

## The Stewardship of Children

Texts: Psalm 127:3-5; Ephesians 6:4

Since January 22, 1973 just under 61 million babies' lives in the United States of America have been taken before they had a chance to draw their first breath. It seems ironic that the one nation who has inscribed not only on parchment, but in stone and in the hearts of the majority of her citizens these words, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." These are the words of the second sentence of our Declaration of Independence. Our hearts still break after all these many years.

On this Sanctity of Life Sunday, it has been my custom to deal with staggering statistics concerning this crime against humanity and monstrous sin against Almighty God. But today, I believe the Lord has led me to talk to those of you for whom life is precious and understood to be a gift from God's loving and creative hand. I am certain there is not a parent here that does not desire for their children the very best life afforded by our Creator. Ephesians 6:4 tells us, "And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." When Paul wrote these words he was saying so much more than, "Dads, be nice and train your kids." The word that the English have translated "nurture" comes to us from the Greek word *paideia* which encompasses so much more than "take your kids to Sunday School and a Wednesday evening AWANA program." And it means so much more than what goes on in a daily classroom curriculum between the hours of 8:00 am to 3:00 pm. There are a lot more hours in the day besides 8-3, Sunday and Wednesday night. The concept of *paideia* in the ancient Greco-Roman culture encompassed a 24-7 enculturation of a child to prepare that child to be the perfectly balanced citizen when he takes his place in the polis. This required training mentally, physically and philosophically. When *paideia* was used, the understood meaning was that the ancients had every intention to train the perfect man steeped in the unbelieving Hellenistic culture of the day. It was the belief that this young person, once grown, would be part of the citizenry that would shape and maintain the democracy or republic personified in the aristocratic elite. What Paul was saying in Ephesians 6:4 was actually subversive. He was saying that God has the only perfect way a person should live and it is housed in Christianity. And when Paul used *paideia*, he was saying don't let the unbelieving world bring you into their concept of the ideal man; change your culture by living the Christian experience. And the great engines of change are to be the parents.

### **1. THE FAMILY**

Congress may decide to declare there is no such thing as gravity. They may put it to a vote and the news agencies may all report what has taken place, but they have not removed gravity. One may even put it to a test by jumping from the JPMorgan Chase Tower downtown. You may enjoy the freedom and sense

of overcoming gravity for a very brief period of time--but soon the abrupt and sudden stop would remind any and all observing that the congressional declaration was a total farce.

The Supreme Court missed it 46 years ago in making it legal to take the life of an unborn baby and the Supreme Court drastically missed it again, when on June 26, 2015 the court held in a 5 - 4 decision that the Fourteenth Amendment requires all states to grant same-sex marriages and recognize same-sex marriages granted in other states. God defines the family in Mark 10:6-9, "But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife; And they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." Man cannot change this truth. This is God's only blessed program to propagate (Genesis 1:27, 28) the human race. The family is also chosen by God to be the central location for the *paideia* of God to take place (Deuteronomy 6:3-13).

## 2. THE RESPONSIBILITY

Psalm 127:3-5; Malachi 2:14, 15; Mark 10:13-16; Mark 9:42

Having children is a most awesome responsibility. We enter a partnership with God. It is important to note that only God makes the child; we do not. God chooses the avenue of male and female, but only God gives life. Ruth 4:13: "So Boaz took Ruth, and she was his wife: and when he went in unto her, the LORD gave her conception, and she bare a son."

The parents are assigned by God to provide, protect and discipline the children. Ephesians 6:2, 3: "Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;) That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth."

Proverbs 13:24; Hebrews 12:6-13. We are required to discipline our children, but we must always keep in mind the ultimate goal (Proverbs 23:22-26; Galatians 4:19). We need to also keep in mind that as we work with our kids, God is also working, not only through us, but in us for His glory (Galatians 6:1; James 1:4).

## 3. THE IMITATION

Ephesians 5:1; I Corinthians 11:1

The word we translate "followers" comes to us from the Greek word *mimetes*. This is where we get the English word "mimic." It means we are to be an imitator of God. As we rear our children this is something we should always keep in mind. We should ever keep in mind that the Gospel of Jesus Christ relates to everything we do, especially in the matter of child-rearing. I John 3:16: "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." Our great goal is to see our kids become Christians and to live like Christians.

We enter redemption through justification. After we are justified, we enter sanctification. We don't become justified through the route of sanctification, we become sanctified through the route of justification. We are justified by grace and

faith alone, apart from the deeds of the law (Romans 3:20). When I was disciplined in my youth, I never forgot that my membership in the family was never at stake. When I was sent to my room in discipline, I was still in the family, even though I was temporarily out of fellowship. Our children ought to always be aware that they are always family.

In willing sacrifice, our Lord and Savior gave Himself freely to redeem us. Sometimes in self-pity, a parent is tempted to attempt to play on a disobedient child's emotion by saying things such as, "Do you realize what you are doing to me?" It is obvious that a disobedient child is oblivious to your pain as a parent, otherwise they would not be behaving in a rebellious manner. And rather than receiving repentance from them, we more often see a hardening against our demand for pity. Let us be imitators of Christ "...who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Hebrews 12:2b). Let us sing with sacrificial joy, believing God for the end result! Zephaniah 3:17; Matthew 26:26-30.

-Pastor Pope-