

### Spiritual Fathering Session 3

### A Further Biblical Basis for Responsibilities in the Home

“Whatever a man feels to be of vital importance, he endeavors to set it before his family.” (Ernst Wilhelm Hengstenberg)

“Listen, oh my people, to my instruction! Incline your ears to the words of my mouth! 2I will open my mouth in a parable. I will utter dark sayings of old, 3Which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us. 4We will not conceal them from **their children**, but tell to **the generation to come** the praises of the Lord, and His strength and His wondrous works that He has done. 5For He established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel, which He commanded **our fathers** that they should teach them to **their children**, 6That **the generation to come** might know, even **the children yet to be born**, that they may arise and tell them to **their children**, 7That they should put their confidence in God and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments, 8And **not be like their fathers**, a stubborn and rebellious generation, a generation that **did not prepare its heart** And whose spirit was not faithful to God.” (Psalm 78:1-8, NASU)

Much of what follows is especially applicable to grandfathers, as well as fathers.

#### **The Man’s Responsibility to His Children: Rehearse God’s Mighty Acts**

##### **This psalm is a maskil: a psalm to give instruction.**

We ignore the instruction at our own peril.

Note the words “incline your ears” and “listen” in verse 1. This is similar to “give ear” and “consider” in Psalm 5:1. Imperatives R used both in commands from God 2 man, commands from man 2 man, & urgent prayers from man 2 God.

**Psalm 5:1** Give ear to my words, O LORD, Consider my groaning.

The thought is the same.

In the same way that we sometimes want to take hold of God’s coattails and plead loudly for His divine attentions, so the psalmist takes us by the shoulders, looks us in the eye and shakes us firmly saying, “You must, for your own sake, listen to what I am saying.”

In Psalm 78, we are told to teach our children.

To teach them God’s commands and God’s ways is our highest service to them.

To fail to do so would be the highest form of neglect.

Note, in verse 4, it says, “We will not hide [His deeds] from our children.”

**To not pass on the wonderful works of God is tantamount to hiding them from our children.**

**It is a more neglectful act than if we had deliberately withheld their inheritance.**

In fact, this *is* their spiritual heritage!

**Notice that rehearsing the mighty deeds of God encourages obedience (verse 7).**

**Commandments alone are not enough.**

**Hearing of how God acted on behalf of His obedient people literally inspires obedience.**

We live in a generation that is becoming increasingly ignorant of the commands of God, but those who do know the commands of God are increasingly unmotivated.

We must pass on God’s mighty works to the next generation.

**Rehearsing the mighty deeds of God builds character. (verse 7)**

The psalmist is telling us to teach our children:

**Put your hope in God during difficult times,**

**not forgetting the things He has done for us in trying circumstances before.**

Here, fathers are being told to recount God's mighty deeds,

in order to build into his children the character that responds in faith under duress.

**It is the father's responsibility to catalogue and communicate God's mighty deeds.**

This can include: His deeds in scrip, in the local church, in relation to the immediate family and each individual within the family.

**This psalm says that rehearsing the mighty deeds of God will correct generational sin (verse 8), at least when it comes to stubbornness and rebellion.**

We live in a time when stubbornness and rebellion nearly always go unchecked by parents.

Here, we have laid down before us a remedy.

Parents need not stand by helplessly.

God shows us the way out but, unfortunately, **we are pointing the finger in the wrong direction.**

This is not the fault of public schools that don't allow prayer.

It is not the fault of a liberal supreme court,

**it is the fault of clueless and derelict Christian fathers.**

It is far more convenient to blame the world for our own problems,

*but doing so has not alleviated our present condition.* (randall)

We are to recount His wonderful works.

Question: How many of us have shared our testimony with our children?

**Verse 1 says that rehearsing the mighty deeds of God is a law**

—something that has the same type of authority as a law handed down from God Himself.

**Verse 5 says that teaching our children is a command,** not just a good thing to do.

**Verse 7 puts two things in opposition: Forgetting the works of God and keeping His commandments.**

If you do one, you will not do the other.

This implies that our children will need reminding, not of His commands, but of His works.

**As we rehearse His works,**

**they will learn that they can trust God and not have to break His law to get their needs met.**

What does "Thou shalt not steal" teach?

That God will meet our needs, therefore we will not have to steal in order to meet our own needs.

(Same with adultery, etc.)

When we rehearse all the ways that God has met our needs,

stealing will be seen as an idiotic act practiced only by those who have not seen God act on their behalf.

Lying will be viewed the same way.

All the commands of God make sense in the context of His wonderful acts on behalf of His people.

So, when they are caught lying, the thought is, "Hey, you don't have to lie! It's totally unnecessary!"

**Verse 8 says that we will respond in rebellion or in trust.**

In the mind of the young, nothing infuses trust in God like hearing stories of God's provision from their parents. At the same time, nothing diffuses a spirit of rebellion like hearing such accounts of God's faithfulness.

**How many generations are mentioned in verses 5-6? Four.**  
**Our work is not done until our children teach their children.**

God's acts of deliverance are effective for each generation, not just one.

They are not to be hoarded. They are meant to be passed on.

**Deuteronomy 4:9 says that we are to not only teach our sons, but our grandsons, as well:**

"Only give heed to yourself and keep your soul diligently, so that you do not forget the things which your eyes have seen and they do not depart from your heart all the days of your life, but make them known to your sons and your grandsons." (NASU)

*This assumes living in close enough proximity so that this can be possible. (randall)*

### **The Power of Symbolism**

**Symbolism is a powerful way to teach.**

**It transcends the event, itself, lasting long after the event is over.**

**As it is repeated over and over, the lesson is reinforced.**

**But symbolism is only powerful when it is interpreted.**

Note especially the interpreting role of the father:

7 "Unleavened bread shall be eaten throughout the seven days; and nothing leavened shall be seen among you, nor shall any leaven be seen among you in all your borders. 8 You shall tell your son on that day, saying, 'It is because of what the LORD did for me when I came out of Egypt.' " (Exodus 13:7-16)

"Now when the LORD brings you to the land of the Canaanite, as He swore to you and to your fathers, and gives it to you, 12 you shall devote to the LORD the first offspring of every womb, and the first offspring of every beast that you own; the males belong to the LORD.... And it shall be when your son asks you in time to come, saying, 'What is this?' then you shall say to him, 'With a powerful hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt, from the house of slavery. 15 It came about, when Pharaoh was stubborn about letting us go, that the LORD killed every firstborn in the land of Egypt, both the firstborn of man and the firstborn of beast. Therefore, I sacrifice to the LORD the males, the first offspring of every womb....' " (Exodus 13:7-8, 11-12, 15, NASU)

"And when your children say to you, 'What does this rite mean to you?' you shall say, 'It is a Passover sacrifice to the Lord who passed over the houses of the sons of Israel in Egypt when He smote the Egyptians, but spared our homes.'" (Exodus 12:26-27, NASU)

The father led the Passover service in Israelite society, at home.

**He not only led it, he interpreted the meaning of it to his children.**

Feel free to set up symbols in your home. Example:

God brings your family through a difficult time (financial, emotional, etc.) You find a medium-sized rock, have the children paint it and write a Scripture verse on it that reminds everyone of what a great God we have. Then, over the years, when guests come over, the children can be taught to explain to guests what that rock stands for.

**The Man's Responsibility to His Children: Dedicate**

Train up a child in the way he should go. Even when he is old he will not depart from it. (Proverbs 22:6)

The Hebrew word for "train up" is "chanak," which means to "dedicate" a child in the way he should go. Deut 20:5 says, "Who is the man who has built a new house and has not dedicated it?" and 2 Chron 7:5 says, "The king and all the people dedicated the house of God." This is a stronger term than "train up."

**Here is a biblical foundation for baby dedication, but it is more than a mere ceremony. It is the setting aside of that child for the purposes of God.**

Baby dedications in a church service frequently have so many distractions that the meaning can be lost. It might be a good idea to have a similar prayer of dedication for use at home, when the child is sleeping. Perhaps the pastor or children's minister could come to the home, if possible and pray with the parents, as they set the child apart for God's purposes in the home environment, where the child will be more comfortable (and more likely to be resting!) It would be very meaningful for the child if the whole thing were videotaped, so that the child could have that as a lasting memory of his/her parents' love, and of God's plan for him/her from the beginning. You may want to ask your child if he/she would like to be privately re-dedicated.

**Dedication requires more than a one-time event. It requires consistent, godly training.**

**Three children dedicated from birth in scripture (other than Jesus): Samson, Samuel, John the Baptist.**

Question: Which one did the worst? Which one did the best?

**Assignment: Check out which father figure was the godliest**

**(Manoah, in Judges 13-14, Eli in 1 Samuel 1-4, and Zacharias in Luke 1), and then compare the boys.**

In the first two cases, God's word came to the mother, not the father.

This is an indication that they were more receptive to God's message than the boys' fathers were.

In John's case, God's message came to the father.

Lesson: It is not enough to dedicate your child to God as a one-time event, as important as that is.

That merely sets him apart.

The godly upbringing that only a father can provide will ensure that he will not depart from the way he should go. Only this ensures success.

**The Man's Responsibility to His Entire Family: Dedicate**

Listen to this verse.

<sup>NAU</sup> **Joshua 24:15** "If it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."

In Josh 24:15, Joshua is not presenting a scenario where people are deciding between serving Yahweh or not.

**The choice is whether to serve Yahweh or the gods of the culture.**

We all serve someone or something.

Who we will serve is the only issue.

Joshua is saying that, though others in the cong of the "people of God" may decide 2 serve the gods of his day, he would decide for his family who they would serve.

As the head of the household goes, so goes the family.

**Question: What are some of the "gods" that church people often wind up serving?**

This could easily be a public declaration before the people of God, much like Joshua's was.  
(The way Brad did it, spelling out what it means to serve the Lord)

I encourage you to come forward Sunday with your family,  
telling the church that you have decided that you will be a family that serves the Lord.

Talk with your family first.

Ask that the pastor or I pray a prayer of dedication over you in front of the congregation.

**Bring your wives along next week.**

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