

Cyber Truths By E-mail

14. Content & Context **(September 17, 2005)**



Restoration Ministries International

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Dear Friends,

Last weekend we were biking past a soccer field where some very young girls were playing the game. Some of them appeared lost as to what to do with the ball when it came near them. Others, for their age, had not only some good individual skills in kicking the ball, they knew also what to do with the ball!

As we watched them, a tremendous and profound awareness came over me. It's the kind of realization where it takes the Holy Spirit a micro-second to impart a great deal of understanding. I realized that someone had to demonstrate not only the footwork necessary to be a good soccer player, but also an awareness of the other players in order to be an effective team member. Years from now, none of these girls will remember the hard work and patience those who taught them soccer went through. They'll probably think they were born knowing how to play the game.

A few days later I was fishing on the Rio Grande River. On the bank of the river was a father teaching his little boy how to fish. I can tell you: Never try to teach a boy to fish on a swiftly flowing river rather than a placid lake. His worm was in the tree; next the line got snagged on rocks. And, doing what was required of him, the father dutifully unsnarled many a tangled line.

Standing in the middle of the river in my hip boots, I realized that my Dad must have done the same for me. Do you see, I too have it in my mind that I was a "natural fisherman" right from the beginning. But, watching that father, I got a dose of reality that I was just like that boy at one time. My Dad had to show me me how, and to help me until I learned the skill—and still try to fish himself as this father was trying to do.

Sue recently read a statistic: The United States has now moved from being a CHILD-CENTERED society to a CHILD-DOMINATED nation. I wonder if this generation of young people will ever have any appreciation for what their parents endured to raise them? Will they live in deception, thinking that they were born with no need for training and correction? As we listen to them today, it appears that they are so engrossed in themselves that few appreciate what others went through on their behalf.

Paul's words have come to prophetic fulfillment:

"But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God—having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them" (2Timothy 3:1-5).

We wonder if all those who read our e-mails are faring any better in their child-rearing?

Content & Context

Many of you reading this e-mail have taken a biblically conservative approach to the way you live. Quite a few of you are home schoolers. We say this because we are writing about a problem that we see in many who feel that they live different from the world and the religious establishment. Yet, the difference may not be as great as you think. We can tell because as we interact with many of you, we detect no testimony to our Father's glory.

While both of us were in the

Nicolaitan system, we heard very few testimonies to our Father's faithfulness. It was very "me-oriented", looking for more of self to be fulfilled in a concentrated Sunday morning dose. The usual testimony at a Sunday morning service was either a quote from Scripture, or what we called "God emptied my garbage pail again". It went something like, "God helped me quit smoking yesterday." Over the years we found that garbage pail testimonies had no perseverance. A week later you found the person back smoking, getting drunk, living immorally, gossiping or whatever. Over time, the demons use 'garbage pail' testimonies to defame God's power, and to create doubt and distrust in others that He really can change lives. It seemed that few people ever yearned (or trusted in His loving and righteous character) to see themselves from our Father's perspective. His purposes for the lives of His children are so much higher than nagging that refuses to forsake the sin nature. Yet how few choose to see beyond their own fears and desires so they can be available for HIS service.

There is a passage in the Word that says, "One who puts on his armor should not boast like one who takes it off" (1 Kings 20:11). A true testimony to God's glory is one that has borne the test of time. The message in this verse is, don't speak too early. So many detract from God and His true power by giving garbage-dumping testimonies too early. They speak from pride, not humility, wanting to be noticed by others and receive praise.

The other problem that you may have carried over from your days in the religious system is perceiving God as a concept rather than as a viable relationship. This is especially true if you learned

about God in the CONTEXT of a classroom setting. Sunday schools, Bible studies, and even home schooling can make God seem like any other academic subject. God becomes the CONTENT, and the passive classroom learning environment is the CONTEXT. The sad part about this is that where you learned the CONTENT — the CONTEXT in which it was taught — has a lot to do with how you will use the CONTENT in the future.

Things you learned about passively in a classroom setting have little or no chance of ever becoming a way of life. Can you picture the girls playing soccer, or the boy at the river, spending hours in a classroom and then going out to play on the field, or fish in the river? No, it would be ludicrous to expect them to make that connection. It is the same in learning how to be a follower of Jesus.

Learning without an example to follow results in all brain and no action. As it pertains to your Christian life, no one "sees" your faith if it's locked away in your mind! You may think that you're "safe" from this if you home school; or you may define your Christian life by what you DON'T DO that the worldly DO take part in. But, in our Lord's sight, living as an isolated fortress is totally meaningless as far as His Kingdom is concerned.

Each of us needs to prepare our heart in obedient trust with these questions before we see Him at the Judgment Throne. How would you answer if He asks you right now:

- **WHAT DO YOU DO THAT BRINGS ME GLORY?**
- **WHAT DO YOU DO THAT EVIDENCES YOUR UTTER DEPENDENCE ON ME?**
- **WHAT DO YOU DO THAT SHOWS YOU REPRESENT ME TO THOSE WHO NEED TO SEE ME THROUGH YOU?**

To learn by example is the hallmark not only of any skill you have learned; it is the only way to become a follower of Jesus. Our Lord makes it plain in the pattern by which He taught His disciples, which Paul reiterates, "I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you" (John 13:15);

"Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ" (1 Corinthians 11:1).

If you want to be a follower of Jesus and raise your family and disciple others as followers who bring Him glory, you are going to have to live for Him. You need to be the example for those in your life! All your Bible knowledge and facts will be meaningless on the Day of Judgment if no one saw your faith in action. If you currently have children living at home, they should be hearing God-sightings every day from your mouth! They should see parents who put Jesus first by having all of you prayerfully before God together before anyone leaves your home each morning.

We have encountered a few home-schooling families whose role-modeling parent-to-children evidenced their love for Jesus in action. In one family, the children were taught to serve. They willingly and joyfully went to a Jewish nursing home each week to help. Sadly, so many home schooling families who think they are different from other families are caught up in the world of sports. The boys grow up trying to please their fathers—glorifying themselves through accomplishments.

The nature, character, and glory of God can only be picked up from people who humbly put their faith into action. Be very careful that our holy and precious Lord is not just another academic or historical fact for your family. BE VERY CAREFUL! So many defame our

precious Lord when they're able to spout all the facts about Him but have no experience in lovingly serving Him.

Please take these words seriously:

The true measure of any teaching is, what did the student learn so that he/she can apply it? When it comes to relating to our Lord as He commands, learning to follow Him is intricately connected to the manner in which you learned.

The CONTENT of knowing God, and the CONTEXT of how you've learned are inseparably linked. If you or your children see the Lord as a relational way of life in which they can see Him interacting with you; if they can see your dependency; and if they hear from your own lips testimony to His wonderful glory; then they as learners will make their relationship with Him their way of life as well.

If you live in the the United States in particular, please heed these words. The warnings of God to this nation are going to come more frequently and will be all the more harsh. The blood on the doorposts of the Israelite homes in Egypt signified trust and obedience to God's command for those who had ears to hear. Today our Lord is calling those who love and serve Him in obedient trust to walk a way of a life that glorifies our Father — because in that life He sees Jesus! Our Father needs to see you completely like His Son, living through dependent trust to glorify Him. Anything short of this makes you look just like those He will chastise.

Your family members in Jesus,
Mike & Sue Dowgiewicz