



Global College of Ministry

EQUIP

**The Christian & the
Next Generation**

Passing the Faith Along

“For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call”

(Acts 2:39).

“...And there arose another generation after them, which knew not the Lord...”

(Judges 2:10).

Children are like an empty book - What are you writing on their hearts?

“**P**assing the faith along” to our children is so important that it is specifically mentioned in the first sermon ever preached to the New Testament Church. As Peter exposes the plan of salvation and opens the door to the kingdom, he also adds that it is for “...unto you, and to your children...” (Acts 2:39).

Many times in the church, the children are neglected and priority is given to reaching adults. One day the disciples of Jesus wanted to neglect the children (infants), and rebuked the parents for bringing them to Jesus. Jesus had a different mind.

“Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God” (Luke 18:16).

Children are our interns or apprentices. In the Bible, male children were trained by their fathers and usually followed the occupation of their father. If Father was a carpenter then the son also became a carpenter. In the spiritual sense, our children are also apprentices. They

learn by the “caught it” method rather than the “taught it” method. They learn by watching us. What are you teaching your children about living for God and serving Him?

“You may not be able to do anything about your
ANCESTORS but you can do something
about your DESCENDANTS.”

Author Unknown

John Maxwell says that we “teach what we know but reproduce what we are.” It is a scriptural principle that “everything reproduces after its own kind.” Don’t allow anything to be in your life that you don’t want reproduced in your children’s lives.

Passing the Faith Along; A Success Story

We have already been introduced to Paul's adopted son, Timothy. We have learned that his mother was a believer but his father was an unbeliever. In the absence of a believing father this mother raised Timothy in the truth of God's Word.

Paul illustrated the principle of passing the faith along when he wrote, "When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also" (2 Timothy 1:5).

How can we be so sure that they passed the faith along? "But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned...And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 3:14-15).

Passing the Wrong Thing Along

One proverb says, "The fruit never falls very far from the tree." It could also be restated, "Like father; like son."

Mothers are not left out from passing the faith along either.

"Behold, every one that useth proverbs shall use this proverb against thee, saying, As is the mother, so is her daughter" (Ezekiel 16:44).

- ❑ In **Genesis 12** Abraham was deceitful when communicating with the men of Egypt. He told them, "**She is my sister.**" He also had instructed Sarai to be deceitful and tell them that she was Abraham's sister.
- ❑ In **Genesis 26** Abraham's promised son, Isaac says to the people concerning his wife, "**She is my sister.**"
- ❑ In **Genesis 27** Isaac's son, Jacob deceived him on his deathbed.
- ❑ In **Genesis 37** Jacob's sons, after selling Joseph into slavery reported to their father, "**...This have we found; know whether it by thy son's coat or no**" (**Genesis 37:32**).

⇒ Jacob's Sons	Sons
⇒ Jacob	Father
⇒ Isaac	Grandfather
⇒ Abraham	Great Grandfather

Abraham's deceit reproduced itself through **four** generations. This story is repeated many times in Scripture. Consider Eli, the man of God and his failure to train his sons but success in training Samuel. What was the problem that David had? What problem did his son, Solomon have? It is possible for Christianity to be wiped out of a family within one generation. How? Just fail to teach the truth to your children.

Paul told Timothy “But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience” (2 Timothy 3:10).

Basically Paul was saying, “You have observed me. You have watched me.” Children carefully observe you. What do they see?

When God wanted to destroy the sinful cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, He said, “Shall I hide from Abraham what I’m going to do? I will tell him my secret.” Why?

“For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord...” (Genesis 18:19).

Father Failures

This is quite a contrast with Abraham’s nephew Lot. When visited by two angels, Lot couldn’t get his wife to cook them a meal, and was willing to give his daughters to a group of homosexuals pounding on his door. Lot’s wife looked back in their escape (longing for the worldly things of the city.) The girls had such a low moral lifestyle that they got their father drunk and then slept with him. “Lot remains an example of a believing father whose faith and commitment to God were enough to save himself, but not enough to save his family.” (Full Life Study Bible, Page 36)

Be Careful How You Pass the Baton

A father’s most important job is to pass his faith to his children. James Dobson likens this mission to a three-man relay race. The father runs a lap around the track. He is carrying the baton, which is the gospel. At the right moment he gives the baton to his son, who begins the journey around the track. Then the son will eventually have to place the baton into the hands of his own children. “Relay races are won or lost in the transfer of the baton.” Passing the baton has lost many a race because it was never done; or never done right. We must place the baton (gospel, what we believe) safely into the hands and hearts of our children.

Fathers and Snakes

As fathers we should not be like the (rattle) snake. After involving in the mating act the male takes off, and is never seen again. The impregnated female finally gives birth to the baby snakes and takes off; never to be seen again. The babies are on their own from that moment forward.

Teachings From An Orange Tree

Kofi climbed up into an orange tree to steal an orange. The owner of the tree rushed out and caught the boy, and yelled, "I'm going to tell your father."

The boy answered back, "Go ahead. He's in the other tree."

Another story is told of a father that was stealing an orange out of a tree and his son was watching. The boy cautioned his father, "Daddy. You shouldn't do that. It is stealing."

The father consoled the boy saying, "It's alright. No one is watching."

To which the boy answered, "But Daddy, God is watching you."

"It is a wonderful heritage to have an honest father" (Proverbs 20:7 TLB).

In both of these cases the family leader, the Father, was setting a very poor example. Examples like these, and neglect of leadership responsibilities in the home, provide an explanation of why crime and corruption is at an all time high in many countries.

"Children are more likely to follow your feet than your lips."

We lead by example. We are to be a reflection of Jesus Christ. Paul said, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ" (1 Corinthians 11:1).

'Twas the Sheep, Not a Lamb

'Twas the SHEEP, not a lamb, that strayed away
In the parable Jesus told
A GROWN-UP SHEEP that had gone astray
From the ninety and nine in the fold.

Out on the hillside, out in the cold,
'Twas a SHEEP the Good Shepherd sought:
And back to the flock, safe into the fold,
"Twas the sheep the Good Shepherd brought.

And why for the SHEEP, should we earnestly long,
And earnestly hope and pray?
Because there is danger...if the sheep go wrong,
They may lead the lambs astray.

For the lambs will follow the SHEEP, you know,
Wherever the SHEEP may stray
When the SHEEP go wrong, it will not be long,
Till the lambs are as wrong as they.

And so with the sheep we earnestly plead
For the sake of the Lambs today
If the lambs are lost...what a terrible cost..
Some SHEEP will have to pay!

(Minnie Lee Bovender)

Study Questions

1. According to the Book of Acts how do we know that "passing the faith" along to our children is important? _____

2. Write out the verse that mentions "...and to your children..." _____

3. What did Jesus say to his disciples in Luke 18:16? _____

4. What method do children usually learn by? _____
5. What did John Maxwell say about what we teach and reproduce? _____

6. What is the Scriptural principle concerning reproduction? _____

7. Using 2 Timothy 1:5 illustrate the point of "passing the faith along." _____

8. How can we be sure that they "passed the faith along" to Timothy? _____

9. What is a proverb given in the lesson that indicates "Like father, like son."? _____

10. Can you think of one cultural proverb in your society that talks about passing what we know on to the next generation? What is it? _____

11. Quote a Scripture that would indicate "Like mother, like daughter." _____

12. Explain the story from Genesis of how the bad character of a father was passed on to the next generation(s). _____

13. What problem did David have that his son, Solomon, also had? _____

14. According to the Full Life Study Bible, Lot is an example of what? _____

15. Explain how the father's mission is likened to a three-man relay race: _____

16. How are relay races won or lost? _____

17. According to Proverbs 20:7 what is a wonderful heritage? _____

It's Time To Think

1. What are some of the bad characteristics in your life that you don't want passed on to your children?
2. What are some creative ways that you can teach your children concerning the Word of God?

A Look at Three Generations

“Save yourselves from this generation that has gone astray!” (Acts 2:40, *NLT*).

Bruce Wilkinson teaches on “The Three Chairs,” representing a three-generation principle. This concept is expanded in his book, *First Hand Faith*, and has deep implications for Christians. Wilkinson believes these generational insights from Scripture are universal truths. They exist for all time and all people. His teachings serve as the basis for this lesson and a strong warning against becoming a generation that has gone astray.

It is possible for dynamic churches to shift from godliness to godlessness, from vibrant faith to empty faith. When a church moves toward the first generation, it is called a red-hot, on fire for God, revival church. But as a church moves into the third generation, it becomes a liberal lukewarm, cold church. Worse yet—*Ichabod*—“the glory of the Lord has departed” could be written over its door.

First Generation **The Life of Joshua** ***Commitment***

- They knew God.
- They had first-hand faith.
- They had the works of God in their midst and saw tremendous miracles.
- They knew what they believed and understood why they believed it.
- They served God.
- They did what was right in God’s eyes.

“Now therefore fear the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the LORD. And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD” (Joshua 24:14-15).

Second Generation **The Elders that Outlived Joshua** ***Compromise***

- They knew about God.
- They had second-hand faith.
- They did not have the works of God, but they had seen and heard about them.

- They knew what they believed, but did not understand why they believed it. They were not committed to it and wanted to try other things.
- They served the God of their fathers, but lacked a personal relationship.

“And the people served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the LORD, that he did for Israel” (Judges 2:7). (See also see Joshua 24:31.)

Arnold Cook said, “The second generation holds its convictions less fervently than pioneers...With each succeeding generation, isolation from the world becomes more difficult.”

Curtis Young in the *Apostolic World Report* (August-September 2001) wrote, “History is replete with evidence that people and churches change. Sometimes those changes remove the heart and soul of the church so that the church is actually dead even though the social machinery continues to operate. The church in Sardis is a good example. Sardis existed on past glory, while claiming to be alive. The verdict of God was that it was dead.” (See Revelation 3:1.)

He continues, “It is possible to predict the future of a movement by its direction. Many are therefore concerned because they see men of influence who appear to be moving or drifting toward compromise where the Oneness of God is a non-issue, and where matters of holiness and separation are dismissed as bondage...To lose any part of the Apostolic message or any of its distinguishing characteristics would be the ultimate compromise. The greater tragedy for the church is not death but compromise. In fact, death is preferable to compromise. But we do not have to chose between a dead church and a compromising church...Instead of giving heed to the voice of compromise that beckons us...let us follow the admonition of the scripture which tells us to, ‘earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints’” (Jude 3).

The second generation failed. They knew the landmarks were there, but had forgotten their purpose.

<p><i>Third Generation</i> The Generation that Did Not Know <i>Confusion</i></p>

- They did not know God. (Wilkinson calls this the “Conflict” or “Chaos” generation.)
- They did not know the works and wonders of God.
- They had no faith—a faithless, godless generation.
- They grew up in an environment where the people had moved away from God.
- They did not know what to believe.
- They did evil in the sight of the Lord.
- They served other gods.

Why do you think there arose a generation that did not know the Lord? Parents never instilled truth in them or worse, never told them.

Albert Outler (as quoted in *Evangelism for a Changing World*) said, “It is as if, once upon a time, an earlier generation understood it all and then forgot to tell their children—who never asked.”

“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).

“(For in those days Israel had no king, so everyone did whatever he wanted to-whatever seemed right in his own eyes)” (Judges 17:6, *TLB*).

Richard Wilke in his book *And Are We Yet Alive?* said, “Our sickness is more serious than we first suspected. We are in trouble, you and I...We thought we were just drifting, like a sailboat on a dreamy day. Instead we are wasting away...Once we were a...revival...fired by the Spirit, running the race set before us like a sprinter trying to win the prize...Now we are tired, listless, fueled only by the nostalgia of former days, walking with a droop, eyes on the ground, discouraged, putting one foot ahead of the other like a tired old man who remembers, but who can no longer perform.”

Let these words never be written about us and the churches we represent.

“(Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do alway err in their heart; and they have not known my ways. So I sware in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest.) Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called Today; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin” (Hebrews 3:10-13).

Where Do You Stand?

Which generation are you a part of? Are you closer to God today than you were last year?

Compare where your church was five or ten years ago to where it is today. Are you moving toward commitment, compromise, or worst of all, confusion?

“As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD” (Joshua 24:15).

I have chosen whom I am going to serve. Have you? I am going to be committed.

“I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name” (Revelation 3:8).

The following was found among a young African pastor's papers after he was martyred for the cause of Christ.

"I am part of the fellowship of the unashamed. I have Holy Spirit power. The die has been cast. I have stepped over the line. The decision has been made. I am a disciple of His and I won't look back, let up, slow down, back away, or be still.

"My past is redeemed. My present makes sense. My future is secure. I am done and finished with low living, sight walking, small planning, smooth knees, colorless dreams, tamed visions, mundane talking, cheap living, and dwarfed goals.

"I no longer need preeminence, prosperity, position, promotions, plaudits, or popularity. I don't have to be right, or first, tops, recognized, praised, or rewarded. I live by faith, lean on His presence, walk by patience, lift by prayer, and labor by Holy Spirit power.

"My face is set. My gait is fast. My goal is heaven. My road may be narrow, my way rough, my companions few, but my guide is reliable and my mission is clear.

"I will not be bought, compromised, detoured, lured away, turned back, deluded or delayed.

"I will not flinch in the face of sacrifice or hesitate in the presence of the adversary. I will not negotiate at the table of the enemy, ponder at the pool of popularity, or meander in the maze of mediocrity.

"I won't give up, shut up, or let up until I have stayed up, stored up, prayed up, paid up, and preached up for the cause of Christ.

"I am a disciple of Jesus. I must give until I drop, preach until all know, and work until He comes. And when He does come for His own, He'll have no problem recognizing **me. My colors will be clear!**"

"Only be careful, and watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them slip from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your children and to their children after them" (Deuteronomy 4:9, *NIV*).

Study Questions

1. What word describes the first generation? _____

2. What word describes the second generation? _____

3. What word describes the third generation? _____

4. According to Curtis Young what is the ultimate compromise? _____

5. Why did a generation arise that did not know the Lord? _____

6. What are the characteristics of the first generation? _____

7. What are the characteristics of the second generation? _____

8. What are the characteristics of the third generation? _____

9. How did Richard Wilke describe the generation that has drifted? _____

10. List three things you personally learned from the writings found in the martyred African pastor's papers. _____

11. Describe the spiritual status of the church at Sardis. _____

12. How can you predict the future of a movement? _____

13. What should we do instead of giving heed to the voice of compromise? _____

14. Why was God grieved with the generation described in Hebrews 3? _____

15. What did Richard Wilke mean by his quotation found in this lesson? _____

Additional Notes

A Vision for Your Child's Future

“At that time Moses was born, and he was no ordinary child. For three months he was cared for in his father's house”

(Acts 7:20, *NIV*).

“By faith Moses' parents hid him for three months after he was born, because they saw he was no ordinary child, and they were not afraid of the king's edict” (Hebrews 11:23, *NIV*). See Exodus 2:1-2.

There was something extraordinary about the little Moses. It was more than just “beauty.” Every baby is beautiful—especially to the parents. I’ve never heard anyone glance at a newborn and say, “That is one ugly baby!” Moses’ parents were convinced Moses was marked for divine favor, and future greatness.

How did they know? There is no evidence of a divine visitation or revelation; any earth-shattering visions or spine-tinkling prophecies. They just “saw.” They had faith. What is faith? It is the confident guarantee that what we hope for is going to happen” (Hebrews 11:1, *NLT*).

This Levite couple—in faith—held on to hope despite nearby sounds of Hebrew newborn baby boys being thrown in the River Nile, and the screams of mothers that could not be comforted wailing, “My baby! My baby!”

The curse cloud hung drearily over the Hebrew race. With persecution at its height, and desperation at its darkest, the light of God’s opportunity glimmered through.

Ray Stedman said, “When man wants to change history he usually uses a battle or a ballot, but when God wants to change history He begins with sending a baby.” Some African cultures count a pregnant woman as the most important person in the village. Why? She holds within her body the future of the village. Someone has remarked that children are God’s way of saying the world should go on.

Jochebed crafted a floating crib for her precious parcel. Pharaoh’s daughter found the child in the makeshift boat that was Moses’ parents act of faith and belief that God would watch over the child. Ten-year-old Miriam was standing by and volunteered to call a nurse—the little boy’s own mother.

How long did he remain at home? The answer is simple: long enough.

Long enough:

- To understand the principles of truth.
- For deep impressions to be made.

- To understand that he was a Jew and different from the Egyptians.
- To know that he was set apart from the rest of the world.
- To learn and never forget his patriotic feeling of being a Hebrew.
- For his mother to repeatedly recount his survival.
- To tell him over and over, “God has a special plan for you!”
- To remind him that he was chosen for blessing. This blessing was not the prestige, prosperity and power of the king’s palace but that he would be a blessing to God’s people.
- To consistently confirm he was marked for favor.
- To understand that he was destined for greatness.
- To discern he would one day deliver the Israelites.
- To show that all of the wisdom and teaching of Pharaoh’s palace could not shake or shape his convictions.

Truth is foundational to fulfilling vision. What profit is there in gaining the whole world but losing your very soul (Luke 9:25). Moses would have received an outstanding education in Pharaoh’s palace. He would have been also trained in military strategy. Undoubtedly, he would have been tutored in religious studies so he could be aware of the duties and supposed powers of the Egyptian gods. Every godly parent, I hope, longs to look at grown children and say: “I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth” (3 John 4).

“My son, do not forget my teaching, but keep my commands in your heart, for they will prolong your life many years and bring you prosperity” (Proverbs 3:1-2, *NIV*).

Jewish customs and feasts (like the Passover) were designed to remind families of God’s goodness, deliverance, and kingship. Life on the way to the Promised Land revolved around the Tabernacle (the tent of God’s presence). All the tribal tents were arranged in order around the Tabernacle. The father was designated as the teacher in the home.

A Jewish father would take his baby and dip his finger in honey and place it in the baby’s mouth. This reinforced that God’s Word is sweet. It became second nature—like the air one breathes. It’s always there. (However, these words were strange in the midst of cultures that worshipped hundreds of gods.)

“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates” (Deuteronomy 6:4-9, *NIV*). See also Deuteronomy 11:18-21.

This section of God’s Word, called the “Shema,” speaks directly to the family. It was to be observed in every aspect of life, taught diligently to children, and reinforced with constant

reminders. God's Word was to be continually in the midst of the family. The "Shema" or "Hear, O Israel" was used in both morning and evening prayers. It echoed the monotheistic message that God is One. As soon as a child began to speak, he was taught to repeat the words of the "Shema." The verses (or at least the first several words) were the last words used before dying and in times of danger.

Gordon Dryden and Dr. Jeannette Vos in their fabulous book *The Learning Revolution* explained, "Fifty percent of a child's ability to learn is developed in the first four years of life. This makes parent's the world's most important educators."

Small children are like wet cement. It is easier to make a lasting impression. Older children become like dried cement. It is more difficult to make an impression. The mold has been cast.

The Jesuits used to say, "Give me a child until he's five and I will have him the rest of his life." They have a vision for their children: Make them Catholic! How is this possible? They begin at infancy. They are deliberate and consistent.

"CatholicCulture.org" stated: "Here is a principle emphasized by experienced educators and teachers: one small act repeated faithfully is imprinted on the mind. Repetition is all-important. 'Day by day' and 'A little at a time' are our mottoes. If you want to learn a language, you master a few expressions a day and keep using them. To learn to play the piano, you practice faithfully with a few new scales and a few new keys added gradually."

A family should demonstrate the basic functions of the church at home:

1. Dedicate children to the Lord in a dedication service.
2. Study the Word of God together.
3. Pray together. An old adage says, "The family that prays together stays together."
4. Worship together.
5. Model the Christian life.

The secret to the success of passing truth along to the next generation:

1. Just do it.
2. Do it bit by bit.
3. Keep doing it.

Some things are better caught than taught. It has often been said, "We teach what we know but reproduce what we are."

Many times a child's talents, inclinations, and abilities are discernable early in life. The Wise Man encourages us to identify these early and to train the child accordingly.

“Train up a child in the way he should go [and in keeping with his individual gift or bent], and when he is old he will not depart from it” [Ephesians 6:4; 2 Timothy 3:15.], Proverbs 22:6, AMP).

Here are seven be-attitudes for bringing the vision for your child’s future into reality.

- Be consistent
- Be deliberate
- Be committed
- Be faithful
- Be a hard worker
- Be an example (lead the way)
- Be focused

Study Questions

1. Express biblically how we know Moses’ parents had a vision for his future.

2. According to Ray Stedman, what does God do when He wants to change history?

3. Why is a pregnant woman considered to be an important person in many African villages? _____

4. According to this lesson, who are the world’s most important educators? _____

5. What does every godly parent long to look at their grown children and say?

6. What was the purpose of Jewish customs and feasts? _____

7. Why would a Jewish father dip his finger in honey and place it in his baby's mouth?

8. What is the Shema? _____

9. Illustrate how important it was to the Jews. _____

10. What percentage of a child's ability to learn is developed in the first four years?

11. List three of the seven be-attitudes for bringing the vision for your child's future into reality. _____

12. In which way can the family demonstrate the basic function of the church at home?

13. Explain the implications of Proverbs 22:6. _____

Extraordinary Minister's Children

“But just as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in your love for us—see that you also excel in this grace of giving”
(2 Corinthians 8:7, *NIV*).

Extra! Extra! Extraordinary! Read all about it! This lesson is not meant to isolate, but to celebrate, a special group of people in the body of Christ—our minister's children. They serve a special function. They go far above and beyond the ordinary, and are truly exceptional. Search the entire New Testament through and you will be hard pressed to find a passage that specifically mentions pastor's or minister's (let alone missionary's) children. Overall, the closest we get, is with the instructions Paul gave to his adopted sons in the gospel; Timothy and Titus. So, we will be depending on TNT and a couple others to teach us several ways to become extraordinary minister's children.

Excel

Everyone wants to excel; to succeed. No one wakes up in the morning and conscientiously decides, “I think I'll fail today. In fact, I have just decided I'm going to flop at life.” God wants us to excel. “For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end” (Jeremiah 29:11). God promises and provides hope for the future. We will reach our “expected end.” He intends for us to develop into people of quality; moving forward in the things that matter most to Him. What are those things? Scripture explains, “But just as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in your love for us—see that you also excel in this grace of giving” (2 Corinthians 8:7, *NIV*).

“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be firm (steadfast), immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord [always being superior, excelling, doing more than enough in the service of the Lord], knowing and being continually aware that your labor in the Lord is not futile [it is never wasted or to no purpose]” (1 Corinthians 15:58, *AMP*).

Example

Kids are used often—too often—as examples in sermons. Close to a father's heart, and in his search for a practical, living, personal case-in-point, it is natural for him to look no further than his own home. This is, at times, to the embarrassment of the one being exposed. More than one pastor has used his child or spouse as an illustration and met displeasure when stepping away from the pulpit and into the parsonage.

Every pastor has an entire arsenal of family ammunition for sermon strengthening. This, rightfully so, is ammo that should be used with caution and with the license of those being fired

upon for public viewing. Regardless of whether Preacher-Dad uses his kids in sermon illustrations, the reality is we are called upon to be examples (patterns for others to follow).

“Don’t let anyone think less of you because you are young. *Be an example to all believers* in what you say, in the way you live, in your love, your faith, and your purity” (1 Timothy 4:12, *NLT, emphasis mine*).

“Get the word out. Teach all these things. And don’t let anyone put you down because you’re young. Teach believers with your life: by word, by demeanor, by love, by faith, by integrity. Stay at your post reading Scripture, giving counsel, teaching. And that special gift of ministry you were given when the leaders of the church laid hands on you and prayed – keep that dusted off and in use”

(1 Timothy 4:11-14, *The Message*)

Extinction

It has been said that we are always one generation from extinction. This simply means that if we fail to live the truth and pass it on to others, it will result in Christianity dying out in—or with—them. Every godly parent, I hope, longs to look at grown children and say: “I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth” (3 John 4). There is no greater sadness than to lose one’s own children. “For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” (Matthew 16:26). Whether we end up on the profit or loss side is up to us. Let’s make and be a profit!

Paul complimented Timothy, “And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures” (2 Timothy 3:15). “I am calling up memories of your sincere and unqualified faith (the leaning of your entire personality on God in Christ in absolute trust and confidence in His power, wisdom, and goodness), [a faith] that first lived permanently in [the heart of] your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am [fully] persuaded, [dwells] in you also. That is why I would remind you to stir up (rekindle the embers of, fan the flame of, and keep burning) the [gracious] gift of God, [the inner fire] that is in you by means of the laying on of my hands [with those of the elders at your ordination]” (2 Timothy 1:5-6, *AMP*). It is faith that is living. It is rich! Fan into flame the gift that God has given you. Don’t relax. Keep it ablaze! “All those prayers are coming together now so you will do this well, fearless in your struggle, keeping a firm grip on your faith and on yourself” (2 Timothy 1:18, *MSG*).

There is a difference between being taught, knowing, and doing. And what was Timothy to do with the scriptures he was taught from birth? “All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right” (2 Timothy 3:16, *NLT*). “But don’t let it faze you. Stick with what you learned and believed, sure of the integrity of your teachers—why, you took

in the sacred Scriptures with your mother's milk! There's nothing like the written Word of God for showing you the way to salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. Every part of Scripture is God-breathed and useful one way or another—showing us truth, exposing our rebellion, correcting our mistakes, training us to live God's way. Through the Word we are put together and shaped up for the tasks God has for us” (2 Timothy 3:14-17, *MSG*).

Extension

One thing is for sure. We are an extension of our parents. What we do or do not do is a direct reflection on our family. More than that, we are an extension of our parent's ministry with a role to play; a part to fulfill. Philip's prophesying princesses are suitable examples of that. He had four daughters: all actively involved in operating in their giftings and ministries.

“And the next day we that were of Paul's company departed, and came unto Caesarea: and we entered into the house of Philip the evangelist, which was one of the seven; and abode with him. And the same man had four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy” (Acts 21:8-9, *KJV*).

We can quote with dual significance, “Did you not see and know that it is necessary [as a duty] for Me to be in My Father's house and [occupied] about My Father's business?” (Luke 2:49, *AMP*).

We exist because of the times, and our understanding of the need, beckons for us to be involved in God's kingdom: “And of the children of Issachar, which were men that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do (1 Chronicles 12:32).

“In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams” (Acts 2:17, *NIV*). So, speak on. Encourage on. Preach on. Have a vision and pursue it with all your strength. “For those who dream, the road of life glistens with a million golden promises—To journey along that road, all that is needed is the strength to hold on to those dreams and the vision to see them through” (Caroline Gray).

Expectations

Face it. The minister, his wife, and their children attract the highest expectations from others. Some reflect on the minister and his family and say they live in “glass houses.” This means that those on the outside (society and the congregation) are always looking at what is taking place inside the minister's family. An African Proverb says, “The higher a monkey climbs on the tree, the easier it is to see its backside.” Ever notice how the media thrives on negative stories about the ministry falling into sin or disgrace? What they see, or fail to see, in the pastor, his wife, and their kids' lives they make it excusable in their own. Many times what they see in their own lives would be quickly judged and criticized if seen in the minister's family. Unfortunately, this creates a double standard. What is acceptable for members and their children is not expected

or accepted when it comes to the minister's family. They are subject to a higher expectation; a higher standard (James 3:1). God expects the family to measure up to expectations, as well: "For if a man cannot manage his own household, how can he take care of God's church?" (1 Timothy 3:5, *NLT*).

The extraordinary minister's kid is "remarkable." That means remark-able; people are able to make good remarks. Rest assured, there is a big group of onlookers that are remark-able: able to make good remarks or bad. Let's cleave to the good, and abandon the bad.

Experience

Experience is profitable throughout life. Minister's kids gain skills in teamwork, leadership, handling people, cross-cultural communications, and surviving on a limited budget, to name a few. Add to that, the strength of a Christian family, spiritual heritage, trust in God and faith and minister's children have the edge. Some studies estimate that over eighty percent of success in the leadership field can be attributed to one's ability to get along with people.

Most ministers do not mind sacrificing and suffering. They accept it. However, they would like to avoid it or do away with it in the lives of their children. Tough times make us tough.

All pass through the "School of Hard Knocks." This is the school of difficult life experiences. It breaks, shapes, and makes us. Someone once said, "He who bears no cross deserves no crown." No cross; no crown. No battle; no victory. Our experiences help us to be profitable to others, and God's kingdom, throughout life. One man referred to our role as being a "wounded healer." Because we have felt the sting of wounds ourselves, we are in the best position to adequately minister to others who are wounded or hurting.

Warren and David Wiersebe in *Ten Power Principles for Christian Service* said, "The nature of Christian ministry is such that it presents us with daily opportunities that can become either tests to build us up or temptations to tear us down." Life's experiences can make us better or bitter.

"And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope" (Romans 5:3-4). I'm sometimes cautious of praying for patience or to be more patient. Why? The Scripture makes it plain that tribulations, trials, tests, and suffering brings about patience. However, it also leads to experience and provides hope.

"Moreover [let us also be full of joy now!] let us exult and triumph in our troubles and rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that pressure and affliction and hardship produce patient and unswerving endurance. And endurance (fortitude) develops maturity of character (approved faith and tried integrity). And character [of this sort] produces [the habit of] joyful and confident hope of eternal salvation" (Romans 5:3-4, *AMP*).

Tim Hansel in *Holy Sweat* tells of a revealing research done concerning 413 famous and gifted people. Two researchers spent years trying to discover the source of their greatness. The common thread that ran through most (392) of their lives was that they had to triumph over difficult obstacles in order to become who they were. Obstacles became opportunities.

The expedition to becoming an extraordinary minister's kid is best traveled when we provide an *example* or pattern for others to follow; live above reproach by meeting godly *expectations*; serve as an *extension* and compliment to our parent's ministry; exemplify the truth and pass it on to others to prevent *extinction*; *excel* at everything we do; and allow our *experiences* to make us better.

Study Questions

1. In 2Corinthians 8:7, list six (6) things that matter most to God (ways He wants us to excel).

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____
- 4) _____
- 5) _____
- 6) _____

2. Explain why preacher-dads should be careful when using their children as sermon illustrations. _____

3. Write out one verse of Scripture that makes it clear we should be an example to everyone. _____

4. Give a brief explanation for this statement: "We are always one generation from extinction." _____

5. Explain the difference between being taught, knowing, and doing. _____

6. Explain how children are an extension of their parent's ministry. _____

7. Explain the following statement: "The minister and his family lives in a glass house." Support your answer with Scripture references that agree with the statement. _____

8. Name at least five (5) skills minister's kids experience throughout life that are helpful in their future.

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____
- 4) _____
- 5) _____

9. List four (4) strengths experienced by minister's kids that give them an edge over other children in life experience and hope.

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____
- 4) _____

10. The expedition to becoming an extraordinary _____ kid is best traveled when we provide an _____ or pattern for others to follow; live above reproach by meeting godly _____; serve as an _____ and compliment to our parent's ministry; exemplify the truth and pass it on to others to prevent _____; _____ at everything we do; and allow our _____ to make us _____.