

Dear Friends in Christ,

One thing that has been extremely helpful in how I think about the world is the three estates. If you'd like, you could also use the words fortresses or stations in place of estates, as the only time we use the word estate is when we're talking about a sale or a tax. Whatever you call it, God has established all three. Those three estates are family, church, and government.

The newsletter articles for three months will be about the three estates. Why? Because the problem in the world is a rebellion against these three estates that God has established. The more we understand what God has established and how sinful humans constantly seek to undermine it, the better off we will be, and the better prepared we will be to uphold what God has established. If we focus on these three stations and how God wants us to live in all three, we'll have stronger families, congregations, and communities. Of course we'll always be ravaged by sin until the second coming, so I'm not advocating for a utopia. But I am saying let's uphold what God has established for the sake of our salvation and for the sake of our children's and grandchildren's salvation. If we don't fight for the three estates, then nobody else will and it'll all be taken away from us.

This month we'll focus on the first estate - the family. God established the family in the Garden of Eden; that is to say, He established it in paradise. This is clarifying - marriage does not "belong" to the church or the government, but it is its own estate, established by God Himself.

The Greek word for household is oikos, which you might recognize as a yogurt brand. What's lesser known is that the word economy comes from this same word - oikonomia. The point is that the household is responsible for a lot, but we often shirk the responsibility. The government isn't responsible for the economy, although we treat it that way. God has given families the responsibility to "make a living." This was far more apparent when a majority of people lived on a farm.

The household is responsible for a lot, and what's most relevant to our discussion here is education. The family is the estate in charge of that, not the church, and most certainly not the government. This is where the tension is. We've outsourced educating our kids to the other estates, and it's reaping really bad results.

The primary place for kids to learn about the Bible is at home, not at Sunday School or even confirmation. Yes, they will learn something there, too. But confirmation goes so much better if the kids know the basic stories. (Practical advice - use Arch books and use them often.) If the only time children are getting told about the Bible is at church, then we're losing.

This also applies to you if you don't have children; if the only time you're getting fed God's Word is Sunday morning, it's a really stark, uphill battle. Think about the amount of hours you encounter worldly doctrines that go against Christ's teaching (hint - I work at church and the answer is too many hours) and compare that to how many hours you spend in God's Word. If you want a reading plan, I'll give you one. The standard Christian diet is praying the Psalms and reading a couple chapters of Scripture every day. Portals of Prayer can most certainly be a part of a healthy diet.

The primary place for education isn't at school. It's at home. Perhaps this isn't as hard to sell to you now as you see the current battles happening in our schools. And the primary mode of education is imitation. What you care about is what your children will end up caring about. If you don't show up to church (and the data shows it's especially important for dad to show), then don't expect your kids to show up.

I know many of you are empty nesters or never had children; maybe you feel a little regret, and there's nothing you can do about it now. Repent and believe the Gospel! Jesus died for those sins, too.

Part of repentance moving forward is supporting the first estate the best we can. Pray for families. Help them; don't stare down children crying at church. I love children crying at church; it's better than older members crying there.

God designed the family as a fortress, so let's uphold it. If you didn't notice, the family is under constant attack. There's not a better time to return to God's Word and see what He offers families and says about them (it happens to be a lot). Next month we'll talk about the second estate, the church. I suppose talking about church is to be expected in church newsletters. To make you pay attention, maybe I'll say something outlandish. Stay tuned.

In Christ,

Pastor Reber