

Who is Salting Whom?

By Steve & Carol Ryerson

The birth of our children is an exciting time. We are full of happiness and expectation for these precious little bundles we hold in our arms and begin to nurture. As much fun as the cuddling is, we realize that we must train them. The early lessons of sleep schedules and feedings grow more complex, and we begin to consider their long term education. Will we send them to government school, Christian school, or will we keep the responsibility in our home?

For some people, that decision was made before their first baby was born, but for others, it's a decision they struggle with almost until time for the first day of kindergarten. Still others choose an institutional setting, only to bring their child home after a few weeks or months.

At some point as we are pondering this weighty matter, or after we have made our choice public, we will undoubtedly hear from some well-meaning soul, "Well, I think we need to keep our children in the public schools. What will become of them if we Christians pull our children out? Our children need to be the 'salt and light' to those other lost children. They need to be missionaries."

If you are unsure of your decision, or even if you do know without a doubt that you've heard from God, you may stammer a bit, unsure how to respond.

Let's take some time to explore this entire 'salt and light' concept. Although we understand that Jesus' Great Commission was given to every believer, we'll focus in on missionaries, since this is the 'salt and light' concept.

People who fulfill the calling to go to a foreign land are mature Christians who already have proven ministries. They have spent much time in prayer and study of the Word to gain a close relationship with God, and to face the issues of life with a Biblical foundation. Although missionaries come from varied backgrounds, they have all proven their ministries through being pastors, teachers, short-term missionaries, or having worked in other leadership positions. Often many years elapse between the initial calling to the field and their arrival. During that time God is testing, teaching, and preparing them for the challenges they will face.

Missionaries are sent by an organization to their fields of labor to function in positions of authority. From this status they are going to teach, preach, and in other ways minister with the purpose of bringing the hungry souls to our LORD. We and the missionaries themselves expect that the hungry souls will respond with some level of respect and honor, yet their victories are not without struggles. God's people face many demonic experiences as they press on to victory.

Contrast these circumstances with our children. Think about those delightful, innocent, cherub-faced five-year-olds skipping off to their first day of kindergarten. They are not mature in their faith, but rather are "sponges" ready to soak up what they are taught. They are being sent one-by-one to a foreign field (the classroom) during their formative years. What they learn will long influence their thinking. Even as they move into their teens, they are still not mature in their faith. With all the rhetoric of being 'missionaries' and the 'salt and light' aside, parents are sending their little children to the government schools as students. They are not going with the authority to, or for the purpose of, teaching others truth. They are being sent by their parents to learn from their teachers.

What are they taught in the public school? They are taught that a person can be good without God, that spiritual issues are of no more than secondary importance in life, that no religion or 'god' is any more worthy than any other, that a person's sexual orientation has no bearing on his ability to function well in society in any capacity, and that a father need not be considered any more of a leader

in the home than a mother. These precepts and others are strongly, yet subtly and intentionally, enfolded into the culture of the American government-run school. This ungodly agenda is being used to systematically tear down the faith of our children, and it is being taught from the time they first set foot in those hallowed halls of learning.

Sometimes people assure me that they live in a "good school district." As a former educator in both government and Christian schools, my response is that "good" schools are more efficient at promoting evil philosophies than are "bad" schools because they have removed some of the distractions. While I can't say that all government-run schools are equally destructive to faith, I can say that the official policies of all of them have moved drastically in the wrong direction.

We recognize that there are some Christian teachers who are working hard to do what they can in the government school arena. Despite those laudable efforts, these institutions use anti-Christian textbooks, and the philosophy of the state boards of education is decidedly anti-Christian. Remember also, that the Christian teacher is typically far more mature in her faith and is going in a position of authority to teach children, unlike our young students. Even she has restrictions set by those above her regarding what she can and cannot do or say. Efforts to evangelize students have to be clandestine. Efforts to evangelize fellow staff have to be cautious. The point is, though, that the Christian government school teacher cannot be equated with a student.

There are some examples of young people who win their friends to the Lord, and we rejoice in those. But, current statistics show that the vast majority of Christian young people are being lost to the world by the time they reach the age of 18. Through the years, that has been our experience. We've seen a few who have won their schoolmates to the LORD. But we've seen far more who have been lost. Even if they remain active in their churches, one can easily see that their thinking has been clouded by the humanistic philosophies they have been taught.

Would we send missionaries to a foreign field if we knew they would need to submit to ungodly daily teaching of the unsaved? Would we send missionaries to a foreign field with the expectation that a significant percentage of them would be converted to the pagan faith of that country in exchange for winning some of the local population to the LORD? Sending children into the foreign field of the public school results in exactly that. There are other ways to reach those hungry souls in the government schools without endangering our own.

If your children are not being taught that God is the center of every area of life, then they are spending hours every day learning an unbiblical view of life, no matter how "good" the schools may seem to be. Those are views that will need to someday be unlearned if they are going to be true servants of the LORD.

Proverbs 19:27 states, "Cease, my son, to hear the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge." Why would we want to send them someplace that is in fact giving them instruction contrary to God's Word, thus causing them to be disobedient to Scripture?

Parents, God has brought us out of the world to be a separate people unto Him as we see in II Corinthians 6:17-18: Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.

He lays the training of our children squarely on our shoulders, not the government's, not the church's, but ours, as Deuteronomy 6:4-7 states: Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.

It's past time for us to obey the Word of God so that our children will grow in grace and knowledge of the Lord. We must train them to walk with Him daily, for Romans 8:14 says: For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.

Let's not send them to work too soon. Be sure while your children are young, that they are learning God's ways. They will then be ready to pick up their tools, and go out into whatever field of labor God has called them.