

Swimming Against the Current of Our Culture

By Michael James Dowling

Just as a fish is unaware of the water in which it swims, we humans are often unaware of how much we are influenced by the culture in which we live. Unfortunately, the atmosphere of our present-day culture is contaminated with unscriptural ideas. As a result, our children and grandchildren are in danger of adopting a worldview that is devoid of or even opposed to the Word of God.

When I was in my thirties and living in Boston, I was deeply involved in the New Age Movement. I consulted astrologers and psychics, practiced meditation, and immersed myself in various cults, such as Erhard Seminars Training (EST) and Silva Mind Control. God graciously and dramatically rescued me from that spiritual darkness and brought me to faith in Jesus Christ. This was in the 1970s, and the heretical thought systems I subscribed to then were on the fringes of society. Today, they have become mainstream.

Have you noticed how the current of our culture has become more polluted in the past twenty years? Below are just a few of the erroneous views that are constantly bombarding us. How many of them are familiar to you?

- All spiritual paths are more or less equally valid.
- We should be tolerant of all lifestyles and views.
- Truth is found within oneself, so it's different for every person.
- Happiness is the goal of life.
- Gender is a decision.
- What you experience is more important than what you believe.
- Promoting self-esteem is of paramount importance.
- Sin is an unhealthy, outdated concept.
- Jesus was a highly evolved person who came to teach us how to attain the same level of spiritual enlightenment.

This is the environment our children and grandchildren are growing up in. These unbiblical notions are everywhere in movies, television programs, popular music, magazines, books, and newspapers. We're in a real spiritual battle!

The initial battlefield is in our minds. The Apostle Paul exhorts us as followers of Jesus to "destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ" (2 Cor. 10:5). How do we do this?

We must be able to recognize ungodly opinions when they are raised against the knowledge of God, and we then need to possess the commitment and strength to take them captive. So, the first step is to diligently read and study the Bible so that we can recognize falsehoods. The next step is to increase our awareness of dangerous concepts. We can do that by reading books on biblical worldview and connecting with ministries like Renewanation, The Colson Center for Christian Worldview, Summit Ministries, and others.

TRAINING OUR CHILDREN AND GRANDCHILDREN TO SWIM STRONG

For many of us, our primary mission field will be within our own family. Witnessing within our family can be challenging because the gospel can be offensive. Jesus said, "Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the world. No, I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. I came to set sons against their fathers, daughters against their mothers, daughters-in-law against their mothers-in-law; your worst enemies will be the members of your own family" (Matt. 10:34-36 GNT).

None of us want to be cut off from our children and grandchildren. But if we are insensitive when presenting the gospel, our relationship with our entire family can

be damaged. So, how can we as parents and grandparents consistently, effectively, and winsomely communicate gospel truths to our children and grandchildren?

One approach is by reading aloud with them using books that promote understanding of gospel truths. Stories are powerful; Jesus Himself taught using parables. In this visual age of video games and the internet, picture books are especially effective.

There are plenty of ways to find good books for ministering to children. *WORLD* magazine annually compiles a list of the outstanding children's books of the year, and it recently published a list of outstanding children's books of the twenty-first century. Many excellent recommendations are contained in *The Read-Aloud Family* by Sarah Mackenzie and *Honey for a Child's Heart* by Gladys Hunt. Subscribing to the blogs of book reviewers like Sarah Mackenzie and Cathy Duffy also can be helpful.

After you've read a book or a chapter of a book, talk with your child or grandchild about the biblical truths it contains. Even books that are not overtly Christian can be useful tools for communicating Scriptural truths like perseverance, integrity, love, truth, and faith.

Use books as springboards for discussions about the reality of our sinful nature, our need for a Savior, and the lies of

contemporary culture (e.g., truth is what one experiences, every type of behavior should be tolerated, and happiness is the goal of life). Use age-appropriate language when examining these subjects.

Grandparents especially have a unique God-designed role to pass a heritage of faith on to future generations. All over the country, God is raising up movements to encourage and equip grandparents to be missionaries of the gospel to their grandchildren. For more on this subject, I recommend the book *Grandparenting: Strengthening Your Family and Passing on Your Faith* by Dr. Josh Mulvihill. Christianguardparenting.com offers resources such as blogs, podcasts, and events to help you build healthy families equipped to swim strongly against the tide of our culture.

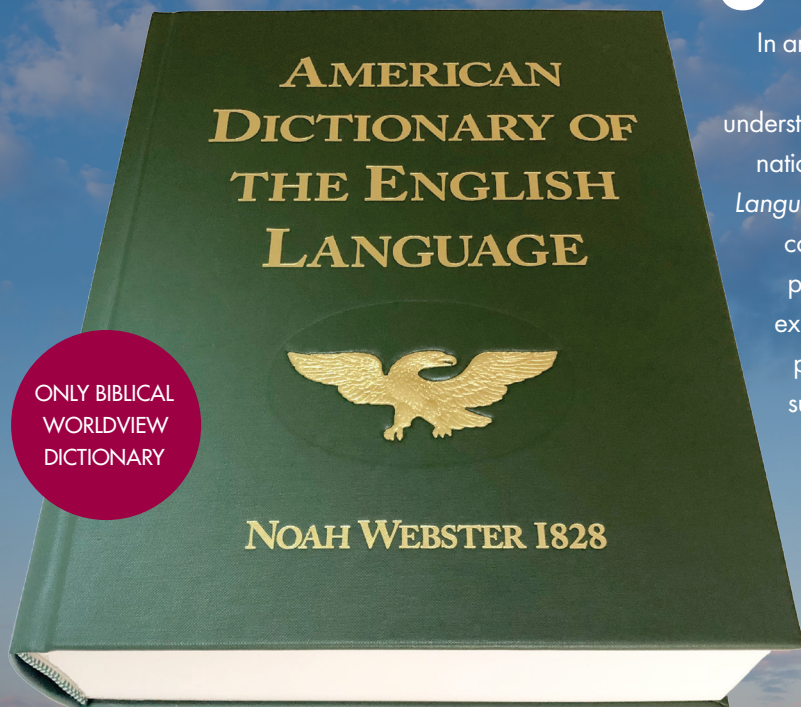
May we as parents and grandparents be diligent about living out the following words of Psalm 78:4: "We will not hide these truths from our children; we will tell the next generation about the glorious deeds of the LORD, about his power and his mighty wonders." ■

Michael James Dowling is a Christian grandparent and the author of *Frog's Rainy-Day Story and Other Fables*, which his wife, Sarah Buell Dowling, illustrated (FrogsRainyDayStory.com). Michael and Sarah live in Nashville, Tennessee.

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