

Parents Newsletter

For the Families of Gospel Fellowship Presbyterian Church

PARENTING IN A POLITICAL FIRESTORM

by Eric Dugan

The class sits Indian-style. . . er, Native American fashion, on the braided rug for circle time. In response to the story, which was a cute tale of a misunderstood young vampire, the teacher asks the students what they think is the scariest monster they can think of.

"A werewolf," chimes in Johnny.

Raising her hand, as Johnny was *supposed* to do, Jasmine responds with, "Frankenstein's monster!"

"Ooooh," the hand pumps the air fiercely, "I think that Jason from *Friday the Thirteenth* is super scary!" The teacher thinks to herself that is super scary that a six-year old was allowed to watch *Friday the Thirteenth*.

"How about you, Corbin. What monster scares you?"

"Nancy Pelosi," he responds.

And Corbin's answer may have been just as inappropriate as the boy who watched *Friday the Thirteenth's* was.

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The mantra of the last election cycle was, "change," and the results of that election have certainly brought about some sweeping changes to our country and economy. Most of us, however, generally don't like change. We like some level of sameness. Children are much more enamored of routine. Predictability is a big plus if you are seven years old. There are changes we enjoy, however-- like having a surprise party or going on a special vacation, but many of the changes we have seen recently hardly fall into those categories.

So how do parents respond to the often tumultuous goings on in the political and financial climate of today? How do you parent in a political firestorm and protect your child from fear?

Yes, Mr. Dylan, The Times They Are A'changing:

Heraclitus posited that one cannot step into the same river twice. The idea is that life, like a river, is always changing. There is truth there. Our world is always changing. As a parent, one needs to equip their children to deal with change. You did so with potty-training, getting ready to start school and adjusting to other things. It's important to prepare them for change in their country as well.

Some changes are good and some are bad. We have to be able to deal with both. You might note that just as your child doesn't always get what they want for supper or at the store, that sometimes Mommy and Daddy don't get what they would like politically. Both of you must learn to deal with not getting your favored outcome.

Though we want to stress that things change, we need to also emphasize that some things don't.



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Daniel saw multiple kings come and go during his lifetime, and with them, many policy and position changes. Even so, God remained unchanged. Daniel could count on that fact even when the world around him was terrifying. How encouraging to know that God's love and watchcare over you remain even as you hear the locks click outside the lion's den!

Emphasize to your little ones that God doesn't ever leave His people, so that with His help you can adjust to whatever may come. It is at such times when we learn what Paul meant by saying, "I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength." (Phil 4:11-13)

The strength-giver, Jesus, remains during every circumstance. Show your

children that you are trusting God during tough times.

Aretha, I'll Tell You What It Means To Me:

There are verses in the Bible that are wonderful when they are easy. For example, loving your neighbor is pretty great if your neighbor is kind and compassionate. It is less so if they enjoy playing Heavy Metal "to eleven" at 3am while their dogs bark non-stop.

When our leaders are gracious and wise, it is easy to obey the Word that says, "Give everyone what you owe him: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor." (Romans 13:7) It becomes a bit more sticky when you are living under the rule of Nero or Domitian.

As a parent, you want your child to show respect to authorities. The best way to accomplish that is by doing so yourself.

One of the big complaints we have about politicians is that they say one thing and often do another. It drives one crazy to have a Senator give a speech decrying a terrible bill that will ruin our republic, only to have them vote in favor of it a few days later. If it drives us nuts when they do it; we ought not follow in those footsteps. That means we can't just tell our kids to respect authority; we need to do it, too.

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Showing respect, however, does not mean approving of what someone is doing.

We had the opportunity to attend the March For Life this year. As a group, we exercised our rights under the law to assemble and make our positions known to those in authority. The march was large, but peaceful. Marchers signed petitions, held up signs, visited leaders and acted in a respectful fashion toward those in authority. Even those who strongly favor abortion in all circumstances were treated respectfully.

We can respect someone's position without respecting their positions on the issues. We have the examples of Jesus, Paul, Daniel and countless others to follow in this area. It might be good to read some of those accounts to your children so they can have Biblical submission to authorities modeled for them.

Crosby, Still & Nash Were Actually Right On This One:

In turbulent times, it is all the more important to teach your children well. Your voice may be the only voice they hear which speaks the truth.

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Despite the name, the Iron Curtain was not a design show on TLC. It was a term to describe the shutting off of the Soviet Union from the outside. Her citizens were only allowed to hear that which its leaders wanted them to hear. They were closed off.

Our children aren't behind that curtain. Our world might be

embracing things that God condemns, but that doesn't mean our kids can't know the truth. Take the time to not just tell them that you favor or oppose something, but why you do so. You might follow Jesus' example and approach it as, "you have heard that it was said. . . but I say to you. . ." As Jesus did, focus on God's Word.

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You Are 16, Going On 17:

At seven years old, your child should probably know who Abraham Lincoln is. If he knows who Robert Gates, Harry Reid or Kathleen Sebelius is, however, we may have a problem. It's not that knowledge is a bad thing--it isn't, but there are some things a seven year old doesn't need to worry about. Part of dealing with the political maelstrom is being age-appropriate with your children.

Young children need to know that you will care for them in a scary world. During the Gulf War, Mister Rogers said, "all children shall be well taken care of in this neighborhood and beyond --in times of war and in times of peace." It's your job to care for your children and to offer them as much a sense of peace as you can. That can, admittedly, be very tough in tumultuous times. Consider the examples of those who have gone before. You might seek advice from those who lived during WWII, Korea, Viet Nam or other troubling times.

As your children get older, they can know more and be taught more. Your 17 year old, for instance should know who Robert Gates, Harry Reid and Kathleen Sebelius are. Further, they should be able to evaluate whether their political positions are Biblical or not. (To help in that regard, we will be hosting *the Truth Project*, a Christian worldview Bible Study for teens this fall.)

Just as you wouldn't give a machine gun to a toddler, equip your children according to what's appropriate for their age. (For the record, that toddler probably needs a Nerf football.)

The Final Countdown:

Your kids are counting on you in these times. They need your leadership to know how best to deal with the myriad of changes going on around them. Direct them to the unchanging God and live before them as one of His followers.

