

Cyber Truths By E-mail

2. When You Can Do No More (February 23, 2005)



Restoration Ministries International

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Dear Friends,

This is lengthy, but we feel it will be worth your while if you are struggling with crying out to God on behalf of children who are making unwise and unbiblical life choices.

In the late 70's I was Controller for a Christian college. That is, I handled the finances for the school. It is a job that has such a negative connotation in the minds of faculty, staff, and students. You are perceived as a 'constraining force' in the lives of people. You don't make the budget, but you enforce it. And, in the free-flowing atmosphere of academia, your job is even harder. In short, everyone has a negative view of the "business office."

This is the position in which our Lord placed me after 10 years in the military. In this office, 14 women worked for me. The negative attitudes of others on campus toward our office often drained these ladies emotionally. When I took over as Controller I found most of their conversations had a negative note. A lot of time was spent as they tried to help each other cope with some difficult situation involving someone on campus.

I knew God wanted me to do something about the situation I walked into. The first thing I did was keep the office closed for 15 minutes each morning so we could pray together. The women initially feared doing this because they perceived such an action would only draw more ire from the rest of the campus if they were inconvenienced. I simply said, "There is nothing more important than seeking God for the help we need from Him to carry out His purposes."

I set in motion some other actions to try to give the campus a better impression of both my role as Controller and my office staff. Even being called

"Controller" in a free flowing academic community is a baggage-laden title! I wanted people to get to know me as a person, so Sue and I volunteered to direct a campus student fellowship that met on Sunday nights. At its peak about 20% of the students attended. And, on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday I played basketball at lunchtime with a group of faculty and staff. On Tuesday I attended a prayer group/Bible study. And, on Thursday I would take a faculty or staff member out to lunch. This was more to me than just a job revolving around college finance!

Keep in mind I was responsible for the well-being of 14 people. In the Navy I was trained that I was responsible for:

1. The operational readiness of those under me;
2. Their morale.

When I read the Bible after 8 years in the Navy, I realized how Biblical these two requirements are for anyone who walks in the responsibility of authority, whether in a home, business, or military.

But no matter what I did as Controller, I could only help reduce how far we were into "negative territory" as far as our office was perceived. We never got back to "neutral territory" in the perception of others on campus, never mind positive territory! Yet, the office staff appreciated what I attempted to do on their behalf, and that boosted their morale.

Parenting In a Lawless Church Culture

The Holy Spirit brought the above story to mind early this morning as Sue and I were discussing the many parents we are hearing from who are facing crises with their grown children. The children grew up in homes with church attendance, youth group, etc. But still

these adult children have pursued a rebellious path that's inflicted great hurt on the parents.

It isn't the children we want to address in this e-mail. We want to encourage you parents. Psychology has done many parents a great disservice over the past 60 years. It has placed greater emphasis on behavior modification than on Biblical heart-modification. Parents have been falsely lured into evaluating their children by their behavior rather than by their heart attitude. We've written about this in newsletters.

Yes, it's good to help people improve their parenting skills. But, there is a "dark side" to the ministry of behavior-modification ministries about which parents need to be warned. This "dark side" produces the years of false guilt that plague so many parents today. This satanic trap keeps them from experiencing the fulness of Jesus. The effect of "behaviorism" acts like witchcraft, controlling parents by making them feel 'more responsible' for the outcome of their children than God does.

To counteract this emotional pit, two things from God's vantage point need to be embraced by every parent:

1. Each parent does the best he or she can for their children with what the parent has going for themselves. Every parent has their own spiritual and biological heritage..., their own generational strongholds..., and a myriad of other variables that impact their parenting.

We've met many young adults raised in the most loving and God-fearing homes, and they still chose rebellion and a sinful path in life. We've encountered those who were raised in the most awful circumstances and have grown to be true servants of God.

2. The Bible reveals that every person

born is bent on sinning and is headed for hell. That cute little baby has more propensity to sin than do good. God tells us this basic and critical parenting truth: "The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time" (Genesis 6:5).

Think about it for a moment: Who taught Adam and Eve to sin? Who taught Cain how to murder? To sin is the predisposition of every human being! No one has to teach you to sin.

Jesus tells us, "What comes out of a man is what defiles him. For from within, out of men's hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man" (Mark 7:20-23).

Yes, God commands you to fear Him and to teach your children His ways. Just as I tried as Controller of that college, you must do your best with what you have going for yourself. But you have NO CONTROL over the sin nature of your children. You can correct it, but in the end that child must overcome the evil of his or her own heart by owning the depth of his or her own depravity. No one can be blamed for someone else's sin. God laid this principle down in Deuteronomy 24:16: "Fathers shall not be put to death for their children, nor children put to death for their fathers; each is to die for his own sin."

When Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit in the Garden, the Knowledge of Good and Evil became part of the legacy of mankind. Tragically, we often choose knowledge of evil over good. But God told Cain (and us) what we must do: "Then the LORD said to Cain, "Why

are you angry? Why is your face down-cast? If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it" (Genesis 4:6,7).

Centuries later, the apostle James affirms our basic nature: "When tempted, no one should say, 'God is tempting me.' For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death" (James 1:13-15).

[We are both very conscious of what we are sharing here. In our video segment The Fear of God, which is already on our website, and Why Jesus Died, which we are working on now, man's depravity was clearly brought home to us again.]

Over the years at our retreat center, Sue and I met few people who had more challenging upbringing than we had. Yet we marvel over what our Lord has done to change both of us! I talked this over with my wife and my brother Tom. We've seen a common thread in each of our lives: We went on in life not holding ANYTHING against our parents. Nor did we try to prove to them that we were better parents than they'd been or more successful in life than they were. That thread gave us freedom to honor them, and God blessed us for that choice.

Our Lord has been true to His Word in our lives: "'Honor your father and mother'—which is the first commandment with a promise— 'that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth'" (Ephesians 6:1-3). Sadly, we meet an ever-increasing number of embittered adult children who

have nothing going right for them. They choose sin over forgiveness.

Parents, you can ask forgiveness from your children if the Holy Spirit convicts you. But, don't get hung up on false guilt if you have a child who is following a sinful and dishonoring path. Your attitude only compounds your problem before God. Satan would love nothing more than to control your emotions through false guilt, and to have you doubting God's ability to change things in answer to the prayers of a righteous parent.

We want to speak especially to you parents who home school your children or send them to Christian schools. You may be observing "Christian behavior" in your children, but be careful! Over the past 3 decades we've seen the REAL FRUIT of many such children — it is pride. They grow up controlled by two sinful motivations disguised behind "Christian behavior":

1). They seek achievement for its own sake. That is, they enjoy recognition for their accomplishments.

2). They evaluate how "good" they are by comparing themselves with others whose actions they consider to be greater evil.

In either case, they never become servants of the living God. They live in a prideful tower that even our Lord Himself must oppose.

For all you parents:

We want to emphasize one crucial point: Nothing else matters in your child's life except that he or she is welcomed at the Judgment Throne! NOTHING....

Especially for those who embrace false, easy-believism gospels: Salvation is never given at the beginning of the spiritual journey, but is experienced at the

end of our lives when our names are proclaimed in heaven from the Lamb's Book of Life. It drives me crazy to hear people speak about their children, "Oh, he's saved. He gave his life to Jesus at 4, but he's been living with a woman for 10 years." Or, "She's saved. This is her third marriage, and she says God will eventually lead her to the right man."

Again, for all you parents:

If the Holy Spirit convicts you, ask forgiveness from your children. Whether they choose to forgive or not is their responsibility. You can't control the outcome. Let God do His thing in answer to your righteous prayers. And, equally important, put aside your downcast spirit. It is satanic at its core because it reveals your doubt and unbelief toward our Lord. He will never answer your prayers if your life defames Him by dis-

trust.

Please, you can't control your child's sin nature any more than you can fully guarantee that you will never sin. First, ensure that your prayers are answered by our Father by living a life of repentance that turns away from sin and receives our Father's full and free forgiveness. If your children are choosing to live in sin, pray for God to pour a spirit of repentance on them. That's the only way they can be changed! If you still have children at home, teach them the crucial nature of living a repentant life. If you live repentantly, AND, if they learn to live repentantly, you will all be "successful" in our Father's sight.

Wanting to encourage you,

Mike & Sue Dowgiewicz