

Change the Family, Change the World

Dennis Peacocke • Balancing Family & Work

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.since Abraham will surely become a great and mighty nation, and in him all the nations of the earth will be blessed? For I have chosen him, in order that he may command his children And his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice; in order that the Lord May bring upon Abraham what He has spoken about him (Gen. 18:18-19).

The family unit is the basic building block of society; if families are healthy, so is the culture. Conversely, sick families produce sick nations. As the scriptures above declare, Abraham-the earthly "father of the faith" (Rom. 4:16)-was charged by God to raise a successful, natural family as a parallel act to laying a proper foundation for the spiritual family God would build through him. Indeed, commanding his children and his household-in order that God could, in fact, bless all the nations of the earth through him-clearly says that to change the earth God's way, we must first change our families.

Successful businesses and strong, long-term, national economies are similarly built upon the foundations of the strengths or weaknesses of the families undergirding them. So let's say it this way: change the family, change the economy.

The "Family Man"

God lives and moves in community. The Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) forms the first community. Not only is God's singularity emanating out of the mystery of community within Himself, He is called by Jesus a "Father."

The economic implications of God's community-family are enormous. The concept of the division of labour is one of only several foundational cornerstones of productive modern economics. That concept came straight out of the Trinity. Were there no Trinity, such a concept would have no emanation from God and, therefore, no ultimate standing outside of man's own imagination. The Father's role is limited by self-imposition; the Son's role in creation and salvation likewise has borders, as do the specific tasks of the Holy Spirit. Out of their specific roles we see teamwork, specialty, and perfect economic cooperation.

Therefore, perhaps the greatest single phrase of economic endeavour is stated in Genesis 1:26 wherein God says, "Let Us make man." The very act of creation comes out of corporate community within God, and His most significant creation is a family of sons and daughters called "man." The scriptures say so plainly:

What is man, that Thou dost take thought of him? And the son of man, that Thou dost care for him? (Psa. 8:4)

For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the author of their salvation through sufferings (Heb. 2:10).

For assuredly He does not give help to angels, but He gives help to the descendant of Abraham (Heb. 2:16).

Economics and family, then, are fully intertwined in God. They were birthed by Him out of a corporate act of labour, using common resources to produce and care for a race of beings that were told to "multiply and take dominion" of God's earthly resources. This process proceeds from a base of covenantal married family life, for the propagation of the race to the glory of God. While I could spend much more time developing this on a theological basis, for the sake of this short article, let me simply say this: God gave the resource development and management process of the earth to His created earthly family in Adam and Eve, His first son and daughter. He later reaffirmed this stewardship mandate in His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ.

Private Property

.and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him (Rom. 8:17).

Private property is certified by God as an ethical and godly concept because God Himself legitimized the idea by owning all things. When the scripture states in Psalms 24:1 "The earth is the Lord's, and all it contains," private ownership, as a stewardship under God, is forever sanctified even if it can be misused like all other stewardships. Private property is not "theft" as Marx or others would have us believe. Indeed, it is not historic accident that, wherever communal ownership of all things is advocated and practiced, it almost always has led to the habit of common wives and common children, a practice rejected by Jesus Christ Himself as He upheld the prohibition of adultery.

Again, as Romans 8:17 says, Christ's family inheritance of caring for God's creation is to be overseen by the redeemed family of man. Eternal economics, like temporal earthly economics, is a family affair. Indeed, the skills of stewardship for eternity are in the process of being developed and refined in our earthly journey now. As you may be aware, Jesus gave us more parables on the subject of stewardship than any other parabolic subject. Why? Because stewardship skills take us into the mind and disciplines of God and His love and care for what He has created.

To become God's friend, we must take upon ourselves His point of view and labour with Him, as Adam did, in the care of those people and things He has entrusted us to nurture and help release into their destiny. Of all our economic stewardships, none is so important as our spouse, children, and extended natural and spiritual family. Christ's sacrifice on our behalf as His family is Exhibit A. Managing both people and things is ultimately all about the same thing: positioning them before God for His purposes for them. Ultimately, salvation is all about the Father's family business and its growth throughout His created order.

Train up a Child

An inheritance quickly gained at the beginning will not be blessed at the end (Prov. 20:21).

As we see in Isaiah 9:6-7, God's government shall increase without end. How will that happen? The answer is wonderfully simple and wonderfully amazing: through His children's maturing management skills. God's Kingdom will grow ever more powerfully and ever more developed as His Church fills all things.

So where is the most effective place to begin training rulers for Christ as stewards of economic resources? At home, beginning when they are three or four, at the oldest. Making one's bed, cleaning one's room, and eating all of one's vegetables: each of these are examples of stewardship training. As we teach our children, in small but significant ways, to care for themselves and their immediate surroundings, they are learning not only to keep, say, the toys off the floor, but also gratefulness and resource management. To allow your children to care improperly for things is to all but guarantee future economic dysfunction or ungrateful arrogance.

Poverty and economic dysfunction are far more about a lack of training than about insufficient IQ, racism, or any other social malfunction. Trained people prosper. Untrained people can't hold on to economic prosperity even if they stumble into it. They don't have the skill base of strategic management and the character base of gratitude, sowing financially into God's Kingdom and other people. They were short-changed by their parents. While it is never too late to learn as adults, our childhood is where these basic economic skills should be taught. Indeed, it is no accident that the very rich and the aristocratic ruling dynasties of history carefully and generationally trained their children in special ruling skills from an early age. We don't need a Ph.D. in parenting, child psychology, or economics to do so. We simply need love for our children, a sense of their destiny, the scriptures, a strong church, the help of the Holy Spirit, and the helpful encouragement of spiritual friends and leaders. There are no legitimate excuses for us not to train them to prosper.

Cathedral Vision

God loves economics for several obvious reasons. One, economic stewardship develops our rulership and skill bases, while, at the same time, teaching us discipline and developing our character. Second, economic labour is a means of providing food, shelter, clothing, education, and all other basic human needs. Third, economic skills teach and reinforce God's laws of sowing and reaping in our lives, showing us, in tangible ways, both reward and penalty for obeying or disobeying His laws of conduct and growth. And last, economic progress feeds hope in the human heart, and gratitude to God for those who have helped teach us to apply God's principles.

Beyond these four reasons, however, is a fifth reason, which is most powerful of all. Using God's laws of economic stewardship, we can greatly enhance the blessings and possibilities of our children and all future generations they produce and influence. In short, we can leverage future lifestyles and change the future of nations by the training of our children and grandchildren. Proverbs 13:22 says it all: "A good man leaves an inheritance to his children's children, and the wealth of the sinner is stored up for the righteous."

This money-transfer scripture is frequently misquoted by not quoting the whole text. There is no promise here to transfer the riches of the ungodly to all the saints. Those resources are specifically to be transferred to those who are investing in their grandchildren! Those parents, and those parents alone, are addressed in this

promise of wealth transfer. These parents are the possessors of what is called "cathedral vision." They are planting oaks for their great-grandchildren to use a hundred years later after two generations of family have built up the stone cathedral walls and are ready to finish the church with wooded beams and roofing! They see across time and have used their lives to gather and pass on economic and spiritual resources to their future progeny.

To change a nation economically, and every other way, we must begin at home. God, the family man, requires it. Economic prosperity depends upon it. When all is said and done, economics-both micro and macro-is about what we have learned about how God manages, shares, and brings increase to people and resources. It is a family affair, a team effort, and a generational transfer process. It is about inheriting our Heavenly Father's heart.

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