

by Kevin Neumann

I just finished reading a book entitled *Standing on Guard for Thee*, written by a fellow-homeschooling father and Albertan, Michael Wagner. It is a sobering chronicle of the clash between modern-day Gideons, Deborahs and Baraks striving against leftist, liberals (to put it kindly), who are backed in turn by the political and judicial establishment. It is a sad, sordid story of heroic freedom fighters wading through the morass of choked political channels to rescue the defenseless unborn, fortifying the historic institution of marriage against marauders, and reducing to rubble the false notion that religion and politics really don't mix (yes, secular humanism is the state's official religion). As a homeschooling father myself, I am encouraged by these examples to engage in the battle for the truth's sake and for the sake of my children. Nevertheless, I am a little discouraged when I survey the cultural landscape and see our civilization hastening to slouch toward Gomorrah. The Christian (spiritual) capital of bygone centuries is nearly spent; western-style, secular humanism is dealing its destructive dividends to a dying culture; the foundations of fragility on which our entire civilization of compromise has been built is about to be exposed. The city of man is about to collapse. "Oh Lord, judge the nations, put fear in their breast, to teach them that they are but human at best."¹

Clearly, political channels are not the most productive avenues in the struggle. However, we should not pragmatically conclude secession of activity in the political realm. Politics, like all other areas of life, is under the sphere and sovereignty of the Lord Jesus Christ, who will reign until His enemies are made His footstool². The church has committed two errors in dealing with the world. One is a fearful retraction from the world. We have ceased to make the cross an offense simply by not venturing into the world at all and by refusing to discipline the nations. Consequently, we have surrendered politics, ethics, faith, science, technology, economics, history, the arts, etc., to the humanists of the day. We have shelved the salt. The other blunder is the dangerous assimilation of the church with the prevailing culture of the day. We have toned down the message of the gospel, making it more palatable. We have taken of the world and put a Christian slant on it. In the final analysis, the church has not become all that different from the world and is actually not doing the things of the world as good as the world does them. The salt has lost its saltiness. Shelved salt and salt-less salt are equally useless in staving off the putrefying corruption of the world's ideologies and systems. Both these errors have contributed to the fearful judgment of God that marks our society's tragic decline.

What has this to do with a homeschooling father? Everything! We see a civilization in the steady decline of its twilight years. We see the professing church either drawing back from the battle

or being assimilated. The towers of the city of man are collapsing yet again and the opportunity to build the city of God has never been better. Fathers are in a critical position. They wield a considerable influence over the course of civilization. They are in a God-ordained, God-equipped position. To renege our responsibility is to bring a disastrous curse. To embrace it is our hope. When the hearts of the fathers are turned to their children, there is renewal. When fathers abdicate their interest in successive generations there brings a curse.³ He is covenant head over the most basic social institution of civilization⁴ - the family - the threads with which the garment of society is woven. The vision of the father becomes the collective vision of the family. Suffice-to-say, it is not enough for us as fathers simply to bring home the bread and the butter. We need to be actively involved in preparing (discipling) the next generation in the great struggle for the cause of God and Truth. But how?

First, it will require intense, intentional interaction with our children - detachment, indifference and the pursuit of self-interest simply will not do. Our day-to-day encounters must be packed with purpose. "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"⁵. We may feel unqualified for such a calling. Perhaps we're rusty on our biblical theology. Our practical theology is also ... well ... er... lacking. Don't use this as an excuse to inactivity, but rather turn this into opportunity. Go on the quest for learning together with your children. Let us admit our weakness in this area, but also our determination to press on to obedience. Avail yourself of useful Bible commentaries to exposit difficult passages (Matthew Henry's, Matthew Poole's etc) and learn with your children. And whatever you do, don't relegate all spiritual conversation to "family devotion time." Make application to all areas of life throughout the day as opportunity offers itself, even in the most mundane of activities as sitting, walking and lying down.

Second, fathers, make godly character your children's core and not academics. All future indicators point to troublesome times as our present civilization implodes under the weight of its own vanity. Character will be vital in these times. The Book of Proverbs is an essential character, survival, handbook for our young civilization builders. Our family reads through the Proverbs once a month. The idea is to have them memorized, then exercised. There are some products available through "Generations with Vision," "Vision Forum," and "Doorposts" that key in on character development. The fruit of the Spirit is Godly character. Components of a Godly character education (discipling) should include: doctrine, practice, purpose or vision; exercises of faith, love,

longsuffering, and patience; and enduring persecutions⁶. And all this must be sanctified by the grace of Almighty God, for unless the Lord builds the house those who build labor in vain⁷.

Third, and most importantly, is prayer. This point is self-explanatory. Not much more can be said on this (especially given the days we are in), than an urgent, desperate, fervent crying out to God for the souls of our children. Pray that they would carry on the generational faithfulness, and be salt and light in this fallen world.

Historically, the church has been characterized by resilience. Many times it has been involved in life-and-death struggles with her enemies and every time she has prevailed, marching from the very precipice of certain ruin. Raging emperors, violent barbarians, Islamic invasion, hammering heresies, totalitarian dictators, resisting ideologies all lay in her unstoppable wake. The end has already been written: "Upon this rock I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it"⁸. Secular humanism and all other cities man have erected are doomed. Generational involvement, discipling of our children, and passionate prayer are crucial to the citizen builders of God's city. Regardless of your view of the days in which we live – whether we are on the eve of the great apostasy or the dawn of a glorious renewal – one thing is imperative and this is obedience to the command of Christ: "Occupy till I come⁹ ...Go therefore and make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.¹⁰" Let us, as fathers, join in the great struggle and equip our children unto the obedience of the faith - not as fearful retractors or naive assimilators, but bold contenders, for the faith once entrusted to the saints¹¹. Civilization Builders!

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Footnotes

1. Psalm 9:20
2. Psalm 110:1; Luke 20:43
3. Malachi 4:6
4. 1 Corinthians 11, Ephesians 5:23,24
5. Deuteronomy 6:6, 7
6. 2 Timothy 3:10,11
7. Psalm 127:1
8. Matthew 16:18
9. Luke 19:13
10. Matthew 28:19-22
11. Jude 3