

## Childhood Preparations for War – *Psalm 127:3-5*

**Introduction** – Training our children, the process of education in the Lord, is something which should be understood biblically. And part of understanding our charge regarding our children (Eph 6:4) is to see the goal, the end for these children, which our text here seems to describe for us. Much more than a Christian worldview that defends the faith, God intends the church to break down strongholds and take captive every thought, against which even the gates of Hades cannot prevail.

**Biblical Warfare** – We must understand the metaphorical context of the Psalm. We must understand the antithesis of two seeds, two sides, and the war in which we live. Why is there a martial theme in the goal of childrearing?

**The Antithesis** (Gen 3:15) – We educate our children because there has been a war since the Fall. We are to train our children for the fundamental battle and we are to train them to win. Every nation, every vocation, every station in life, is to bow the knee to the Lord Jesus Christ (Psalm 67, Phil 2:9-11). The decisive blow in this war was Jesus Christ's death and resurrection where He defeated the devil; His victory also is the grounds for our justification and sanctification.

**God the Warrior** – “*The Lord is a man of war, the Lord is His name*” (Ex 15:3). He is “*The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle*” (Psalm 24:8). Disciples of this Warrior regularly are described with martial language (Eph 6:10, 2 Cor 10:3-4, 1 Tim 1:18, 6:12, 2 Tim 2:3).

**The Enemy** – Our enemy is the devil, along with the world and the flesh. These are intertwined in one sense (for instance 1 John 2:16), but it is helpful to distinguish as well – the battle is both internal and external. Psalm 127:5 is not describing a healthy dialogue with the enemies in the gate (in fact it could be translated “*shall destroy the enemies in the gate*”). The Word of God is a two-edged sword; it is the sword of the Spirit. It cuts, flays open, and destroys.

**The Impossibility of Neutrality in Education** (Prov 1:7, Matt 12:30) – Understood as war, we see that it is impossible to train up our children in some kind of ‘neutral’ territory. But Christians in our day have bought into this lie. We have done so because we do not see a war before them nor a promised victory in the battle. Fundamental assumptions about the nature of truth, goodness, and beauty are either submissive to the declared Word of God, or they are in rebellion to it. It has been said that education is one of the most religious things we do. It should also be said that it is one of the most martial things that we do.

**Biblical Boot Camp** – If we are to understand the discipling of the nations as war, then we should understand the education of our children as boot camp.

**The Tools of Education are also The Weapons of This Spiritual War** – Since creation, God has commanded us to go out and collect things in the world, name and evaluate them, and then refashion them for utility and beauty. Here is the classical Trivium. We can see the pursuit of knowledge, understanding, and wisdom, commanded in Proverbs and Psalms (i.e. Prov 19:11, Psalm 111:10, Prov 15:2). In other words, we are to take dominion over the entire created world, both the physical world around us, and the world of ideas, propositions and beliefs. And we are to take dominion of these things as servants of the living God, not as autonomous humans seeking to eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

**“Why am I preparing for war when Dad isn’t fighting?”** – The most critical element in a child’s education (and particularly a son’s) is not the curriculum, but his father’s example. Do your children see you search the scriptures? Do your children see you wrestle to think biblically about everything? What is your choice of subjects at the dinner table? We are all in training and we are all in the battle. Make sure they see and experience you leading it.

**Biblical Faith** – We must read Psalm 127 in light of the promises God has given to us for our children (Ps 102:25-28, 103:15-18, Ezek 37:24-26, Luke 1:48-50, Acts 2:37-39). This means the training (education) of our children must be based upon faith in the triune God of scripture. Nothing must be taught from an attitude of agnosticism or pluralism, which is what every non-Christian form of education does.

**A Demeanor of Trust** (Look back at Psalm 127:1-2) – This means our demeanor is one of faith, hope and love – not a sour disposition towards the work given to us, to the children given to us, or the future promised to us.

**Preparing Divisions** – One “division”, the government school system, is a traitor, and so we pray for its ultimate downfall (and just as Daniel could pray for the downfall of Babylon while faithfully serving in the system, so a Christian may serve in a system while praying for the system’s ultimate downfall). Other divisions exist, and you can picture them by methods and/or by families.

**Countless Methods** – Preparation for war and the warfare itself will use countless methods, and there are times to sit down and consider what is working best for your family. Wisdom considers that which is good in the various lawful methods which exist and is careful to glean from the other methods employed.

**The Father’s Responsibility** – Eph 6:4 makes very clear that it is the father who will answer to the Lord for his children. He may faithfully (and most appropriately) delegate his duties to his wife, to tutorial services, to a school, or to any number of options. But he may not abdicate his fundamental responsibility, which must include hands-on involvement in the training up of his children.

**Conclusions** – In warfare, as in all hard work, it is important to rally the troops with a well-defined objective. Here it is. God has given promises to us and to our children, to a thousand generations. Those promises have been given, not only for our comfort, but for a particular end: the discipling of the nations. And this is nothing less than a declaration of war upon the gods of false religions and their followers. And this is why our children (and us parents) must understand – it’s “back to school” time.

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