

HOPE FOR OUR CHILDREN

“Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged.” —COLOSSIANS 3:21

The goal of good parenting is to raise children who are not discouraged, but full of hope and whose hearts are free to pursue those hopes. Hope is looking forward to the future in such a way that gives confidence in the present. Hope is the opposite of discouragement, so the question is: Where do we encourage our children to place their hope?

Parents without Christ may give their children hope in a good education as being the key to their future; hope in professional success as the key to their satisfaction, and hope in earning good money as the key to attaining their comforts. But what if our children are not academically inclined? If these are the hopes instilled in a child, they may very well be set up for disappointment and failure. That’s why Paul writes, “Do not embitter your children.” Bitterness is a deeply rooted poison that is hard to get rid of, and may ultimately affect every area of their lives.

The Apostle Paul said he had every reason to boast. He was trained in the best schools, and by Gamaliel, renowned in the field of Pharisaic law. As for legalistic righteousness, Paul said he was faultless; a ‘Hebrew of the Hebrews’, but he also says of his past experiences, “I consider them rubbish that I may gain Christ...” (Philippians 3:8). There’s nothing wrong with wanting a good education for our children, nor in wanting them to have lucrative careers, as long as we don’t push that as being their priority.

Paul writes to Timothy, “Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God...” And here’s the consequence, “who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment” (1 Timothy 6:17). Encouraging our children to place their hope in anything other than God is encouraging them in secondary things, which are never secure or certain. Their goals shouldn’t consist of possessions, performance or position, but in coming to know God. As our heavenly Father, God’s goal is not to teach us confidence in ourselves, but confidence in Him.

Sometimes we unwittingly set material goals for our children because in today’s world, that’s what is the norm. The best thing we can do for our children is to guide them in the love of God, and encourage a relationship with Him. That’s what gives hope, and hope, says Paul, “does not disappoint us.” In years to come, regardless of circumstances, they will always have God to lean on, and what they’ll discover is that God’s will and purpose for their lives far exceeds their own.

PRAYER: Dear Lord Jesus, I pray for my children to develop a strong faith in You, and that You will be the hope for their lives and the reason for their joy. Thank You, Lord.

TO REFLECT UPON: Where am I encouraging my children to place their hope?