

Preparing Sons for Life
Rev. Joseph Keller
Christ Covenant Church (OPC)
June 29, 2008

I. Train them to Work – Gen. 1:28; Col. 3:23-24

A decade ago I worked for a large corporation in America. There were thousands of employees there and it was easy to slip through the cracks. Each day for years on end, one employee spent his days pushing a cart around the building and sitting in the cafeteria. People wondered what it was that he did at the company. What he actually did was nothing more than push a cart around. One department thought he was part of another department. The other department thought he was part of the first department. Neither supervised him, but each week he continued to collect a paycheck for doing nothing. When they finally caught on to what he was doing, he was just a few years away from retirement, so they retired him. What is tragic is that this man had no sense of the importance of work and no desire to contribute anything to society.

Work does not have a good reputation in American society today. Many people view work as nothing more than a necessary evil. They only work, because they need money to survive. And when they work they do as little as possible to stay employed and draw their paycheck. The idea of working to contribute to society and to bless others does not enter their minds.

Each year the number of boys who are dropping out of High School continues to rise. For the first time in American history, the number of girls now outnumbers the number of boys in colleges by a ratio of 3 to 2. At the present, over one-third of all men who are between the ages of 21 and 35 still live at home with their parents. This is a 100% increase over what it was just 20 years earlier. A major reason why these men still live at home is that many of them do not have jobs. Both their lack of motivation to work and their lack of training are contributing to their inability to get and hold jobs. (*Boys Adrift* by Leonard Sax)

This is a serious situation. More and more men are shirking their responsibility to provide for the financial needs of their families. This is contrary to the pattern that God has established for the family. In our last message on the family, we examined God's command given at creation. Gen. 1:28 says: "*Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.*" For the Christian, this rule includes spreading the Gospel and working to promote God's will in the world. We also noted that the primary responsibility for providing for the financial needs of the family falls on the man in the family.

It is important that we as Christians give to our daughters, and especially to our sons, a desire and motivation to work hard. To do so, we need to use all the tools at our disposal. We must begin by teaching them God's will in this matter. Let us briefly examine a few Scriptural thoughts on this matter. First, we should note that everything in this world that we see has been created by God. All that we are and have is the result of God's labor. And God desires that we would become like him. He desires that we would learn to become productive, that we would learn to bless others through our labor, just as he has blessed us with his labor. Eph. 4:28 says: "*He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need.*" To steal is to become like Satan, the great thief and robber. To work hard, is to become like God, and to bring blessing to others.

And the great spiritual blessings that we have all come to us through the very hard work, the physical pain and suffering that Jesus Christ endured for us through his death on the cross for our sins.

The book of Proverbs is filled with verses that praise the virtues of hard work and warn of the perils of laziness. Prov. 10:4 says: "*Lazy hands make a man poor, but diligent hands bring wealth.*" God has even written lessons about the importance of work in nature. Prov. 6:6-11 says: "*Go to the ant, you sluggard; consider its ways and be wise! It has no commander, no overseer or ruler, yet it stores its provisions in*

summer and gathers its food at harvest. How long will you lie there, you sluggard? When will you get up from your sleep? A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest—and poverty will come on you like a bandit and scarcity like an armed man.” And if these verses do not make God’s will clear, I Tim. 5:8 leaves no doubt about what God’s will is when it says: *“If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.”*

Christian parents, we need to instruct our children in the virtues of work. Not only does work provide for our financial needs, but it also contributes to society and brings blessing to the lives of others. Hard work is God’s will for our lives. Hard work is not part of the curse, though thorns and thistles and sinfulness is, all of which make our labors more difficult. Rather, God commanded Adam to work from the day he placed him in the Garden of Eden. Gen. 2:15 says: *“The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.”*

But we must not stop with instruction. Secondly, we must also teach all our children, our daughters, and especially our sons, to work, by our example. They need to see us work hard. They need to see that we have purpose in our work. They need to see that we are doing our work to bring glory and honor to God and to bring blessing to our fellow men, not merely to make money.

So many people make excuses for not working hard. They rationalize that the boss doesn’t pay them enough or works them too hard. But Col. 3:23-24 puts an end to all these rationalizations when God says to us: *“Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.”*

And thirdly, we must train our children to work hard. It will not work to merely teach them and show them our example for 20 years and then expect them to start working when they turn 20. If they haven’t done any hard work before age 20, it is likely that they will never learn to work hard. They have learned laziness for 20 years and it will likely take 20 to undo that pattern of laziness.

If we want our children to learn to work, we must give them simple chores to do when they are very young and bigger chores to do as they get older. The measure is to give each child the chore that he is capable of doing at his age. There is no reason for children to sit in front of a TV or computer while parents run themselves ragged. Chores are an important part of training children to handle work without complaining, of training them to look for what needs to be done at home and in the job without needing to be told, of training them to enjoy work.

Fourthly, parents need to help their children, and especially their sons, think through how they will financially provide for their future family. It is important to help them identify their likes and dislikes, their natural skills and abilities, what jobs they would do well at, and what education they will need for that job. Above all, it is important to keep them asking the question: How can I glorify God and bless others by my work?

II. Train them to be Pure – Prov. 5-7; Matt. 5:28-30; Eph. 5:3

A second matter for young men that is greatly emphasized in Scripture is the call to be pure. This has always been a serious matter, but especially so in our day. Ever since the fall of mankind into sin, men have had to fight the corruption of their nature, which encourages them to lust. Lust is an overthrowing of God’s holy purposes in marriage. God desires that a husband would give himself to caring for and providing for every need of just one woman, his wife. But lust encourages men to neglect the needs of their wives and to see every woman as an object for their selfish pleasure.

In our day, with the rise of the internet, a vast amount of pornography is easily available to all men, and its destructive effect is to feed the monster of lust. A vast number of men outside and inside the Christian Church have become slaves to pornography and lust.

Christian parents must be aware of these terrible influences and guard their sons from them. Parents must teach their sons, warning them of the dangers of lust. There are many passages on this subject. All

men ought to regularly read the warnings in Proverbs 5-7 Here are a few verses from those chapters. Chapter 5, verses 18 and 20-23 say: “. . . may you rejoice in the wife of your youth. . . Why be captivated, my son, by an adulteress? Why embrace the bosom of another man's wife? For a man's ways are in full view of the LORD, and he examines all his paths. The evil deeds of a wicked man ensnare him; the cords of his sin hold him fast. He will die for lack of discipline, led astray by his own great folly.”

In the New Testament Jesus tells us that lust is such a threat to our spiritual life that it would be far better for us to gouge out our eyes than to continue in this sin and allow it to take us to hell. He says in Matthew 5:28-30 says: “*But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.*” And Eph. 5:3 says: “*But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people.*” Jesus Christ came to rescue us from sin and make us pure. His purpose for us is to lead pure and holy lives before him.

Fathers need to make purity a high priority in their own lives. Father will not be able to raise pure sons if they themselves are not pure.

And parents must also take steps to safeguard their children. Every computer in a Christian home needs software on it that blocks objectionable material. This material is just too easily available and too dangerous to have unprotected computers in the home.

III. Train them to be Spiritual Leaders – Psalm 78:4-7

Finally, let us consider spiritual leadership. Vast numbers of Christian men today have turned over all spiritual leadership in the home to their wives. While it is important that wives and mothers teach their children the word of God, it is tragic that husbands and fathers have shirked their responsibility to be a spiritual leader.

Of course, a boy cannot begin to be a spiritual leader if he does not know Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior. We must teach our children about God, about their sinful and lost condition, and about salvation through Jesus Christ. Only if they have submitted their hearts to Jesus Christ as their spiritual leader, can they become spiritual leaders under Christ.

Now, Eph. 5:25-27 teaches us that spiritual leadership is at the heart of all leadership. A man cannot fulfill his role as the leader of his house if he is not a spiritual leader. Eph. 5:25-26 says: “*Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy . . .*” This tells us that Christ died in order to make his wife, the Church, holy before God. In like manner, a man is called to lead his wife and children into greater holiness.

First, to train our sons to be spiritual leaders in the home, parents must teach them what the Bible says.

Secondly, fathers must be an example of what a spiritual leader is. If sons see their fathers serving as spiritual leaders, then they will know how to do so and will see the importance of doing so.

Thirdly, parents must train their sons to be spiritual leaders through practice. They can ask their older teenage sons to lead the family devotions after supper on occasion. They can encourage their older teenage sons and daughters to volunteer at church to teach the Children's Sunday School classes.

Through such activities, they develop the skills and confidence to become spiritual leaders.

Ps. 78:4-7 shows us that it is God's will that men be spiritual leaders in their homes and churches. It says: “*We will not hide them from their children; we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the LORD, his power, and the wonders he has done. He decreed statutes for Jacob and established the law in Israel, which he commanded our forefathers to teach their children, so the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would tell their children. Then they would put their trust in God and would not forget his deeds but would keep his commands.*”

What are some of the wonders of God we can show our children, to encourage them to trust in God? One is the wonders of creation. Two weeks ago I went to the Jean Lafitte Park in New Orleans and observed a female dragonfly laying eggs on the water. I was amazed as I saw her swoop downwards and forwards to the water to lay an egg and then swoop upwards and backwards to where she began. She hovered in the air and swooped in this circle repeatedly. I noted that each of her wings were joined to her body at three places, allowing her to bend and twist her wings forwards and backwards. Not only did she possess these incredible wings, an incredible technology that no airplane or helicopter possesses, but she also had the intelligence to know just how to use her wings to hover and to move in every direction. This tiny creature gave testimony to the greatness of the God who created her.

Another way of showing our children the glory of God is through answered prayer. This past week Mr. Testardi shared with us miraculous answers to prayer when a friend received a visa after it appeared it was too late to receive it. It was issued by employees working on a day when the embassy was supposedly closed. And told how he received an extended visa that he did not even ask for or pay for, which would cover his next two trips to Africa. What a glorious God we have—a God who has the hearts and minds of all people under his control.

Copyright © 2008, Joseph A. Keller