

Born to Win

Love the Little Children

by Ronald L. Dart

Tomorrow has been mentioned as Mother's Day, but did it ever occur to you who it is that actually makes Mother's Day *possible*, meaningful? *Children*, exactly. Without children, there's no mother; and without mothers, there's no Mother's Day. So, you know, you see where the problem is: You have to be a mother for it to mean anything; and to be a mother you've got to have *children*.

Now, I don't know if it was the near approach of Mother's Day...I think, at the time, I found myself reading what Jesus said to his disciples on one occasion...I hadn't tumbled to the fact that tomorrow was Mother's Day yet; but somehow or other I found myself in the 18th chapter of Matthew this past week; and it probably was a confluence of a lot of stuff that was in the news, it was...you know, who knows, sometimes, why. And for all I know the Holy Spirit came and whispered in my ear and said, "You will speak on *this* this week." And if I had *known* that was who it was, I would have said, "Yes, Lord", and gone right on down the line, but I did anyway. Matthew 18:

Matthew 18

AKJV

¹At the same time came the disciples to Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?

And Matthew doesn't tell us the expression on Jesus' face (there are times when I wish he had); because we know he turned, he [...]

Matthew 18

AKJV

² [...] called a little child to him, and set him in the middle of them,

³ And said, Truly I say to you, Except you be converted [*You change.*], and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

We're not to the place of talking about who's great, who's small, who's big, who's little in the kingdom of heaven, right? Our question now is whether you're even going to *see* the kingdom of heaven. And he says, unless you become far more like this little child (which involves a great deal of *change* in your life), you're not going to be there to discuss who's great and who's small.

Matthew 18

AKJV

⁴ Whoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

⁵ And whoever shall receive one such little child in my name receives me.

Do you have any idea how *big* that is—that he just said here: “Whoever you are, who receives one such little child in my name receives me.” Now, what this means to me: It doesn’t mean you speak to some child saying, “In the name of Jesus Christ, I receive you.” You know, some formula. Hardly. What it means to me is the receiving of this little child as one who bears the *name* of Jesus. Now, I made this point before; I will make it again: When my wife and I got married, she took my name. Therefore, *everything* she does, she does in my name. (I think she signs her checks “Allie Dart”, and I’m not sure...there might have been a time when she signed them “Mrs. Ronald Dart”.) Because she is able to do that; she is able to act in my name, because she’s my wife. Okay. Little children who are in Christ... In fact, he doesn’t really even make that distinction. He says, “Whoever shall receive one such little child in my name receives me.” Basically, he’s saying: “I’m joined to this little child. They’re mine. And if you receive one of these little children, because they’re mine, you’re receiving me.” You need to *think* about that when you see little kids wandering around after church. You know, you have to be careful not to step on them. You know, the time was that we didn’t know if we were going to *have* any kids in this church; and now we’ve got lots of kids who visit us in this church; and we’re *so pleased*. We just wish there were *more* of them.

Also, in the blessing of little children: In effect, when we bless little children in this church, the *entire church* becomes godfathers and godmothers to that child. They come into our family. They come into our fellowship. And I think we should begin to include language in the blessing of little children to the effect that we take these children into the covenant of the church: They’re members, they’re part of the family, they are in the name of Jesus as much as any adult in this congregation is in the name of Jesus. And then he says this:

Matthew 18

AKJV

⁶ But whoever shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.

Now, I think one of the reasons this may have come to mind this week is the *absolute bombardment* we’re getting of news stories about the abuse of children. It is...it is *horrible*. I almost hate to turn the television set on. In fact, I’ve all but quit watching television news, it seems. I become so annoyed by what I’m seeing, and I become so dismayed by what I’m seeing. But the abuse of children is rampant in our society, and nobody realizes: You harm one of these little children, you would have been better off for someone to put a big old nether millstone around your neck and throw you out into the middle of the Atlantic Ocean; or out in the middle of the Gulf of Mexico, where you’re only one mile from land—straight down.

Matthew 18

AKJV

⁷ Woe to the world because of offenses! for it must needs be that offenses come; but woe to that man by whom the offense comes!

Now, this [following] scripture is often taken out of context, and I want you to think about the fact that this is talking in the context of the abuse of children, or receiving children in Christ’s name, of not offending children. He says,

Matthew 18

KJ2000

⁸ Therefore if your hand or your foot offend you, cut them off, and cast them from you: it is better for you to enter into life lame or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire.

⁹ And if your eye offend you, pluck it out, and cast it from you: it is better for you to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire.

Now, when you consider what people are doing...and it is *epidemic* in our society. I think it must be becoming worse. You never know for sure. You kind of think: Maybe it's better reporting, or maybe the news media have gotten on this. And I know some of the people who are in the news media these days are almost making a crusade out of going after child predators and people who harm children. More power to them. I think it's important. But none of the churches (and, we have to conclude, that neither the Church of God) are immune to this kind of thing happening among us. Well, I will serve notice on you. You'd be better off right now to be cast in the middle of the sea with a millstone around your neck than to harm one of these little children who come here and who actually believe in Jesus Christ. On *another* occasion (Mark 10, verse 13):

Mark 10

AKJV

¹³ And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them: and his disciples rebuked those that brought them.

And this is *really* fascinating to me. It is as normal as apple pie: "Here is *the Master*. He's *important*. His time is *precious*. And these people are *bothering* the Master with these little rugrats." And they just said, "No! You don't need to be coming around here." Jesus heard that and put a stop to it *immediately*.

Mark 10

AKJV

¹⁴ But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, [...]

He wasn't merely mildly annoyed. He was *much* displeased.

Mark 10

KJ2000

¹⁴ [...] and said unto them, Allow the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God.

¹⁵ Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein. [*He isn't going to be there!*]

¹⁶ And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them.

You don't really have to do a whole lot of reading between the lines in the Bible to know that Jesus loved children. And what's not to love? Oh, yeah, children are troublesome. Yes, they're noisy. But they're beautiful. They are the *heritage of God*. He has given them to us for a reason, and we're supposed to cherish them. You know, from this sort of thing right here comes one of the children's songs that we *all love*. I bet you know it. If you do, let's sing it.

Jesus loves the little children,
all the children of the world.
Red and yellow, black and white,
they are precious in his sight.
Jesus loves the little children of the world.

Jesus Loves the Little Children - C. Herbert Woolston

I didn't know that was in the Top 10.

Jesus loves me, this I know
for the Bible tells me so.
Little ones to him belong.
They are weak, but he is strong.
Yes, Jesus loves me.
Yes, Jesus loves me.
Yes, Jesus loves me;
the Bible tells me so.

Jesus Loves Me - Anna Bartlett Warner

Now, you wouldn't want to make that song a lie, would you: by the way you treat children, by the way you work with children, by ignoring children when you ought to speak to them—calling them by name, learning their names—and thinking and realizing how *important* they are? You know, our generation has lost something along the way. We really have. And there are times when I wonder if we've really lost our love for little children. You know, Allie and I eat out at family restaurants frequently; and it's always interesting to watch, in those kinds of restaurants, how many people are bringing their kids out to eat. They park them up in the restaurant, and it is so funny to sit off to one side and kind of watch them—watch them play with their food, watch them be curious about their environment, watch them *fussing* because whatever didn't work like they wanted it to work; and to see how *beautiful* they are, how *cute* they are, how *precious* they are; and to realize *God loves every one of them* deeply, profoundly, and passionately. But in our society... I don't know. There's a scripture that keeps coming back to my mind when I watch television and I see some of the things that I see taking place. (And I'm not going to go through all this stuff, because I don't want to scare little children about some of the stuff that's taking place.) But there's a scripture in Lamentations, chapter 4. It says,

Lamentations 4

NIV '84

¹ How the gold has lost its luster,
the fine gold become dull!
The sacred gems are scattered
at the head of every street.

What's he talking about? Continuing:

Lamentations 4

NIV '84

² How the precious sons of Zion,
once worth their weight in gold,
are now considered as pots of clay,
the work of a potter's hands!
³ Even jackals offer their breasts
to nurse their young,
but my people have become heartless [*The King James says, "cruel".*]
like ostriches in the desert.

And in fact, to many people now, these are no longer babies; they're fetuses. As long as they're in their mother, they're an invasive chunk of flesh. That's all they are to some people today. And they're something to be disposed of, you know, like a clay pot—just dispose it. Put it up the hospital incinerator

and get rid of it. In Lamentations, though, the city has been besieged. There is no food. And instead of taking care of the children first, the people *let them starve*. That's the picture that Lamentations is drawing for us.

Now, at what point are we going to come to understand that our children are the future—that the next generation that's coming up behind us has *enormous* responsibilities thrust upon them, and the generation that is now just beginning in the church will have *even greater* responsibilities thrust upon them. They are precious like fine gold, and in *our* eyes have they lost their luster? Are we going to just scatter gems (Gems!), really: emeralds, rubies, in the head of every street? Or can we realize what enormous *value* there is there. I know I've thought about it several times that, in our generation, the church...not just ours, but all the churches today seem to be losing their way, and I feel a comparison like Israel coming out of Egypt and refusing to enter the Promised Land [**Numbers 14**]*—where God said, “Okay. You were afraid that your children are going to die out here in this desert. You will. They won't. Those children that you thought would die out here—that you thought would become a prey—I will use these children, and that next generation will go in and possess the land; but you won't.”* Two exceptions: Joshua and Caleb. Everybody else died out there, everybody over 20 years of age.

Now, to me what this is saying to the Church of God, to the Presbyterians, the Methodists, the Catholics, and everybody else out there today: You had better look well to that new generation that's coming along behind. They're the future. And I'm afraid an awful lot of us are just going to have to die off and get out of the way to make room for them. And it will be the Joshuas and Calebs, perhaps, of *our* generation who are willing to take the time to teach, to learn, to train, and help these kids to be what God intends for them to be.

The 127th psalm is interesting. He says:

Psalm 127

AKJV

¹ [A song of degrees.] Except the LORD build the house, they labor in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman wakes but in vain.

² It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows: for so he gives his beloved sleep.

You know, I have to think about that. We do our planning, and we try to work out all of our machinations, and we sacrifice for this, and we work hard at that, as though we are the ones that actually get it done. And God says, “You don't have to do that; I can handle it.” He goes on, then, to say:

Psalm 127

KJ2000

³ Lo, children are a heritage of the LORD: [...]

What a *simple* statement that is, and how profound. Children—*every one of them*...I don't care where they are. I don't care who their parents are. I don't care what church their parents attend. Every single one of them is a heritage of God. And I just think everybody needs to come to understand that God considers people who mistreat his heritage *vile*. They become vile in his eyes, and he will deal with that in his time.

Psalm 127

AKJV

⁴ As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth.

⁵ Happy is the man that has his quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate [*the public square*].

That expression, “the gate”, that you see again and again in the Bible is really the place where business is conducted, where court is held, where the judges make rulings, and what have you. The best synonym for us today is “the public square”. This is a man who can go into court with his adversaries *strong*, because he has eight big, strapping sons behind him—standing behind him in what it is that he does. Happy is the man that’s got his quiver full of arrows like these. Psalm 128 continues the theme:

Psalm 128

AKJV

¹ Blessed is every one that fears the LORD; that walks in his ways.

² For you shall eat the labor of your hands: happy shall you be, and it shall be well with you.

³ Your wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of your house: your children like olive plants round about your table.

Oh, how cute, little olive plants. What’s that about? Well, if you’ve ever done any gardening at all, you know what it’s like to put plants in the ground. You go by; you buy a bunch of plants of this, that, and the other thing; and you stick them in the ground. Or maybe you buy small trees, and you dig a big hole, and you put the tree in the ground, you water it for a year, and it dies; that’s the way it works out. (That’s the way it works for some of us, at least.) If you can understand this: Of all the agricultural sources of wealth in Israel, the olive tree was one of the best; because it produced oil. Without olives and olive oil, you are going to sit in *the dark* after sundown, because olive oil was what they used to make lamps. It’s what they burned in the lamps. And so, consequently, it was precious; because it was oil. (And we all know what oil’s worth, don’t we—how many dollars a barrel it is today? It was even more precious then because nobody had discovered it under Oklahoma yet.) But that’s what this is about. These children, apart from being something for you to love, are a *resource*—an *incredible* resource—for a family. And when you read the Bible, and you find people who are without children—who are really *hurting* because they are without children, who are *distressed* because they’re without children—it seems to concern women in many ways more than it does men in the Bible. And I think there’s a reason even for that. But the reason that it comes back down to is: “Well, who’s going to take care of us in our old age? Who’s going to defend us when the time comes we have to go down to the public square and talk about whether we own this piece of property or not? Who’s going to be on our side? Who’s going to take care of us?” Well, children were what was expected to “take care of us” in that situation.

You know, I had a couple of *old* friends once (and I say “old”, I mean they were old). This was several years ago, and they were old enough to remember something that I was *puzzled* by. So I went to them one day and I said, “Tell me, what did people do before Social Security?” The reason I was asking was because people were making all kinds of noise about what a *wonderful*...you know, one of the best programs we ever had in this country was Social Security. And the big battle was going on about how Social Security is going to go in the tank in, what, 2026 or somewhere down the line. It’s going to go broke. We’re going to run out of money. And so I wanted to know. I said, “Well, what did people do before Social Security?” And they said, “Well, families took care of them.” And I thought, “Oh, of course.” And I harkened back to *my* family, the community where I grew up in Northwest Arkansas. There was a county home. There was *one* in that county. And it was for people, I guess, whose family couldn’t take care of them. So, they would commit them to the county home, and that’s where they would end their days. But it was a community thing, and a charity thing, and old people *were taken care of*; and we didn’t have to depend on the government. And you know, don’t you, that one of the great jokes of our generation is: a guy knocks on your front door, you open the door, the man’s standing there and says, “I’m from the government, and I’ve come to help you.” And everybody understands how

ridiculous that is, because the government has things that they need to do. They have *just* things that they do. But at the same time, they aren't always there to help us. He goes on to say,

Psalm 128

AKJV

⁴ Behold, that thus shall the man be blessed that fears the LORD.

⁵ The LORD shall bless you out of Zion: and you shall see the good of Jerusalem all the days of your life.

⁶ Yes, you shall see your children's children, and peace on Israel.

How? By taking care of your little olive plants. How sad it is that the blessing of God has been outright *rejected* by this people. He has given us the gift of life, and we throw it away. One woman (and I'll never forget this to my dying day) had a third-trimester abortion. Why? Because she didn't want to miss the family's skiing trip that was coming up. But that's the way some people think. The blessing of life had been given to that woman, and she threw it away.

You know, our sin differs from that of the Baal-worshippers in Israel *only* in the methodology and the terminologies and the language that goes around it. Psalm 144, verse 11:

Psalm 144

NIV '84

¹¹ Deliver me and rescue me from the hands of foreigners whose mouths are full of lies, whose right hands are deceitful.

¹² Then our sons in their youth will be like well-nurtured plants, and our daughters will be like pillars carved to adorn a palace.

You know, what they're saying (and I've read this before in many cases): The strength of a nation is *its people*. And when your population goes into decline, the strength of a nation goes into decline. And that's where we are—right here, right now. I'll never forget: We are still to this day living in the reaction that was created by some books and what have you back in 1975. Back before 1975, but the one I remember particularly is one titled *Famine, 1975! America's Decision: Who Will Survive?*. They were talking about a population bomb—that we're going to have *so much* of an explosion in population, and *so little* food supplies because it's not growing as fast, that when these things crossover people are going to be dying of starvation all over the world; and America will have to make the decision: Who are we going to help? Who are we going to let survive, and who are we going to let die? We'll have to do a kind of triage of the world. It never happened. But what happened was two things: One, agricultural production was accelerating even as they wrote their book and they missed it. There was a *lot* of progress being made in agricultural production, food production, and consequently that was most going to go ahead much more rapidly than anybody thought it would. And the second thing that happened was the efforts that suddenly went into effect to reduce population growth. Now, we solved the agricultural problem, but we are still living in the mindset of controlling population growth. The fact is: Planet Earth is able to handle all the people we can breed onto it. It really can, believe it or not. It'll manage it. There will be adjustments that have to be made from time to time, but what is tending to happen in some parts of this world is that we are no longer having children. And as a result of it, our nations are very likely to go into decline and are going to fall prey to the nations that *are* having children. I don't think I need to tell you who those are.

There are signs in the world that there are people in the world who are just now beginning to wake up to this. Germany this year, for example, has just started paying women \$12,000 to have a baby. Now, see if you can get your mind around that: paying a woman \$12,000 to have a baby. Where'd that come from? Well, where it came from was actuaries in Germany had figured out that, if someone doesn't start having babies, 20 years from now there will be no young workers paying into the pension system. So,

naturally you've got to have some workers; so let's have some babies. Now, I'm no actuary, but I figured this out a long time ago. You don't have to be that smart to see it if you just will look at it. The reason why we are facing a Social Security crisis in this country is a missing cohort of *50 million workers* who were aborted at some point in their mother's pregnancy. That's five-zero million. Can you think that that will not have an effect—whenever those kids would go through school, graduate, go out, get jobs, go to college, go out and get more jobs, make money, pay money into the system, and support their old grandparents? That's the way it worked...until we decided we'd *stop having* kids. And that's where we have taken ourselves. So far I haven't really seen anybody wake up to it. Why is it no one talks about that? I don't know. I may have missed it. Have you heard anybody besides me talk about the fact that our Social Security problem is related to abortion? I haven't; I've been paying attention, too, because... You heard one? One person made a reference to it. One older...(He probably heard it from me.) [Laughter]

I mentioned already that I asked my friends about this. Now, in the Bible, *children* were the Social Security system. Real simple. That's why Hannah was so disturbed. She could see herself in her old age not having a child to take care of her. As it turned out, she gave Samuel to God, but then God gave her some more kids. People like Allie and I, who have no children, we're at a severe disadvantage in that generation. We had to look ahead—they did—to secure a future for themselves. They couldn't depend on someone else to do it. Abraham was kind of worried that, as he was getting older and older and older, the only person that he had in his house to be an heir and to carry on those responsibilities was not his son. It was Eleazar of Damascus—probably a very good man, probably one that Abraham had trained up—but that's the way that went.

Now, if you consider what's happening here, there is this passage of scripture in Deuteronomy 28...I feel a need almost to present it in a sermon or a radio program every month or two, because it is so relevant and because it's so frightening. In Deuteronomy 28, verse 1:

Deuteronomy 28

AKJV

¹ And it shall come to pass, if you shall listen diligently to the voice of the LORD your God, to observe and to do all his commandments which I command you this day, that the LORD your God will set you on high above all nations of the earth:

² And all these blessings shall come on you, and overtake you, if you shall listen to the voice of the LORD your God.

“Not complicated; just listen to what I'm telling you.” He said,

Deuteronomy 28

AKJV

³ Blessed shall you be in the city, and blessed shall you be in the field.

⁴ Blessed shall be the fruit of your body, and the fruit of your ground, and the fruit of your cattle, the increase of your cows, and the flocks of your sheep.

He's talking about, “You'll have healthy children—and a lot of them—if you'll just *listen* to me.” What happens if you don't? Verse 15:

Deuteronomy 28

AKJV

¹⁵ But it shall come to pass, if you will not listen to the voice of the LORD your God, to observe to do all his commandments and his statutes which I command you this day; that all these curses shall come on you, and overtake you:

¹⁶ Cursed shall you be in the city, and cursed shall you be in the field.

¹⁷ Cursed shall be your basket and your store.

¹⁸ Cursed shall be the fruit of your body[....]

And that's what happens when it comes about. I was just going through Hosea, in the radio program [*The Minor Prophets #12*], and I was struck by something that I was beginning to read. (It hasn't aired yet, so don't expect to hear this for a bit.) God says (Hosea 9, verse 10),

Hosea 9

NIV '84

¹⁰ When I found Israel, it was like finding grapes in the desert; [...]

“You know, out there where there's nothing, and all of a sudden I stumble onto a grape vine. It's *wonderful*.”

Hosea 9

NIV '84

¹ [...] when I saw your fathers, it was like seeing the early fruit on the fig tree. [*Oh, man! That looks good.*] But when they came to Baal Peor, they consecrated themselves to that shameful idol and became as vile as the thing they loved.

You know, I really think it's hard for us to understand how corrupt the society of Canaan was before Israel entered that society. And it wasn't just that here's a healthy, thriving people who have good commerce and good relationships in the world; they just burn a little incense once a week to Baal and go on their way. That's not what was going on in these countries. I don't know why the men who wrote the Bible were not inspired to be more *explicit* in their description of what these people did. It may be because, in Paul's words, it's a shame to even speak of the things that these people did in secret [**Ephesians 5:12**]. It may be because the Bible is a family book; and God wanted children to be able to read it and not be scared to death by what they read. So I'm not going to go there, either; I'll leave you a few breadcrumbs to follow so you can draw your own conclusion. This comes from the *Holman Bible Dictionary*:

Baal worship revolved around two themes that represented the conception of Baal his worshipers held. Baal was both the sun-god and storm-god. He was worshiped as sun-god when the people wished to express thanks and gratitude for light and warmth and fertility. Worship of Baal as storm-god took place to appease the destructive nature of Baal, demonstrated by drought and storms that devastated the vegetation of the worshipers. The efforts to appease Baal whenever adverse conditions prevailed culminated in the sacrifice of human beings, usually the firstborn of the one offering the sacrifice. The victims [*children*] were burnt alive, a practice in the Old Testament termed “to pass through the fire” (2 Kings 16:3; 2 Kings 21:6). Baal worship was as diverse as the communities in which he was worshiped. Each locality had its own Baal, who was named after the city or place to which he belonged.

Holman Bible Dictionary - Baal Worship in Canaan

I hadn't really realized that there were many “Baals” in the ancient world.

Moloch, the God Ba'al, known as the Sacred Bull, was widely worshipped in the ancient Near East and wherever Punic culture extended. Baal Moloch was conceived under the form of a calf

or an ox or depicted as a man with the head of a bull.

Wikipedia - Moloch

Now, I don't know why I never made this connection before: the connection between the calf and Moloch, between Baal and the golden calf. I should have; I just didn't do my research. I had not realized either that the Hebrew word for "calf" [לָבַד, *egel*, H5695] derives from an ancient root that means "circle". And I've always had a little problem with the movie *The Ten Commandments*, because of the way they presented the golden calf. You know, here's this *calf*; they're carrying him around. I don't think so. I think this is something very different. And just as in English a calf can mean the son of a cow, or a part of your leg (it can even mean soft leather, right?), it appears to me it has another meaning in Hebrew, as well. Later, God will speak of "shameful acts at Gilgal". Gilgal [גִּלְגָל, H15367] *also* means "circle". I don't know what it means with any precision, but I think the golden calf was a representation of Baal. Somewhat is known of later Baal worship at Carthage, where the people engaged in naked orgies and burned people alive. And this agrees with what Moses said happened at Sinai. Remember the story? He comes down off Mount Sinai, there's a lot of singing and laughter and all this stuff going on in the camp. He says, "What's going on?!" And poor Aaron, he says, "Well, the people got restless, and we threw in the gold, and there just came out of here this...calf?" I don't think so. And what is interesting to me, as I read this story is that (and this is Exodus 32:25):

25And when Moses saw that the people were naked; (for Aaron had made them naked to their shame among their enemies:)

Bingo. Calf worship, Baal worship, get naked, involve yourself with cult prostitutes—and the thing that I didn't understand until probably within the past year, at least not clearly, is it cult prostitution in the ancient world (and in some places in the *present* world)...it starts with *children*. The women who are cult prostitutes are not people who made that decision as adults; they were *sold into it* as little boys and little girls, and they are *sex slaves* in a cult. And if you do your concordance search on Moloch, you'll find him designated as the god to whom the Israelites sacrificed their children.

Certain rabbinic writers describe a hollow bronze statue in the form of a human, with the head of an ox. According to rabbis, children were placed in the structure that was then heated from below. Drums were pounded to drown out the cries of their children.

Holman Bible Dictionary - Molech

So, this is the kind of thing that a society went into at that time in the past; and here we are, 20th century, as a people—we are undervaluing our children considerably. We are *not* taking care of them. We are *not* protecting them as we should. (Witness what you will see probably this evening on the evening news.) And the church, in spite of everything, tends to follow society, rather than lead it. We just do. We accommodate ourselves to it, we adjust to it, we get comfortable with it; and we don't want anybody to think that we're *different* from this society.

There was another thing recently in an issue of *World* magazine. It was a column by Marvin Olasky and an article about the recent Supreme Court decision [*Gonzales v. Carhart*] that upheld (much to everybody's surprise, I think) the law Congress passed against partial-birth abortion. And it's been celebrated as a victory by many pro-life people, and disaster by people who are pro-abortion; and not surprising that it is. What it really amounts to, though, is the thin edge of a wedge that needs to be driven home. But there was something about this decision I...I didn't focus on it, because I didn't *hear* it. I mean, it wasn't presented to me anywhere that I could recall until I read it in Marvin Olasky's column. He said, basically, it was the words that Justice Kennedy used in writing that decision for the Supreme Court. He's taken a lot of heat from the right for not being conservative enough. (We should

remember he's not God; he's just a judge.) Something *very important*, though, has happened in the abortion debate, and it's reflected in Judge Kennedy's ruling on this occasion. He spoke of a "mother" and a "child". So what's the big deal about that, you ask? Well, it isn't the "approved" way of speaking of this. You're supposed to speak of a "woman" and a "fetus". That's the politically-correct thing to do. And Marvin Olasky, when he saw those words in a *Supreme Court decision*, he realized there has now been a new mark laid down for the possible—a new mark laid down for what can be said by members of the Supreme Court, and by lower courts. We can now look at these decisions as affecting a mother and an unborn child. (And I believe that is the way he put it in his ruling.)

How did this come about? How did it ever happen? And what can continue this trend in saving lives? I don't believe it happened—not for a minute—because Christians picketed abortion clinics. I don't think so. I think it's because Christians—Christian writers, Christian teachers—were *engaging the culture, debating the issue, arguing the case, standing up* for life on every opportunity they possibly could: discussing it with their neighbors, discussing it their students, discussing it with *whoever it is* that comes across their path.

I don't believe...you know, when you start doing demonstrations around abortion clinics, you're engaging in what amounts to intimidation. I don't believe intimidation should be a tool of Christian people. For us, *moral persuasion* is our prime tool; and what I think is important is *we hold the high ground*. And *because* we hold the high ground, we're in an awfully good position to fight the good fight on this particular issue. We may be a voice crying in the wilderness; but we must never, never, never give up.

Transcript of a sermon by
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