

Instilling God's Standard In Our Children

An article at www.timesonline.co.uk was titled, "Parent's Told: Avoid Morality In Sex Lessons." The article went on to tell about a leaflet that has been sanctioned by the British government. The leaflet advises, in part, "Discussing your values with your teenagers will help them to form their own. Remember, though, that trying to convince them of what's right and wrong may discourage them from being open." Commenting on the leaflet, a child psychologist said that educating older children and teenagers about sex had to be a process of negotiation. "We do not know what is right and wrong; right and wrong is relative, although your child does need clear guidelines," the woman stated.

There is so much error in the statements from both the leaflet and the child psychologist that it's difficult to know where to begin in responding. We could spend our time discussing the fact that there is indeed a standard of right and wrong. God's Word is that standard (John 17:17; 8:24; 12:48; Revelation 20:12; et al.). We could consider how contradictory it is to say in one breath that we don't know what is right and what is wrong and then to say in the next breath that we need clear guidelines. (What is a guideline but a standard, a boundary, a limitation; in other words, a mark distinguishing between right and wrong?) Instead of dealing with those however, let's focus on the fact that not only should parents teach their children right from wrong, they have a scriptural responsibility to do so. The book of Proverbs will be our guide.

Proverbs 22:15 says, "Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him." Does this mean that children are born foolish? No, but it does mean that they have to be taught and that from time to time they will make improper choices, some of which could be potentially damaging to them. What should parents do? Should they just let the children engage in destructive behavior without trying to correct them? Should they permit them to abuse drugs, engage in immorality, steal from others, etc.? Solomon says that children need to be corrected. One can only make corrections by use of a standard, by clearly saying, "This is right and this is wrong." As earlier noted, this standard is God's Word. We as parents must teach our children God's standard.

Proverbs 29:15 says, "The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame." A child left to himself is one who has no guidance from parents. He is left to fend for himself, to decide for himself what is right and what is wrong. Granted, there comes a day when the child must grow up and make his own decisions, but how can anyone expect a youngster to know and understand the consequences of their actions without someone having first explained them? Children do not live in a vacuum. They will learn to make choices somewhere. Someone somewhere along the line will tell them what they think is right and what is wrong or someone may even come along and tell them that anything goes, that there is no standard of right and wrong (see the first paragraph). In other words, someone's standards are going to be instilled into the hearts of each of our children. Whose standards should they be? Who should be the ones instilling these standards? It is up to the parents to teach God's Word to our children and that includes praising them when they're right and correcting them when they're wrong (Ephesians 6:4).

The attitude expressed by the leaflet and the child psychologist are dangerous and not very well thought out. Consider the far-reaching implications of a philosophy that right and wrong are relative terms. It means that each one decides for himself or herself what is right and what is wrong. It means that what's right for me is always right, even if you think it's wrong. It means there can be no laws, for the existence of laws indicate that some actions are right and some actions are wrong. That line of thinking would produce nothing but chaos. And this is what they want us to instill in our children? I think not! May each parent give diligence to "train up a child in the way he should go." (Proverbs 22:6). The way he (or she) should go is God's way, guided by God's single standard, the Bible.

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