“The Nurture and Admonition”

(by Jim Stauffer)

**Ephesians 6:4**, **“*And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.”*** Thiscoincides with the instruction for everydispensation of God’s word. He said of Abraham, **Genesis 18:19** – **“*For I have known him, to the end that he may command his children and his household after him, that they may keep the way of Jehovah, to do righteousness and justice; to the end that Jehovah may bring upon Abraham that which He hath spoken of him.”***Thispaternal responsibility was considered part andparcel of the man through whom God wouldsend the blessing of salvation through Christ(cf. **Genesis 22:18**).

Later, when Moses was instructing the people of God, training children in the ways of God was considered vital to their way of life. **Deuteronomy 6:6-7**, **“*And these words, which I command* *thee this day, shall be upon thy heart; and* *thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy* *children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thy house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest* *up.”***

[Christmas] is a time of year when parents are scouring the marketplace in search of the appropriate gifts for their children, when all along the greatest gift we could ever give them is access to the gift of salvation. (cf. **Romans 6:23**; **Ephesians 2:8-9**)

It seems a common practice of brethren to expect their children to absorb the teaching of God by some sort of osmosis. They seem to think just taking them to worship 2 or 3 times per week should do the trick. It simply does not work that way and the results of congregations across the country will verify this. Abraham was able to command his household to keep the way of Jehovah. This does not mean “order” them to do such. It means to teach it so that it will be on their heart as Moses said. It should take such a high priority that we meditate on it and discuss it when we “sit”, when we “walk”, when we “lie down” or when we “rise up.” It is the greatest gift we can give. The problem, at least as I have observed, is it comes after secular education (our newest idol) and after hobbies and recreation, and after career planning, etc. And, of course, if we are not careful, it is crowded out of the daily routine altogether.

Nearly anyone who has worshipped with a congregation for any length of time can look back and count the children of the families of that local work and lament the number who never obeyed the gospel. Or many who did wandered from the Lord in their adult lives. When we do this we tend to count the numbers and wonder how many additions would have been necessary for the building to house them. Or how many new congregations might have been spawned in the area. If we had been more determined in this area and thus more successful, how much greater would the influence of the church be in the community?

A final note of sadness over our failure to “bring our children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord,” is the scarcity of men qualified to lead churches as elders. How many congregations go wanting in this area simply because we are not producing disciples from our own families?

Let me encourage the young parents and parents to reverse this trend. Trust in the Lord in this matter and come to realize that if you rear your children to seek Him and His kingdom, then they will never fail in this life or the next. **Matthew 6:33**, ***“But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”***

**God Is Not the Same as His Creation**

(by Gary Henry)

***“In the beginning God created…”*** (**Genesis 1:1**). The first statement in the Book of Genesis affirms that the cosmos was created by God. From that point forward, the Scriptures make it clear that this God was not merely the universe creating itself nor simply a “creative life-force” pervading nature, but rather a personal God who is distinct from the nature that He created. God is presented to us in the Scriptures as a transcendent God; He is radically “other” than His creation. And if that is the truth, then it is a serious mistake to give to the creation the reverence that ought to go to the Creator alone. Contemporary thinkers and writers tend to be generic rather than specific in their concepts of “God.” There is often very little distinction among terms like “spirit,” “the universe,” and “the creator.” God is conceived as simply everything that exists or as a force that animates nature. The way in which “spirituality” has come to be distinguished from “religion” suggests the shift that has taken place with respect to God. Spirituality now encompasses an extremely broad range of philosophies, attitudes, and lifestyles, very few of which have anything to do with a personal God who is distinct from the universe.

The adoration of nature, or even political participation in the environmental movement, is now enough to qualify as “spirituality.” Indeed, in some circles respect for the “web of life” would be seen as a much more enlightened spirituality than that of the religious person who believes in a transcendent, personal Creator. The creation is now firmly ensconced on the throne that once belonged to the Creator.

The apostle Paul wrote of those who long ago ***“exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen”*** (**Romans 1:25**). But whether in its ancient or modern form, the tendency to confuse God with His creation is an intellectual mistake – indeed a spiritual mistake – fraught with the most tragic consequences. When nature is worshipped at God’s expense, not only is God dishonored, but nature is dishonored also. As long as we are false to God, we can never be true to nature. *“Nature has perfections in order to show that she is the image of God, and defects to show that she is only His image”* (Blaise Pascal).