

The Family – God’s Way

(Adapted from *Path to Righteousness* by Linda Poitras)

“For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him”
(Genesis 18:19).

Introduction

From the first time God made a covenant with man, it has been His priority that fathers lead their children to follow Him.

His law, given to Moses on Mt. Sinai, had at the heart, a plan for families: fathers were to be constantly training their children in God’s ways. They did not just tell them about God – they showed them. It was not just an occasional talk or visit to church. It was a continuous thing, designed by God as a constant reminder of how He intended to pass along His covenant and our faith in Him.

“Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates” (Deuteronomy 6:4-9).

This was God’s specific plan for making sure the children of Israel never forgot who delivered them from Egypt. He meant for the fathers to always tell the children, and to live according to God’s law so they would see God’s plan in action.

However, it did not happen that way. The fathers did not obey God’s law. They did not continue to tell their children, and the result was the same as it is today: their children forgot who God was, and did not follow Him.

After the death of Joshua, the Bible says this: *“And also all that generation were gathered unto their fathers; and there arose another generation after them, which knew not the Lord, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel”* (Judges 2:10).

Why did this new generation not know the Lord and the things He had done for them? Because their parents had not taught them. There were no written history books, nor even any Bibles to read to find information about what had taken place in Egypt. There was only the experience of those who had been there, who had actually walked in the wilderness and seen the hand of

God as He gave the land of Canaan to them. They did not share this with their children, and obviously the children did not have their own experience with God. Whose job is it to teach the children?

Husbands Are the Head of the Family

As much as men love to declare themselves the “stronger” vessel, they are not very quick to accept their God-given responsibility in the home. In most cultures and societies of the world, men are the strong-silent type, working hard to provide for the necessities of life, but seen very little in the home. They are too busy to spend time with the family, because they must provide the means for doctor bills, food, education, and a place to live. This is not God’s complete plan. We have taken the Scripture that teaches the father to care for his family (1 Timothy 5:8) to mean that he should concern himself only with the physical aspects of his family’s need.

God Ordained – The family is the most basic unit in society. Someone has to lead. God chose the man to be the leader, and He called him the “head.” *“For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body”* (Ephesians 5:23).

“God has given us the authority to guide, guard, and govern – direct, protect, and correct. In the home, the man is to be prophet, priest, and king – he is to nourish, cherish, and admonish.” – T. F.

God as Example – As head, the man is not to suppress and oppress. His example is Christ, so the husband has no excuse for not knowing how he should treat his wife and family. *“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it...So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself”* (Ephesians 5:25, 28). The fifth chapter of Ephesians gives a clear picture of the type of love a husband is supposed to have for his wife. A real “head” (husband) will never be guilty of treating his wife in a way that would hurt or demean her. She too has a definite place in God’s plan for the family.

Wives Submit to Their Husbands

“I have never seen a problem with a submissive wife when she is loved by her husband in the same way Christ loves the church.” – Dr. Leman Strauss

“Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord” (Ephesians 5:22). This submission is not talking about a type of slavery, or suppression by a man. God has a distinct purpose for the woman in relation to her home and family.

“...as unto the Lord” – A wife’s submissiveness to her husband is seen by God as an actual part of her obedience to Jesus (*The Full Life Study Bible*, p. 1857, note on Ephesians 5:22).

Responsibilities include love for:

📖 Husbands – Paul wrote to Titus with instructions for the aged women: *“That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands...”* (Titus 2:4). This love includes their attitudes toward their family. *Webster’s Encyclopedic Dictionary* gives the definitions of these attitudes:

- Chaste – innocent of immoral sexual activity
- Discreet – able to keep silent about matters where prudence requires it
- Keepers at home – taking care of the needs at home
- Good – morally excellent, virtuous, well behaved, dutiful, kind
- Obedient to their own husbands – willing to submit to their chosen “head”

Why were these attitudes important? Titus 2:5 says: *“...that the word of God be not blasphemed.”* The Old Testament has many references to this “blasphemy,” and both Isaiah (Isaiah 52:5) and Ezekiel (Ezekiel 36:20) wrote of it and reprimanded the children of Israel for their actions.

The most graphic illustration of this is found in 2 Samuel 12. Here David is confronted by the prophet Nathan for his sin with Bathsheba, and his murder of her husband. Nathan told David that he had *“despised (made of little account) the commandment of the Lord”* (2 Samuel 12:9). This had given the nations round about a reason to talk. They now had ammunition whereby they could accuse the king of God’s chosen people of practicing some of their sins.

“No amount of success in the ministry can compensate for failure in the home.” – T. F. Tenney

David broke at least two of the Ten Commandments (murder and adultery – Exodus 20:13-14), with no regard to any of the consequences. Bathsheba lost her husband and child as a result of her failure to love her husband and live by the correct attitudes of a godly wife. Both David and Bathsheba paid a terrible price for their sin.

God said He would bring three different things on David in punishment: *“I will raise up evil against thee; I will take thy wives before thine eyes; I will do this thing before all Israel; Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die”* (2 Samuel 12:11,14).

Until his death, David was an example of God’s judgment on a spiritual leader and father who had greatly sinned. *“Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house; because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife”* (2 Samuel 12:10).

📖 Children – *“...to love their children”* (Titus 2:4). It has always been the duty and joy of mothers to love their children. This love is best shown in her work with the father to train her children properly in the things of God (Proverbs 1:8-9; 1 Timothy 5:10). Ezekiel makes it a bit plainer when he speaks to the nation of Israel and says: *“Behold, every one that useth*

proverbs shall use this proverb against thee, saying, As is the mother, so is her daughter” (Ezekiel 16:44). The sins committed in Israel by the mothers would be repeated in the lives of their daughters. What a message to us to be very careful with the way we live before our children.

“Guide older women into lives of reverence so they end up as neither gossips nor drunks, but models of goodness. By looking at them, the younger women will know how to love their husbands and children, be virtuous and pure, keep a good house, be good wives. We don’t want anyone looking down on God’s Message because of their behavior”
(Titus 2:3-5, *The Message*).

Children Obey Their Parents

This commandment from the Lord lets us know what the children are supposed to do. Their task is obedience. However, it makes a big difference what their parents are asking them to do. It is supposed to be God’s Word, will, and way. Sadly, many times parents do not ask children to obey God or His Word. Children get to follow their own selfish desires, and all members of the family are unhappy and in distress. But look what God has promised to children who follow His plan: *“Children, obey your parents in the Lord; for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth”* (Ephesians 6:1-3).

- 📖 ***“...That it may be well with thee...”*** Here, God is promising that we will be well taken care of.
- 📖 ***“...and thou mayest live long on the earth.”*** We are promised long life for the honor we give our parents.

When God gave Moses the Ten Commandments, He included this part because it was a special blessing. But there was a string attached. They were not only to obey, they were to teach these laws and promises to their children, thus forming the unbroken chain of a continuing pattern of walking in God’s way (Deuteronomy 4:9).

The “Buck” Stops Here!

This American expression means that the one at the top gets the credit or blame, depending on the result. As the head of the family, fathers must answer for the outcome of the lives of their children.

God has *always* had a plan for every part of our lives. He will not force us to follow it, but He will keep His Word. He will send His just punishment on those who do not obey His Word and way. This places a tremendous responsibility on the father. Children may *listen* to what you say, but they will *become* what you are.

When Abraham told Sarah to say she was his sister, did he ever dream that one day Isaac would commit the same sin with his wife, Rebekah? This seed of deceit sown in Isaac's life was reproduced in the life of Jacob. What a price Jacob paid for his deceit! First his father-in-law deceived him about the wife of his choice, and then his sons continued the same pattern begun many years before in their great grandfather, Abraham. Joseph was also Jacob's son, but somehow Joseph learned a lesson about reaping what you sow. He refused to follow in the pattern of deceit. As a result, he was blessed abundantly and used by God in a mighty way.

Fathers, be careful of the seeds you sow in the lives of your children. God has given you a place, and no matter what you think, or how much pressure is placed on you by this world, you are still the "head" of the home. All fathers will give an account for their actions toward their children; a reckoning day will come. Remember David? God forgave him, but oh, what a harvest of sorrow he did reap! The next chapter after the prophet Nathan gave David God's pronouncement of judgment on his house, his family troubles began. 2 Samuel 13 tells the sad story of incest and murder among David's children.

Let us choose to follow God's plan for our family: a godly father leading the way; a submissive and God-fearing mother supporting him in love; and well-behaved, obedient children who are taught the ways of the Lord following behind.

"Blessed is every one that feareth the Lord; that walketh in His ways. For thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands: Happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee"
(Psalm 100:1-2).

Study Questions

1. Write the Scripture passage that is God's specific plan for making sure the children of Israel never forgot who delivered them from Egypt. _____

2. Write out Joshua 2:10. Explain what this verse means to the new generation of Israel.
