

**August 6, 2011**  
**Train Up a Child to Live Powerfully**

*"Train a child in the way he should go,  
and when he is old he will not turn from it" (Proverbs 22:6).*

What do you think it means to *"train a child in the way he should go?"* From ancient times this passage meant that parents should get to know the *particular bent* of each child, the particular way God has made them in their strengths and weaknesses, interests and abilities. Then the mother and father, along with the help of others, can guide each child into a life goal and vocation that would glorify our Father according to His design for them.

If you have multiple children, you're probably amazed at how different and unique each one is! Each of your children has different intelligence, aptitudes and talents that you as a parent can readily recognize. When, what, and how to present what each child needs to learn will vary. Yet how much more effective will your interaction and shaping of your child be as you tailor experiences that prompt responsiveness and enthusiasm! And that comes from getting to know what's going on inside each child as interests spark and fade.

Recently our nephew Lee, his wife Chestina, and their six-year-old daughter Seina visited us from Philadelphia for 9 days to go camping in the Colorado mountains. They're especially dear to us because as devoted followers of Jesus, they represent a very small minority among our relatives who are intentionally seeking to grow in His likeness and serve His interests. Both of these younger people (early 40s) have determined to raise Seina to be a loving and bold follower of Jesus, growing in His character and love. We've been privileged to play a small part as "spiritual" grandparents in Seina's development as we've spent much time talking with her parents weekly.

We want to share with you some of the particulars of our time together with them to encourage you in whatever opportunities you have with your own grandchildren or with the youngsters of others close to you. Prior to their arrival, Sue had purchased eight DVDs, "Heroes of the Faith," from Voice of the Martyrs. These animated biographies target the 8-12 year old audience, but were certainly attention-holding for our 6-year-old grandniece! (The ones we viewed and discussed were of Eric Liddell, Perpetua, William Tyndale, Jim Elliot, Gladys Aylward, Amy Carmichael, Richard Wurmbrand, and John Bunyan.)

Seina expressed a vivid interest in watching the DVDs, so I (Mike) sat with her as we watched five of them before our camping trip. I marveled over her concentration over each 30-minute segment, not really sure at first what she

might be getting out of them. As she observed the suffering and hardship people went through to be true to their Lord, she offered a few comments and observations. Then, as we prepared to leave for camping, she made me promise that she could see the last three episodes before they flew back to Philadelphia.

We had been praying that Father would pour out his blessing on this little one during her first time camping, and how He responded so lovingly! The first day we set up camp, in the campsite next to us was a 9-year-old camping with her family, and the two became almost inseparable as they explored in the trees and by the river. And to our surprise, the expected afternoon monsoon rains held back until we returned to the Springs!

The final day of their visit, Seina sat entranced in Mike's lap as they watched the last three DVDs together. To our joyful amazement, she stopped the DVD several times to ask questions, questions that indicated she readily understood the suffering that people must go through when they're true to Jesus with all their heart and soul. I was especially surprised that she never balked at the idea of suffering. As I prayed for her, in my Spirit I discerned a great calling on her life—one that would require this little girl to live boldly for Jesus without regard for herself.

After this dear family left, our home seemed strangely quiet. Yes, we'd enjoyed such a wonderful week of spiritual, emotional and physical refreshment with them. But we were all the more intent on how we could help Lee and Chestina in the spiritual development of Seina to become the woman the Lord needed and wanted for His Kingdom purposes. Like so many younger couples we hear from, they have no older couple in their area to come alongside and help as spiritual grandparents.

When we raised our own son, we were grateful for the support of some other followers of Jesus. But, sadly, our own relatives offered none. Rather, we grieved over their eager excitement over media that overflowed with immorality, and found ourselves the "odd ducks" in our stand over what we considered by God's Word to be right or not for our own family. Added to this difference in worldview was the control by the wives in most of the households, something we certainly did not want role-modeled for our son when it came to him finding a wife! Since little has changed over the years with our relatives, Lee and Chestina are experiencing the same tensions as they purpose to raise Seina with biblical foundations. Perhaps you're facing the same friction with your own relatives.

*"A good man leaves an inheritance for his children's children..."*  
(Proverbs 13:22)

It's a joy that Lee is more a younger brother in the Lord to us rather than just a nephew. While blessed with a thriving career in corporate America, like most younger men he has needed the guidance of an older man in Christ to set priorities according to God's Word and plan. In particular, Mike has been helping Lee focus on his biblical role and responsibilities to his wife and daughter. It's a sad testimony that so many men expend more emotional energy on their jobs than on developing Christ's character in their marriage and on raising their children to be strong and loving followers of Jesus.

This whole misguided focus away from the home front has gradually come about as western society has changed during the past 150 years. Throughout most of history the world was agrarian-based, dependent on the interconnected generations of a family working together for a common goal on their land. Part of the motive of each generation was to improve the productivity of the land for succeeding generations, and to train the next generation(s) in what was needed so that the land could increase its harvest. Paying attention to sustaining and preserving their property into the future was so natural that nobody had to give it much thought. In fact, regard for *developing future generations* in many dimensions is a key theme of many of God's commands (for example, Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Ephesians 6:4).

Today, both the practical and spiritual preparation of future generations has been all but lost by this society, even within Christendom. Few people intentionally train up their children "in the way they should go." Instead, parents give way to their children's preferences and desires, hoping that someone else will prepare them for some future goal. The interconnectedness of generations and generational goals has disappeared.

So many parents have dug themselves a pit of debt to put their children through college, thinking that's the only way their kids can succeed in today's job market. They hope that somehow in the free-for-all carnality and anti-biblical tutelage, their sons and daughters will find *something* that's career worthy. Other parents outsource their children to Sunday school programs and youth groups for "religious instruction", not realizing that three-quarters of these kids will forsake biblical teaching once they leave home. Being "taught at" by nonfamily members doesn't get internalized into a child the way that day in/day out *living* the way of the Lord within the family does!

#### **Godly Parenting Begins With an Intentional Eternal View**

Looking to the future of your children and of the generations to follow begins with a strong *eternal* perspective: *"For the Lord Himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are*

***left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage each other with these words" (1 Thessalonians 4:16-18). If the goal of having your progeny in heaven with you isn't the key driving force in your life, then in light of eternity you have been compromised by the world. Our personal goal is to spend eternity in heaven with everyone we care about rather than focusing on worldly pleasures and activities with them here on earth.***

### **A Strong Word of Encouragement**

**For you husbands and wives, especially those with children at home: Given the deliberate demonic and worldly opposition you're facing as you try to raise godly children, you need far greater determination and reliance on the Spirit of Christ than that with which your parents raised you. With purposeful intent you need to focus on the Christ-like character development of your marriage and your children! Insulate your children from the destructive forces around them until such time as they are fully prepared to resist the ungodliness that's out to destroy their faith. Intentionally instill in them the biblical framework to resist it, and the love for Jesus that will lead them to obey His Spirit. You're not raising them to be fearful, but to discern between good and evil and to have compassion for those who are in bondage to sin.**

**Now is the time for you grandparents, fathers and mothers to rise to the occasion. Keep the biblical bar high for you and your family and don't lower it to compromise with this society that has made single parenting the destructive norm. In 1985 we talked with the editor of a major Christian magazine. Her words remain with us today: "Until the 1950s Christianity influenced society. Since then society has a much more powerful influence on Christianity." Don't let that be so in *your* family!**

**Trusting in the One Who established marriage and intergenerational family,**

*Mike & Sue*