

Patient and Faithful vs. Pragmatic

by Steve Grutzius

In the world of philosophical theories and concepts it seems that the only contribution that has come from American thought is the philosophy of pragmatism. As Americans we cannot escape this line of reasoning. It's not the journey, it's the destination. It doesn't matter how you do something, just get it done in the most efficient way possible. We want the bottom line, just the facts, the short version and the end result.

Pragmatic thinking permeates everything we do and stands in sharp contrast to the biblical concept of patient faithfulness. Both patience and faithfulness are fruit of the Spirit and considered evidence of the Holy Spirit's work in the life of a believer, but in our culture we are convinced that we must always find the latest and most innovative way to do things. This places tremendous pressure on both the church and Christian families to depart from patient and faithful devotion to Christ and gravitate toward man's wisdom and ingenuity in reaching its goals.

This is not only a modern dilemma, even Abraham, the "Father of Faith", struggled with patience and faithfulness. He was promised a son, but the years passed by and he and Sarah grew older and older. How was he to be the father of many nations without a son? Rather than patient faithfulness, Abraham came up with a pragmatic solution. God did not move quickly enough for him and he devised his own means to the end. This son that was born by human ingenuity was rejected by God when Abraham prayed for Ishmael to fulfill God's plan. It was the work of the Holy Spirit that God insisted on, not the work of the flesh.

There are many ways that pragmatism is affecting Christian home educators, but the one that has been coming to the forefront in many churches and homeschool groups lately is in the area of training young adults. As our children reach late teens and early twenties, we begin to feel the pressure. Biology, geometry, chemistry, sociology; what skills will they need? Who will they marry? How will it all work out? All of this is God calling us to patient faithfulness. Regrettably, there are also many other voices out there sending a different message. And sometimes these voices are within our own homeschool communities.

Faithfulness finds its roots in God's word. We must rely on God's word not man's wisdom in equipping our young adults. The scriptures clearly place the responsibility for training children and young adults with the parents, as well as the duty to guide them safely through the courtship process. While parents may feel overwhelmed with this daunting task, it is nevertheless their responsibility. While the church and local support groups may assist the parents in their efforts they must be careful never to displace the

parents. Many activities offered through homeschool support groups and the local church may sometimes cross this important jurisdictional boundary.

The reason is simple; it is much easier to train the children than to equip the parents to train their children. It is easier to provide a courtship environment than to teach parents to prayerfully and intentionally lead their children through courtship to marriage.

A common practice with many support groups is to offer special classes for biology or chemistry labs that start out with parental involvement, but soon begin to look more like high school classes, where parents drop off their children to be taught by someone else. If a parent is struggling with teaching a certain subject, it might be better to take the class together so they can learn it at the same time. The goal is not learning a given body of knowledge, it is shepherding the heart of your child. These classes and co-ops may be beneficial if used properly, but support group leaders must be careful to maintain a support role.

Another catch phrase is providing a courtship environment. This usually means hosting events whereby eligible young men and women participate in activities together, many times with limited parental involvement. While it sounds like a good time, we must still try to find a biblical model for this practice. The pattern we see in the scriptures is for the parents to assist and oversee the courtship process. We do not find a precedent for grouping boys and girls approximately the same age together for social activities or even for training purposes. What we do find is gender segregation; for example Titus chapter 2 tells us that older women should teach the younger women and older men should train the younger men. Contrary to grouping young people by age, we should be grouping them by gender with the purpose of training them. The training for a young man is so different from that of a young woman, how could it possibly be done simultaneously? Faithfully following the patterns set forth in the scriptures is the best way to train the next generation and safely bring them into adulthood.

So what do we do? First, we take seriously our role as parents and accept the responsibility for training our children. Then, we begin to trust God with their future, not relying on man's wisdom or ingenuity. We intentionally begin to fellowship with other like-minded families, support one another and prayerfully guide our children through courtship to marriage. Finally, and most importantly, we renew our minds with God's word so we can begin to practice patient faithfulness. †