

American Decency Association

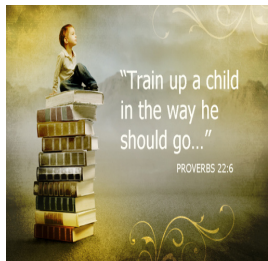
PO Box 202, Fremont, MI 49412 231-924-4050 www.americandecency.org

Encouraging Christians to guard their hearts

October 2016

The Most Solemn Mandate

By: Dr. R.C. Sproul



I don't know how many times I've heard parents who are members of churches say to me:

I intentionally never discuss theology or religion with my children, because I want them to believe whatever they come to believe honestly and not because they've been indoctrinated by us in the home. I don't want them to be slaves to a parental tradition. I want them to experience reality on its own terms and come to whatever conclusion they are drawn from the evidence.

Such sentiments mystify me because they are at such odds with the teaching of Scripture. Just consider Deuteronomy 6:4-9:

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

What I find remarkable about this text is how closely it places the mandate to teach our children to what Jesus calls the greatest commandment, namely, "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might" (v. 5; see Matt. 22:36-40). There is no commandment more important than to love our Creator, but what's the very next command in Deuter-

onomy 6? That the law of God is to be on our hearts and taught to our children. The divine mandate is that parents should teach the Lord's commandments to their children. Not that the parents should send their children somewhere else to learn these things, but the responsibility is given to the parents.

Moreover, Deuteronomy 6 doesn't say that "you shall teach them casually, occasionally, once in a while to your children." No, it says, *You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.* (vv. 7-9)

That is, these things are to be taught so diligently that they are going to be taught every single day, in every place, even in every room of our homes.

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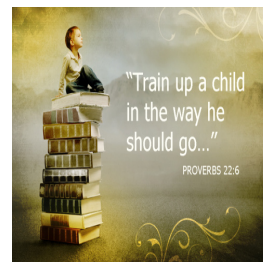
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That is, these things are to be taught so diligently that they are going to be taught every single day, in every place, even in every room of our homes.



I don't think there's a mandate to be found in sacred Scripture that is more solemn than this one. That we are to teach our children the truth of God's Word is a sacred, holy responsibility that God gives to His people. And it's not something that is to be done only one day a week in Sunday school. We can't abdicate the responsibility to the church. The primary responsibility for the education of children according to Scripture is the family, the parents. And what is commanded is the passing on of tradition.

In our forward-looking age, many look upon tradition with scorn. It is seen as the province of reactionaries and conservatives who refuse to get with the times. But when we look at Scripture, we find it has much to say about tradition, some of it negative, some of it positive. One of the judgments

of God upon the nation of Israel and upon the teachers of Israel was that they began to substitute human traditions for the Word of God, with the human traditions taking the place of Scripture. Because of that error, we may jump to the conclusion that we should, therefore, never communicate traditions.

Yet when we come to the New Testament, we find a distinction made between the traditions of men and the tradition of God. The Apostle Paul, for example, claims that he did not invent out of his own mind the message that he proclaimed to the churches and was passing on to the churches—the *paradosis*, the tradition, of God. *Paradosis* is the Greek word for "tradition," and it comes from the same root as the Greek term for "gift" as well as the prefix *para-*, which means "alongside of" or "passing on." Literally, the meaning of "tradition" in the Scriptures is the passing on of a gift. The gift that is to be passed on is the gift of the knowledge of God, of what He has revealed about Himself in His Word, of what He inspired the prophets and Apostles to tell us in sacred Scripture.

It's my responsibility as a parent and it's your responsibility as a parent to pass on that gift. If you aren't a parent, it's your responsibility to support the work of the church and those who are parents in passing on that gift. It is a great and glorious calling to lead our children into the truth of God's Word. Indeed, there is no more solemn mandate given to parents and adults in the church than to raise up covenant children in the fear and admonition of the Lord.

[Used with permission: Ligonier Ministries, September 2016]

***Train up
a child in
the way he
should go:
and when
he is old, he
will not de-
part from it.***

Proverbs 22:6



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