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"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).

Responsible Leadership in the Home

Lesson Subject: Fathers should direct their families in the ways of the Lord.

L42. Date: June 1982. **Text:** Genesis 18:19; Joshua 24:14, 15; Proverbs 4:1-5; Ephesians 6:2-4. **Topic:** Home.

"Around here, Dad makes the living while Mom raises the kids." That statement, made by a lad to his teacher, indicates one of the most serious breakdowns in home life in America. The only thing worse than that is when both Dad and Mom make the living and no one is raising the kids!

Strong and loving parental leadership in the home would revolutionize society in America in less than one generation. It is the fastest way to rebuild a nation, except for the direct intervention of God in a great life-changing revival.

God holds the father responsible for the home! The mother helps, but God has assigned the headship to the father and holds him responsible. That is the most solemn obligation a man is given in this world, for it is given of God.

"Fathers should direct their families in the ways of the Lord." That is the central truth of this study.

I. SAVE YOUR HOUSE

"By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house, by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith" (Hebrews 11:7).

What a challenge to a father today to "save his house." But how can a man do it? Noah set the example.

A. A father saves his house as he is motivated by personal faith in God. Noah *"moved with fear"* because he believed God's warnings of coming judgment (Genesis 6). He believed God, acted on his belief, and built an ark by which his family was saved from drowning in the flood.

B. A father saves his house as he invests time and effort in spiritual preparation. How long did it take Noah to build the ark? Some interpret *"his days shall be an hundred and twenty years"* (Genesis 6:3) as an indication of how long Noah was at work. It is evident that Noah spent time — a long time — at work in the effort to save his household. A father never saves his household unless he spends time with them in spiritual things.

C. A father saves his house as he is distinct from the unregenerate world. Noah's whole story is based on the fact that he was not like other men. Blessed is the father who stands straight and is identified as different from the world of sin around him. That man will influence his children.

D. A man saves his house when he has received the righteousness which is by faith. Noah *"became heir of the righteousness which is by faith"* as did Abraham (Genesis 15:6), Paul (Philippians 2:7-9), and all others who trust Jesus (Romans 4).

Here is the picture of a man who trusts God, invests time in the welfare of his family, is distinct from the sins of the society in which he lives, and who knows by experience the forgiveness of sin and the imputed righteousness of God which is given by faith. Blessed is the family that has that man for a husband and father. He will save his household.

II. GOVERN THEIR CONDUCT

"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" (Genesis 18:19).

A. The man of the house must recognize his personal responsibility for his family before God. This is a responsibility which cannot be passed on to wife, school teachers, pastor, or any other person. *"HE will command his children."* A man may wish that he did not have that responsibility, but it remains the same.

B. The man of the house must exercise parental authority. *"He will COMMAND his children."* Authority undergirds the father's responsibility. His is a power tempered with love, but it must never become weak

sentiment. The fact that a man must "*command*" his children indicates that sometimes they will not wish to obey. What loving admonition does not accomplish, the exercise of parental authority must. God rejected Eli as being high priest over Israel "*because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not*" (I Samuel 3:13). God holds the father responsible, fully responsible, because He gave the father authority to require obedience when it was not freely given.

C. The man of the house must instill eternal principles in the family members, teaching them to "*keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment.*"

There are four areas of normal human development: mental, physical, spiritual, and social (Luke 2:52). Parents want to see their children develop in each area. It is the business of the father to see that children are taught spiritual principles so they will obey God in justice and judgment.

D. The man of the house can reap a reward for faithfulness in governing the conduct of the family. God promised He would bring "that which He had spoken" because Abraham would govern his family. The promises of God are fulfilled upon the obedient and disciplined family. Father, God knows you have to make a living for the family. He knows you come home tired after a day's work. He knows you would like to relax and let the family take care of itself. But remember that building a home is your most important work. It must never be neglected. Devote your life to serve God as the head of your home and family (Ephesians 6:4).

III. DECLARE YOUR COMMITMENT

"Now therefore fear the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in truth . . . And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve . . . but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD" (Joshua 24:14, 15).

A. Live by principles which show commitment to God. What are those principles? There are four suggested in the text quoted above. (1) Stand in reverent awe before God. "*Fear the LORD.*" The requirement to "*fear*" God is repeated once and again in Holy Scripture. It means to hold God in highest esteem, to be filled with awe at the presence of God, to reverence at the thought of God.

A man indicates fear for God when he speaks respectfully of God (not using His name in vain), when he attends regularly the house of God (not using the Lord's Day for secular affairs), when he reads faithfully the Word

of God (not pretending he has no time for Bible study), and when he obeys consistently the commands of God (not using excuses for non-Christian acts or attitudes). Such a man will have great influence over his family in turning them to righteousness.

(2) Render service to God: *"Serve him in sincerity and in truth."* That means more than to go to church on Sunday. Let the family see a spirit of availability to God manifest day by day in the life of the head of the home.

(3) Be separated unto God: *"Put away the gods."* We do not bow before idols, but we have things which take time and interest from God. Those things are put away as we refuse to be conformed to this world and are transformed by the renewing of our minds (Romans 12:2).

(4) Make a decision for God: *"Choose."* The grammar of the verb indicates that a person is to choose over and over, once and again, at each point of decision to serve the Lord. It is a one-time decision repeated in daily living.

B. Make a public declaration of allegiance to God. *"As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."* Commitment must be public and plain in order to bear full fruit.

Here is a man who has a right attitude toward God, is faithful in Christian living and church attendance, who makes life decisions in the light of the will of God, and is not ashamed to make his commitment to God a matter of public knowledge.

IV. INSTRUCT YOUR CHILDREN

Proverbs 4:1-5 sets forth five guidelines for a father teaching his children the things of God.

A. Help the children understand the things of God. *"Hear, ye children, the instruction of a father, and attend to know understanding"* (verse 1). A father is to instruct his children. He is to make them understand the basic issues of life. That is his greatest privilege and most serious duty.

B. Encourage the children to be loyal to the law of God. *"For I give you good doctrine, forsake ye not my law"* (verse 2). *"Good doctrine"* means "sound truth taught." A faithful father will teach his children the truth. Wise children will remain faithful to the principles taught them by their parents.

C. Establish the children in the way of the people of God. *"For I was my father's son . . . He taught me also, and said unto me, Let thine heart retain my words"* (verses 3, 4). The things of God are to be passed on from generation to generation. One generation is taught that it might teach

the next. Fathers teach their children, who teach their children, who teach their children generation after generation.

D. Place the children in the path of the blessings of God. *"Let thine heart retain my words: keep my commandments, and live"* (verse 4). The only way of security is the way of holy obedience to divine principles. The child who is taught to reverence and obey God will receive the blessings of God.

E. Keep the children in a lifestyle of walking with God. *"Get wisdom get understanding: forget it not; neither decline from the words of my mouth"* (verse 5). That is the way of life which marks the people of God.

V. INSTILL GOOD PRINCIPLES

Ephesians 6:14 is an excellent summary of the relationships which should exist between parents and children. It can be used as a guideline for the domestic life of the Christian, whatever his age or position in the home. Review those guidelines and measure your home life by them.

A. Teach the children to be submissive to parents. *"Obey your parents in the Lord"* (verse 1).

B. Teach the children to have respect for persons in authority over them. *"Honour thy father and mother"* (verse 2).

C. Teach the children the blessings of a godly life. *"That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth"* (verse 3).

D. Teach the children with full awareness of their personal limitations. *"And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath"* (verse 4).

E. Teach the children with a sense of stewardship toward God. *"Bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord"* (verse 4).

The full responsibility for family leadership rests on the father. He can delegate certain areas to the mother, the public school teacher, the Sunday School teacher, and others, but that does not relieve him of the responsibility.

Each father will answer to God for his family — every member of his family. It is a solemn responsibility and a wonderful privilege to be a husband and a father. Blessed is the family who has a man of God as its head.

QUESTIONS

1. How can you save your house?

2. How can you command your house to serve the Lord?
3. How can you declare your commitment to Christ?
4. How can you instruct your children in spiritual things?
5. How can you instill good principles in your family?
6. What warning is there in I Samuel 3:13?
7. How is fear of God related to obedience to God?
8. How is family worship in the home related to this study?
9. How can a father teach his son to respect all women?
10. How does this lesson help you to have a better home life?