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A HILL TO DIE ON

A War Parents Must Win

– Rick Lanning

I remember a few years ago visiting in the home of a fellow Christian family when suddenly the teenage daughter came into the room wearing only a string bikini. She had no embarrassment or shame whatever. Later, when I talked to the dad and mom about this, they replied, “We know it isn’t right, but you have to choose your battles.”

Parents, do you have a reaction to that statement? I’ll tell you mine.

Wars, whether militaries abroad, or family struggles at home, are fought when one side draws a line in the sand and dares the other to cross. Hitler would have ruled Europe if Winston Churchill had not boldly said, “this far, and no further!” While Neville Chamberlain, Churchill’s predecessor as Prime Minister, naively believed Hitler’s signing of a non-aggression treaty would lead to “peace in our time,” we all know what history says about that. Giving in, again and again, only makes matters worse. While it might not be a World War, a war in the home also has great consequences.

Family battle lines must be drawn by parents, whether they like it or not. While weapons of war on the home front do not include bombs and bullets, they do include spiritual principles given by God. Yes, I know only too well, sometimes it is very difficult to judge what hill to surrender and what hill to die on.

There are truly “gray areas” that demand the wisdom of Solomon to navigate. But sometimes it is a clear matter of “*thus says the Lord!*” When God draws the battle line, that settles the issue.

Just as Churchill never negotiated England’s freedom for national peace, you must not, you dare not, compromise Biblical authority for family peace. Fathers and mothers must take a clear stand by making family rules that distinguish what is godly and what is ungodly. Settle it right here, and right now, that in your family the children are ***not*** allowed to negotiate the terms of peace.

Like I said, on some issues there might be shades of gray that are negotiable. But on many there are only bold black-and-white principles established from the mouth of God. For example, modesty.

Words have meaning. I Timothy 2:9-11 gives God’s words to women: “*I want women to adorn themselves with proper clothing, modestly and discreetly... as befits women making a claim to godliness.*” Parents, you can’t lower that standard. Moving that line God has drawn will lead to other compromises, all with disastrous consequences. If we wink at the issue of modesty, choosing to draw our battle lines elsewhere, very soon we will be surrendering on other moral issues. If you raise the white flag here you will be raising your hands in surrender more and more until you are finally a prisoner of war to your child. When the smoke is cleared your children will have won the battles but lost the war for their souls. You will live out your days bemoaning “Where did we go wrong?” – carrying the battle scar of your prodigal child’s lost soul the rest of your life.

God, as Father to the Israelites, always drew a line in the sand so that they would never be confused how they should live. He wrote these words: “***Do not remove the ancient landmark which your fathers have set***” (Prov. 22:28). Compromising God’s landmarks (principles) by timidly giving the excuse, “well, you have to choose your battles,” is not living up to God’s command: “*Fathers... bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord*” (Eph. 6:4).

To bring our children up *“in the training and admonition of the Lord”* requires following the pattern of grandma Lois and momma Eunice. Paul recalled the *“genuine faith that is in you”* (2 Tim. 1:5) through their training. He then elaborated on that when he said, *“from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus”* (2 Tim. 3:15). To grow a Timothy you have to put in the work of a Lois and Eunice. There are no shortcuts. *Raising children is an eighteen-year full-time evangelism program.*

Take heart, there are success stories all through the Bible. Yours can be one of them too. Enoch walked with God, as did Noah, in a world described as: *“the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually”* (Gen. 6:5). Paul lived in a world in which it was said, *“God gave them up to uncleanness... God gave them up to vile passions... God gave them over to a debased mind...”* (Rom. 1:24-26).

While we certainly live in a negative world in which the darkness seems so black, we must also positively believe that it gives us an opportunity to show God we too can teach our children to *“walk with God”* like Enoch, and *“find grace in the eyes of the Lord”* like Noah (Gen. 5:24; 6:8). Jared (Enoch’s father) and Lamech (Noah’s dad) must have done something right (Gen. 5:18,28).

We have now a moment in history where it can be said of us, as it was said of Josiah: *“he did what was right in the sight of the LORD, and walked in all the ways of his father David; he did not turn aside to the right hand or to the left”* (2 Kgs. 22:2). Or, like Hezekiah: *“He trusted in the LORD God of Israel ... he held fast to the LORD; he did not depart from following Him, but kept His commandments”* (2 Kgs. 18:5-6). Remember, these two kings lived in worlds in which their fathers (Ahaz and Amon) plunged the nation into child sacrifice. If these children could let their light shine, so can yours.

On the issues facing you as a parent it is absolutely crucial to locate God’s ancient landmarks, His *“line in the sand,”* and take your stand there. Whether it is modesty, coarse language, disrespect for authority (including yours), alcohol or drugs, seek God’s wisdom in prayer (Jam. 1:5) and believe that He will bless you as you raise your kids for His glory. Remember, they are His kids too.

May God bless you, like Joshua, *“Be strong and of good courage... For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success”* (Josh. 1:6-8).

Save your child’s soul! Now that’s a hill to die on.