

The Ongoing and Hard Work of Nurturing our Children in the Lord

Introduction – In the book of Philippians, Paul says, “Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. For me to write the same things to you is not tedious, but for you it is safe.” Paul has an immediate context, but in all areas of our discipleship, we can find these words a good admonition. In the arena of child-rearing and the Christian education our Lord demands for our children, we can never hear these exhortations enough – “Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.” (Phil 3:12-14)

Childrearing: By Faith (Rom 1:17) – The beginning of our duties in all aspects of our obedience as God’s covenant people is faith. Put another way, the heart of covenant-keeping is promise-believing. Our work must flow out of our joyful expectation of God’s favor upon us and upon our children, *from faith to faith*.

One of God’s Purposes (Mal 2:15) – A central reason for faithful, covenant-keeping marriages is for godly offspring rendered to God.

Settled in the Promises of God (Psalm 102:25-28, 103:17-18) – These promises are claimed by the mother of our Lord (Luke 1:48-50) and applied to the children of New Covenant parents (Eph 6:1-4).

Our Hope in Future Grace (Is 65:22-23) – As the gospel goes out to all the world over generations, we are instructed to expect to see the curse on childrearing and on our work upon the ground reversed. Our hope in our childrearing is the hope of gospel maturity in the world and a progressive manifestation of Christ’s victory over all the created order.

Discipline: By Faith – It is not enough to discipline our children, although we must. We must do so by faith.

The Promise and Warning (Prov 13:24) – If you do not discipline your children, you are a fool. The scriptures teach that you hate your children. And your love is manifest in your discipline – if it is by faith.

Organic, Not Mechanical (Heb 11:6) – If you discipline your children *without faith*, your discipline is faithless. You are no better than a tyrant, a bully getting his own way. Technique is helpful, but faith is indispensable.

Did it Work? (Prov 20:30) – Believe the promises, not the immediate results. Faith is the confidence in things yet unseen. New parents and veteran parents both need to remember this.

The Atmosphere of Godly Discipline (Col 3:12-15) – When discipline occurs, fellowship has been broken. For a child growing up in a Christian home, he will desire to return and remain in that fellowship *only when* that fellowship is sweet.

Education: By Faith – It is not enough to send your children to a Christian school, nor to homeschool. If it is to be a truly Christian education, it must be done by faith.

The Environment of Education – There is no such thing as religious neutrality in anyone’s educational material, method, or philosophy.

“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge” (Prov 1:7) means that you cannot go anywhere in pursuit of knowledge without answering this fundamental question – ‘do you fear the Lord?’ If it is true that God created the universe *ex nihilo*, and that ‘in Him we live and move and have our being’, then how can we ever faithfully study anything without acknowledging the full authority of God over the creation and providence of that thing? As faithful disciples, we must learn to bring every thought captive to Christ, and to ‘the Queen of the sciences’.

The Lie of the Enlightenment (Rom 1:18-31) – When it comes to acknowledging where truth comes from, and whether or not there is a truth, you have only two options. Either we openly acknowledge and thank God for all things, declaring His glory in everything – or we suppress the truth in darkness, but pretend that we are wise by proclaiming ourselves to be the center of everything. This is the only way to support a so-called secular education system.

The Goal of Education (Psalm 78:1-8) – The goal is to place, set, and send our children, by faith, on the road of faithfulness, as worshippers of Jehovah. The Word of God is to be brought to bear on everything, and everything we study is to be brought under the authority of the Word, and studied in light of that truth. Deuteronomy 6 is all about One God over everything, people responding with their whole beings, and proclaiming His Lordship in every aspect of life to the next generation entrusted to us.

Several ‘New’ Applications – When the Word is brought to bear, the Spirit often makes old commandments ‘new’ in the sense of reformed, refreshed, or revitalized.

Rejoice Always (Phil 4:1, John 15:13) – If there is no greater love than to lay down one’s life for his friends, then there is no greater joy than in faithfully loving your children in the Lord, nurturing them in the training and admonition of the Lord. Make sure it shows.

Be Content Now (Heb 13:5, Phil 4:6-7) – It isn’t perfect, so settle down and put your hand to the plow. But do so by faith, content in what He has provided for now. His Word has declared peace beyond understanding. Walk in that peace.

Straining Now (Gal 6:9) – We are to grow tired, because the work will be hard. But we are not to grow weary, because the work, *done by faith*, is going to render good fruit in due time.

Reformed and Always Reforming (Phil 3:12) – The work will go on and on. We have much to recover and master. We have many blindspots. If God is kind, our grandchildren, standing on our shoulders like a maturing fruit tree, will find the harvest more plentiful.

Covenant Community (Gal 6:10) – Look around at those in the midst of this hard work. How has God equipped you to show particular grace to those in need?