

## Children and Church

- I. Children are the “...heritage of the Lord...” (**PSA 127:3**) and are to be raised by parents in trust for God Who desires a godly seed. **MAL 2:15; PSA 144:11-12.**
- A. Children are to be trained up in the way that they **SHOULD** go. **PRO 22:6.**
- B. The way that children should go is obviously established by God. **EPH 6:4.**
1. nurture: Breeding, upbringing, training, education (received or possessed by one). b. Moral training or discipline.
  2. admonish: To put (a person) in mind of duties; to counsel against wrong practices; to give authoritative or warning advice; to exhort, to warn.
- C. The ultimate goal of child-training is not to prepare them for a career or marriage but for an encounter with God through Jesus Christ, which will inevitably happen. **PHIL 2:9-11.**
1. Children need to be correctly taught of God’s existence and attributes for they will not learn properly by themselves. Nature and experience are corrupt books.
  2. The fear of the LORD dare not be according to the precepts of men. **ISA 29:13-14 ct/w PSA 119:128.**
  3. The LORD is “God of truth” (**DEU 32:4**), known through Jesus Christ (**1JO 5:20**) Who is the truth (**JOH 14:6**) and Who planted the gospel church in this world to uphold the truth (**1TI 3:15**) that men may properly develop conformity to Himself. **EPH 4:15-16.**
  4. The local church is the governmental system of God for this world and when it is functioning according to Scripture, it is a civics lesson from heaven, for heaven. It represents authority, law, order, community, judgment, punishment, restoration, etc. in the purest form this side of eternal glory.
  5. To assume that children can be properly acquainted with God through Jesus Christ without His church is to assume what Scripture denies. It is to assume a disconnect between the Head and the body. **EPH 1:22-23.**
  6. Do not underestimate the importance of prioritizing church for your sakes and for your children’s sakes. **MAT 6:33.**
    - a. If you believe the Scripture teaches that men should believe, repent and be baptized into the church of Jesus Christ in this world according to the order of **ACT 2:38-47** and submit themselves to King Jesus’s order therein, then you had better be sure that the children are getting the right signals from you as parents as to the importance of church assembly and attendant duties.
    - b. Since children are to be brought up in the nurture and *admonition* (being put in mind of duty) of the Lord (**EPH 6:4**) which includes church assembly for worship, at what point is a delinquent parent flirting with a breach of apostolic order (**2TH 3:6**) and eventual reaping of unhappy consequences?
    - c. If you are reluctant to have your children in church because you think the church or its minister is not conforming to Scripture, say something to them for the benefit of everyone (**LUK 22:32**)! Share your light: don’t hide it under a bushel. **MAT 5:15.**
    - d. If a parent would not even want his/her child to become a member of a particular church, the parent shouldn’t be a member there either.
- II. **ACT 2:38-39** speaks of a gift of the Holy Ghost received by penitent baptism.

- A. The gift in context is being joined to the church indwelt by the Holy Ghost.
- B. Believers thus become part of the house of God, the house where He dwells. This was a dramatic upgrade from the O.T. system where the worshippers could only come to the house of God where the Levitical priests alone enjoyed the inner value of the place where God dwelt. **NUM 18:1-4.**
- C. This promise accrues to believers *and their children*, "...even as many as the Lord our God shall call" (v. 39).
  - 1. This qualified promise therefore depends upon God's election of sinners into Christ Who *called them unto eternal glory*. **ROM 8:28-30 c/w 1PE 5:10.**
  - 2. The gospel call, by contrast, is universal. **ACT 17:30.**
  - 3. The election of grace does not run in the blood (**ROM 9:11-16**) but the promise of the Spirit/Holy Ghost does flow in the direction of faith: the church of Jesus Christ grows according to the addition of *such as should be saved* (**ACT 2:47**), i.e., "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved..." (**MAR 16:16**), saved unto the fellowship of Jesus Christ unto God. **1JO 1:3-4.**
  - 4. The Spirit operates *invisibly and freely* in the work of grace *inwardly* (**JOH 3:5-8**) but *visibly and orderly* in the call of the gospel *outwardly*, reserving His gift of church membership to believers only.
  - 5. Parents therefore should adhere to their instruction to bring their children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (**EPH 6:4**), living a good example and treating them all justly, and let the Spirit know His own. **2TI 2:19.**
    - a. We can't perfectly discern wheat and tares (**MAT 13:29**) but God does.
    - b. First impressions may not be the whole story. **MAT 21:28-30.**
    - c. Kingdom living is much a matter of doing what God tells us to do and leaving the results up to Him.

### III. Children from infancy should be familiarized with church assembly and order to prepare them for God's service in His kingdom.

- A. Inordinate concern about the challenges for the little ones cost Israel dearly at Canaan's border and gospel duty is not grievous. **NUM 14:31-32 c/w 1JO 5:3.**
  - 1. There will always be obstacles and inconveniences to any worthwhile enterprise. The value of the enterprise is largely determined by the desire, effort and dedication one has for it. **MAT 13:44-46.**
  - 2. Our church service takes less than two hours out of a 168 hour week, plus driving time and expense. How many people would think nothing of dedicating equal time, expense and effort every week to get their family to King's Island or a youth sporting event?
  - 3. Prioritize what God prioritizes and reap His blessing, or... **1SAM 2:30.**
- B. Israel's great assemblies were to include the children. **DEU 31:12; JOEL 2:15-16; EZR 10:1.**
- C. N.T. ministers are to instruct the aged (**TIT 2:1-3**), the younger (**TIT 2:6; 1PE 5:5**) and little children. **1JO 2:13.**
- D. Parents should acquaint their children with the Scriptures and encourage their reading of them to wise them up unto salvation. **DEU 6:6-9, 21 c/w 2TI 3:15; 1:5.**
- E. Home life should be consistent with church assembly.
  - 1. Holiness reserved only for the assembly is the sacrifice of fools. **ECC 5:1.**
  - 2. Children will spot hypocrisy which opens the door to blaspheme God. **ROM 2:23-24.**
  - 3. Believing children are precious gifts from God not to be offended. **MAT 18:6.**

- a. Extra effort should be made to save a young believer from perishing, which may mean a parent forgoes his own liberties for the sake of an impressionable child's young faith. **MAT 18:10-14 c/w 1CO 8:10-12.**
  - b. Abuse by a parent of a child is likely to poison that child's mind against order and authority, including God's. This is especially an area where parents should not provoke a child negatively. **COL 3:21.**
  - c. Corrupting a child's mind or faith with lies like Santa Claus or Easter Bunny, etc. would be the wrong way to instill faith in the truth of God in him. Consider how many professing Christians consider "fable season" to be the premiere time for church worship and/or to pollute the house of God with heathen customs.
  - d. Fewer things will offend a young child's faith and direction more effectively than a parent bad-mouthing the church or the pastor's teaching. Want to create confusion and distaste for church and the faith in your child? Then tell him that the pastor is preaching error without bothering to tell the pastor about it first to seek clarity or correction.
- F. Parents should bring their children to church as long as they are under paternal/maternal government to prepare them to meet God.
- 1. Parents are responsible to determine when a child may be emancipated. **GAL 4:1-2.**
  - 2. Self-willed children who demand emancipation may have to be accommodated at some point. **LUK 15:11-12.**

IV. A Biblical understanding of baptism is necessary regarding children and church.

- A. Bible baptism is a material action involving water. **MAT 3:11, 16.**
- B. Bible baptism adds one to a local church, per **ACT 2:38-47.**
  - 1. The Spirit adds the penitent believer to the body which is the local church He indwells and nourishes. **1CO 12:13, 27.**
  - 2. Biblically baptized individuals are by this made into church members with all rights and responsibilities.
  - 3. Scripture knows nothing of a waiting period between water baptism and church membership for a new convert.
  - 4. Bible baptism grants one priestly citizenship in the nation of Jesus Christ: the spiritual house which is the local church. **EPH 2:19-20 c/w 1PE 2:5, 9.**
- C. Bible baptism is restricted to penitent believers in Jesus Christ. **ACT 2:38; 8:12, 36-37.**
- D. Bible baptism is a figure of what it took to save sinners: the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. **ROM 6:3-5.**
  - 1. Christ was temporarily buried in the heart of the earth (**MAT 12:40**) so the convert should accordingly be temporarily buried in water. Sprinkling or pouring water upon one is not a burial.
  - 2. Christ's death was a conscious, voluntary death: it was not forced upon Him (**JOH 10:17-18**). Accordingly, baptism should only be administered to one who consciously wills to die to sin and assume the yoke of Christ. **MAT 11:28-30.**
    - a. Baptism of passive infants is not a scriptural doctrine.
    - b. Arguments made for infant baptism on the assumption that baptism "has come in the room of O.T. circumcision" have no textual support.
    - c. O.T. circumcision of infants was only for males so why would one think that females should be baptized? **GEN 17:10.**
    - d. O.T. circumcision was imposed on servants, not just family members.

**GEN 17:12-13.**

- E. Jesus Christ's inclusion of believing little children served only to use them as an example of humility required in genuine converts. **MAT 18:3-4.**

V. Considerations regarding children and baptism/church membership.

- A. A child must be a believer in Jesus Christ, conceding his own sinfulness and dependency on the mercy of God in the saving grace of Jesus Christ Who died to take away sin, thus prompting his repentance and surrender to his Lord's will. This is the core of biblical baptism.
- B. Baptism/church membership should not be taken lightly nor entered into without considering its implications.
1. It is the answer of a good conscience (**1PE 3:16, 21**); therefore if there is not obvious proof of inward salvation (faith, repentance, hunger for righteousness, willingness to stand apart from the world, etc.), it should not be done. **HEB 10:21-22.**
  2. There is a cost to consider: full surrender to Jesus Christ. **LUK 14:26-33.**
  3. It is a "no going back" commitment to live under Christ's government, putting His interests first. **MAT 6:33; LUK 9:62.**
  4. There are rules to obey and penalties for sin, including exclusion from the church. *Disobedience to parents* is one such sin (**2TI 3:2**) and flagrant examples of this must meet with judgment.
  5. It is a pathway of progressive light (**PRO 4:18**) on a highway of holiness which benefits even a fool (**ISA 35:8**). The goal is maturing in Christ. **EPH 4:13-15.**
- C. As a pastor, I give cautious consideration to a young child's interest in baptism.
1. Youthful baptism can become a fad in a church where identification with peers is more of a motive than identification with Jesus Christ.
  2. Experience has taught me to not rush young children to baptism without first giving pastoral instruction and counsel about the seriousness of the matter. This pattern of "loving discouragement" was used by Jesus Christ. **JOH 6:63-69.**
  3. I watch, and I advise believing parents to do likewise, to see if the child's interest in baptism persists and his love of Jesus Christ is compelling. **2CO 5:14-15.**
- D. Believing parents who think their child should identify with Christ in baptism and church membership need also to consider that they are putting their child under a genuine government other than their own.
1. This is not a radical concept. Every child that is enrolled in a public school, private school, finishing school, etc. comes under extra-parental government.
  2. I, as pastor, am the minister of King Jesus. I am charged to watch for the souls of all under my purview without partiality. **HEB 13:17 c/w 1TI 5:21.**
  3. If I deem it necessary to counsel a young member, I expect that child to be made available for the same by the parent. If parents don't want their child to be subject to pastoral rule and counsel, they should not be pushing the child into Christ's kingdom.
  4. I will not subvert parental government of a child but neither will I deny pastoral counsel to a child that needs it. Every church member under my pastorate has a right to seek my counsel.
    - a. Whenever possible, my counselling of a child will be done with a parent present and I will discuss issues appropriately with parents.
    - b. I especially will not counsel young females without another adult present, preferably a parent.