the Bible speaks to all areas of life and thought), but also from his method (unabashedly premising all perspectives from an orthodox, biblical perspective). In the end, that's the kind of legacy that is worth recording on one's lifetime resume—we were found faithful in raising our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.



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