

# HEART AFLAME: ENTRUSTING YOUR CHILDREN TO GOD

BY: **WALT MUELLER**, CPYU President

*“The good news is that parents always exercise the greatest influence on the spiritual lives of their children.”*



**My fourteen-year-old self had gone to bed at my usual 9pm time.** Two hours later, I woke up to use the bathroom. While walking undetected past my parents darkened room, I not only heard my dad whispering, but I heard him whispering my name. It was at that unforgettable moment that I learned that my parents’ bedtime routine included intercession on behalf of their three children.

I shouldn’t have been surprised. I had been blessed with parents whose only stated hope for me for as long as I can remember was that I would grow up to love, follow, and serve Jesus Christ. As Christian parents, our hope for our children should be the same. Nothing more. Nothing less.

But challenges to passing on the faith in today’s world and seeing these good desires realized are many. Marketing, media, social media, and the peer group are among the many compelling voices that speak counter to the Gospel, summoning the allegiance of our children

and teens. Research from David Kinman and Mark Matlock in their book *Faith For Exiles*, reveals that more and more of our kids who have grown up in the church and Christian homes are following “the course of this world”, as only 10% of 18 to 29-year-olds who “grew up as Christians” are embracing a lifestyle of consistent discipleship.

The good news is that parents always exercise the greatest influence on the spiritual lives of their children. This should not be surprising, as God has established the home as the primary arena for spiritual nurture (Deuteronomy 6; Ephesians 6). This influence is effectively exercised as we entrust our children to God, which includes certain responsibilities that He has entrusted to us. How can we entrust our children to Him in a contemporary world full of distractions that so easily leads both children and parents away from the faithful pursuit of the chief end of “glorifying God and enjoying Him forever?”



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## First, to entrust your children to God is to tend to yourself.

I love Tedd Tripp's definition of parenting as "shepherding the hearts of your children in the ways of God's wisdom." It follows that the only way we can effectively nurture our children in the ways of God's wisdom is to be constantly nurturing ourselves. The Apostle Paul's words to the Colossians tell us that "therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving" (Colossians 2:6-7). We can only lead our children to where we are.

## Second, to entrust your children to God is to teach them doctrine.

Our children and teens are seeking answers to two basic developmental questions: "Who am I?" and "What do I believe?" Thanks to smartphones and social media, culture is catechizing (teaching) our kids around the clock. While they are turning to their devices to make sense of life in the world, we must lead them into the deep, liberating, and life-giving Word of God... which is the only source of Truth. Deuteronomy 6:4-9 reminds us that we are to be intentional about constantly and diligently teaching them God's Word, showing them how it speaks to all of life. Our approach is to be multi-sensory as we talk, sit, walk, lie down, and rise up with God's Word on our lips and our lives. We teach sound doctrine by enlisting the tools of age-appropriate Catechisms, family devotions, and the everyday teachable moments that offer opportunities to pass on the truths of God's Word. But teaching doctrine is not enough.

## Third, to entrust your children to God is to train them in righteousness (I Timothy 4:6-10).

Knowing sound doctrine is a worthless pursuit if that doctrine is not translated into everyday living. Our parenting should be directed to the end of not just honoring God with our lips, but glorifying Him with our lives (Mark 7:6). One way parents can teach this is to look for those everyday opportunities to employ what I call the *World-Word-Walk* paradigm. It starts with keeping your ears and eyes open to the current cultural narrative. What is *the world* teaching our kids? We point these things out and then examine them with our

children under the light of *God's Word*. Finally, we think and pray with them about how God's Word is calling them to *walk obediently* to God's glory in the midst of a world that teaches them to live contrary to the Gospel.

## Fourth, to entrust our children to God is to completely entrust our children to God!

While yes, we have been given the aforementioned responsibilities to **tend**, **teach**, and **train**, we cannot drag, push, or pull our kids screaming and kicking into the Kingdom of God. There is no guarantee that we will see the results that we want, in the way that we want, or in the time that we want. No, "salvation belongs to the Lord!" (Psalm 3:8; Revelation 7:10). It is only the Holy Spirit, working in His way and His time, who will call our children to faith. We need to constantly remind ourselves of what I heard R.C. Sproul say on many occasions: "God has entrusted the ministry of the Word to us, not its results." Our high calling is to be faithful and obedient... and to leave the rest up to God.

My dad was a pastor, and he would often end worship services with words of benediction that I've turned into a prayer that I've prayed often for my own children and grandchildren: "*Lord, as they go on their way, may you yourself go with them. May you go before them to show them the way, behind them to protect them, beside them to comfort them, above them to watch over them, and within them to give them peace. Amen.*" And, thanks be to God that my parents prayed these same words for me.

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