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The Child in Control? I Think Not!

Right now, in Geneva, Switzerland, a committee of eighteen experts from around the world called the Convention on Rights of a Child (CRC) is in the process of creating a document that would be recommended internationally. This document will take away much of the authority from parents, and give it to children. A few statements incorporated in this document are: “Children would have the ability to choose their own religion, while parents only have the authority to advise them. A child’s ‘right to be heard’ would allow him (or her) to seek government review of every parental decision with which the child disagreed. Parents would no longer be able to administer reasonable spankings to their children” (“April”). This law goes against all biblical views on authority. The scary thing is that if the CRC committee ratifies this document, it may be enforced in America, as well as other nations around the world. God tells us that children are under the parents’ authority, and parents are under His (Shellenberger). Everyone should show respect for those God has put in authority over them.

First of all, everyone has authorities they need to respect. Examples of these authorities are parents, teachers, bosses, and the President. Many times, people disagree with what their authorities say or do, and sometimes they talk disrespectfully about them behind their backs. For example, President Barack Obama was just recently elected as the President of the United States. Many people are strongly against his views and policies. Every time they mention his name, they say something negative about him. God calls everyone to honor their authorities even if they do not agree with them (Shellenberger). Also, as Christian young people, God has set our parents over us; He has given them full authority (Tripp 46). If we do not respect our parents, we most likely will not respect or honor those higher in authority (Evans 215). We will always have authorities we need to respect.

Secondly, over the years our American culture has switched the roles of the parent and the child, a role-reversal that needs to be changed. Noah Webster defines a parent as “a father or mother; he or she that produces young.” The duties of parents to their children are to maintain, protect, and educate them. “When parents are wanting in authority; children are wanting in duty” (Ames, as noted in Webster). A modern dictionary defines a parent as “a person in relation to his or her offspring; a mother or father” (Agnes). These two definitions define the same word quite differently. Webster’s definition explains that parents have authority over their children; however, our modern dictionary just shows a parent as the person who gave birth to the child. Many of us know the verse, “Children obey your parents in the Lord for this is right” (Ephesians 6:1). Yet, in our culture today, the Scripture has been twisted to, “Parents obey your children, for this way you will keep peace in your home” (Evans 212). Almost every time I turn around, I see evidence that our world puts the child on a pedestal, only caring about making that child happy. TV programs often show kids, especially teenagers, rebelling against their parents, making us think the child is always right (Evans 209). Who cares about our parents; they are only there to feed us, fund us, and make our lives happy, right? No! Our parents are set in authority by God (Tripp 46). Our parents will always be our parents, even when we move out of the home. We must thank God for our parents, and submit as they do their job by being in authority over us (Shellenberger).

Thirdly, Scripture has much to say about honoring our authorities. As young Christians, we must pay attention to what God says in his Word about honoring and respecting those in authority over us. For example, Ephesians 6:1-3 says, “Children obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ‘Honor your father and mother’ – which is the first commandment with a promise – ‘that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.’” In other words, when we obey and honor our parents, we are obeying God (Shellenberger). “Honor your father and mother” is the first commandment to deal with relationships with other people. It also is mentioned in the Old and New Testaments, so we know God is trying to tell us something. Finally, this is the first commandment with a promise. God promises us a long life if we honor and respect our parents. He tells us it is the right thing to do if we obey our parents in the Lord (Shellenberger).

God’s view is clear on how He wants us to respond toward our authorities. For example, Romans 13:1-2 says, “Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves.” God has put our parents, teachers, and our President into positions of authority over us. When we rebel against these authorities, we are rebelling against God, and he will judge us accordingly. Truly, respect and honor are extremely crucial to God. We must respond respectfully to those in authority over us!

In conclusion, everyone has authorities that they need to respect, the world has presented a role reversal that needs to be changed, and there is clear biblical teaching that gives us guidance about the importance of respecting authority. In the 1620s, when children were disrespectful toward their authority, they were put in stocks. If the CRC passes this law, it will be the parents who will be put in “stocks” for not respecting their children. It is so important that everyone shows respect for the authorities whom God has placed in their lives.

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