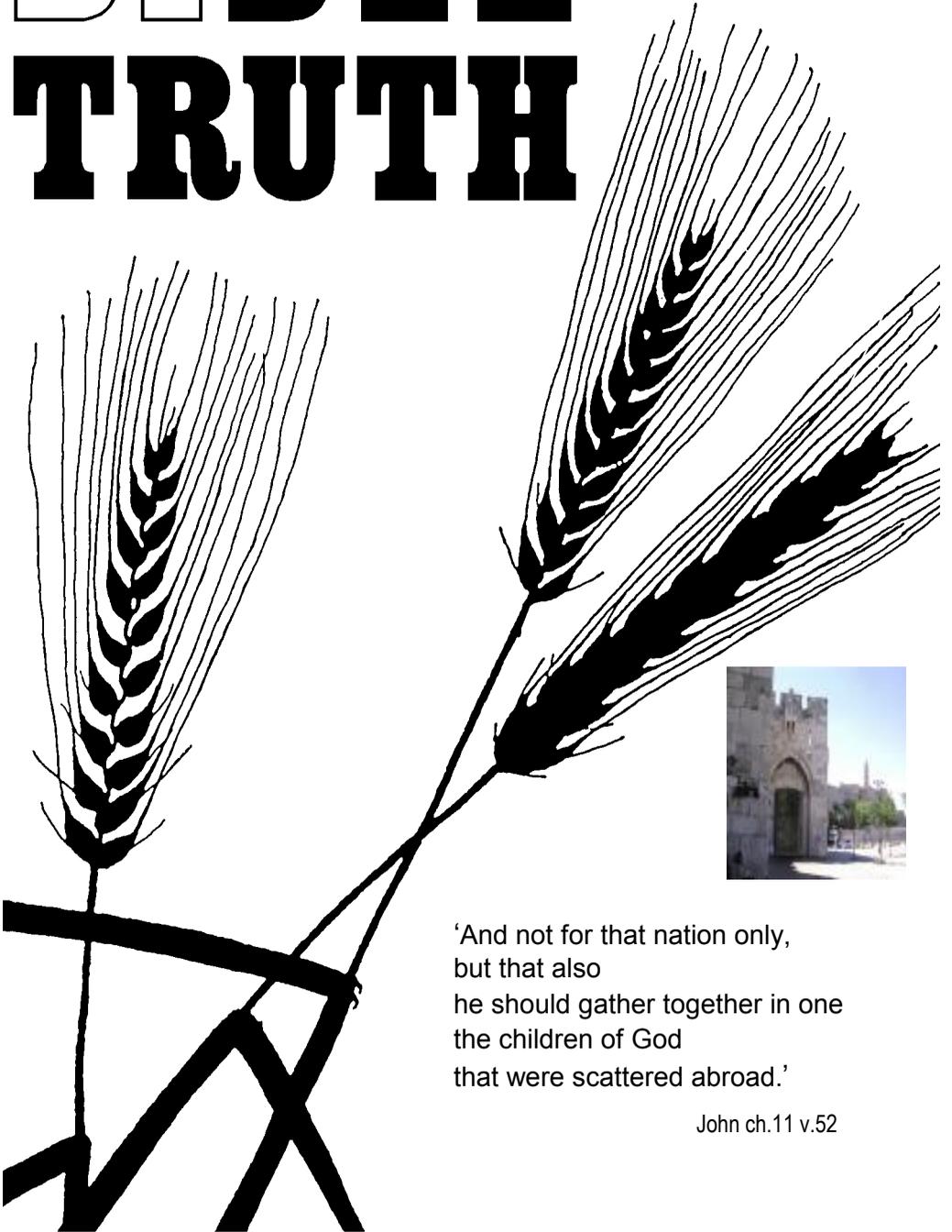


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'And not for that nation only,
but that also
he should gather together in one
the children of God
that were scattered abroad.'

John ch.11 v.52

The War Against Boys

by Pastor Kevin Swanson

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You may remember a news headline from a few years ago reporting, 'New Scientific Research Indicates Boys are Different from Girls'. That assertion in 2004 should be laughably obvious to us, but is also a serious flaw in the predominant world view operating today.

We give girls and boys the same education, the same toys, teachers, expectations, and goals in life, and then wonder why they are frustrated, angry, aberrant, and purposeless in older life.

Dr Christine Hoff Somers is the author of a recent book called, *The War Against Boys*. While interviewing her on my weekly radio programme, *Generations*, she told the listening audience that the modern school is dangerous for boys. It is producing boys that are feminised, awkward, rebellious, or otherwise ill-prepared for life.

Today in the US only 43% (46% UK) students attending college are boys, and that ratio continues to drop. Schools are increasingly designed for girls. Meanwhile, boys are disenfranchised and disinterested.

Removing a boy's unique purpose and preparation in life, setting him in a girl's world and then putting him in competition with girls will only produce devastating consequences for our social and economic systems. Actually, it is already happening. The number of children born without fathers, where the father is nowhere to be found, has risen from 5% to 35% in just the last 30 years.

This problem is not limited to conventional schools. It's happening in home schools too. We woke up to this reality when my wife and I hit a crisis point with our son. We had read somewhere that boys in the homestall easily give way to docility, laziness, and sometimes rebellion, and it was plain that these issues were already hitting close to home. While it is important to hold a young man responsible for his own sin, we wanted to hold ourselves accountable for the proper raising of our son. As I listened to dozens of other stories, I came to discover that this problem is rampant throughout the home schooling movement. The reality crashed in on us like a ton of bricks. We had inadvertently bought in an egalitarian (gender neutral) viewpoint on education, and it was hurting our son. What my son needed was a man in his life, and God was pointing at me.

First, we should resolve the matter that differences in natural abilities and designed purposes do not contribute to an essential difference in value. A man cannot give birth to a baby, and therefore has a different function. It would be futile to complain about it. We should just accept the fact. But, that a man cannot birth a baby and a woman can, does not mean that a woman is essentially better than a man. The same can be said for any other distinctive purposes God has instituted for men and women.

Goals: What we're shooting for

When I trained my son to shoot a gun I would tell him, 'If you can't see the target, it's doubtful you'll ever hit it'. The same thing applies to raising children. Unless you have a clear and correct target in your mind's eye for those children, the arrows may very well fly far off course. You need to have a goal in mind, because the goal will shape the preparation of a child for life and eternity.

I would recommend that every family start with the Bible if they want a clear vision for the raising of children. It is far more important to review the Creator's 'Operations Manual' before launching out to do anything as important as raising children. So what's the vision? What's the goal?

In some ways, we are raising our children for the same purpose. We want every one of our children to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. We want them to pursue His Kingdom's interests.

But it's pretty obvious from the Bible that from the beginning there was always a difference between the girls and boys in nature with regard to function and goals. Of course, man has perverted these differences and the result is feminism, abuse of women, feminisation of men, and so forth. Today we sit in a 'gender blender'. For parents with vision, for parents who take the raising of their children seriously, we must go back to the 'Owner's Manual' and define a vision for raising our sons and daughters.

The woman was created to be a 'helper' for the man (Genesis ch.2 v.18). This is the broad target or goal we have in mind. A more narrow target subsumed in the function of 'helper' is 'home manager' (Titus ch.2 v.5). While the term is translated in some Bible versions as 'keepers at home', it is better rendered 'home manager'. Part of the woman's capacity of 'helper' is to be a 'home manager'.

Some will jump to the conclusion that this means a girl is limited to classes on changing nappies and wearing aprons. That conclusion limits the vision of the Titus ch.2 v.5 role, while in fact her role is far more comprehensive than that. She is 'helper', which, according to Proverbs ch.31 includes buying fields, taking care of the poor, and a lot of other things. Of course, central to her God-given duties is the managing of the home but her broad purpose is to be a 'helper' to her husband. Sometime in her future she may help her husband in missionary medical work because she has learned medicine. Therefore, the preparation of a young lady must keep these two goals in mind. One day she will be a helper and a home manager. If her preparation ignores these important goals, or if her home schooling and college work trains her not to be a good helper and a good home manager, it will be a defective preparation.

These being the broad goals for our young ladies, what then are the goals God has laid out for young men? Here is a list.

- **Dominion** - Genesis ch.1 v.26
This is effectively ruling the world about us. We take rocks and oil to turn them into cars and computers. We make wise use of the animals, property, environment, family, church and state, by applying the absolute principles of truth and right found in the Bible.
- **Responsible for Material Sustenance for his Family** - Exodus ch.21 v.10 & 1 Timothy ch.5 vv 7-8.
- **Defenders** - Deuteronomy ch.20 vv 1-5, Nehemiah ch.4 v.14 & Psalm 144 v.1.
- **Heads (Leaders)** - Ephesians ch.5 v.23.
- **Sacrificial Lovers** - Ephesians ch.5 vv 25-28.
- **Resident Theologians** - 1 Corinthians ch.14 vv 34-35.

If our boys are raised without a vision for dominion, without a sense of responsibility for taking care of a family, without a sense of protecting the family even by force if necessary, without leadership experience and training, without learning how to let his sister go first in the food line (in the quintessential act of boyhood sacrifice), or without being able to explain the doctrines of the Bible, then he has not been trained to be the man that God wants him to be. His preparation will be defective and he will not be trained to be a man.

Turning a Boy into a Man

If the goals of a girl and a boy are different, then the obvious question that follows is whether it would make sense that their preparation would be different. There are several practical ways in which the training of a boy differs from the training of a girl.

1. When a boy is young he will spend more time with his mother, but as he gets older, he will need a man to properly mentor him into manhood. If a boy is to grow into a man, the best mentor that can show him how to be a man will always be a man. Ideally, this will be his own father. If, for some reason, it is not possible for a father to invest concerted time into his boy's life, his parent(s) should seek out an internship, an apprenticeship, or something like it under the tutelage of a Godly, dependable man in the church or in the home schooling movement that can serve as a mentor.
2. A boy should learn to treat girls differently than he treats boys. As the sacrificial lover, he must learn to treat girls with a tender respect, 'as the weaker vessel' (1 Peter ch.3 v.7). We once took care of a couple of young boys whose parents needed a little extra help. From the outset I told the boys that they could wrestle with my son and punch him around a little. They could even sit on him if the situation called for it. 'But', I told them, 'That doesn't go for my daughters. I don't want you hitting these girls'.

The same rule goes for debate. We can teach girls to fight like boys in debate. Both young men and young women should learn to debate. But if we don't allow for the differences, debate will be thoroughly feminised, which doesn't do boys any good. Or it will be thoroughly masculinised, in which case women are left out, forced into an unnatural masculine mode, or mistreated. The way a boy debates with a girl will differ from how he debates with a boy.

3. The environment of learning for a boy may be a mixture of home, classroom, or business. He should be trained for the environment in which one day he will find himself, namely the business and home. While classrooms may have an occasional use (such as for training in rhetoric), the principle of life integration is often lost in that environment. As a home educated boy gets older, he should spend more time outside of the home. He should learn what it takes to take dominion and provide a sustenance for himself.

4. Boys can be born fighters. They turn a doll into a gun, and run around the house shooting the bad guys. Meanwhile, his sister may take the toy gun and turns them into lay dolls. I have encountered both liberals and conservatives alike that want to suppress this God-given ability in their sons. The problem however, is not with the boy's inclination to fight. Like everything else in children, this inclination needs to be shaped and honed according to the standards of God's laws.

Boys need to be taught two things about fighting - what to fight and how to fight. They should learn to fight their own sin, bad world views in the realm of ideas, and real enemies. While there is a place for self defence and real warfare, our boys need to know that the hottest war of all is the war of ideas. The greatest fighters of all time were stalwarts like Ambrose, Augustine, Patrick Boniface, Martin Luther, John Knox and William Wilberforce. Over the centuries of the Christian church, courageous men of faith have brought down strongholds of Satan's kingdom, bastions of man-centered power base, by holding up the Word of truth, and casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalts itself above the knowledge of God. These should be the real role models for boys. I highly recommend biographies such as the *Leaders in Action* series as a terrific way to transfer this vision to our boys.

Conclusion:

Our world view does make a difference. If we build our children's education on the egalitarian world view that most of us have been taught by our university training and the 6 o'clock news, and if we ignore the Maker's Instructions, we will pay. Our children will pay.

When rains come and floods rise, the house that was built on the sand - that house that was not built on the words of Jesus in the Bible - will come tumbling down. It may not be ten years from now, it may be forty, but the house will come down.

Let us build our house and our children's future on the Rock.

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