

HOW SHALL THE YOUNG SECURE THEIR HEARTS?

Deuteronomy 6:4-9

As a parent, I worry about my sons. While I experience the usual worries about injury and happiness, my most profound and persistent concerns center on the culture they inhabit and how it influences their thinking. I know I am not alone. My parents felt the same fears about me, and I know other parents wrestle with similar concerns for their children.

I recognize alarmist studies can be found that point out seemingly dangerous patterns in younger generations, and I know that other studies reveal genuine and praiseworthy features that engender confidence in their future. So, let us place all the surveys and anecdotes about young people aside and focus on something we all know to be true:

ALL HAVE SINNED AND FALL SHORT OF THE GLORY OF GOD¹ (ROMANS 3:23)

Our children live in a fallen world and participate in its fallenness. But they lack the experience we have, the experience that comes from successes and failures, from meditating on God's will and being seduced by the world's wiles, from being hurt and hurting others. We *know* the dangers they face.

And so, I worry about my boys, as I am sure you worry about your families. What can we do about our worry? What can we do to 'help the young secure their hearts'?

Securing young hearts

Like many of you, I have thought about protecting our youth from the spiritual dangers embedded in our culture. I want to offer five items that, I believe, should be part of any effort to safeguard our children. However, we need to keep a couple of things in mind:

- No list of steps will remove all worry, nor will it guarantee the spiritual well-being of your children.
- Do not rely on any strategy; rely instead on Jesus (*cf. Philippians 4:13*).

To help secure the hearts of our children:

Teach them to fall in love with Jesus (John 14:15).

¹ All quotes from the Bible come from *The Holy Bible, English Standard Version* (ESV Permanent Text Edition, Crossway, 2016) unless otherwise noted.



Teach them that identity comes from Jesus and not the variety of changing distinctions we often use to give meaning to our lives (Galatians 3:26-29).

Teach them that Jesus provides a fixed point - he is the truth (John 14:6).

Teach them to embrace Jesus' relationship-oriented worldview (Matthew 22:34-40).

Model the lifestyle and values you want to instill in your children (Deuteronomy 6:4-9).

As a parent, I believe good reasons motivate my concerns for my sons – I know the dangers posed by our world. However, I know that we live in a world where God exercises His sovereign rule through Jesus. I want to therefore end with reminder from Paul:

DO NOT BE ANXIOUS ABOUT ANYTHING, BUT IN EVERYTHING BY PRAYER AND SUPPLICATION WITH THANKSGIVING LET YOUR REQUESTS BE MADE KNOWN TO GOD. AND THE PEACE OF GOD, WHICH SURPASSES ALL UNDERSTANDING, WILL GUARD YOUR HEARTS AND YOUR MINDS IN CHRIST JESUS. (PHILIPPIANS 4:6-7)

