

- *** Read I Peter 3:13-16*** Today, my little girl Olivia turns 4 months old. Which means that Paisley is 6 months old. Hagan is 8 months old. Annabelle is 10 months old. And Lord willing, baby Jules Brown will be here by around this time next week. Our Lord has greatly blessed this congregation with so many children of a great range of ages, and we certainly should be appreciative of this. Children surely are a blessing from God and they bring such joy to our lives. But they also bring some stresses and anxieties from time to time. Obviously, we all want our children to grow to have a faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God and the Savior of their souls. I sometimes think about what the future will be like for O and our other children and their faiths. I wonder about what type of challenges they will face if this world continues on. It's not a matter of if they will face challenges, but it is a matter of what exactly they will face.
- Regardless, it must be our hope and prayer that they heed the teachings of this text and they set Jesus as the focus of their hearts. It must be our hope and prayer that they are able to give and answer to those who would question their faiths. It must be our hope and prayer that by their good behavior they will put to shame those who might try to shame them for their faith in Jesus. There will be those who try to shame our children for their faith.
- Some months back, a woman named Natasha Crain wrote an article address some of the ways in which our children are attacked for their faiths. Ms. Crain maintains a blog concerning spiritual matters and after taking a brief vacation from writing, she returned to find that many of her articles had been commented on and that many of those commenting were atheists and skeptics. She said that she noticed a common theme that these individuals would often center their comments around efforts to shame young people for their faith. They would use what seems to be the same arguments time and time again in order to instill doubt and shame within the minds of young believers so that they might abandon their faith in Jesus. This morning, I would like to take some of her observations and talk with you about 3 ways in which skeptics will attack our children. I want to identify 3 of these attacks and then discuss how we as parents can prepare our children to defend themselves against these skeptical attacks on their faiths.

I. "You've been indoctrinated."

- A. Basically, the attack is that our children have been brainwashed to believe that God is real and that we should obey Him.
 1. The skeptic would accuse our children of being Christians simply because mom and dad were Christians first. I won't be naive and act as if that isn't or can't be the case of some children, but the assumption is that all Christians are only Christians based upon legacy.
 2. They would go on to say that our children are only Christians because they're scared of what their parents might do to them if they questioned the legitimacy of God. They would accuse our children of being cowardly in their faith.
 3. One of the major issues I have with this accusation is with understanding what it actually means to be indoctrinated. To be indoctrinated is to "teach someone to fully accept the ideas, opinions, and beliefs of a particular group and to not consider other ideas, opinions, and beliefs."
 4. This definition of indoctrination has nothing to do with religion in and of itself. In fact, anyone could be indoctrinated to believe anything if those teaching that person teach them in this absolute sort of way....skeptics and atheists included.
- B. We need to make sure that the faith of our children is actually their faith. They need to own their faith.
 1. Again, consider what it means to indoctrinate. Basically, it means to force someone to believe something absolutely without ever considering any other alternatives. It is entirely possible that we teach our kids to the point where they are indoctrinated because we either shelter or guard them against all other things in this world. This ought not be so in our teaching of our children.
 2. Our job as parents is to train up our children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord (**Eph. 6:4**), but we must be sure to do so in a manner that allows for them to truly own their faith. Our children must possess a faith that is their own and not that of their parents.
 3. We often talk poorly about "doubting" Thomas, but I think we ought to reconsider the way we view him based upon what it was that he was thinking in **John 20**. Remember, Thomas wasn't with the other Apostles when Jesus first met them after His resurrection. He knew that His Rabbi had died, and nothing beyond the word of his friends was telling him otherwise. Thomas simply wanted to see evidence that supported the claims of his brethren. Our children should demand evidence.

4. When I consider **I Peter 3:13-16**, I don't see those people who are able to stand up to the detractors and persecutors as being people who simply possess a faith which is that of their parents. What I see are people who own a faith that is truly their own. Few people are willing to suffer for something that isn't truly theirs, but those who possess a faith that they call their own are willing and able to stand up answer for and suffer if the need be. Our children need to own their own faith.

II. "If you'll just allow yourself to think critically then you'll see that there is no reason to believe in God."

- A. The skeptic will accuse our children of being simple minded to the point where they simply possess a blind faith without supporting evidence.
 1. If they can't get our children for having a faith that isn't their own, then the skeptic will move on from that and begin to attack our children by telling them that they obviously aren't thinking critically because they choose not to or they aren't capable of such.
 2. Many a skeptic likes to throw around this term "critical thinking." To think critically is to simply think objectively while analyzing given evidence to come to a logical conclusion. Therefore, the skeptic would tell our children that they haven't considered the evidence concerning God and believe in Him despite the total lack of evidence supporting His existence.
 3. Again, there are some people who do believe in God despite actually considering the evidence of whether God exist or not. They might just be lazy in their consideration or they just take someone's word for it. These people need to take the time to actually consider the evidence and come to an education conclusion concerning. However, the thinking of the skeptic in this attack isn't exactly logical its. They would rightly say that critical thinking involves considering evidence. But then they would move on to say that there isn evidence for the existence of God. Therefore, they would say that those believing in God fail to think critically.
 4. This is obviously faulty thinking in our minds because we believe that there truly is evidence for the existence of God.
- B. We need to be sure that our children consider and evaluate the evidence for their faith.
 1. We can help out our kids by teaching them what words mean. We can teach them about the things that skeptics will say about them and their faith. And then we can teach them what faith truly is. We can show them what faith actually entails. The skeptic will tell us that faith in God is blind, but the Bible tells us that our faith needs to be based upon our conviction of things that we can't see. (God) **(Hebrews 11:1)**
 2. So how can we have conviction in a God that we haven't seen? How can we have faith in a book that claims to be the Word of God? We can and must consider the evidence because it does exist.
 3. We can look to the internal evidence of God's Word, the continuity of the Bible and even fulfilled prophecy. We can look to the external evidence of manuscripts and historical accounts that support the biblical accounts. There is much evidence to consider when it comes to the validity of the Bible.
 4. Then we could consider the evidence for the existence of God. Scripture itself tells us to look to the world around us and its complexities and allow it to convict us of the existence of God. **(Rom. 1:20)** We can look to the complexities of our bodies and we must consider whether it is a result of chance as the skeptic would say or design by a heavenly Creator. We can look to the intrinsic moral nature that man possesses and determine where it originates, by chance or a Designer.
 5. The skeptic will try to shame our kids by telling them that their faith is empty, but we must do everything we can to give them all the necessary evidence for them to make an informed decision concerning their faith or lack thereof in the God of heaven.

III. "Studies show that Christians are less intelligent than atheists."

- A. Smart people recognize that God is false, and only dumb people are willing to believe in & follow God.
 1. This type of accusation and shaming tactic is thrown around by skeptics because of some studies that showed a negative correlation between educational intelligence and faith in God. Crain did some studies on her own and determined that the studies showed an extremely weak correlation between the level of intelligence and religious faith.
 2. Obviously, if you look at our society, many institutions of higher education, maybe even most of these institutions do have a leaning towards skepticism and atheism. Then we must also recognize that there are some places of higher learning who embrace faith in God and religious teachings.

3. So why do so many intelligent people tend to lean towards a lack of faith in God, some even going to far as to attack those who do believe in God? I believe it goes back to what people put their confidence in. Just as the wealthy person has the temptation to put all of their faith and confidence in God, so can the intelligent person be tempted to put his/her faith in his/her intelligence. The highly intelligent person's confidence in self can lead them to see themselves as self sufficient and in no need of a higher being. Thus, the possible correlation between the two that is pointed out.
- B. We need to teach our children the role that intelligence plays in the life of a disciple of Jesus.
 1. Just as there is nothing inherently wrong with having money, there is also nothing inherently wrong with being highly intelligent or having a formal education. However, we must make sure to not teach our children that seeking intelligence is the main goal in this life. We must make sure that we teach our children that the wisdom and intelligence of man is still not even close to the foolishness of God. **(I Cor. 1:25)** Man cannot even comprehend the all knowing mind of God.
 2. We can also show our kids that there are many people in Scripture who fit into both categories of intellect in Scripture. Sure some of the Apostles were uneducated men **(Acts 4:13)**, but we must also recognize that there were some very educated men who possessed strong faiths in God and Jesus as being the Son of God in the flesh. The Apostle Paul, Nicodemus, and even Apollos seem to be all wise and educated individuals who followed Jesus. **(Phil. 3, John 3, Acts 18:24ff)**
 3. Many skeptics would try to join intelligence and atheism or skepticism together because they say that the logical evidence points towards there being no God, but we have discussed that there is plenty of evidence that can and should point us towards faith in Jesus Christ. Intelligence is not accurately equated with atheism and skepticism. They don't get to claim academia for themselves when there are plenty of intelligent individuals who profess faith in the God of heaven.

As we have seen, there are vicious attacks that our children will be pelted with as they strive to grow in their faith in God. Hopefully, we recognize the necessity of finding, understanding, and accepting the evidence that points towards God being who He claims to be in His Bible. Many will try to dismiss our children in their faith. They will try to shame them and make them feel as if they are inferior for being believers, but as long as they are convicted in their hearts based upon honestly evaluation of the evidence then they will be able to stand and give answer when people question their faith. They will be able to put them to shame. They will be able to stand up and profess confidence in the Gospel of Jesus Christ of which they are not ashamed. May God help our young people to stand strong against the skeptics. May He help us to prepare them well, and may we all stand strong as faithful servants of our Heavenly Father when Satan attacks us from all sides.