

Text: Dt 6.20-25

Today we return to the series I started a few weeks ago, based on the book, *Instructing a Child's Heart*, by Tedd & Margy Tripp. We are thinking of this as an extended book review.

The second chapter of the book is called "Five Goals for Formative Instruction."

The Tripps define *formative instruction*: "Formative instruction 'forms' or 'shapes' our children. It is not a single event, but a lifetime of interaction that is based on God's revelation."¹

The focus of the book is on creating an instructive atmosphere in the home, but I see value in the book for everyone. The Tripps are promoting a Biblical worldview that we all ought to cultivate in our lives.

The Five Goals for Formative Instruction are:

- Remember Scripture is our personal history
- Develop godly habits
- Apply Scripture to life
- Model spiritual vitality
- Grow into a mature relationship with your children

You can see that the first four are about Christian living — you could give this advice to any Christian, whether they have children or not. And even those who have no children are nonetheless influencers of children in their lives: extended family, church kids, etc.

Your Christian testimony matters. The way you live your life matters.

Today I want to simply focus on Goal One: **Remember Scripture is our personal history**. I am not sure that I will do five messages from this one chapter, but this one will stick with the one topic.

I. The challenge of Dt 6 (Dt 6.20-25)

A. The formative instructional nature of the passage (20-21a)

1. The passage envisions a question from a son to a father, "Why do we do what we do?"

¹ Tedd Tripp and Margy Tripp, *Instructing a Child's Heart* (Wapwallopen, PA: Shepherd Press, 2008), 18–19.

2. God commands the father to respond explicitly.

B. The content of the instruction (21b-24)

1. Rooted in the redemption history of Israel

2. Emphasized the work of the Lord

3. Communicated God's work "for us"

4. The consequential commands: we observe the statutes for reasons (24)

a. Covenant relationship: To fear the Lord for our good

b. Contemporary survival: To survive in the land as we do to this day

C. The Spiritual fruit of formative instruction as a lifestyle (25)

1. It will be righteousness for us

2. It involves carefulness in behaviour

"[Moses'] words carried weight because the Israelites knew their history and the God who revealed himself to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Israel's history rehearsed over and over again who God was and what he had done for them. They read, recited, sang, chanted, and memorized their history."²

D. Ongoing applications of this instructional lifestyle

1. Persistence in the dietary laws commanded by God: a part of the persistent covenant relationship

2. Submission to God as Lord over the nation (including the eventual kings): Theocracy made Israel unique among nations

Now, we are speaking of ideals, not 100% compliance — many Israelites failed as we shall see

II. The course of spiritual life in Israel

A. When it broke down (Jdg 2.6-11)

1. Joshua faithfully served the Lord

² Tripp and Tripp, 23.

2. The elders after Joshua faithfully served the Lord
3. The next generation failed to serve the Lord

We've covered this ground before, there is much to say, but what we have here is generational failure.

- Many factors, so not a blanket judgement of the second generation
- However, the third generation didn't receive the instruction God commanded the fathers to pass on (blame on the third generation itself, possibly on the second generation also)

B. When it succeeded

1. The Psalms represent meditations on the law by some of the holiest men in Israel's history
2. Consider these "historical" psalms
 - a. Psalm 78: "Tell the Coming Generation"³
 - b. Psalm 96: "Let Us Sing Songs of Praises"
 - c. Psalm 99: "The Lord Our God Is Holy"

The writers of these Psalms are many years from the events of the Exodus, but the events of the Exodus are "spirit shaping" events for them.

"Formative instruction 'forms' or 'shapes' our children. It is not a single event, but a lifetime of interaction that is based on God's revelation."⁴

III. The spirit forming power of Biblical instruction

A. The Scriptures invite contemplation of God

1. Psalm 34.8-11

³ From Psalm headings in Michael S. Bushell, Michael D. Tan, and Glenn L. Weaver, *BibleWorks*, v. 8 (Norfolk: BibleWorks, LLC., 2008), BibleWorks. v.8.

⁴ Tedd Tripp and Margy Tripp, *Instructing a Child's Heart* (Wapwallopen, PA: Shepherd Press, 2008), 18–19.

2. Philippians 4.8-9

“Our children cannot understand why they are in this world, how sin has affected them, and how redemption restores what sin has destroyed, apart from their spiritual history.”⁵

B. The Bible story: Creation, Fall, Redemption

1. The Bible story is our story: it is our creation, our fallenness, our redemption.
2. The Old Testament story displays the concept of redemption in narrative form
 - a. The nation Israel created out of one man’s faith response to God (Abraham)
 - b. The nation Israel struggled to follow God’s precepts from the very beginning (fallenness on display)
 - c. The nation Israel found God’s redemption (and continual covenant keeping, even in captivity) despite its failures (redemption)

“The faith, hope, and confidence of heroes of the faith in the Bible and church history are born of personal identity with God’s revelation.”⁶

3. For us, with the whole Bible, the complete story of redemption is available to us
 - a. We see the ultimate consequence of sin and fallenness: the wrath of God poured out on Christ
 - b. We also see the undeserved love of God in providing Christ as our substitute, enabling us to receive his righteousness through faith
 - c. We finally see the final outworking of redemption in the NT prophecies concerning the end of this age and fully accomplishing redemption in Christ

⁵ Tripp and Tripp, *Instructing a Child’s Heart*, 24.

⁶ Tripp and Tripp, 24.

Conclusion:

“We must show our children the vital connection between the powerful story of redemption in the Scriptures and their daily experience. The instruction we give them will only make sense in the context of the story of the Scriptures that tells them who they are and about the God who made them and offers them redemption.”⁷

Here is what we see in lives who make the Bible story BIG in their lives:

- The story of Creation, Fall, Redemption becomes the dominant theme of life and thought
- The Biblical worldview becomes the lens through which we:
 - ♦ Read the news
 - ♦ Interact with others
 - ♦ Make life choices
- When we interact with our children (and other children) our Bible viewpoint affects how and what we communicate

Now, there is much to this story. I am not giving a guarantee: “Immerse your life in the Bible, and everything will be fine, your kids will automatically become spiritual over-achievers.”

What I am saying is that this kind of atmosphere *ought* to be the atmosphere of your life. You should live and breathe the Bible.

⁷ Tripp and Tripp, 26.