

Facing Challenges to God

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Deuteronomy 6:6 -9 paints a picture of the Word of God permeating lives. Fathers should be working toward having the Word of God permeate their children's lives. It is ok for fathers to request their children adhere to their teaching, as was done in Proverbs 1:8. This request should be accompanied with a persistence in presenting the truths of God. In a world of contradictions we need to do so in a way that promotes insight.

Consider an account from the life of the Lord. It is found at Mark 12:18 -27. The Sadducees challenge Jesus with a question based on their assumptions about life after the resurrection. Jesus points out that the premise of their question is wrong. Life after resurrection does not have the same style as life prior to the resurrection.

It is important that Dad's not only have their children memorize scripture, but they train them to have insight. This will help them to distinguish between world based attacks on the Christian life and biblically based correction. Dad's should develop this insight deliberately and strategically. Strategically, in that promoting a clear understanding of basic Christian values and beliefs should be a goal.

Deliberately, in that Dads should point out the nature of various attacks on God and godly values in the education system, entertainment, news, and yes sometimes in the body of Christ.

Below are some things you may want to consider talking about several times with your children as the years go by. Once is not enough. Just like the world continues to present its view point, we must continue to reinforce a Godly perspective.

God

1. God is a condemning God. Exodus 34:6 - 7 ; 2 Peter 3:9

Some people see God as angry and ready to condemn. This extends to judging God and even a hatred of God. In their deception about the nature of God they discount His mercy and wisdom. Often times words such as genocide, infanticide, and homophobic are used in challenging God. The underlying sentiment is a lack of trust in the greater wisdom of God and His understanding of His purposes.

Dad's can help their children have insight into this type of thinking. Although it may be used to indicate that God doesn't exist, it doesn't. It does challenge either our concept of God or the fairness of God. In either case our children need the insight of asking on what basis the challenger is not accepting God's

revelation of Himself. On what basis is the challenger saying that God has not spoken? On what basis does the challenger question God's fairness?

To begin with children need to listen to understand what is really being said. For instance the word belief has at least 6 dictionary definitions. Listening to understand how a word with multiple meaning is being used is an important skill. Sometimes one can detect that the word is being used with different meanings, in the same conversation. Perhaps a person may be using the emotional impact of a term to lead a person to a conclusion that is not being proved.

Consider the statement, "I don't believe in God". Listening to the points being made can determine if the person is saying God doesn't exist or is the point they don't have confidence in God. The person speaking may not even be aware of this important distinction.

Understanding who God has declared Himself to be is important. Too often people have a view of God that the bible does not present. As Dads live with their children they need to teach them about how God really is. By so doing they may be able to quickly see that they don't believe in the God the attacker is describing, and then they can describe the God they do believe in. They will also see that the attack was not an attack on the God they trust.

Jesus

Luke 1: 1 - 4 and John 20:30 -31

There are many stories circulating about Jesus and many theories. Luke writes that he had researched the story of Jesus and then written down his findings (Luke 1: 1 - 3). Luke along with the other gospel should be the basis for understanding the story of Jesus. Our children need to know the story of Jesus well, because many attacks on Jesus are not based on an accurate telling of Jesus' life. Some attacks are unsupported speculations.

Our children need to know that the Gospels were written close to the time that they happened. Many who had known Jesus, both friends and enemies, were alive when the Gospels were written and sent to churches. In light of this they should be careful about centuries-later theories that have no evidence. They are baseless speculations.

The empty tomb is the great stumbling block for those who attack Jesus. There are people who assert that Jesus did not die or that someone stole the body. The argument that Jesus did not die ranges from the Gnostic theory that the spirit of the Son of God left a man named Jesus to die on the cross, to a theory that Jesus fainted (swooned) and only appeared dead. They assert he revived in the tomb. According to Matthew 28: 11- 15 the assertion that the body of Christ was stolen. The culprits range from the disciples to Joseph of Arimathea. All of these alternative explanations of the empty tomb do not agree with detail of Christ's death provided, or the actions of those closest to Jesus for the remainder of their lives. The Scriptures record that Jesus was badly beaten and that he was pierced in the side. He was examined specifically to determine if he was dead. (Matthew 27: 26 -50 ; Mark 15:15 - 37; Luke 23; John 19:1-35). The details provided agree with other accounts of crucifixion, which a well developed method of execution by the time of Jesus. It had been in existence for over 500 years by the time of Jesus. Cicero and

Josephus, ancient writers are mentioned as among those talking about crucifixion [(Cicero, 106-43BC, *Pro Rabirio Postump* 16) and <http://religiousstudies.uncc.edu/people/jtabor/cruc-josephus.html>]]. The story recorded that Jesus died from crucifixion is more believable than that he somehow survived the ordeal. Jesus was placed in the tomb, dead. Theories on how the tomb became empty will be dealt with next.

The need for alternatives to the resurrection grow out of the observation stories of that people rising from the dead after 3 days are unusual. This believe has been held for thousands of years. Those in Jesus' time knew this. That is why they knew that the resurrection of Jesus was a miracle. The spread of the story of his resurrection was not the result of people who were ignorant of the normal course of life and death. The fact is that regardless of what explanation is provided for the empty tomb, the earliest testimony is that three days after Jesus' death the tomb was empty. Although elaborate details can be provided, the simple truth is that the life of the disciples and Joseph of Arimethea do not support the belief that they stole the body. (Josh McDowell *The New Evidence that Demands a Verdict* Chapter 9) Their reverence for God and love of their people seem to go against the type of cynicism or non-belief regarding God's righteousness and judgement that would be required for such a hoax. Instead of saving people they would be assuring their condemnation by God. They would be knowing agents of Satan.

One other theory that has been advanced is that people went to the wrong tomb. There is no support for such a theory. It calls into question the memory of the soldier's guarding the tomb, the memory of several women that say Jesus interned (John 19:38 -42 and Luke 23:50 -56), Joseph of Arimethea knowledge of his own tomb, and finally the insight of the Jewish leaders spreading a story about an empty tomb (Matthew 28:11 -15). All that needed to be done is to produce the dead body of Jesus or show the still sealed tomb.

Our children need to be confident in the belief that Jesus rose from the dead. (I Corinthians 15:1 -8)

Limits of Reason

Western culture emphasizes the importance of man's reason. This manifestation of the flesh has cause many to abandon faith in God. Man's reason is seen as the basis for measuring the validity of any information. It is assumed that faith and revelation are subject to evaluation by reason. The bible asserts that exalts reason from it proper use. Reason should be used to increase the understanding of faith and revelation, so that we grow closer to God.

Our children need to see that everyone starts from a point of faith or revelation. People don't know all they know because we started out with a blank slate and figured out everything ourselves. Starting from nothing produces nothing. We all receive input from our senses and take it that at some level this input reflects reality. The input we receive includes communication from outside ourselves on how to interpret our world. It is based on this communication we use reason, which is the development of correlations between what we sense. It is important to understand that we sense not only physically, but spiritually. The question is not if we start from revelation or faith, but what revelation or faith we start from. The frame work we reason within affects our conclusions.

Our children need to understand that there are several frameworks within which people reason. They define relationships that exist.

A summary of these frameworks is found at http://ancientfaith.com/podcasts/carlton/the_limits_of_reason. A portion of the thoughts from that site follows.

The first is that of the secular materialist who rejects the existence of an independent creator and, instead, interprets religion through psychology or the social sciences. Feuerbach argued that when we talk about God we are really just talking about ourselves, and most materialists would agree with that appraisal.

The second approach is that of the pagan materialist who believes in a Higher Power, but one who is, nonetheless, very much a part of the physical cosmos. Mormonism would be an obvious example.

The third is that of the religious Platonist who believes that, while God is not knowable through the physical senses, he is knowable through the use of human reason. This view is popular among some Catholics and Reformed thinkers.

The fourth is that of the Pietist who believes that God can only be approached via some sort of personal experience which is usually emotionally charged. God is not so much known as felt. Most Charismatics would fall in this category.

A fifth is captured by a distinction between awareness and discursive reasoning. In one case we sense an interaction such as being aware that I am typing, the other is concluding through a thinking process. The awareness is not a feeling but giving attention to what is there (Romans 1: 19 -20). This is knowing through paying attention to the I AM, who is outside his creation, acting in our lives. This comes through our heart.

Understanding that we know material things like rocks in one way, animals in another, fellow human being in still another, and finally God totally differently is an important step that our children need to understand. The possible relationship we bear to the aim of our knowing affects how we can know. Understanding this can help protect our children against thinking that the materialistic approach to knowing is the only way of knowing.

Truth

There are many things said about truth that are self-contradictory, although on first hearing they may sound like the saying of a wise person. For instance consider the following statements:

1. One thing we know is that we can't know anything certainly.
2. I don't need to know the truth to know a lie.

Sayings such as these abound in some circles that enjoy challenging common conventions. They are viewed as sophisticated insights. In fact they are confused statements which obscure our ability to know truth.

One thing we know is that we can't know anything certainly. This statement is self contradictory. This is disclosed by simply asking the question, "Is the statement true?". If it is possible to know that this statement is true then we can know something. If this statement is true then communication and meaning exist. These are two truths. If one continues this reasoning I think that eventually we will conclude that while we may not know all truth, we can know some truth.

I don't need to know the truth to know a lie. This statement is not true. A lie is a falsehood, or in other words the absence of truth. If a person calls something a lie and a person asks why, a proper answer will assert, "Because it contradicts an accepted truth. That truth is that ...". When the person answers they are admitting that to some extent they know the truth. It may not be true that they know the whole truth, but they know some truth.

Dads should recognize that these and similar statements obscure our ability to know truth. (Romans 1:18) People have reached the conclusion that, as finite being, they can't start from themselves and end up with certainty. Because of this they doubt the ability to know reality. However this is based on a bad starting place. People are depending upon man's reasoning. As such, without divine input, they will not see the truth (John 8:32, John 14:6, Romans 1:21, I Corinthians 1:21). Revelation is necessary for us to see with certainty truth. This revelation comes from God. (Romans 10:17) Starting with God's revelation we comprehend the realities of existence. This ability to know eternal truth, not through our own reason, but through the revelation of God needs to be explained to our children. They need to understand the limits of what we can learn through our senses (Psalms 19 and Romans 1: 19 – 20)