

The Power of Hope

Promises are important. They are important because of the hope they foster in our lives. Without promises, our hearts have nothing in which to hope. Promises provide hope for the future. It is important for children to learn to think ahead to the future when considering their actions. A child who learns the dynamics of hope early in life is one who will be prepared to make wise decisions in life. Fools rush in without thinking of the consequences of their actions, however wise children consider the ramifications of their actions on others and their futures. More importantly, who understands the power of hope is ripe for the promises and hope provided in the gospel.

God made us to hope

God has made the heart of man to hope. In Proverbs 13:12 we read, "Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but desire fulfilled is a tree of life." Our hearts are full of desires seeking fulfillment. The human heart has the capacity to treasure those things that offer fulfillment in the future. This makes hope a tremendous motivator in life. If we're to see the importance of the promises in our foundational calling in life, we need to understand the dynamics of hope.

In Colossians 1:3-6, we discover the power of hope. The Apostle employed hope as the motivational principle for the Colossians to keep their focus on Jesus Christ alone as their source of life. Paul wrote,

We give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and the love which you have for all the saints; because of the hope laid up for you in heaven, of which you previously heard in the word of truth, the gospel...

Hope produces faith, love, and joy

When you heard the promises of the gospel (forgiveness, the gift of righteousness, and eternal life in Jesus Christ), you were moved by the hope. The hope of the promises being fulfilled produced faith in your heart. In Galatians, Paul taught that faith always works through love. We could further say that hope also produces joy, because when love finishes working in our lives, we are filled with the joy of the Holy Spirit.

Promises made by someone who has demonstrated the power to fulfill those promises fosters hope. The reason earthly treasures allure us is that they offer a temporal hope to the heart. Without a greater hope, the heart will seek unconsciously the greatest hope available. Jesus taught this concept in the Sermon on the Mount when he said, "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Matthew 6:19-21). If our treasures are on earth, our hearts will be earth-bound. If our treasures are in heaven, then our hearts will be heaven-bound.

Offer Hope

As we lead our families and teach our children about their responsibilities before God as children, the promises of God should be provided as a motivation for them. Consider for instance what the Apostle Paul wrote to the Ephesians, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother (which is the first commandment with a promise) that it may be well with you, and that you may live long on the earth" (Eph. 6:1-3). To encourage the children to fulfill their responsibilities to their parents and to God, he included the fact that this command came with a promise.

Here are some suggestions for family devotions. You might consider reading the promises of God in the gospel and discussion the hope in each one. Also, the book of Proverbs offers tremendous examples of employing the dynamics of hope to children (note Proverbs 3:1-6). Notice the promises which provide hope for the future as the father of Proverbs encourages his son. First, the father gives the responsibility of the son and then he gives the promise which provides hope for the future. Perhaps you might read through the book of Proverbs this month, a chapter per day. Take note of the responsibilities of sons and daughters to their fathers and mothers, but make special notice of the promises. You might have your children make a list of the

promises and then what is required for those promises to be fulfilled. In this way you can teach them about the power of hope as well as give them the basis for practicing faithfulness in their foundational calling in life as your children which will prepare them to be children of God.

I want to encourage you to become parents of hope. As you teach your children the way to live life, fill them with hope by explaining the benefits of your way of life. Use God's Word with His promises as the basis for your actions and lifestyle. If you are dealing with a child who lacks faith to follow you and obey you, then you have a perfect situation to apply these principles. You can know they are lacking hope or that you have not offered a greater hope to their heart than the world or peers have offered. Show them how their choices are going to impact their future relationships: they'll either suffer in the future or they'll experience benefit and blessing as a result of wise choices now.

What do you think about evaluating your family values and practices by the hope they offer for the future? When you make a decision about training your children and what programs or activities in which they are to be involved, ask yourself, "What hope does this provide for the future?" It will give you wisdom in making your child-training decisions. Giving hope adds value to any relationship.

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