

Spiritual Warfare & Moral Excellence – Part 3

Impacting Our Kids Towards Moral Excellence

Ken Birks, Pastor/Teacher

I. Introductory Remarks.

Isaiah 59:14 *Justice is turned back, and righteousness stands afar off; for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter.*

In the last couple of messages we have seen what we as a society and a culture are up against. We have seen that there is a tide of immorality and wickedness that is sweeping our nation. We have seen that this is a direct result of the foundation of truth being removed from our culture and nation. The various strata of our society and nation are no longer being governed by the Judeo/Christian ethics that many of us grew up with, because truth has been assaulted in the streets by the father of lies.

John 8:44 *"You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.*

Unfortunately, it is our children who are being affected by Satan's lies the most. They are growing up in a society with the absence of moral absolutes that come forth from the Word of the Lord, which is the measuring rod for all truth.

Psalms 33:4 *For the word of the LORD is right, And all His work is done in truth.*

Our children are part of a generation that is being taught that truth is whatever is right for each individual, which results in each person doing what is right in their own eyes, where all ideas of right and wrong are now a matter of personal taste, emotional preference or cultural choice.

Since the whole world lies in the lap of the evil one, his lies have inundated our society and culture, which has had its affect upon our lives and our children's lives. Educators are teaching his lies as truths. To see how far reaching Satan's lies are listen to this: Alan Bloom in his book "Closing of the American Mind" says, "almost every single student entering Universities adheres to the concept, 'All truth is relative to your situation, personal taste and cultural choice.'"

Because of this, today's youth are facing a crisis of truth. Truth, to them, is a

matter of taste and as a result there is no standard of right and wrong. They do not have moral absolutes and core values being imbedded into their hearts. Everyone does what is right in their own sight. Therefore a foundation of truth must first be established in their lives, if we are to have any hope for moral excellence coming forth from this generation.

In this message today, my purpose is to share with you, from God's Word, how you as parents can impact your homes and your children towards moral excellence. But first of all let's take a closer look at how today's evangelical youth are faring in this society without morals.

When we were young, most of us were raised in an atmosphere that communicated absolute standards that came from the Judeo/Christian perspective. They were standards for right and wrong behavior and were accepted nationwide. Our parents, educators, church, youth leaders and other adults collaborated together to communicate a standard. This is no longer so, because truth is fallen in the streets. A clear standard of right and wrong gave society a moral compass to measure crime and punishment, business ethics, community values, character and social conduct. It became the lens through which society viewed law, science, art, politics –the whole of culture.

II. Spiritual Warfare And Today's Youth.

It is time for us as the people of God to recover what was taken and to put on the armor of God with our waists girded with truth. We must allow the banner of truth according the sovereignty of God to be raised high in our homes and communities. It is time for absolute truth to be restored: something true for all people at all places and at all times. Just to see how bad the situation has become, listen to these statistics for youth who have been raised in good Christian evangelical homes.

Early in 1994, Barna Research institute surveyed 3,795 kids (ages 11-18) and asked them 193 questions. More than 80 percent of those surveyed attended an evangelical church weekly, and 86% said they had made a commitment to trust Christ as their Savior and Lord. The survey showed that many of our kids are not adopting our value system at all

- 66% had lied to their parents or teacher during the past six months.
- 59% had lied to their peers in the last 3 months.
- 66% had cheated on exams in the last 3 months.

- 20% had intentionally tried to hurt someone.
 - 25% had tried to emotionally hurt someone.
 - 16% had watched a pornographic/erotic movie in past three months.
 - 5% had attempted suicide. The nationwide average is 7%.
 - 55% said they were confused about life.
 - 50% said they were stressed out.
 - 46% said they were always tired.
 - 45% watch MTV at least once a week
 - Many others are smoking, gambling and engaging in pre-marital sex.
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- 57% of these kids said there is no such thing as objective truth.
 - 45% said everything in life is negotiable and that it is alright to do what is right in your own eyes.
 - Consequently, they are making conditional decisions, choosing what seems to be the best alternative at the time, without reference to any fundamental principles to guide their choices.
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- Another study shows that of 1,000 teenagers 76% would go far enough sexually to feel experienced and not feel left out.
 - One study showed that 50% of today's sexually active 19 year old males had their first sexual experience between the ages of 11-13.
 - 87% of sexually active teens say they had sex before age 17.
 - Average age for first sex is 15 for girls and 14 for boys.
 - Religious-conscious girls are only 14% more likely to be virgins than non-religious-conscious girls.

The Barna research study concluded that the #1 problem that kids face is that of adhering to a standard of truth. Another group of 42 Christian youth leaders from across the nation was asked what the foremost problem that youth face in today's culture is. They concluded that the #1 problem was a lack of adhering to a standard of truth.

What is happening to our kids? Why aren't they adopting our values? And what can we do about it? Josh McDowell states that there are three reasons for the loss of values among our young people.

1. One is the condition of our culture,
2. another is the need for a defense of the truth, and
3. the third is the need to spotlight the benefits of right choices.

What does this say about how Satan's disregard for truth has affected even

godly evangelical Christians? It is time for us to gird our waists with the armor of truth.

Ephesians 6:14 Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness...

I want to share with you now how we can impact our kids towards moral excellence and how we can preserve them from the destructive influences that have torn away at our society and culture.

III. Steps Towards Impacting Our Kids.

1. Truth Must be Taught in the Home.

Deuteronomy 6:6-7 "And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart; "you shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.

When children are young you teach them in the most simplistic terms what God's commands are and what is right and what is wrong. But as children grow into their teens they need be explained why the commands are right and wrong. Many parents fail to progress beyond communicating right and wrong commands. They stop short of providing a defense of truth.

In a society without moral boundaries, where personal choice sets the standard for what is right – we need a truth apologetic, a ready defense of truth. We need to help our children understand that there are absolutes--that which is right for all people, for all times, for all places.

The Barna research study also indicated that when our children do not accept an objective standard of truth, they become:

1. 48% more likely to cheat on an exam.
2. two times more likely to watch a pornographic film.
3. three times more likely to use illegal drugs.
4. six times more likely to attempt suicide.
5. two times more likely to be angry with life.
6. two times more likely to be lacking purpose.
7. two times more likely to be resentful.

Because we live in an "instant" society, we have become conditioned to a "right now" mentality, which results in instant gratification winning out over waiting till

marriage, lying to a parent for an instant way out of trouble, cheating without studying, stealing instead of paying for it. In short wrong choices promise appealing benefits.

We must teach our children the benefits of right choices. For example, we can teach our children that being honest:

- Protects from guilt and provides for a clear conscience and unbroken fellowship with God.
- Protects from shame and provides a sense of accomplishment.
- Protects from the cycle of deceit and builds a reputation of integrity and a "good name".
- Protects from ruined relationships and provides for trusting relationships.

We can give our children a defense of truth about marriage, family, love justice, etc., in the same manner. The more we demonstrate the long-term rewards and benefits of God's standard of truth, the more likely our children will be to make right choices.

2. A Positive Relationship With Your Children Is A Must.

Psalms 85:10 *Mercy and truth have met together; Righteousness and peace have kissed each other.*

Truth must be distilled into your child's heart through a relationship that exudes with love and mercy otherwise truth will lead to rebellion.

There are four major keys to having loving relationship with your child in which God's mercy is being blended with His truth. They are:

1. Unconditional Acceptance,
2. Appreciation,
3. Affection and Availability.
4. Unconditional Acceptance is a must. Acceptance gives them a sense of security.

Romans 15:7 *Therefore receive one another, just as Christ also received us, to the glory of God.*

Your children need to know that you love them and support them no matter what they do or how bad they disappoint you. This is God's attitude towards us.

Give them lots of appreciation. Appreciation gives them a sense of significance.

Romans 1:8 *First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.*

Paul was always very careful to show his appreciation for those who were entrusted to his care. As a result he was able to consistently speak the truth into their lives without provoking them unto rebellion.

It is more important for us to catch our kids doing right than wrong. The more you catch them doing right and then praising them the less you will catch them doing what is wrong. Everyone likes to be praised.

- Give them lots of affection. Affection gives them lovability.

Romans 12:10 *Be kindly [affectionate] to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another;*

A healthy home environment consists of lots of affection. Many young girls become pregnant because they are starved for love and affection. They need to be cared for and loved at home. The drive for intimacy leads them into a culture that is self-centered and as a result they give up hoping to find lasting intimacy and settle for temporary closeness in a boy-friend or girl-friend relationship.

Josh McDowell tells a story of a letter he received from a Christian father who said he and his wife had done their best to be good parents. They were members of a good church, and they had always been proud of their children. But what they had just discovered about their oldest daughter had brought their world crashing down.

He described his daughter as pretty, but not real popular with boys – that is, until recently. She had dated a boy on the football team, and early in the relationship she had sex with him. Then she went from him to another football player. Before long, she had slept with the whole team! This tortured parent wrote, "Josh, they were passing my little girl around as some sort of `team girl!'"

By the time they learned of their daughter's behavior, it had been going on for months. They sat down with her, told her that they knew, and cried with her. Then they asked her "Why?" Her only explanation was "I just wanted to feel loved. For a few fleeting moments, I felt like some-one loved me."

Be Available to them. Availability gives them a sense of importance.

A common complaint many teens have is that their dads never have time for them....he never takes me anywhere.

3. Parents Must Be Good Role Models.

1 Timothy 4:12 *Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity.*

35% of evangelical youth cannot identify any adult as their hero or model. Their #1 hero or role model should be mom and dad. Without role models to show how values are determined and acted upon, your teenagers' sturdiest fortress against the mold of the world is gone. They are swept along in the mudslide of their culture.

The problem many children face is that they experience a dichotomy between what they are told is truth and how they perceive truth being lived out. This causes them to grow up and question truth. And when Satan comes and says, "Has God really said?" They are in a state of vulnerability and bite at his lies.

When we continually yield ourselves unto the Spirit of truth and the Word of truth, truth shall be our fruit, even in the hearts of our children.

Personal testimony of my parents. Truth was lived out in the lives of my parents and established in my heart through them. When Satan came to question the truth, I didn't believe him because truth had already been established in my heart.

The key is not being the perfect parent, but being real. When you blow it, confess your faults to your children and as a result mercy and truth will meet together.

IV. Concluding Remarks.

In conclusion let me summarize for you the three most important steps towards impacting your children to moral excellence.

- Teach the truth of God's word in your homes.
- Have a positive relationship with your children based upon God's love and mercy.
- Be good role models to your children. Model the truth.

If you do these things faithfully, you will have given your children the best thing they could have ever wished for in life -- a life that is pleasing to the Father. They will grow up to be mature adults who lead a life of moral excellence as vessels unto honor.

i. Statistics from Josh McDowell article in Focus of Family issue November 1994 and his tape series "Right and Wrong".

i. From Ken's sermon notes "Steering teens away from Sexual Pressure", October 8, 1992. Statistics originally taken from Josh McDowell's Book "Why Wait".