

MISSION: CHANGE THE WORLD. CHILDREN WELCOME.

by Ben House, Veritas Academy

Our children, by God's grace, are to go from the environment of our homes and change the world. That is a big assignment. It entails writing on the front and back of the paper, if necessary. God often gives impossibly large homework assignments.

Consider:

We are to pray for His will to be done on earth as it is in heaven (Matthew 6:10).

We are to be light to the world and salt to the earth (Matthew 5:13–15).

We are to go and make disciples of all the nations (Matthew 28:19).

Why does God give so much homework? Why does He give such huge assignments? He gives us

these cosmic, universal assignments because He expects us to be working together. Yes, you can help each other out on the cosmic projects. Yes, you can and must work together. Our God is not a solitary being, but a Triune God. The Great Three-in-One has brought us together in communion with Himself. We (plural) are commissioned. We (plural) are salt and light. We (plural) are praying for and working for the Kingdom.

God also lets us use the Book. In fact, we have to use it to have success. As one teacher, named Joshua, told his students, "Bring your Book to class." His exact words were: "This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but

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you shall be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous (meaning, get your assignments done), and then you will have good success (meaning, pass the test).

Along with working together and using the Book, God expects us to recruit help in completing the assignments. Paul explains this principle in 2 Timothy 2:1–2. In verse 1, Paul tells Timothy, "You, therefore, my son, be strong in the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ." Timothy was Paul's eyes, ears, and hands in the church at Ephesus where he was sent. Paul delegated part of his homework as an apostle to his faithful student Timothy. Next, Paul tells him this: "And the things you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will teach

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others also.” Paul is telling Timothy to read back over his lecture notes, and then find some new students to learn the same material. These students will then recruit more new students. It is a pyramid principle; it is multilevel Christianizing of the world. This is multigenerational mentoring discipleship. This is Christian education.

God gives the big, impossibly big, assignments to us. Then He sets us in a small corner of the earth to fulfill the assignment. God says to take the Gospel to all nations, then He places most of us in marriages where, after a time, these marvelous little creatures start showing up in our homes every year or so. They arrive incomplete. They have to be taught language, evangelized, instructed about God. They have to be civilized as well. They have to learn culture and manners. They also have to learn to read and be potty-trained. Unlike baby birds which fly out of the nest within weeks of birth, our children grow and learn slowly.

God tells us to be world changers and then confines us to a mailing address, a local church, an office or a workbench, and a supper table with little faces all around it. In a world of seven billion people, God puts us face-to-face with somewhere between one and ten little people. None of this is said to minimize big ministries, vast evangelistic

endeavors, large outreach programs, mega-churches, or massive works that God may have included you in.

Christians need to witness more. We need to send out more missionaries in our communities and throughout the world. We need to promote more churches and Christian ministries. We need to address social ills, injustices, and immorality in our culture. But Christian families are central to all of this.

Christian family life calls for strong relationships between husbands and wives. Good marriages are essential to spiritual growth and a godly witness. There are lots of resources on Christian marriage—books, seminars, studies—but that is not our focus. Christian family life calls for good parenting skills. The children themselves also have to embrace the faith. God has no grandchildren. There are lots of materials concerning child raising, discipline, and family life. Your bookshelf or Kindle better have some Christian child-raising books (well-used ones) and your church better have direct, pointed, convicting teaching and preaching on child raising in the Christian home.

But here the focus is the matter of educating our children. The defining term that explains your life in regard to your children’s lives is “therefore.” Our children

are our “therefores.” They live out the implications of what we have said, and even more importantly, what we have lived out in front of them. Our children will absorb, imbibe, smooth out, roughen up, build upon, or reject the world we raise them in. Their lives will say, “My mother and/or father was like _____; therefore, I am _____.” That is scary and hopeful.

Paul tells fathers to raise their children in a Christian culture. The words in Ephesians 6 are usually translated as something like this: “Bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.” Training and admonition are good words; however, they might imply that parental oversight means a list of rules and a few exhortations. The Greek implies much more: “Fathers, bring them up in the *paideia* of the Lord.” *Paideia* means culture. Some people associate the word culture with classical music and having tea while dressed in fine clothes. Actually, culture means all of life. Culture is the atmosphere—spiritual, physical, intellectual—of our environments. Culture or *paideia* is as close, vital, and present as the air we breathe.

Children are to be brought up in a Christian world. They are to have Christian thoughts, Christian answers, and Christian ethics. We want the Faith to be

central to all their decisions. Preferably, our Christianity will impact our children's books, music, conversations, and companions. Christian principles will affect their career choices, their marriage choices, and every part of life. If possible, we even want them to eat Christian oatmeal.

Our children, our "therefores," will, God willing, live beyond our lives and go beyond us. The famous Richard Weaver book title says *Ideas Have Consequences*. So do children. So does education. Our goal should be that our children will stand on our shoulders, that they will see farther than we see, that they will go farther than we have gone. They will not only see the horizons we point to, but they will, by standing on our shoulders, see beyond our own horizons.

We and their teachers can benefit from what John of Salisbury in the twelfth century said of his own teacher, Bernard of Chartres:

Our own generation enjoys the legacy bequeathed to it by that which preceded it. We frequently know more, not because we have moved ahead by our own natural ability, but because we have been supported by the [mental] strength of others, and possess riches that we have inherited from our forefathers. Bernard

of Chartres used to compare us to [puny] dwarfs perched on the shoulders of giants. He pointed out that we see more and farther than our predecessors, not because we have keener vision or greater height, but because we are lifted up and borne aloft on their gigantic stature.

Parents, you cannot do the homework assignment that God has given you. God gives work that is too hard, too great for us. There is not enough time, nor do you have the abilities you need. Jesus said, "Without Me, you can do nothing" (John 15:5). If no other area of life brings us to realize the truth of what Jesus has said, raising children will. We must be faithful parents. We must secure the best education for our children. School for your children is not about social status. It is not about economic ease (a.k.a. "free" public education). It is not about getting a prestigious college scholarship or high-paying job, although either or both have their benefits. It is not about extra-curricular activities.

The most important thing about school, which is often overlooked, is that school is primarily about education. I sometimes comment on a restaurant after a meal by saying, "It was great except for the food." Obviously, if a restaurant fails in the food area, it has a big problem.

If Mordor High School has great programs and facilities, if it has a plethora of great course offerings, if it is just two blocks away and free, but it does not educate—and specifically educate in the fear of the Lord—it is not a school. To say Mordor High School is a great place except for the education is to say that they have failed to be a school. And when we as parents send our children, our "therefore," our homework assignments, there, we have failed also.