

GODLY FAMILIES PROVIDE HOPE FOR CHILDREN

April Newsletter 2011

I was led to write this article after having a conversation with my pastor several weeks ago. I would have thought that this month's newsletter would have been more focused on the Easter season. However, it's not. Our conversation had to do with deteriorating families. The result of this deterioration is chronic problems for children. Children always suffer when they lose their secure base. The secure base in the home is not just dependent on one parent. Unfortunately, that seems to be the case in more and more families. I don't want this to be a blame situation. Blame originated in the garden. Adam blamed Eve. Eve blamed the snake. I suppose if we could interview the snake he would blame someone or something else. Blame comes from Satan. He is a liar, John 8:44 "... not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies." The lie in blame is that it takes us away from our personal responsibility in any situation. We are called to be like Christ in all that we do. Our responsibility in marriage and in parenting is to be in a state of love. I wrote extensively on being Christ like in the January and February, 2011 Newsletters. These are archived on my website.

Ephesians 5:22-33, is a very tough set of passages. Husbands are called to love their wives as Christ loved the church. Wives are called to submit to and respect their husbands. The picture that is painted for husbands is very clear. I didn't say easy, I said clear. The word submit creates a lot of fear because it is miss-interpreted. Do your own research. Submit does not mean less than. I like what the Message Bible says - "Wives, understand and support your husbands in ways that show your support for Christ." After all, didn't Christ submit to his father? The Trinity says that God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit are one in the same. A discussion of this type can become very complicated. We can easily get side tracked. Since I'm not a theologian, I'm going to avoid a complicated discussion that could come out of this. I need to keep things simple. I can easily connect this to the stress model. Loving your wife becomes fearful. Supporting and respecting your husband becomes fearful. Fear takes us out of being in a love state. Simply put, work toward staying in a state of love. This is the individual responsibility of the husband. This is the individual responsibility of the wife. When this happens, all the other "stuff" goes away. We don't have to worry about submission or respect. Love just begins to happen.

You need to realize that this is a process. It is an interactive mechanism between husband and wife. It also needs to be an interactive mechanism between parent and child. This is how we connect to and help our children. According to Alan Shore, the attachment relationship is an interactive mechanism for generating very high levels of positive affect. Secular research says that this positive affect is joy. Hmm. Nehemiah 8:10 "... for this day is holy to our Lord. Do not be grieved, for the joy of the LORD is your strength." There's another clear picture. Joy is part of the mechanism. We can connect with God to receive His joy. I believe that without "co-regulation" between husband and wife, children are at risk. Dys-regulated parents are out of relationship with each other. They are out of relationship with their children. Mostly importantly, they are out of relationship with God. Bruce Perry says that "Everything you need to know, you learn in the context of relationship. Without relationships

we are physiologically at risk. We are neurologically designed to be in relationship.” (Brain, Trauma, Relationship DVD). Co-regulation needs to begin in our vertical relationship. This is our relationship with God. When we are out of relationship with God, we are totally at risk. Co-regulation then needs to flow into our horizontal relationships. Horizontal relationships are our relationships with each other.

What I see happening in families is that the children are expected to have good behavior regardless of the emotional state of the parent. They are expected to be obedient. Ephesians 6:1 - “Children obey your parents . . .” I believe this scripture is used inappropriately because this is usually the only part quoted. It is used to emotionally beat up children. When used out of context it shames children. The rest of the scripture says “Fathers, do not irritate and provoke your children to anger (do not exasperate them to resentment), but rear them (tenderly) in the training and discipline and the counsel and admonition of the Lord.” Ephesians 6:4 (Amplified Bible). I believe a child’s obedience is a function of the co-regulation between the parents and with the child. Co-regulation creates a secure base. A secure base influences obedience. A secure base creates positive neurological feedback loops and positive conditioning. Lack of co-regulation between parents causes children to react out of fear. So parents, if you’re dys-regulated, then don’t expect your children to be obedient. When we are dys-regulated, God doesn’t get upset with us. He doesn’t put us in time out. He is there for us regardless of our state of regulation. This is the model we need to follow with our children.

I suspect my statements may dys-regulate some parents. Especially the “spare the rod” bunch. I will address this next month. I will be writing about discipline, punishment, and consequences. In the mean time, pray and mediate over these scriptures. Find out from God how they apply to you. Homework for next month. Look up the Biblical definitions of discipline and punishment. Find out what the “rod” was actually used for. If you have never done this, you’ll be surprised. I know I was.

I hope all of you had the opportunity to visit the cross this past week end. It was a grievous event. However out fo that grief comes our victory. Be blessed and ichorous.

In Christ,

Ken Thom