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Preparing Children for the Gospel

Introduction

Picture two terra cotta planters sitting side-by-side in a sunny corner of the yard. The same gardener has tended both pots, planting them at the same time with seeds from the same packet. Each pot has received the same careful attention—adequate water and sufficient sunlight. In one pot, the seeds have sprouted and the plants are growing to a full and healthy maturity. But the other pot still sits empty—the seeds have yielded nothing. Why the difference?

In one pot the seeds were planted in rocks, while in the other pot the seeds were planted in rich, dark soil. In the end, the soil was the determining factor in this situation, because God has designed seeds to grow in soil, and not in rocks.

Just as God has ordered certain conditions for growing seeds, He has also ordered certain conditions for growing His kingdom:

A sower went out to sow. ⁴And as he sowed, some seeds fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured them. ⁵Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and immediately they sprang up, since they had no depth of soil, ⁶but when the sun rose they were scorched. And since they had no root, they withered away. ⁷Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. ⁸Other seeds fell on good soil and produced grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. ⁹He who has ears, let him hear. (Matthew 13:3b-9)

We know from the explanation of the parable Jesus gives later in the chapter that the seed is the Word of God, and the soil is a person's heart. The Word of God is taught to all hearers, but it only takes true root in some hearts.

As we labor to sow the seeds of the gospel to children in our classrooms and homes, this parable is very instructive for us. It presents us with the following questions to ponder:

- Who is the sower?
- What is the seed?
- What kind of soil is in the hearts of children?
- How do we sow, tend, and harvest?
- How do we lead a child to salvation, and what are the evidences of saving faith?

The Sower

No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. (John 6:44a)

All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation;¹⁹that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.²⁰Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

(2 Corinthians 5:18-20)

Ultimately, the salvation of children is in God's sovereign hands. He chooses whom He wills and calls His own to Himself. Unless God is at work in a child's heart, all our efforts are in vain.

However, this does not mean that we are not to labor in this ministry. As believers we have the privilege of being God's instruments. We are laborers in God's vineyard, and God has "entrusted" us with this great privilege and awesome responsibility (1 Corinthians 3:4-9). We are to work in cooperation with God, who gives roots to the seeds of gospel truth we sow in the hearts of children.