

Text: Col 2.8

A couple of weeks ago, I heard a blog interview of pastor and author Tedd Tripp. You may have heard of his book, *Shepherding A Child's Heart*. That book received good reviews some years ago. Many parents found it helpful.

Tedd Tripp and his wife, Margy, published another book, *Instructing a Child's Heart*. The interview really struck home with me as I listened, so I ordered the book. I am part-way through. Pastor Tripp is a Presbyterian and an evangelical, so there are aspects of his theology where we have strong differences. If you know the lingo, you might pick up some hints of that in this book.

However, the overall message of this book is so good, I want to do a series of messages from it. You might think of this as an extended book review.

Now, those of us who don't have little children in the home might think this topic doesn't apply much to me.

I couldn't disagree with that thought more! The fact is, the reason the book so caught my interest is that it teaches the kind of life that *every* Christian should lead. The book is really about worldview and how we live it out in a sinful world.

- If you ever watch television, you will profit from this book.
- If you ever read a newspaper, you will profit from this book.
- If you ever surf the internet, you will profit from this book.

In short, no matter where you get your information, you *need* the benefits of the thinking in this book.

We will start with the question, "Why?" Why do we need the thinking found in this book?

Here is the text we will start with:

Col 2.8 (read on screen)

Our message title is, *Are You a Captive?*

The reality is that many Christians are captives to the thinking of the world, and their own spiritual lives suffer proportionately. Even worse than that, however, their impact on others (especially if they have children) is often worse than nothing.

Proposition: Some culture captivates every mind.

I. The warning of Col 2.8

A. The captivating concepts: “the philosophy and empty deceit”

1. Paul warned the Colossians of a real danger
2. The danger could captivate the hearts of the unwary
3. The danger isn’t named: “the philosophy”
 - a. The only place Paul uses the term, philosophy
 - b. Not speaking against philosophy as such, but “the philosophy” — a specific teaching
 - c. The character of this teaching is
 - 1) Empty (no real value)
 - 2) Deceptive (seems to have value)

B. The characteristics of the empty philosophy

1. According to the tradition of men
 - a. Tradition is something that is handed over
 - b. This tradition is handed over from men
 - c. In other words, human teaching, human principles, human values

When you listen to conservative politicians talk, you will hear terms like “family values.” We are all for family values... if they are rooted in the Bible.

All too often, politicians mean values rooted in human traditions, crafted without God in mind.

2. According to the elements of the world
 - a. The word “elements” means the basics, the elementary principles
 - b. Goes back to the “ABCs” — the building blocks of language, the building blocks of worldly philosophy
 - c. The deceptive philosophy of emptiness is built on the basics of the world system

3. Not according to Christ

- a. The reality is, the world system and human traditions are contrary to Christ, not according to Christ
- b. Entire worldviews are built on notions that do not include Christ

In a sense, what I am saying here is nothing new to you. You are well aware of this.

However, three cautions about taking this casually:

- The philosophical systems of the world are *deceptive*
- The philosophical systems of the world seek to captivate you
- The warning implies captivity is possible.

II. The strategy of the world in promoting its philosophy

A. Three passages

Ep 6.11-12 Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. ¹² For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual *forces* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*.

¹ Pt 5.8 Be of sober *spirit*, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

Jas 4.1 ¶ What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members?

1. The third passage seems somewhat unrelated to the first two
2. But consider the first two:
 - a. The head of the world is the devil
 - b. The devil does not act alone
 - c. The forces arrayed against us are malevolent: they seek our harm
 - d. The forces of the world are active, they do not rest
 - e. The forces of the world aim at destabilizing Christians

3. Now consider the third passage

- a. The forces of the world are effective: quarrels and conflicts
- b. Their effectiveness is found within their target: “your pleasures that wage war in your members”

B. The drumbeat of the world’s message

1. The multi-headed adversary speaks with many mouths

a. All forms of media in our world

- 1) Television
- 2) Movies
- 3) Music
- 4) Print
- 5) Internet
- 6) Text messages
- 7) Video games
- 8) Etc.

b. All authorities in our world

- 1) School teachers
- 2) News anchors
- 3) Politicians
- 4) Actors and actresses
- 5) Sports figures

“Secular culture is powerful and cannot be quarantined.”¹

2. Exposure to the multi-headed adversary is inescapable

a. Many Christians make attempts at limiting exposure to the world

- 1) Some don’t have TV
- 2) Most will limit access to the internet in some way
- 3) Selective about reading material

¹ Tedd Tripp and Margy Tripp, *Instructing a Child’s Heart* (Wapwallopen, PA: Shepherd Press, 2008), 16.

- b. Nevertheless, the world is all around us, constantly teaching its ideas
- 1) We can limit our intake
 - 2) We cannot avoid it completely

When our oldest son was just starting to talk, we didn't have a TV. However, we remember driving by the Golden Arches, and heard him shout out, "Look, Rono Dono's"

How did he learn that? We live in a media saturated culture, he got it somewhere — maybe in the store itself.

- c. Any elemental philosophy (building blocks ideas) has shaping power

"Advertisers repeat their message. They know that it will take more than one exposure for their message to be absorbed. If it didn't need repetition, they would create quick and inexpensive ads that aired only once. Advertisers want you to memorize their jingles so that you remember them when you are facing the wall of available products, trying to decide which one to buy! The world gets it! *Shaping ideas requires long-term interaction with long-range goals and 100 percent saturation.*"²

III. Countermeasures: the intentional effort to overcome

- A. The term Tedd Tripp uses is "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."³

² Tripp and Tripp, 17 (emphasis mine).

³ Tripp and Tripp, 18–19.

B. Biblical basis of formative instruction

Dt 32.46-47 he said to them, “Take to your heart all the words with which I am warning you today, which you shall command your sons to observe carefully, even all the words of this law. 47 “For it is not an idle word for you; indeed it is your life. And by this word you will prolong your days in the land, which you are about to cross the Jordan to possess.”

Dt 6.6-9 “These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. ⁷ You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. ⁸ “You shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. ⁹ “You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

1. As the world’s message never shuts off, so we must turn God’s message constantly on
2. The world communicates by appealing to desires; God’s word communicates by appealing to the heart
3. The world enlists the worldly wise of all kinds as spokesmen; God calls parents to bear the message in the home consistently and constantly

Now, again, don’t miss this: Your home needs the mind of God whether you have children in the home or not.

Conclusion:

We are just introducing the topic of instructing the heart with this message. We all have a need to hear and heed God’s word, to be shaped by it and conformed to it.

Proposition: Some culture captivates every mind.

Let’s be sure that the culture that captures our mind is the mind of Christ.