

# RESET

— FOR —

# PARENTS

HOW TO KEEP YOUR KIDS FROM BACKSLIDING



TODD FRIEL

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## *Introduction*

# Why Parents Need a Reset

**B**efore you know it, your son or daughter will be moving out, possibly to attend a university or tech school. Would you like to hear how your child is likely to sound after being out of the nest for three months?

*Me:* Hello young person.

*Your child:* Hello, Sir.

*Me:* Are you a born-again Christian?

*Your child:* Yes, I am.

*Me:* If someone is not a born-again Christian like you, will that person go to hell?

*Your child:* I don't want to judge.

*Me:* Sigh.

I have had that conversation hundreds, possibly thousands, of times. I have also had this dialogue with countless “Christian” students:

*Me:* Hello young person.

*Your child:* Hello, Sir.

*Me:* Are you a born-again Christian?

*Your child:* I used to be, but I'm kind of re-thinking all that stuff.

*Me:* Deep sigh.

And finally, there is this heartbreaker:

*Me:* Hello young person.

*Your child:* Hello, Sir.

*Me:* Are you a born-again Christian?

*Your child:* I'd rather not talk about it.

*Me:* Why not?

*Your child:* If my parents find out what I have been doing here, they wouldn't be happy.

*Me:* Very deep sigh.

All three of these conversations reveal that these kids really don't understand biblical Christianity, even though they were raised in a Christian home like yours. The odds that your child won't apostatize and talk exactly like those "backslidden" kids are not in your favor.

Pick your favorite pollster and you will be horrified to discover that the MAJORITY of our Christian youth will spend their formative years at church playing gross-out games, only to leave home and notoriously "lose their faith." Today's headlines makes this crystal clear.

*Headline:* Young Christians Highly Involved in Porn (one-newsnow.com)

*Headline:* Christian Teens Are Viewing More Porn Than Ever Before (patheos.com)

*Headline:* Most American Teens Hold Positive Opinion of Bible but Rarely Read It, Survey Finds (Christianpost.com)

*Headline:* Why Young Christians Can't Grasp Our Arguments against Gay "Marriage" (Lifesitenews.com)

*Headline:* For Millennials, Out-of-Wedlock Childbirth Is the Norm (Slate.com)

On and on the headlines go, all pointing in the same direction: we are losing an entire generation of Christian youth. The statistics that state 60 to 80 percent of our kids "lose the faith" reveals that Christian parents are producing more false converts than true.

Clearly, we are doing something radically wrong. It is time for an examination of our Christian parenting methods and ask, "Do I need a parenting reset?"

## **The Goal**

*Reset for Parents* is NOT about:

- Teaching your children manners.

- Changing your children's behavior.
- Getting your unruly children under control.

Instead, *Reset for Parents* is written to help you lovingly and relentlessly pursue the one thing every parent wants more than anything else: to see his or her children walking in the truth.

*Reset for Parents* is written for you to consider your parenting priorities, and possibly reorient and aim toward one overarching goal: *the salvation of your children*.

- *Reset for Parents* is not a parenting manual; it is a salvation guide.
- *Reset for Parents* will not help you change your child's diaper; but it will help you apply your faith to the heart of your child.
- *Reset for Parents* aims to encourage you to stop raising well-behaved children and start raising children who love Jesus . . . who will then desire to be well-behaved.
- *Reset for Parents* is not about changing your children; it is about changing YOU.

What you are about to read is not the musings of a Christian father who raised his kids perfectly. Instead, you are going to read about the consistent excuses I have amassed after witnessing to hundreds (perhaps thousands) of university students who “backslid.”

You can avoid those mistakes. You do not have to become a member of the prodigal children club. However, you are likely going to have to reset your parenting approach and raise your children in a radically different fashion than you currently are.

Let me applaud you for making the effort to accomplish the most important assignment a Christian parent has — to raise up your children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord (Ephesians 6: 4).

*Reset for Parents* cannot guarantee that your child will get saved. But it does promise that if you apply what you are about to read, you may hear the sweetest words that anyone can hear, “Well done, my good and faithful servant [Matthew 25:21], your children will be here soon.”

Are you ready for a reset?

## *Chapter 1*

# **Stop Disciplining and Start Discipling**

**D**ear Mom and Dad, if you want the joy of watching your child grow in love for the Lord and obedience to you (Proverbs 29:17), I beg you to thoughtfully consider this advice:

Every interaction with your child should have one overarching goal: that your words and actions would lead them to love and fear the Lord more than they currently do.

In other words, stop striving for peace, quiet, and well-behaved children. Start focusing primarily on your child's salvation. That one thought will forever change you, your child, and your home. If your family is like ours, this will likely require considerable adjustments in your parenting strategy. So, let me phrase this negatively:

If your interaction with your child doesn't end with more love, joy and peace than when you began, then you have failed in your one and only assignment with your child.

The salvation of your child is eternally more important than compliance.

- Who cares if your child holds his fork right, but dies and goes to hell?
- Who cares if your child never uses a potty word, but spends eternity crying out for a drop of water?
- Who cares if your child gets accepted by an Ivy League school, but experiences the wrath of God forever and ever?

Because the salvation of our children is the most urgent issue for our children, doesn't it make sense that you and I focus tenaciously on that objective? What does it profit a parent if their child never gets arrested, but languishes in an eternal prison?

God wants your children to love Him. God wants your children to run to Him. God wants your children to find their hope, joy, and peace in Him. If you and I are not working with God to that end, then we are working against Him. Let's begin the reset.

### **Disciplining Vs. Discipling**

This may be the most radical Christian parenting advice you will ever hear: NEVER discipline your child; instead, ALWAYS disciple your child. Let me 'splain myself, Lucy.

What I am not saying:

- I am not saying you should never spank your child.
- I am not saying you should never give your child orders.
- I am not saying you should never correct your child's behavior.

What I am saying:

- If you spank your child without discipling him/her through the process, then you are not parenting; you are just being a bully. Gulp.
- If you only give your child orders without explaining the biblical motivation that should drive their behavior, then you are treating your child like Pavlov's dogs, not as image bearers of Almighty God. Double gulp.
- If you only correct your child's behavior, then you are not parenting like a Christian. You are, triple gulp, parenting like a pagan.

Discipling your child may involve consequences, including corporal punishment, but Christian discipline should never be dispensed without discipleship as the overarching goal. The only way you can biblically discipline your child is by discipling your child at the same time. The two words are almost synonymous and should be considered that way.

- Discipline serves discipleship.
- Discipline is a part of discipleship, but it must never stand alone in the Christian home.
- Discipline must be administered and received as discipleship, or you are simply not parenting biblically.

Christian parents should NEVER punish their children. Ever. Yes, you may administer the wooden spoon in the discipleship of your child, but spanking should never be administered to punish the child. Jesus already bore the punishment for your child's sins.

Christian parents who punish their children confuse the gospel. If our children think they are being punished for their naughtiness, a.k.a. sins, then they are left to wonder why Jesus died on a Cross. Punishing our children tells them they can atone for their own sins. Oops.

Punishment took place at the Cross, and it has been dealt with completely. Our role as Christian parents is not to whack our kids for crimes committed against us, but to disciple them to love Jesus more.

God does not punish you for your sins; He punished Jesus for your sins. God never blows up and gives you a smack. Yes, God disciplines you, but it is only as a loving Father who seeks your spiritual growth.

“My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord,  
nor faint when you are reproved by Him;  
for those whom the Lord *loves* He *disciplines*,  
and He scourges every son whom He receives.”

It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you *as with sons*; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? . . . Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not *much rather* be subject to the Father of spirits, and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but *He disciplines us for our good*, so that we may *share His holiness*. All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards *it yields* the peaceful fruit of righteousness (Hebrews 12:5–11; emphasis added).

If that is how God disciplines His children, isn't that how we should discipline our children? When we parent our children the way God “parents” us,

then we are acting like God. If we do not, then we distort the very essence of our faith.

If we are not parenting biblically, then we will not see the peaceable fruit of righteousness; we will see begrudging compliance until they no longer have to submit to our authority. If we do not play our role as God's representative faithfully, we should not be shocked when our children become untethered.

Permit me to illustrate this life-altering truth with three very common parenting scenarios. You might think this is too cheesy to be true, but I offer you a money-back guarantee on this free advice — if you start talking more like a Christian parent, whose only goal is to increase your child's love and fear of God, your home will never be the same.

### **Scenario 1**

**Pagan parenting:** Hey, quit hitting your sister or you're going to get a spanking.

**Christian parenting:** Whoa there, Sport, did I just hear you hit your sister? Then I am very concerned for you. We better sit down privately and talk about this.

I remember when I was your age; I hit a girl named Rhonda and made her cry. Yep, your dear ol' Dad made someone's precious daughter cry. I share that with you to remind you that I am no better than you are; I am a sinner just like you. Let's see if we can figure out why we do such wicked things.

The Bible explains exactly what was going on in our hearts when you and I decided to slug a girl. James 4 tells us that if our desire to get what we want is thwarted, then we murder. That is what you did to your sister. You wanted what you wanted, and when you didn't get it, you didn't kill her, but your attitude was murderous. Not only that, you physically harmed an image-bearer of God.

That is bad enough, but you and I did something even worse. First Peter 3:7 tells us that men are not supposed to hurt women; we are supposed to protect them. That means you committed a triple sin. So did I.

Best I can tell, the people sitting on your bed are two very bad sinners. Maybe we should talk to God about our wicked hearts.

## **Scenario 2**

**Pagan parenting:** Pipe down back there or I'll turn this car around.

**Christian parenting:** Hey Gang, I am going to pull over at this gas station so everyone can use the bathroom. Hurry back to the car so we can talk about the rest of our trip.

Did you all wash your hands? Good, but I still want you to use this germ-killer.

While you are passing around the Purell, did I ever tell you about the time that your Dad drove to Chicago with your great grandparents? I thought I was being a perfect angel, but the reality is that I was fidgety and whiny. The police would have understood if my grandparents had left me on the side of the road in Milwaukee.

Do you know why your Pop was such a beast? Because I was only thinking about myself. The reason I acted like a spoiled brat was because I was only loving myself in the moment. In other words, I was being an idolater, and the idol was me.

Maybe you didn't notice, but ever since we left the Ark Encounter, you guys have been really loud. It made it hard for me to concentrate on driving and have a conversation with your Mom. In other words, you were acting the same way your Dad acted on the way to Chicago.

When we act in an inconsiderate way, we tell the people affected by our bad behavior, "I don't care about you. I only care about me." Knowing that Jesus humbled Himself and always put others first, do you think you could be a bit quieter in the back seat?

Now, does anyone want some of this stale licorice I just bought?

## **Scenario 3**

**Pagan parenting:** Clean your plate. There are children starving in Africa.

**Christian parenting:** Honey, do you know what food your dad hates? When I was your age, my stepfather made me eat a

tomato and it actually made me throw up at the dinner table. I share that disgusting detail because I understand there are some foods that none of us like to eat.

I am looking at your plate and I notice you are barely touching things you normally enjoy. Is there a reason for that? Have your taste buds changed? Did you sneak a treat before dinner?

Maybe you are just a little burned out on mac and cheese. That happens to all of us. So let's do this; while you are eating as much as you can, tell me what foods you really despise and I won't act like my stepfather and force you to eat what you hate.

Please note, in the last scenario there was no theology offered that helped the child love Jesus more. But here is what that Dad didn't do; he didn't make his child angry and resentful. Instead, he modeled the way God deals with us.

As God's representative to your child, forcing him/her to choke down a dish he/she despises isn't really showing the love of God. Conversely, your thoughtful, loving, gentle kindness models the way God treats His children: thoughtfully, lovingly, gently, and kindly.

If these scenarios sound too fantastic for you, I understand. It is much easier to issue commands and demand obedience. Been there, done that. So here are a few thoughts that will help you practice the self-control that this parenting approach demands.

1. Remember that your child is going to go to hell if he/she doesn't understand the gospel and respond rightly in repentance and faith.
2. Remember that you were no better than your child. Your parent's offspring were just as beastly as yours.
3. Remember the joy you experienced when you responded to the gospel. How spectacular would it be to watch your child have the same joy?
4. Remember that God deals very, very, very lovingly with you. All the time.
5. Remember Jesus' promise that He is preparing a place for us (John 14:2). Think of what it will be like to dwell with God and not have your children with you.

Does every encounter with your child have to include a mini-devotion? No, but if you are not regularly discipling your child, then you are not leading them to the Cross. And that is precisely where Jesus wants them.

### **What about Consequences?**

I am not suggesting you become a Bohemian who never gives consequences for naughty behavior. The Bible is clear: if you love your child, you will even lovingly spank your child (Proverbs 3:12, 13:24).

Regardless of the consequence you rightly impose, if you do not sentence your child with a desire to see his/her love for Jesus grow, then you are biffing it.

- If you yell at your child, you are not parenting; you are sinning.
- If you only issue orders to your child, you are not acting like Christ; you are acting like a nag or a jerk. Sorry.
- If you spank your child in anger, you are not being biblical, you are being abusive.

We have all been there; your child does something sinful and you snap. With trembling in your voice you seethe, “Go to your room. I will be up there in a minute.” You find your preferred implement, like a spatula or belt, and you charge to their room.

Now imagine this. On your way up the stairs, you stop and remember, “That stupid *Reset for Parents* book said I should only spank my child if I can lovingly discipline him with an eye on growing my child’s love for King Jesus.”

Do you think that might change the way you enter your child’s bedroom?

### **Call It What It Is**

Christian children are never naughty. Yes, you read that right. Christian children are never naughty; Christian children commit sins. Labeling your child’s behavior biblically will change the way you engage with your child when there is a ruckus in your home.

When you think your child is simply being a brat, it is easy to scowl, yell, or even hit. But when you remember that your child’s conduct is a sin against God, you no longer see bad behavior as something that must be curbed. You will now see your interaction with your child as a rescue mission.

When your child sins, he/she does not need to be yelled at. Your child needs to be taken to the Cross where a sin/forgiveness transaction can take place. Go ahead, try to scream at your child when you are teaching them about Jesus' amazing sacrifice for their sins.

The next time you hear screaming in the other room, before you shout, "Knock it off, or I will give you something to scream about," remember, they are not being naughty; they are sinning. In other words, your parenting is no longer about conformity to your rules, it is about rescuing your child from the wrath of God. This is earnest business.

Typically, we want our kids to stop being naughty for the following reasons:

- They are getting up your nose.
- You just want some peace and quiet.
- You want to do something and they thwart your goals.
- You are worried about being embarrassed in public by their bad behavior.

If you begin to see your children as image-bearing sinners who need the gospel applied to their totally depraved hearts, then you will respond to your children's naughtiness differently.

- Instead of getting angry, you will be concerned for their spiritual well-being.
- Your desire for peace and quiet will be overwhelmed by the desire to help your child understand God's grace better.
- You will put your earthly desire behind your heavenly desire to see your child spend eternity with Jesus.
- Your embarrassment will diminish because you are on a rescue mission for your child's very soul. Who cares what the servants think when you are on a mission from the King?

Parenting with salvation in view forever changes the way you treat your child. Think of the amazing impact this will have on your little reprobate sinner:

- They will stop saying, "Yes, Ma'am" and then do the very thing you commanded them to not do the second they are out of your sight.

- They will obey the omnipresent God who never loses sight of them.
- They will no longer see your unrighteous anger and have a servile fear of you.
- They will not think that God is a simmering pot, ready to boil over.

On the other hand:

- They will see the gospel in action.
- They will understand the earnestness of salvation.
- They will see that you have been affected by God's grace.
- They will see you as a loving representative of your loving God.

Is this approach to parenting easy? No way; it demands much of us.

- It is one thing to talk about the gospel; it is another thing to live the gospel.
- It is one thing to teach your child the gospel; it is another thing to show them the gospel.
- It is one thing to sing about the gospel; it is another thing to put the power of the gospel to work in your life and home.

Hard? Yes. Worth it? Absolutely. And here is a bonus for you. If you start learning how to think “gospel” when you parent, God will sanctify you as you focus on your child's justification. You will stop being angry, disgusted, frustrated, annoyed, snarly, and mean. That is a hefty bonus.

### **Danger, Danger**

God has not instructed us to disciple our children so we can have well-behaved kids. God wants to do far more than that in your home. God wants to change children, and He wants to change YOU.

Your home can be one of two places: it can be an endurance marathon with much anger, frustration, and fighting, or it can be a school of character. God wants the latter, not the former.

God wants you to love and appreciate Him to the point where you cannot help but parent with your eye on salvation. The only way that can happen is to first focus on your own salvation.

In order for you to genuinely do any of the things recommended in this book, you must first be affected by your faith. If you simply adopt this book as your latest parenting strategy, then you will have missed the point. You will have missed not just what God wants to reveal to your child, but what He wants to do for you.

Do not read all of the scenarios in this book and think, “That’s it! I will memorize those speeches and start preaching them to my kids every time they are naughty.” Don’t do that.

There are as many parenting scenarios as there are children. You can’t give a memorized speech to your child when they sin in their own special way. This is not about parroting another parent. This is about genuinely speaking truth to your child in an effort to help them understand the Savior who has so affected and changed you.

God does not want gospel to be used simply as the latest 1-2-3 Time-out! God wants the gospel to affect radical change in everyone in the home, starting with you, Mom and Dad.

- Remember what God has done for you.
- Remember how He bled and died for you.
- Remember how He rose from the grave for you.
- Remember how He has provided every temporal blessing for you.

Then approach each combustible situation with one thought: “When I am done, I want my child to love and fear the Lord the same way I do.”

Then disciple your child.

That is what the rest of this book is about.

– *Reset* –

*Target your parenting toward salvation,  
not behavior.*

## Chapter 13

# Act Like a Good Shepherd

**L**isten. Listen very carefully. If you turn your ear toward California or Missouri, you will hear the sound of millions of children getting enticed into a dangerous, sensual, and heretical movement. And there is a pretty good chance your kids are singing their songs.

Unfortunately, the fastest-growing Christian sect in the world is not Christian at all. The New Apostolic Reformation Movement boasts hundreds of millions of followers. The epi-centers of the NAR are located in Redding, California, and Kansas City, Missouri, but their reach is global.

The New Apostolic Reformation Movement barely teaches theology, and when it does, it is almost always wonky. Just one example will suffice.

Former Fuller Seminary professor and self-proclaimed prophet of the New Apostolic Reformation, C. Peter Wagner, preached that Japan's economy is struggling because the emperor had intercourse with the Sun Goddess. 'Nuff said.

Why are 369 million people attracted to this a-biblical form of Christianity?

1. They get attracted to the teachings of false prophets through the music of the mega-popular worship groups Jesus Culture and Hillsong. Kids love their hypnotic, romantic, and repetitious tunes. They hear the music at youth group and church, and assume the adults are okay with them. When they attend their concerts, they get introduced to the teachings of these aggressive recruiting machines.
2. Followers of the New Apostolic Movement love bomb emotionally starved college and high school students with hugs and kindness.

3. The teachings of the New Apostolic Movement are emotion-driven. It feels good, and millennials are hooked on that feeling.
4. The church services are very experiential. You don't think at an NAR worship service; you dance, jump, sway, get knocked down, and set on fire as the glory of God pours out of the ventilation system.
5. The NAR asks the kids to be a part of a great eschatological movement that ushers in the return of Jesus. These kids are told they could be a part of something big.

For a fuller treatment on the fastest-growing Christian sect in the world, I devoted two chapters to the NAR and Jesus Culture in my book, *Judge Not*. You can also see their histrionics on our DVD titled *Drunk in the Spirit*.

Mom and Dad, if you think this has nothing to do with you and your kids, ask them if they are familiar with Jesus Culture and Hillsong music. Ask them if they listen to their music. This cannot be stressed enough; music is the lure, but the false teachings of the NAR are the hook. And they are catching MILLIONS of kids.

Homes have been destroyed as families get torn apart. Parents' hearts have been shattered, and children's faiths have been shipwrecked. This aberrant movement is the single greatest external theological threat evangelicalism has ever seen. Do not dismiss this.

The NAR recruits with a ferocity that makes Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses jealous. Your child will almost certainly be exposed to this movement and be invited to participate in a meeting, youth group, or concert that is NAR influenced. Are they prepared?

### **Jesus Understood the Consequences**

It was none other than Jesus Christ who lobbed the first theological hand grenade that exploded all over the Pharisees. From John 5 through John 10, Jesus launched an intense theological assault against religious leaders. Jesus audaciously insisted that if they didn't know Him rightly, then they did not know the Father either (John 8:19). In other words, if you don't possess correct Christology, you will not be saved.

Jesus claimed to be God (John 8:58). Jesus claimed that He is the only means of salvation (John 14:6). Jesus claimed that if you don't understand His divine and human nature rightly, you will not be saved.

Jesus spent the entire fifth chapter of John testifying to the Pharisees that He is God. He equated Himself with the Father, over and over. Jesus knew they must understand that He and the Father are one or they would perish.

He who *does not* honor the Son *does not* honor the Father who sent Him. Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears *My word*, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life (John 5:23–24; emphasis added).

If a child doesn't believe rightly in the One God sent, that child will perish eternally. In other words, correct Christology is kind of important.

You *do not* have His word abiding in you, for you do not believe Him whom He sent (John 5:38; emphasis added).

Jesus went so far to say that a pastor who does not warn the flock about wolves are not true shepherds of Jesus Christ (John 10:12). Not that anyone else had to write about the subject after Jesus slammed the door shut on heresy, but the Apostles wrote extensively about the importance of correct theology.

### **The Apostle John Understood the Consequences**

John closed his Gospel with his thesis statement for the book.

Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written so that you may *believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God*; and that believing *you may have life* in His name (John 20:30–31; emphasis added).

John repeated this theme three times in his two epistles.

Who is the liar but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, the one who *denies the Father and the Son*. Whoever denies the Son *does not* have the Father; the one who confesses the Son has the Father also (1 John 2:22–23; emphasis added).

He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life (1 John 5:12).

Anyone who goes too far and *does not* abide in the teaching of Christ, *does not* have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son (2 John 9; emphasis added).

Apparently John thought theology was pretty important. Do your children?

### **Paul Understood the Consequences**

Never one to pull his punches, Paul was anything but vague when it came to false teaching and false teachers. To the Judaizers in Galatia who were adding works (circumcision) to grace, he twice declared, “Let them be accursed” (Galatians 1:8–9). Paul even rebuked Peter publicly for confusing people about grace alone (Galatians 2:11–21).

Paul encouraged young Timothy to guard his doctrine closely (1 Timothy 4:16). Paul warned Timothy to reprove, rebuke, and exhort so his flock would not fall prey to false teachers (2 Timothy 4:2).

Paul’s tearful farewell to the Ephesian elders summarizes Paul’s ministry and concern for false teachings that can creep into a church.

For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God. *Be on guard* for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God, which He purchased with His own blood. I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and *from among your own selves* men will arise, speaking perverse things, to *draw away* the disciples after them. Therefore *be on the alert*, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to *admonish* each one with tears (Acts 20:27–31; emphasis added).

Paul called false teachers savage wolves because he knew how dangerous they were. That is why Paul warned the Roman Christians to mark false teachers and avoid them (Romans 16:17).

If theology is no big whoop, then why are there so many warnings of false teachers in the Bible? Clearly, heresy is a big deal.

## **The Early Church Understood the Consequences**

Heresy is a matter of eternal life or death. The early Church understood well the consequences of false beliefs: damnation. They took Jesus, John, Paul, Peter, and Jude seriously. When it came to theology proper, they understood the stakes were very high.

Do your kids know that the early Church fought prolonged battles with theological precision to make sure that everyone understood what must be believed if one is to be saved?

Consider Athanasius. This fourth century church father was exiled, jailed, and threatened for holding to orthodox Trinitarian theology. He stood *contra mundum* (against the world) to condemn the doctrine he knew would damn people who did not rightly understand the Trinity.

The creed that is named after him is a glimmering example of the concern the early Church had for incorrect Christology and correct Trinitarian theology. Here is about a third of the 43-sentence-long Athanasian Creed. It starts out with a kick: believe this statement of faith, or be damned. Not exactly seeker sensitive.

Whosoever will be saved, before all things it is *necessary*  
that he hold the universal faith;

Which faith except every one do keep whole and unde-  
filed, without doubt he shall *perish everlastingly*.

And the universal faith is this: That we worship one God in  
Trinity, and Trinity in Unity;

Neither confounding the persons nor dividing the substance.

For there is one person of the Father, another of the Son,  
and another of the Holy Spirit.

As also there are not three uncreated nor three incompre-  
hensible, but one uncreated and one incomprehensible.

The Father is made of none, neither created nor begotten.

The Son is of the Father alone; not made nor created, but  
begotten.

The Holy Spirit is of the Father and of the Son; neither  
made, nor created, nor begotten, but proceeding.

So there is one Father, not three Fathers; one Son, not three  
Sons; one Holy Spirit, not three Holy Spirits.

He therefore that will be saved must thus think of the Trinity.

Furthermore it is necessary to everlasting salvation that he also believe rightly the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ.

For the right faith is that we believe and confess that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and man.

God of the substance of the Father, begotten before the worlds; and man of substance of His mother, born in the world.

Who, although He is God and man, yet He is not two, but one Christ.

This is the universal faith, which except a man believe faithfully he *cannot be saved* (emphasis added).<sup>1</sup>

Would your child be able to affirm that statement? Does your child comprehend the need for sound theology like the Council of Nicea, which literally fought over the Greek letter i?

The Council of Nicea contended that Jesus had the exact same nature as the Father (*homo-ousios*). They insisted that anyone who taught Jesus merely had a similar nature (*homoi-ousios*), would be damned. They literally fought over the letter i.

Do they know the Council of Chalcedon of A.D. 451 was dedicated to clarifying that Jesus had a fully divine and a fully human nature that never mixed or mingled? Here is the rather pithy Chalcedonian Creed. Prepare for the world's longest run-on sentence.

We, then, following the holy Fathers, all with one consent, teach men to confess one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, the same perfect in Godhead and also perfect in manhood; truly God and truly man, of a reasonable soul and body; consubstantial with us according to the manhood; in all things like unto us, without sin; begotten before all ages of the Father according to the Godhead, and in these latter days, for us and for our salvation, born of the virgin Mary, the mother of God, according to the manhood; one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, to be acknowledged in two natures, inconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably; the distinction of natures being by no means taken away by the union, but rather the property of each nature being preserved, and concurring in one Person and one

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1. <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02033b.htm>.

Subsistence, not parted or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son, and only begotten, God the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ, as the prophets from the beginning have declared concerning him, and the Lord Jesus Christ himself taught us, and the Creed of the holy Fathers has handed down to us.<sup>2</sup>

Theological liberals, the NAR, and seeker-sensitive evangelicals scoff at such precision. We should not; eternity is at stake. The men who wrote our historic creeds were not knuckleheads.

### **Warn Them**

The first thing we can do is warn our children that everyone who claims to be a Christian is not orthodox. Warn them of the wolves in apostle's clothing. Warn them that there are false teachers who would love their money, their bodies, and their souls.

Every book in the New Testament, but one, warns of false teachers. The entire Books of Jude and 2 Peter are dedicated to false teachers. Scripture is replete with commands to warn people about charlatans who masquerade as angels of light (2 Corinthians 11:14).

### **Teach Them Heresy**

Don't indoctrinate your children with heresy, but teach them about historical heresies that just don't seem to go away. The Church has always had to battle heresy, and we are no different today.

Historically, there have been five basic heresies that continue to recycle throughout the centuries. These heresies reveal themselves in various forms.

#### *The Judaizers*

Paul's first-century battle was soteriological. The Judaizers of Galatia insisted that a man must be circumcised to go to heaven. Paul responded by condemning them the same way Jesus rebuked the Pharisees for adding works to grace.

#### *The Gnostics*

The big battle of the second century began a long history of Christological clashes. Gnosticism denied the incarnation of Jesus. They taught Jesus appeared to be a man, but was not actually a man (Docetism).

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2. <http://www.theopedia.com/chalcedonian-creed>.

*Arianism*

Fast forward to the fourth century and another Christological lulu called Arianism. Arius denied the deity of Christ and the Trinity. Athanasius and the Council of Nicea disagreed and labeled Arianism a rank heresy.

*The Pelagians*

The fifth century brought us our last early Church soteriological battle. Pelagius denied total depravity and elevated free will above divine sovereignty in salvation. The early Church concluded: Pelagianism = heresy.

*The Socinians*

Rank heresy did not disappear entirely for 11 centuries, but it made a roaring comeback in the 16th century with the mother of all heresies. Laelius and Faustus Socinus took all of the aforementioned heresies, put all of these early Church heresies in a blender, and concocted a toxic mix. Socinianism is a legalistic, anti-Trinitarian, universalist, Christological, and soteriological mess that elevated reason above Scripture.

These five historical heresies are alive and well today. Mormons, Roman Catholics, liberal Protestants, Jehovah's Witnesses, Unitarians, Oneness Pentecostals, and many evangelicals have repackaged and re-pedaled these ancient heresies.

Warn your kids about these movements. Spend some time with them pointing out the bad currency, but spend even more time teaching them to identify the true currency.

Federal currency experts can spot a counterfeit from a mile away. Is it because they only study the knock-offs? No, they spend some time studying counterfeit currency, but they spend even more time studying the genuine article. The better they know the true, the easier it is to spot the false. The same thing is true with theology.

Immerse your children in the Bible and study the five solas of the Reformation. Teach them to know and love:

- *Sola Scriptura*: Scripture alone
- *Sola Gratia*: grace alone
- *Sola Fide*: through faith alone
- *Solus Christus*: through Christ alone
- *Soli Deo Gloria*: glory to God alone

The reformers drew very stark lines: anyone who fails to understand these five foundational truths stands outside of orthodoxy, and will be damned. If you don't want your kids to find their way into a wonky movement that will condemn their souls, warn them early and often that false beliefs are nothing to trifle with.

Make sure they grasp the doctrine of the Trinity. Make sure they possess correct Christology and soteriology. Make sure they understand the Bible is the inspired, infallible, inerrant, sufficient Word of God. After all, their souls depend upon it.

*– Reset –*

*If you have withheld Jesus' warnings  
about heresy, you better get on it. Before  
it's too late.*