

The Home – A Spiritual Training Center

By Eddie Spencer

God's plan for the spiritual training of the next generation is the home. Sadly, this is not happening in the culture at-large or in many of our churches. I find that the spiritual training of children is not even a pressing concern to many church-going families. The days of an unwavering commitment to Sunday worship and Sunday School, much less the pro-active spiritual education of our children, is quickly diminishing.

I firmly believe the church must be focused and equipped to play more of a primary role in the spiritual training of the emerging generation. What children receive on Sunday morning and other church times may be all the spiritual training many children receive. I know this should not be the case, but too often this is the norm.

While the church will stand in the gap in the 21st century, we must never lose sight of God's idea for the spiritual training of children. God purposed the home to be the primary spiritual training center. The church is to supplement, not supplant, the home. How then is the home to function as a spiritual training center?

First, any good training or educational center needs a faculty. It is crystal clear in the Scriptures that parents are to be the spiritual professors. *"Love the Lord your God... these commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts"* (Deut. 6:6). If parents are to be spiritual teachers, they must be spiritual learners. Parents cannot give what they do not have. What parents possess in their hearts, they are called to *"impress them on their children... and write them on the doorframes of your houses..."* (Deut. 6:9).

The call for parents to be the primary spiritual trainers is a biblical "no-brainer." And, do I even need to point out that this is not just the job of mom? In fact, dads are given explicit exhortation, *"Fathers do not exasperate your children; bring them up in the training of the Lord"* (Eph. 6:4). The legacy of parents passing their faith to the next generation is an eternal one. There is no greater privilege than the opportunity to spiritually train and educate our children to know and serve God for His glory.

Secondly, if parents are to be the spiritual teachers, what do we teach? The Bible is a big book. Below are a few truths to teach and emphasize as we spiritually raise our children:

- **Teach children that God is the Creator.** We did not evolve from pond scum. God is the Creator and children bear in themselves the glory of His workmanship. *"For you created my inmost being, you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made..."* (Ps. 139:13-14). Our children have significance because they are unique creations of God. Their talents, passions, abilities, and personality are to be celebrated and used for God's glory because God is our Creator.
- **We need to teach our children that even though they are uniquely and wonderfully made, they are sinners.** They are sinners because they sin, and they sin because they were born with a sinful nature (Ps. 51:6). This may sound harsh to a modern mindset, yet let the one who rejects such a view watch an undisciplined child. We affirm our children because they are uniquely created. We teach our children boundaries with appropriate punishment because of their sinful nature. Most importantly, the brokenness of the world, much less their need for a Savior, does not make sense unless our children are taught about sin and its consequences.
- **We are to teach our children the essence of our faith, the gospel of Jesus Christ.** Christianity is not a set of rules and moral regulations. At the heart of the gospel is a Holy God who has chosen to initiate relationship with sinful people. He accomplished this through the incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection of His Eternal Son, Jesus Christ. Through faith in Jesus, we can have a now and forever relationship with God. Such a life that is truly life is living for the pleasure and glory of God our Father.
- **We are to teach our children the basic truths of the faith.** *"So then, just as you received Christ Jesus, continue to live in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught..."* (Col. 2:6-7). The children's and shorter catechisms are excellent ways to pass on the basics of the Christian faith, which will strengthen them in the faith for the rest of their life.
- **Parents are to teach and model a life of service and giving.** Life is not all about you, and it is not all about our children. Life is not just about the pursuit of fun and acquisition of stuff. If you want your children to be happy, teach them to give, serve, and sacrifice. *"And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God"* (Micah 6:8). We take our children to piano rehearsals, ball practices, and tutoring lessons. For the sake of their souls, take them to a

homeless shelter, a nursing home, or a third world country to give of themselves and serve, because they need to see us being the Church to our world.

- **Finally, teach your children about the reality of suffering and death.** Teach the biblical truths such as God's sovereignty, God is not the author of evil, and God is good and can redeem evil for good. God will not give us more than we can handle in His strength. Christ declares solidarity with us in our pain and suffering and the glorious hope of Heaven. Teach and model for your children that it is OK to grieve and express sorrow.

Great Peace in the Lord,
Eddie