

Lessons from the Loons



By Alane Waters

RECENTLY we were on a family campout enjoying a few of the glorious summer days we appreciate here in Montana. We were at one of our favorite spots that has peaceful privacy, a beautiful blue, tranquil lake, and gorgeous mountain vistas. As in years past, we enjoyed canoeing around the lake, to the island, and down the various fingers of the lake. One of the highlights is hearing and seeing the family of loons that make this spot their summer home.

But on this weekend we observed something that we had not been aware of in past years. This little family of loons—a father, mother and one chick—were swimming around the lake, especially near to the end where we were camping. It seemed that not only did we hear the usual ong of the loons at dawn and dusk, but often throughout the day. We also noticed as we observed them from our canoe, that they were not only watchful of us, but of a family of bald eagles—a father, mother, and two nearly full sized, yet immature young. We watched how the moment that one of the eagles would fly out of a tree over the lake the father loon gave a warning cry. Immediately the mother and baby loon, itself nearly half grown, were fully alert and attentive to the father loon. He was always a distance away from the mother and the young loon, often increasing his distance as the danger of the predator eagle approached. He was trying to be a decoy away from his family. Throughout the day we heard the warning signal given, and on a couple of occasions it was with such urgency that we ran to the shore from our tent site to watch an incredible episode of the male eagle trying to attack the father loon. At the instant we thought the eagle's talons would pierce the loon, he dove under the water with precise calculation and the eagle flew back “empty handed”. All the risks the father loon took were to spare his family from the predator.

Over the weekend, we observed this loon family had no rest. Constantly throughout the day the warning cry was echoing and with each cry we saw the eagle taking flight over the lake. What un-wearying vigilance and watchfulness! We found ourselves wanting to give the loon family a break, and protect them, but this could not be. It had to be their own personal involvement, especially on the part of the father and then the mother, who at times also gave specific calls to her young. With persevering diligence the father and mother worked together to protect their chick from harm and danger. We also noted that with each command from the mother and

father the young loon had complete obedience. If he had not, he would have been a meal for the eagles. What a lesson it was for us! The message was clear and pointed.

This is the privilege and responsibility God has given us as parents for our children. Peter understood this need of watchfulness and vigilance from his own experience and challenges us in I Peter 5:8: “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.” Or we could say as a preying eagle seeking whom he may devour.

So, what are we doing as parents? Are we caught up with all the busyness of life, unaware of the temptations and dangers that are preying on our children? Are we content that we are doing as good as any of the other families in the church, so why be so particular? Are we blind to the devil’s attacks on our young? Or are we, like the adult loons, **constantly watchful of any danger** and ready and willing to give the call to protect our young from becoming a victim of the foe?

Many years ago, my husband, Tom, and I made a commitment to the Lord, to each other, and to our children that they would be our first priority under God for their spiritual, physical, and character development. This commitment has been an ongoing challenge to us through the years as we have raised our children. There have been times when separation from wrong, misleading association was necessary to protect them. We have been accused of being over-protective, too strict, and imbalanced. These strong accusations have at times shaken us, and also have driven us to seek the Lord and see what He has to say in His Word about such associations. As we have been willing to set God’s Word as our standard and foundation over the years, we have seen the blessing of being willing to honor Him and our children above the accusations of others and the pulls of our flesh wanting to fit in with other’s expectations of us. But we must realize that if we must protect against unprofitable association we must replace with positive ones. That begins with us as **parents making time** for our children and young people.

We have not gone through parenting flawlessly. We have at times failed to be vigilant and have also experienced the painful results of a moment of carelessness. But we can learn from our mistakes, confess and repent to our tender Saviour and our children, and again be more determined to engage in the watchcare necessary for our families.

There have been times when the danger to our children lies within our own hearts through impatience and irritation, or perhaps in pampering and coddling. When we see the effects of our weaknesses on our children, it is a wake up call to us that the change must come in our hearts. As we are willing to let the Lord reveal the weaknesses in our own hearts especially as they affect our children, and ask Him to change us, He will answer prayers and strengthen us to face our weaknesses and gain the victory over them in His power. I am often encouraged that His grace (power) is sufficient for any of my problems and His strength is made perfect in my weakness (II Corinthians 12:9). That means that there is no weakness that I have, no problem I encounter that is not conquerable in Him. As I have believed this and taken Him at His word I have continued to find victories in my life personally, as a wife, and as a mother. I have experienced Him change my feelings, my attitudes, and my opinions and give me better thoughts, words, and expressions that bring peace and joy to my heart and in my home with my husband and children.

So whether the predator is from outside our homes or in our own hearts, God has promised that He will enable us to overcome every temptation and every trial. We can cooperate with Him to be the watchful parents we need to be to raise our young in safety and prepare them for their future in Christ, both in this world and in the world to come!