

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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Rearing Godly Children in Difficult Times

It is not uncommon today to hear older Christians who have already reared their children comment somberly in the presence of young prospective parents, "I certainly wouldn't want to be bringing up children in times like these." It may be innocently done, but it is not helpful. These already anxious young people do not have a choice of times in which to rear children. For them, it is now or never.

Candidly, from the short-term perspective, these are certainly not the best of times for the family. Much has happened in this century that serves to tear at the fabric of domestic life. We have become a city rather than a rural people, living in the anonymity of teeming urban anthills where no one knows or cares who his neighbors are. Our increasing mobility had made us a "nation of strangers" and the once supportive influence of an extended family of grandparents, uncles and aunts, has been lost. Even the homemaker mother has been gradually disappearing before the increasing power of industrialization. Today, for the first time, most American women of childbearing years are working outside the home.

Along with these important social and economic changes, there has been a significant philosophical shift. Our society has been increasingly secularized. Biblical values that once had at least some influence on our institutions have been largely set aside. From a world in which certain values were cherished, even though often violated, we have moved to one which denies that absolute values exist. Out of the passionate individualism which arose during the Vietnam War era has come a hedonistic pursuit of personal fulfillment which is heedless of the consequences to others. Marriage and family commitments are seen as less important than the "finding" of oneself. Drug abuse and mindless sensuality abound. And to this already frightening equation must be added the insidious factor of television, which has the ability to instantly, universally and powerfully infiltrate this moral and spiritual corruption into every American mind.

But if this analysis of our times is accurate in the short term, it certainly does not obtain for the long one. From a wider perspective, current circumstances do not present nearly the challenge to rearing children that past ages have. A few examples will suffice to make the point.

How would you have liked to rear children in the days of Noah, when the whole world was convulsed by violence and every human heart, save two, was wholly set on evil? In spite of the loneliness of their task (you think you're in the minority!) and the ridicule which it must have brought, Noah and his wife reared three sons not only to trust the true God in the midst of a moral cesspool, but to influence three young women into the same commitment.

What chances of nurturing children in righteousness would you have given Jewish parents during Israel's abject bond-servitude in Egypt when even your infant children's lives were under threat from an all-powerful state? Amram and Jochebed reared two sons and a daughter in these very circumstances. In order to save the life of Moses, they were compelled to sacrifice the joys of seeing their youngest child grow daily into manhood and were not even allowed to openly claim him as their own. But the little time they were granted with that son was so well used that he never forgot who he was and, at last, chose affliction with God's people over the pleasures of sin (Hebrews 11 :24, 25).

The New Testament world was no great advance over that of the Old Testament. Fully half the people of the first century Roman Empire were slaves. Human life was cheap and murder was frequent. Divorce was easy and generally accepted. Unwanted infants were simply exposed to die and the females were frequently saved by the enterprising and reared as prostitutes. Every variety of corrupt pagan religion and superstition flourished and was woven into the work-a-day world of all the people. Devotion to some god or goddess was linked to every job and every social occasion. And yet in a world like that, in the midst of an intensely pagan city, a young Jewish girl, married to an unbelieving Greek, reared her son to be one of the great gospel preachers of the early church. With no synagogue in Lystra and only her mother to help with Timothy's spiritual training, Eunice not only succeeded in rearing a godly son, she succeeded magnificently!

And so, when anxious young people approach me with concern and ask if I think it is possible to build solid marriages and rear godly children in these "difficult times", I simply take them by the hand, look them in the eye, and tell them, "Absolutely!" All that is required is that they be willing to pay the price of a surpassing love for God and a deep love for one another which guided the parenting of those successful fathers and mothers who have gone before us.

- Paul Earnhart

HARBORING GRUDGES

One of the most immature and petty of human practices is that of harboring a grudge against our fellowman. The nature of the offense is even more aggravated when we observe its practice among brethren in Christ.

What is a grudge? It is merely the leftovers of an unforgiving heart; it is a clear manifestation of a lack of love. The following passages from the Word of God deal with the subject:

"And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." (Eph. 4:32.)

"Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any; even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye." (Col. 3:13.)

"If any man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God love his brother also." (1 John 4:20, 21.)

If these and a host of other similar passages were observed, the harboring of grudges and its antecedent evils would not exist.

All sins have a deteriorating effect upon those who commit them. But none seems to effect such a rapid corruption of character and personality as that of harboring grudges. Unfortunately, the guilty party is usually the last one to realize that any change has taken place.

May God help us avoid this sin.

- Robert H. West

YOU CAN ... BUT YOU CAN'T ...

You can ignore God's warnings; you can refuse His blessings; you can reject all His wondrous love, but you can't go to heaven doing so.

You can believe any doctrine you choose; you can belong to the church of your choice; you can worship God as you please, but you can't please God by doing so. (2 John 9; John 8:32; Matt. 15:9, 13; Heb. 11:6; Rom. 1:10-17).

It seems that Satan has done a remarkable job of convincing the people that their religion is a matter of THEIR choice, not God's; that it is a matter of their being pleased, not God; that is, if they are pleased, then God must be.

People insist. "I have a right to believe as I please. I have a right to join the church of my choice. I have a right to worship God as I see fit." And I reply, "Yes, you most certainly do." Not only does the constitution of our great Nation give us this privilege, but God, Himself, does too. "Choose you this day whom you will serve" is the way God would have it (see Josh. 24:15).

God created man a free moral agent - that is, He made him with the power to choose between right and wrong, between believing false doctrine and the truth, between worshipping God as He directs and thus pleasing Him, and worshipping God as YOU are pleased to have it, between heaven and hell. - Yes, you have a right to go to hell, but do you prefer to exercise that right?

YES, YOU CAN do as you please, -- BUT YOU CAN'T please God at the same time.

- Grover Stevens, via *Westvue Messenger*, Sept. 17, 1963

The Pharisees

Jesus often had controversy with the Pharisees. Several points about them are worth considering: (1) They were unworthy opponents (Mt. 19:3); (2) they represented a doomed cause (Mt. 23:38); and (3) Jesus said "Let them alone" (Mt. 15:14). Even with the foregoing being true JESUS DID NOT STOP HAVING CONTROVERSY WITH THEM. Matthew records the following accounts of controversy between Jesus and the Pharisees after Jesus said "Let them alone." (Mt. 15:14):

1. The Divorce and Remarriage Question, 19:3-12.
2. Conflict with money changers, 21:12-17.
3. Controversy about the Authority of Jesus, 21:23-46.
4. Discussion over Tribute Money, 22:15-22.
5. Questions of First Commandment, 22:34-40.

And don't forget the Lord's exposition of the false teaching and practices of the Pharisees recorded in Mt. 23. When Jesus said "Let them alone" it is quite obvious that he did not mean "stop debating them." Jesus never cast reflection on them because they could give "book, chapter, and verse" for their practices. He condemned their observing traditions to the breaking of God's Word and of failure to do part of the Law.

- Ferrell Jenkins

- "A smile is a gently curved line that sets a lot of things straight!"
 - "If we are lonely it is because we have built walls instead of bridges!"
 - "Great opportunities come to those who make the most of the small ones!"
 - "He who cannot forgive others breaks the bridge over which he himself must pass!"
 - "The tragedy of our day is not unanswered prayer, it is the unoffered prayer!"
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THIS WEEK'S LESSONS: Sunday morning: *"The Commandment We Forgot!"* (Text: Eph. 6:2-3); Sunday evening: *"The Light Men Failed to Recognize!"* (John 8:12-20).