

Sharing God's Truth With Those We Love

It seems like every week I hear from several of our newspaper readers and radio listeners, contacting me about their grief and concern over loved ones who are wayward and lost. They want my prayers and my advice on how they can reach them for Christ.

In every instance, they have been praying for their loved ones for a very long time... their kids, their spouses, their extended family and friends. These are serious, true Christians, saved by the blood of Jesus and filled with the Holy Spirit, and their hearts GRIEVE for those they love so much, but cannot seem to "get through to" concerning spiritual matters.

In many cases, these are parents and grandparents whose children and grandchildren grew up attending church, youth groups and have HEARD the Word of God their whole lives, yet when they come of age, they reject their faith. In other cases I hear from folks who are concerned about their parents, now reaching the end of their lives, and still seem to have no time and no interest in eternal matters.

I understand just what they are going through, because I, too, have those I dearly love that just will NOT listen or care about God, their Creator. They live their lives according to their own will, and suffer lives of heartbreak, mistakes and constant ills. Others I love seem to have no problems in life at all – everything is fine for them, and these are even tougher nuts to crack, because since all is going so well for them, they feel they have no need or "use" for God.

It's all so very sad. I have heard it said that witnessing to your own family and loved ones is the hardest and toughest

type of evangelism there is. Perhaps because we are so close to the situation... these are not just folks we meet on the street or at work or at a cafe, somewhere between "coincidence and God's will," – these are our dearest loved ones, and it is very personal to us. Maybe it is because we just seem to have a harder time saying what really NEEDS to be said to those closest to us. Seems like satan is always able to silence our tongues and it is frustrating. We don't want to turn them away further, we don't want to come across as "holier than thou," and so instead, we often times just say nothing at all. It just seems "too hard" to speak.

The Bible tells us, "train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it." That is God's Word and promise to us, and therefore, we can be assured that it is absolutely, irrefutably true. But we must examine what this Scripture is really saying. It's saying "Train up your children to know the things of the Lord. Let them come to know and understand WHO their Creator is, what SIN actually is, how we are so predisposed to it and separated from God, but also how the Father loved us so much that He made a way for us to put the enemy of our souls under our feet, because Christ has already done that, and if we are truly His children, we have the authority in Jesus to do the very same.

The Scripture means we TRAIN our kids... get that: WE train our kids... they see our faith, our genuine faith, lived out in front of their eyes all the years they are growing up in our homes as we prepare them to leave the nest and go out on their own.

One thing I hear a lot is that "we took them to church every Sunday. They GREW UP in the church. They attended youth group regularly. So WHAT in the world happened?"

Sadly, THAT MAY BE the very problem. You see, we are two – and possibly three – generations away now, from when attending church really meant something. And attending church is only a

small PART of the Christian life.

You see, nowadays, here in America, "attending church" is often the WHOLE of one's Christian experience. And things in most churches today are not good. In many cases, they are not even biblical. Christianity has become something we "add on" to our busy lives, it is no longer our LIVES. It has become an ACTIVITY we take part in; no longer is it WHO WE ARE.

The messages preached in most churches for the past few generations has been less than genuine, and instead of Christ-likeness being modeled, it is hypocrisy. Youth group activities consist mainly of silly entertainment, with a little "Bible" thrown in to make it look legitimate. But it's really about keeping the kids busy, entertained and "fun enough" to hold their interest for an hour or two. The same is true of Sunday School, and "Childrens' Church." I guess what I'm saying is, if that was the case, where you simply raised your kids "in the church," as they say, there's a good chance it may have done more harm than good.

If your kids did not see the true Christian life modeled for them every day in your home; if the Father in the home did not lead as the spiritual minister, but instead left those duties up to Mom and the church; if the whole of their Christian lives consisted of a couple hours on Sunday and Wednesday night, but never went any deeper than that, then sadly, you may have inadvertently set them up for failure.

We are so busy these days. I understand. It's hard to carve out time in our hectic schedules for regular time with God in our homes. For parents of young children, I would advise that it is NOT too late for you. IF you make this a priority now. But it has to be a REAL priority; a primary concern. In fact, it needs to be THE primary concern, above all else. Above sports activities, above extra curricular school activities, above watching TV, playing video games and all other forms of entertainment. And especially, it needs to be FAR above

“screen time” on your phones, tablets and computers. The things of God need to take front and center priority in our entire lives... everything else must be WAY down the list.

So what DOES it mean to “train up a child in the way he should go?” Moses spoke the most important message of his life at the end of his days, as he knew his life was coming to a close, and he needed to impart the most essential information to his people before he died. Look at Deuteronomy 6:

“These words that I am giving you today are to be in your heart. Repeat them to your children. Talk about them when you sit in your house and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Bind them as a sign on your hand and let them be a symbol on your forehead. Write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.” That sounds pretty important to me... We ought to take heed. The things of the Lord our God need to be first and foremost in every aspect of our lives. When our children SEE us living out our professed faith in God FOR REAL... THAT is what impacts them. When they see the power of the Holy Spirit working in every situation we encounter; when they see how we respond in Godly, biblical ways to even the most desperate and seemingly hopeless crises we all go through – THAT is what impacts them. FAR MORE than a pizza party and a movie at their weekly youth group.

But what if we have DONE that and our kids and grandkids have still chosen to go astray? What if we have been praying for them ‘til we can pray no more and still those we love so dearly remain hard hearted and calloused to the things of God? Well, Scripture does not lie... those seeds HAVE been planted. It is up to God to give the increase. The Word says, “when he is old, he will not depart from it.” Very true. But what it does NOT say is “how old is OLD?” It may be early adulthood. It may be when THEY begin having children. It may be on their deathbed, long after you’re gone. But we can be assured that God’s Word remains

steadfastly true. If we have trained them up in the true fear and admonition of the Lord, then when they are old, they will remember. This should encourage us.

Still, it is a tough battle. It's a very EMOTIONAL battle, as we are forced to watch those we love struggle and continue to reject the Lord. And maybe in your case, it's not your kids. Maybe it's your spouse. Maybe it's your son's wife. Maybe it's your sister, who has a form of godliness but denies the power thereof, because she is stuck in "churchianity" and refuses to ever come out of that safe space, that "BOX" that the modern American church uses to contain the sheep and keep them fat and happy and oblivious to the WHOLE counsel of God's Word. Maybe it's a friend who is quite content living in sin and debauchery, and is unwilling to seek the Lord because he KNOWS he is going to hell because of the way he's lived for 70 years and he really believes there's no hope for him. Or, maybe he just can't be bothered to "change."

We ALL have loved ones in all of these situations. We all know SOMEONE we deeply care about that we want to reach for Christ. And again, it seems to be those closest to us that are the most difficult to witness to.

I would suggest that we do three things: 1) Pray and ask the Lord to guide you, through His Holy Spirit, as to how to approach that person, because each person is different and each will respond with whatever sort of method resonates with them the most. 2) Live out your own life and model for them what a true Christ-follower IS and DOES. Often times how you spend your free time, how you respond to crisis situations, what they see you value the most in life will speak volumes to them and Lord willing, they will come to a point where they want what you have.

This has happened to me more than once, and my wife has experienced the same. People we work with, those who are mere acquaintances, who live absolutely Godless lives, who WE may

think there is “no hope for,” will eventually come to a place where they need someone to talk to, and THEY will come to YOU for advice on something deeply troubling to them... This is your opportunity to speak LIFE to them in Jesus’ name. Don’t let the enemy keep you from boldly sharing your “secret.” Because the Gospel should NEVER be a secret to those around you. They should be able to look at you and see JESUS.

And 3) do not be ASHAMED of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation for everyone who believes. Remember the words of Revelation: we overcome the enemy “by the blood of the Lamb, the word of our testimony, and loving not our own lives, even unto death.” Life can change in a heartbeat, for all of us. Tomorrow is promised to none of us. But one thing remains true: the blood of the Lamb, our Savior, Jesus Christ, has already overcome the enemy, and all power is given unto Jesus both in heaven and on Earth. And our Lord said that we would do even greater things than He, if we follow His commands and stay connected as a branch to His tree of Life.

Now remember, we were instructed to not cast our pearls before swine. Pretty strong language, but essentially, that means simply that the worldly, carnal person CANNOT comprehend spiritual things, because they are spiritually discerned, and they do not have (or in many cases want) the Holy Spirit. It is too scary for them at first... so do not think it some great accomplishment if you manage to get your lost loved one or friend to go to church with you and listen to a sermon. Because chances are great that that will just fall of deaf ears, like it always has. Jesus sent US – HIS children – to do the work, personally, one on one. We don’t drag people to church and expect them to get saved. WE are the ones who have to do the heavy lifting and hard work, and get our hands dirty, risk getting our pride hurt... WE are the ones who need to be vulnerable enough to share all that we know.

This comes, as Revelation tells us, through the word of our

testimony. Our personal testimony is a VERY STRONG tool. When God gives you the opportunity, do not hesitate for a second, because you may never get another one, and if you miss it, you'll regret it forever. Always be ready to share YOUR testimony. We all have one. Don't preach complicated theology they cannot understand, since it's spiritually discerned. Just tell them what God did for YOU. How YOUR heart, mind and life were transformed in Christ. How God gave you all the desires of your heart – not by giving you everything you ever asked Him for, but rather by transforming YOUR desires to fall into line with HIS desires. HIS desires became yours, and thereby YOU were transformed, in the renewing of your mind. You were born again, and filled with the Holy Spirit, the Counselor, who is always with you.

And lastly, again, do not be afraid to speak. Do not let the enemy silence you. Revelation 12:11 concludes, "...loving not our own lives, even unto death." Put away your pride and fear of rejection. The word "minister" means "servant," and as God's children, we are to be servants of all, ministering to all, especially those we love the most... therefore, our job is to minister, regardless of what it may cost us. Let's be honest. Sharing your testimony with your loved ones is NOT going to cost you your life. But even if it did, what is the worst that could happen? You'd simply be ushered into the throneroom and hear those words, "well done, thy good and faithful servant!" You see, we literally have NOTHING to be afraid of! Also remember: God does NOT want ANYTHING from you that doesn't cost you SOMETHING!

Having done all of this, if our loved ones continue to reject God and His Word, then we have done all we are called to do. But let us remain steadfast and not grow weary in well doing. Let us remain faithful to the call. I have struggled with this with a loved one a very long time. And I believe the Lord has shown me that this person WILL indeed come to the Lord's table – but perhaps not until the day of my own

funeral. And if that is the case, if that is God's will, then Lord, let it be. I pray those we have a burden in our hearts for will respond to all our efforts. But let us always remember... one plants the seed, another waters, but it is GOD Himself who gives the increase. Amen.

Audio CDs and transcripts of this message are available when you call me at (715) 486-8066 or email Rob@WisconsinChristianNews.com. Ask for message number 239.

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