

Why Children Walk in the Truth

"I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth" (III John 4). Mrs. Pope and I have enjoyed seeing kids and grandkids this summer. It is hard to believe how fast everybody grew up. As I look back I can go to precious moments that let us know everything was going to turn out alright. I was thinking about a vacation we took when our kids were progressing through their teen-age years. I looked in my rear view mirror and I noticed a set of ear phones one of our teens was wearing. I was about to snap, "Okay, what are you listening to?" Then suddenly this kid said, "Hey, Dad, let me share with you what I'm listening to." The earphones were dropped over my head and I heard a song that was declaring the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Tears filled my eyes and the words of II John verse four came to mind, *"I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth."* Dr. Johnson who authored *The One Minute Father* encouraged parents to catch your kids doing the right thing and congratulate them for that. My dad was great about applauding character. It seemed whenever we made the right decision, Dad would say, *"I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth."*

In the context of the verse, John by the Holy Spirit was referring to the walk of Christians. But it can translate very well in the parent/child relationship. I don't know of a parent who doesn't want their kids to grow up as responsible, moral citizens and above all, great Christians. Let me share some thoughts with you about why children walk in the truth.

1. Children have found a good role model.

Paul said, *"Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do..."* (Philippians 4:9).

To the church at Corinth he wrote, *"Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me. For this cause have I sent unto you Timotheus, who is my beloved son, and faithful in the Lord, who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ, as I teach every where in every church"* (I Corinthians 4:16,17). The word "follower" is *mimetes*: which means a follower or an imitator. As you can see for yourselves this is where we get the word our English word "mimic."

A worthy prayer for our children would be, "Lord, give them a role model that is like Jesus!

2. Children have learned the intrinsic value of doing right.

Extrinsic refers to that which, coming from outside a thing, is not inherent in its real nature. This bears the connotation of a reward for doing right which is only temporary. For a kid to do the right thing on a permanent basis requires them to "own the conviction." Intrinsic refers to that which belongs to the real nature of a thing; not dependent on external circumstances; essential; inherent.

Let me give you an example. I say to "Junior," "If you tell me the truth, I'll give you an ice cream cone." Even a dishonest person, would have no problem temporarily pacifying your desire, if the external reward is sweet. Telling the truth pays off from the outside. If, on the other hand, no external reward is involved and "Junior" tells me, "Dad, I thought about lying to you, but it broke my heart when I thought about it; I just couldn't do it. I had to tell you the truth. I know you may be angry with me over what I have done; at least I can live with myself." When a kid "owns" convictions, he or she will end up doing right!

"Stand in awe, and sin not: commune with your own heart..." (Psalm 4:4). Selah.

3. Children have developed a deep abiding love to Jesus Christ.

This is truly when a child walks in the truth on a perpetual basis. Everything I do as a parent or a pastor is to encourage our youth to be real with Jesus! This involves the great commandment to love God with all our heart, *"And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might"* (Deuteronomy 6:5).

The next question is obvious, “How, then, do we get a child to that point?” First we must live in that love toward God ourselves and secondly we must pray to this end. Everything hangs upon this. This was the end of the law and prophets (Matthew 22:40).

- Pastor Pope -

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