

Sheltering Children; God's Mandate to Holiness

(Part 1)

“Children are a heritage from the LORD, offspring a reward from him.” (Psalm 127:3)

Our children are precious reward from the Lord. He had given them to us, therefore we need to cherish that fact and be responsible toward Him in raising them in the way that God wants us to raise them. In doing so then we have to protect them from the dangers of the world and the polluted atmosphere of sin that is so prevalent in the world around them. For this reason we as true Christian parents might be accused by the society around us that we are over protective parents.

In modern society it is assumed that over-protection of children is the worst thing that can be done to the children. And they will say after all, everyone knows children must not be sheltered from the real world. Truly now a day's one of the most threatening accusations true Christian parents face is the charge of being over-protective. Somehow the society is suspicious of those who do not want their children exposed to all the seemingly harmless experiences the world considers necessary for proper and healthy childhood maturation. As the insinuations become increasingly strident the terminology becomes shriller. Ultimately, if we are not responsive to the more subtle slurs hinting that we should release our children from our own oversight, we are indicted for the worst crime parents can commit: **SHELTERING** them!

Before we deal with the issue of sheltering directly let's deal with our tendency to be driven by the fear of man, *“Fear of man will prove to be a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD is kept safe.” (Prov. 29:25)* Virtually every godly parent will easily identify the most frequently asked question about their Christian attitude in raising up the children, *“What about socialization?”* When people ask this question, what are they wondering about? Are they worried that our children will not be capable of displaying lifelong servanthood for the glory of God? Generally not. They are shocked that we are not intimidated at the thought of our children being different from everyone else.

Actually, what these examiners want to know is whether or not our children are learning to *fit in* with their peers. At first glance this seems a healthy consideration. But what does the Bible call it when God's people “fit in” with their environment. Paul addressed this directly when he said in **Romans 12:1-2** *“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”*

Our efforts to “fit in” are nothing less than a fearful surrender to the very conformity and worldliness Scripture challenges us to avoid. Such conformity or worldliness takes us away from being the *“Living sacrifices”* Paul emphasized as being *“Holy.”* Too often modern Christians seem intimidated by the world. We don't want to be noticed as odd with the culture--we want desperately to “fit in.” We try to be camouflaged Christians. Our conformity is not motivated from servants' hearts but from cowardice (fearfulness). Paul wrote in **Romans 1:16** *“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes.”* But we are so timid of seeming different that we shrink from the accusations of not being **socialized**. Well, who wants to be **socialists** anyway? Socialism is the attempt to equalize everyone--make everyone alike.

But God didn't make us alike. He made each of us, including our children, to be unique. And we are not to minimize, but maximize our distinctiveness for the glory of God. We are not to try to mask our uniqueness beneath a facade of timid conformity. We are to SHINE as Jesus said: *“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.” (Matthew 5:16)*

What did Paul mean when he described our non-conformity with the world as *“Holy?”* The word *holy* literally means set apart, separated, consecrated. God desires for His people to be different from all other people. Like Paul, Peter contrasted God's mandate to holiness with conformity *“As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: “Be holy, because I am holy.” (1 Peter 1:14-16)* We cannot be holy and conformed at the same time. We have to be separated from the world. God is calling us to be *holy non-conformists*. Peter went further, describing us in **1 Peter 2:9** as *“But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession (Peculiar), that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.”*

One of the most remarkable examples of those identified as *holy* were those who took the vow of a Nazirite. In **Numbers 6:8** God summarizes the intent of the specific Nazirite regulations by saying, *“All the days of his separation he shall be holy to the LORD.”* During the period of a Nazirite's vow he was to be different from everyone else. He was supposed to look different--he could not cut his hair. He was even supposed to have a different diet--he could consume nothing from a grapevine. His whole lifestyle was supposed to be out of sync with the rest of society. The Lord actually intended for these Nazirites to be *holy eccentrics* living among the rest of the people. He called this being *holy*! And now He calls us all to be **God's special possession** and **peculiar people**.

This applies not only to us, but to our children. The world wants them to “fit in” and become *socialized*. God wants them to stick out--to *“Shine”* before men. Some Christians who oppose this view and argue that our children must be “Salt” and “Light” in the world. They are right! But they are wrong in that they believe the way to be “salt” and “light” are to mingle with the world. In fact, the opposite is true. Salt loses its savor through leaching, through dissipation. Light is dimmed by proximity to shadow-producing obstacles.

My Dear and Beloved: One of the best examples of this *holy peculiarity* was the Nazirite, John the Baptist. He dressed peculiarly, ate peculiarly, talked peculiarly--his whole lifestyle was eccentric. Was John the Baptist well socialized? Absolutely not! He was apparently raised in isolation as an *only child*. He lived out in the wilderness, away from civilization. But was he *“Salt?”* Yes! He polarized the nation with his stingingly salty message! Was he a *“Light?”* John the apostle wrote in **John 1:8** *“He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light.”* Jesus said in **Matthew 11:11** *“Among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist.”* Yes, John the Baptist was a light for God in the world. But how? By being so totally separate from the world that they were attracted to him like moths.

My Prayer: *Father God I come before you in the name of Jesus who died on the cross for my sins to give me eternal life. Lord I commit myself to be separated from the world and I commit myself to raise up my children and train them to exhibit social graces to enhance their current and future servanthood. Lord make them fearlessly confront the world with a gospel they not only articulate, but live Boldly unto you, this is my prayer in Jesus name Amen.*