



ADULT BTC

SIBLINGS OF RIGHTEOUS PARENTS

SUMMER QUARTER, 2010
JUNE, JULY, AUGUST



Adult Quarterly

Prepared by David Johnson

Vol. 96, No. 3

ISSUED JUNE 1, 2010

SUMMER QUARTER

Outlines by
Don Price

EDITOR IN CHIEF:
Larry E. Clements
larryclements@abaptist.org

BUSINESS MANAGER:
Wayne Sewell
wsewell@abaptist.org

PRODUCTION EDITOR:
Sally McInvale

ADULT EDITOR:
Jim Jones

CHILDREN'S EDITOR:
Libby Gill

ILLUSTRATOR:
Connie Spears

GRAPHIC ARTISTS:
Shawn Blase
Jeff Allen
Greg Hilterbrand
Ashley Carozza

LAYOUT DESIGNERS:
Bonita McKnight
Kyle Elkins
Cindy Butler

CONTENT EDITORS:
Terry McKellar
Deby Turrentine
Carolyn Burks

PRINT PRODUCTION:
Charles Easley

COVER DESIGN:
Greg Hilterbrand

Copyright © 2010

Baptist Sunday School
Committee
4605 N. State Line Ave.
Texarkana, TX 75503-2928
www.abaptist.org
1-800-264-2482

SIBLINGS OF RIGHTEOUS PARENTS

Quarterly Aim: To show that siblings have a responsibility to receive godly teachings.

CONTENTS

Lesson No. 1, June 6, 2010	
The Children of Adam and Eve	2
Lesson No. 2, June 13, 2010	
The Children of Noah	7
Lesson No. 3, June 20, 2010	
The Children of Abraham	12
Lesson No. 4, June 27, 2010	
The Children of Isaac	17
Lesson No. 5, July 4, 2010	
The Children of Jacob	22
Lesson No. 6, July 11, 2010	
The Children of Joseph	27
Lesson No. 7, July 18, 2010	
The Children of Amram	31
Lesson No. 8, July 25, 2010	
The Children of Aaron	36
Lesson No. 9, August 1, 2010	
The Children of Samuel	41
Lesson No. 10, August 8, 2010	
The Children of Jesse	46
Lesson No. 11, August 15, 2010	
The Children of David	50
Lesson No. 12, August 22, 2010	
The Children of Jona	55
Lesson No. 13, August 29, 2010	
The Children of Zebedee	60

The Children of Adam and Eve

APPLICATION

Children born and raised in the same household may make different choices in life.

SCRIPTURES TO READ

Text: Hebrews 11:4.

Related Scripture: Leviticus 19:17; Psalms 25:19; 34:21; Proverbs 10:18; 22:6; 26:26; Matthew 5:44; Galatians 5:19-21; 1 John 3:12, 15; Jude 11.

Devotional Reading: Jealousy Can Breed Hatred, Genesis 4:1-15.

Introduction

Why is it that children from the same family never seem to make the same choices? Could it be that certain ones in a family receive spiritual instruction while the others are not privileged to be taught about the Lord? That is an unlikely scenario. Not every child in a family takes advantage of the blessings offered by the parents. One child might be more prone to heeding the advice of the parents, while another might tend to be a bit more rebellious. This is a fact of human nature. Does it excuse the failure of some to listen to godly advice? No, it just explains how different children from the same family can make wildly divergent decisions.

This lesson will focus on two of the first children born on this planet. After Adam and Eve were cast out of the Garden of Eden, because of their rebellion, they began having children. Cain and Abel were born to this union. What happened in this family illustrates what happens in many families in the world today. Decisions are determined by the free will of the individual.

1. _____ **The Training They Received**

While in the garden, Adam and Eve communed directly with God. He taught them what they could and could not do. They had one restriction. They could not eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. All other trees were acceptable for food. Satan wanted to destroy the relationship between God and His creation. He tricked Eve into eating the fruit of that tree. She gave to Adam, and he willfully rebelled against God by breaking His Law. This act cast the human race into sin. God provided clothing for them through the sacrifice of an animal. Adam and Eve were banished from the garden.

After a period of time, children were born to them. They taught their children about God and the need of a sacrifice. This training could have been through verbal instruction or by example. The boys, Cain and Abel, grew up seeing the importance of offering worship and sacrifice to God. There is no reason to assume one of the boys received one set of instructions as to an appropriate sacrifice to God and the other received another. The problem was they made different decisions.

Every person on earth has the ability to make choices. No one can force an individual into doing what is right. All people decide what they want to do in life. Sometimes those choices will follow the principles they were taught as children and sometimes they will not. This certainly does not excuse wrong decisions. God has given His Word to show the actions approved and disapproved. People choose to follow the dictates of their hearts whether that direction is toward good or evil behavior. It is not always a matter of training. Sometimes it is a matter of personal rebellion.

2. _____ **The Testimony of Abel**

Abel had lived under the authority and instruction of his parents for many years. Now, it was time for him to begin a family. He understood he should offer worship to God. Abel had listened closely to the instructions of his father. He had watched as Adam slew a lamb to offer it unto the Lord. He knew this was appropriate worship because he had seen his father's relationship with God. He wanted to offer a right sacrifice to Him. Abel was a shepherd. He went out to the flock and chose an appropriate

offering. He gave it in love and faith. His sacrifice was accepted by God.

Abel's sacrifice was "more excellent" (Heb. 11:4). This term described something that was excellent in terms of quality or quantity. Abel could not have brought something else and it be acceptable to God. He chose the best lamb of the flock. No other lamb was as beautiful or pleasing. Abel's heart was right, and he was ready to worship the Lord. People often bring what is left over in life as their offering to God. Many people take care of all other things in life and hope they have a small amount left to give the Lord. This should not be. God deserves the first and the best. That was what Abel brought Him.

Abel's sacrifice testified of his relationship with God. "He obtained witness that he was righteous" (verse 4). The actions of a person's life testify of that person's faith and righteousness. Jesus spoke about how to determine the spiritual depth of a person. "Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them" (Matt. 7:20). He used the illustration of plants and crops. A grapevine will always produce grapes. A thistle will never produce figs nor will a thornbush produce grapes. A plant is known by the fruit it bears. God's people are also known by the fruit they produce. People who produce only evil works cannot be assumed to be godly. Their fruit defines who they are. The fruit of Abel's life defined him as a righteous son of God. God, through Scripture, has testified of this fact.

The testimony of Abel did not cease with his passing. "He being dead yet speaketh" (Heb. 11:4). Thousands of years have passed since the day he brought his proper sacrifice to the Lord. His testimony has not ceased in all those years. Though he is physically dead, his godly example lives on. Those who live for Christ have an impact on those around them. That influence will live on. This is a testimony of the greatness of God.

3. _____ **The Testimony of Cain**

Cain was raised in the same manner as his brother. He received the same instruction and saw the same example in his father. Yet, Cain decided to begin his life separated from his parents

and did not follow their godly example. He knew it was proper to worship God, but he wanted to do it his own way. Cain was a farmer. He grew crops by the sweat of his brow. He knew the hard work that he put into all his crops. He was proud of what he accomplished. Since he needed to bring a sacrifice to God, he thought his crops would make an appropriate sacrifice. After all, he had put all his efforts into the fields. The sacrifice he brought was not pleasing to God.

There were some problems with Cain's sacrifice. It was not what God demanded. Throughout the Bible, the primary sacrifice acceptable to God was a blood sacrifice. A blood sacrifice showed what would happen in the death of Christ. A vegetable offering could not paint the same picture. God wanted people to look forward to His sacrifice. The attitude Cain had toward his offering was also inappropriate. He felt the work of his hands was sufficient to satisfy God. People have always wanted to bring the work of their hands to satisfy God. This has not and will never be satisfactory to God. It is "not of works, lest any man should boast" (Eph. 2:9). If people could work their way to Heaven, they would brag about themselves instead of giving praise to God. Cain wanted to deserve a relationship with God because his works were good enough. It is also possible that Cain begrudged giving anything to God. He had worked hard for that food. Why did God deserve any of it? Nothing Cain did was pleasing to God, and his sacrifice did not satisfy Him.

When Cain saw God's displeasure with him and His acceptance of Abel, he was overwhelmed with anger. God knew what was in his heart and tried to draw him back through repentance and forgiveness. Cain wanted nothing to do with repentance. Abel came to the fields where his brother was. Cain rose up in anger and killed his brother. Why was he angry? He despised his brother because Abel had done right and he had only done wrong (1 John 3:12). God punished Cain because of his wickedness.

People must be careful how they deal with God. If they seek a religion based on personal desire instead of faith in Christ, they will end up with wrong attitudes and actions. It is far better to seek God and His way than to follow the ways of human reasoning. That path leads to destruction (Prov. 16:25).

Conclusion

How does all this apply to us? The decisions we make often do not reflect the instruction we have received. Each person in a family has a different mind-set. Each has the opportunity to make right decisions or to reject the way of the Lord. They must be careful to weigh their decisions so they will follow the path God has set for them.

The book of James was written to demonstrate how God's people should live. It describes those who claim to have faith but are unwilling to live for Christ. That kind of faith offers no proof of one's relationship with the Lord. Suppose a person comes along who is hungry and lacking adequate clothing. That person is homeless and without hope. What can we do? Some people offer platitudes. "Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled" (James 2:16). Though kind words are spoken, no help is provided. What is the good? The person is still hungry and cold. God's provision gives evidence of the love of God. We must show how much we care. We do this by helping lift a person out of the despair of life. Then, we are afforded the opportunity to share the gospel with him. Which of these two actions give evidence of our relationship with Christ? May we always choose to have a living faith that gives evidence of the grace and love of the Savior.



The Children of Noah

APPLICATION

To show how a quick decision may bring shame.

SCRIPTURES TO READ

Text: Genesis 9:18-27.

Related Scripture: Genesis 10:1-32; Esther 3:8, 9; Job 3:8; Proverbs 11:18; Hosea 8:7; Matthew 5:9; Romans 8:13; Galatians 6:7-9; Philippians 3:11; James 3:18.

Devotional Reading: The Way of Great Joy and Happiness, Psalm 144:15.

Introduction

The story of Noah's ark is one that captures the imagination of every young child. Then, as children begin to grow into adulthood, the depth of the story sinks in anew. There are aspects of the story of the flood and its aftermath that cause most Bible students to seek answers. This is a good attitude to have toward any narrative given in the Bible. There are lessons to learn from all that is given in the Bible.

Life is often pictured as a journey. It is not a journey of brief duration but continues for many years. Along the path of that journey are many bumps and curves. Not everything a person faces in life will be easy and smooth. There will be times when circumstances bring events with lasting consequences. This was true with Noah and his children as well.

Many years prior to the lesson Text, God had called Noah to perform a special task. God was going to bring judgment upon the earth. The vast majority of its population had given themselves to the pursuit of worldly pleasures. Every thought of their hearts was continually on evil and sensual activities (Gen. 6:5). The only solution to the problem was judgment. He would bring a

flood upon the earth. God told Noah to build an ark of safety. He and his family would be preserved in the ark throughout the worldwide flood. God would also bring representatives of all animal life to enter the ark and be preserved. He would use Noah and his family to repopulate the earth.

Though this was a difficult matter to understand, Noah submitted to the will of God. For one hundred twenty years, he preached to his world about the coming judgment (Gen. 6:3; 2 Peter 2:5). No one responded to his preaching except his family. Eight people joined the animals on the ark. The Lord closed the door and brought the rain (Gen. 7:16). The waters covered the face of the earth, and all flesh outside the ark perished. In the process of time, the floodwater receded from the earth. Noah, his family and the animals on the ark were allowed to leave. Life would begin anew.

This sets the stage for the events of this lesson. The eight people who had boarded the ark began new lives on earth. Years passed and the family grew. Life continued as usual. But an incident happened that produced horrible consequences. The choices made by the sons of Noah concerning an act of their father shows how different children can be. The example of a parent has a lasting impact on the family.

1. _____ **The Act of Noah**

After the flood, Noah and his family had to put forth the effort to maintain their existence. They built places to live. They planted gardens and built pens to hold their animals. Noah also planted a vineyard. He and his family partook of what they grew.

As Noah tried to store and preserve some of the juice from his grapevines, some of it fermented. Was this an intentional act on his part to produce wine or was he unaware of what would happen when fruit of the vine was stored in this manner? Different people have different opinions. No one knows how or why Noah came to this place. The fact is that Noah stored some fruit of the vine that became fermented. As he drank this wine possibly in celebration of some festival, he became intoxicated. He may have staggered into his tent to sleep it off. In his inebriated state, Noah was unaware of his immodesty. He lay uncovered on his bed.

The Bible is clear in its condemnation of the use of alcoholic beverages. It has a bite like a snake (Prov. 23:32). It is dangerous and deadly. It will cause a person to make foolish and evil decisions (verse 33). It will bring sorrow, conflicts, babbling and wounds (verse 29). Nothing good can come from the practice of drinking wine and other alcoholic beverages. The example of Noah makes this clear.

2. _____ **The Act of Ham**

The circumstances of Ham's sin revolved around his father's failure. Noah was in a condition no child should see in a parent. Yet, that is exactly what happened. For some reason, Ham entered his father's dwelling place. When he found his father, he saw the disreputable condition he was in. It would have been natural for Ham to quickly and quietly close up the room and to leave without further word. Instead, what he saw so disgusted him, he could not keep quiet. He searched out his brothers and related exactly what he had seen. The word used for *told* indicates he stood boldly and announced every detail of what he had seen. Ham related his disgust in his father and was unashamed of his bitterness and anger.

It is a sad thing when children realize just how human their parents are. They feel as though a trust has been broken. They feel justified in anything they do. Reality is that parents are merely human with all their frailties and failures. Children should never disrespect their parents. God declared children should honor and respect their parents (Ex. 20:12; Eph. 6:1-3). The choice is up to the individual. People can have respect and honor for their parents, or they can rebel against God and have no honor for them. Ham chose the wrong path. He dishonored and disrespected his father.

3. _____ **The Acts of Shem and Japheth**

Having heard from Ham the sad condition of their father, Shem and Japheth took a garment, possibly a blanket, and entered the room without gazing on their father. They covered their father and departed out of the room. Their action showed the deep respect they had for Noah. They understood it was Noah who had heard and listened to God in the matter of the flood. They knew his faith had been complete. They had trusted

him in those days and continued to hold him in respect. This one failure would not destroy how they felt about their father. They would always lift him up and help him as best they could. They wanted to do something to help restore his honor. Treating him as they did exalted him as a person but did not excuse his action. They simply wanted to show him they still loved him.

Every parent will disappoint his children on occasion. It is usually unintentional, but such circumstances will come. How will the children respond to such times? They can get angry and refuse to forgive, or they can have a loving heart and seek to reconcile with their parents. Since the Bible admonishes children to love, honor and respect parents, it would be wise to continue to honor them for the position they hold. It is somewhat like the office of the President of the United States. People might like or dislike the one holding office, but he is the President. As such, he deserves respect. All Christian people should pray for him to conduct himself properly while in office. How people feel about him really does not matter. He holds a high office. Parents are in a position of respect from their children. Even when they make mistakes, their children should still seek to honor them. If parents are not godly, the children should pray for them and seek to draw them to Christ. They are parents and deserve this respect.

4. _____ **The Consequences of Their Actions**

People often think their actions affect no one but themselves. In reality, every decision made and every action undertaken has an impact on other people. Noah's drinking hurt his testimony in the family. Even worse, his son, Ham, was prompted to act in a manner displeasing both to his father and God. But the damages did not stop there. When Noah passed judgment on Ham, the worst part of the sentence fell on Canaan, Ham's son. Noah cried out, "Cursed be Canaan" (Gen. 9:25). The actions of the father impacted the son.

The reaction of Noah toward his other two sons was far different. Where he placed a burden on Ham and his descendants, Noah gave a blessing to Shem and Japheth. They had honored him, and he wanted to reward them for their respect.

One of the greatest reasons fathers should desire to live for God is so their children will also desire to live for Him. An adage

says, “The apple doesn’t fall far from the tree.” This means children are prone to follow the example set for them by their parents. If they see their father treating their mother without respect, they will tend to hold her in dishonor. If they see the father being dishonest in business dealings, they will often be less than honorable in business. Learned behavior is powerful. What a challenge this is for parents to set the proper example for children to follow! There are always consequences to actions.

Conclusion

The events of the lesson Text led to horrible consequences. Because of an impetuous decision, a family became somewhat fractured. Ham had shown disrespect for his father. His family would have to pay for what he had done. If he could have turned time backward, he might have made a different decision. But time cannot be reversed. He had to live with what he had done.

God’s people must always be careful to think before they act. A teacher once said to make sure your mind is in gear before setting your mouth in motion. This is a true sentiment for any action. We should carefully think through a decision before pressing forward. We should want to do the right thing. God will bless us when we honor Him.

The Children of Abraham

APPLICATION

To show how the actions of two brought great pain for many.

SCRIPTURES TO READ

Text: Genesis 16:1-15; 21:1-3; 25:1, 2, 4, 5.

Related Scripture: Genesis 12:10-13; 17:18; 20:2-18; 21:11; 26:7-11; Exodus 2:11-15; 1 Samuel 25:2-11; 2 Kings 5:20-27; 1 Chronicles 21:1-4; Psalm 37:1-7; Proverbs 14:12.

Devotional Reading: Difficult Circumstances—Difficult Decisions, Genesis 21:9-21.

Introduction

Abraham has often been called the father of faith. It is through Abraham that the Jewish people trace their roots. They recall the promise made by God to this man because of his faith. He would be a father of nations. The primary nation from Abraham would be the chosen people of God. Through this people all nations of the earth would be blessed. This last statement was a promise of the Messiah who would come and purchase salvation and deliverance. These promises are called the Abrahamic Covenant. It was an unbreakable promise from God to His people Israel.

Though Abraham was a man of faith, he was also a natural human being. He let things stand in the way of what he should do. Sometimes his wants, fears and longings stood in the way of hearing what God had to say. Part of this problem came about because of God's promise. When Abraham departed from his native land, he was married, but childless. The promises of God indicated that he would have descendants. Many years passed

and still he had no children. When would God fulfill His word? The time for having children was passing them. Abraham decided one way around the problem was to have his favorite servant stand in the position of his son. This servant was Eliezer. Maybe God would let him be the promised son. The Lord declared that Eliezer would not be the son, but one would be born directly from Abraham (Gen. 15:2-4). He accepted the word of the Lord and continued the waiting process.

The lack of faith exhibited by Abraham and Sarah caused them to make a decision that had lasting consequences. The descendants of Isaac and Ishmael have been fighting for thousands of years. They both want to claim the position as the primary son of Abraham and want the preeminence. This fight continues because of the foolish decision of Abraham and Sarah. The decision and its consequences will be the focus of this lesson.

1. _____ **Ishmael Was Not the Son of Promise**

As the years passed in the life of Abraham, he remained somewhat doubtful as to how God would carry out His promise of giving him a son. Abraham was approaching ninety years of age. Sarah knew she physically could not have a child, so she devised a new plan. A child born in the household could be considered a family heir. Therefore, she encouraged Abraham to go in to her handmaid, so he would finally have a son. He agreed to the plan. When Hagar, the handmaid, found she was with child, she began looking on her mistress with disdain. It is likely that Hagar thought she would replace Sarah as the favored wife. Sarah grew angry and began treating her harshly. Hagar escaped and tried to find freedom somewhere else. God told her to return to the household. She would bear a son named Ishmael who would become a great nation. Hagar relented and returned to be under the hand of Sarah.

The common practice of that era was for the eldest son to receive the birthright. This gave him a special place in the family. God refused to grant Ishmael the promise given to Abraham. He was not the promised son. In the book of Galatians, Paul explained some of what took place here. Ishmael was called the son of the flesh (Gal. 4:23). The promised son had a spiritual heritage and would produce a spiritual people. Ishmael was born

because Abraham and Sarah trusted in the flesh instead of the promises of God. God would never bless fleshly pursuits over the spiritual. Ishmael was born to picture the bondage of the Law (verse 24). The Law could never take away sins. It was given to point out the sins of human flesh and to draw people to Christ (Gal. 3:21-24).

Many people want to follow the flesh instead of looking to God to help in right choices. Had Abraham and Sarah fully trusted God in the matter of a promised son, they would not have failed in this matter. Generations to follow would not have endured the struggles that have killed so many people. Trusting God will enable His people to live according to His principles.

2. _____ **Isaac Was the Son of Promise**

Several years passed once again. Still Sarah had not conceived a son. Now, Abraham was approaching one hundred years of age and Sarah was near ninety. All hope of a child had vanished. Three visitors came to the place where Abraham had his flocks. He invited the travelers into his home for a meal and refreshment. Little did Abraham know that one of these men was the Lord (Gen. 18:1). After they had been refreshed, the Lord restated His promise. A child would be born and it would happen within the next year. Sarah overheard what had been said and laughed in her heart (verse 12). The Lord responded to her mirth and doubt with a powerful statement. “Is any thing too hard for the LORD?” (verse 14). God would do exactly what He had promised.

As time passed, Sarah found herself with child. At ninety years of age, she was bearing in her body the answer to God’s promise. It was only proper for God to handle the situation as He did. Had Sarah borne the child while she was young, she would have thought of it as merely a child. Because she was past the childbearing years, the baby was known to be something special. He must have come through the promise and power of God. Nature could not have produced him.

Waiting on the Lord is always a difficult task. People normally have an idea of what they want to happen. They have their schedules and expectations, but God is not required to work according to their plans. He knows all things. “Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world” (Acts

15:18). To think that human reasoning can be better than divine understanding is merely foolish. God knows exactly what should happen and when it should happen. When God's people are willing to yield to His wisdom and timing, all things will work better. Isaac was born to Abraham as God promised. The Lord never issued a time schedule. He never declared that Isaac would be born in five, ten or twenty years. At the appropriate time, when God would receive all honor and glory, the son of promise was born. In God's way and in His time, He brought His will to pass.

3. _____

Abraham's Covenant Went Through Isaac

Once again, many years passed. Abraham grew old and died at the age of one hundred seventy-five years. At his death, Isaac and Ishmael joined together to bury their father. Up to this point, the covenant made between God and Abraham had remained with their father. Now that he was gone, where would the rights and responsibilities of the covenant fall? Some might think it should fall on the shoulders of Ishmael since he had been born first. But Ishmael was born after the principles of the flesh instead of the Spirit. The covenant concerning the people of God would fall on the shoulders of the son of promise, Isaac.

God spoke to Isaac about where and how to live his life. Isaac needed to trust the Lord to help him in all future decisions and actions. As a part of God's message to Isaac, He said the promises given to Abraham would now pass to Isaac. The thoughts and ideas God had shown Abraham so many years before were repeated to Isaac, showing it was now his responsibility to follow God's plan. Through his descendants, all the nations of the earth would be blessed (Gen. 26:4). The hope of the world would come through his lineage. He would be the forbearer of the Messiah.

God has a plan for every person and every family. Those who listen to God and heed His message are those who will produce good works for Him. They will be people of faith and will have an impact on those around them. Isaac endeavored to follow the good example of his father and was blessed by receiving the covenant God had made with his father. As a result, Isaac is classified as one of the patriarchs of Israel. He is held in extreme

honor among his descendants. May all God's people have the desire to leave such a positive example for their children.

Conclusion

The story of Abraham is an account of practical sanctification. As a young man, God had called him to separate from the worldly life-style of his family. He departed and dwelled where the Lord directed Him. His life was not one of perfection. His desire to help God perform His word shows how easy it is to fall short of the will of God. He tried to find ways for God's promise to be fulfilled through human efforts. That can never work. God will always do what He says, but only when He is ready. We must trust Him.

Abraham's faulty efforts produced consequences still being felt today. Much of the trouble in the Middle East springs from the conflict that began with Abraham's two sons—the son of the flesh and the son of promise. Decisions can often produce these kinds of conflicts. This is why it is important for God's people to look to Him with every thought and decision. When God is directing and His people are following, they will make better decisions. The alternative is to stir up trouble. What will we decide to do? Will we follow the Lord, or will we go where the flesh leads?

The **JERUSALEM** Priority
outreach emphasis
"And ye shall be witnesses unto me" Acts 1:8

For more information, visit us on the Web at:
www.thejerusalempriority.org

The Children of Isaac

APPLICATION

To show what can happen in a twisted love environment.

SCRIPTURES TO READ

Text: Genesis 25:18-28.

Related Scripture: Genesis 27:1-46; 28:1-9; 31:1-16; 33:1-16; 35:1-5; 36; 37:1; Deuteronomy 2:8; Malachi 1:2, 3; Colossians 3:5; 1 Thessalonians 4:3; Hebrews 11:20.

Devotional Reading: Decisions Bring Consequences, Hebrews 12:16, 17.

Introduction

The home should be a safe haven for all members of a family. Peace, love and harmony should reign supreme in such a setting. In reality, that does not always happen. The family life of Isaac, Rebekah and their sons was anything but peaceful, loving and harmonious. Instead, their family lives were filled with competitions, partisanships and conflicts. The people who should have been closest to each other were often bickering and deceiving one another.

The study of Esau and Jacob is a study of contrasts. Esau was the firstborn in the family. By the customs of the day, this position would bring him a double portion of the inheritance. Esau was the favorite son of his father. This favoritism was openly expressed. Isaac loved to eat the venison his older son would hunt. Isaac was more concerned with his appetite than with the emotional and spiritual well-being of his sons. His partiality undoubtedly had an impact on the relationship between his two sons. The second born son was Jacob. He was the favorite of Rebekah. She

loved him above everything else. She passed certain behaviors on to her favorite son. She was a little conniving and devious. These traits would be found in Jacob.

The behavior of children is often influenced by their parents. This does not mean all children within a family will turn out the same. There are differences of personalities and preferences. But the behavior of parents will impact the thinking of their children. Even in a home where the parents love the Lord and bring up their children properly, there will be differences. Some will be more responsive to the right path while others will tend to rebel. If this happens in a balanced, loving home, it will be far worse when the family is dysfunctional. The study of the household of Isaac shows how damaging partiality can be.

God had a purpose and a plan for the covenant He had made with Abraham. His promises concerned the future of the world. God would provide the way of salvation. Salvation would come through the descendants of Abraham. The covenant had passed to Abraham's son, Isaac. Now it would pass to the next generation. Which son would receive God's promise?

1. _____ **Esau's Weakness**

Esau loved to hunt. While the rest of the household tended the flocks and grew crops, Esau hunted for game. It was his passion. His love for hunting could have increased because his father approved of the game he provided. It seemed appropriate to Jacob for his eldest son to gallivant around in this pursuit. Since his focus was on these matters, Esau cared little about the spiritual side of life. He thought for the moment, not for the future. This would be one of the pitfalls in his life.

One day, Esau had been out in the fields hunting for food. As he returned home, he was famished. He had exerted so much energy that he felt weak. Jacob, as was his normal custom, had remained around their dwelling. This day, he had cooked up a pot of lentil stew. It smelled savory and Esau wanted some. He expressed himself bluntly. "Feed me, I pray thee, with that same red pottage; for I am faint" (Gen. 25:30). All that mattered to Esau was his present desire. He was hungry and needed a bowl of that stew. His brother offered him a bargain. Give me your birthright and I will give you some stew. Esau, only concerned with the moment, cared little about the birthright. It did not cross his mind that the birthright tied its owner to the Abrahamic

Covenant. It did not enter his thoughts that the birthright might have lasting importance. All he thought about was his empty belly.

It seems much of the world today is following the example of Esau. Many people care little about the future. They will bargain away their eternity for momentary pleasure. They only consider those things that bring them enjoyment right now. To contemplate repenting of sins, trusting in Jesus and following Him is simply beyond their imagination. That would be giving up too much. They do not look ahead to the day they stand in the presence of the righteous Judge and hear the statement, "I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Matt. 7:23). They had the opportunity to turn to Jesus but decided the pleasures of the world were more enticing. This is the well-traveled path that leads to utter destruction (verse 13).

2. _____ **Jacob's Trickery**

Several years had passed since the day Esau bargained away his birthright for a bowl of stew. Esau had thought little about what he had lost in his lopsided bargain. Now, their father was growing older. It was time to give a special blessing to his firstborn and favorite son. He called for Esau. When Esau arrived, Isaac told his son to go to the fields to kill some game. He wanted to taste the savory venison prior to the blessing. Esau departed. Rebekah overheard what her husband said. He was not her favorite, so she devised a plan whereby her choice, Jacob, could receive the special blessing of his father. It would involve trickery.

Rebekah told Jacob to kill two young goats and bring them to her. She would prepare them as though they were wild game. Then, he would take the meat in to his father and receive the blessing. Jacob knew the physical differences between him and his brother. Esau was rough and hairy. Jacob's skin was smooth. He was afraid the deception would turn the blessing into a curse. Rebekah had thought out her scheme. Jacob would take the hairy skin of the goat and put it on his arms and neck. Then, when Isaac felt him, he would be fooled. Jacob relented and did as his mother directed.

Some people think trickery or deception is an acceptable option for victory. In the sporting arena, some athletes take

unauthorized substances to enhance their strength and ability. They want an edge. Their cheating is acceptable to them but not to the governing authorities. When caught, these athletes are suspended or banned from competition. Some people in the business world think deception is an acceptable practice. They will gild the lily to get the advantage. When the product is delivered, it does not meet the expectations because the promise issued was not made in good faith. Future sales will be jeopardized.

God expects people to live by what they say. Jesus said, “But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil” (Matt. 5:37). This simply means for people to say exactly what they mean. If they promise to do something, they must do it to the best of their abilities. Anything less is an evil practice. Trickery and deception are not acceptable to God.

3. _____ **Isaac’s Blessing**

When Jacob brought the goat meat to his father, Isaac was totally fooled. He even asked Jacob, “Art thou my very son Esau?” (Gen. 27:24). Jacob responded that he truly was Esau. Then, Isaac called his son near to kiss him. Isaac smelled the earthiness of the skins on Jacob’s arms and began to pronounce a blessing on his son. The blessing included many things.

Jacob was promised the physical blessings of the earth (verse 28). The earth would bring forth abundantly for the good of Jacob and his descendants. They would possess a land flowing with milk and honey (Ex. 3:8). This was another term to describe how productive and beautiful the land of Israel was. God would greatly bless them.

Jacob also received a promise that nations would honor his descendants and would bow before them. This was fulfilled during the reigns of David and Solomon. The extent of their influence was far-reaching. The promise will be more completely fulfilled when Jesus establishes His millennial kingdom. He is the ultimate King of Israel, and all people will bow in His presence.

The promise also included a statement concerning how other nations would treat Israel. People and nations who curse Jacob or his descendants would receive a curse from God. Those who blessed Jacob or his descendants would receive a blessing.

This has proven true throughout history. The countries which attacked Israel were soon overthrown. Even nations used by God as His tool for punishing Israel met defeat because “cursed be every one that curseth thee” (Gen. 27:29). Some nations, such as the United States historically, have stood behind Israel seeking to support it. One of the first countries to acknowledge the new sovereign nation of Israel in 1948 was the United States. They blessed God’s people and God has in turn blessed the United States because, “blessed be he that blesseth thee” (verse 29).

Isaac pronounced this blessing on Jacob and his descendants thousands of years ago. The truth of the covenant has yet to change. When God gave His promise to Abraham concerning his descendants, it was an everlasting covenant. It is still true today.

Conclusion

This dysfunctional family had much distress in years to come. Esau was so angry over the deception of his brother that he threatened to kill him. Rebekah devised another plan to assure the safety of her favorite son. The plan involved sending him to a distant land so he could remain safe. The fractured family came to pieces as a result of the foolish choices of two different sons.

Families must be careful to be unbiased toward the children. Each child has special talents and traits. Loving parents must give equal love to all children. To do less is to endanger the health of the family. Families can fracture and fall apart. Family members must do everything they can to hold closely together.

The Children of Jacob

APPLICATION

To show how God fulfilled His promise to Abraham.

SCRIPTURES TO READ

Text: Genesis 35:23-26.

Related Scripture: Genesis 28:1-5, 10-16; 29:21-35; 30:1-6;
31:17-24; 32:1-12; 37:1-3, 16-28; 39:6, 21-23; 41:25-38;
42:1-4; 50:15-21; Exodus 1:1-7.

Devotional Reading: Love Makes Time Fly, Genesis 29:14-20.

Introduction

There is a saying which declares, “What goes around, comes around.” It is a modern expression of a biblical truth. It is called the law of reaping and sowing. This truth goes back to the creation where God caused everything to produce after its own kind. The principle was concisely stated by the apostle Paul, “Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap” (Gal. 6:7). The subject of this lesson shows its truth.

Jacob was a trickster. His name actually means “a supplanter or one who grasped the heel to trip a person.” Jacob and Esau were twins. Esau was the elder. When Jacob was born, he reached out and grabbed the heel of his brother. He lived up to his name. He plotted and schemed his way through life. When he (with the help of his mother) tricked his father into giving him the special blessing of the firstborn, trouble really arose. Esau threatened to kill Jacob. He had to flee for his life. He made his way to his mother’s family far to the north. This was where payback for his scheming ways began. It started with his finding a wife.

Laban had two daughters. The elder was Leah. She was not the most beautiful woman. Her younger sister, Rachel, was gorgeous.

Jacob looked on the countenance of the two and chose Rachel. He would serve Laban seven years to win her hand in marriage. He served diligently, and the seven years passed quickly. Now, it was time to receive his wife. One the wedding night, Laban swapped Leah for Rachel. Jacob had been fooled. What he practiced on others came back to haunt him. He had to serve another seven years to gain the hand of his preferred wife, Rachel.

This family had problems from the beginning. The women were jealous of each other. To get more children for Jacob and to be considered the primary wife, each wife gave him her handmaid as a secondary wife. Ultimately, twelve children were born to the dysfunctional family. Jesus declared marriage should be the union of one man and one woman (Matt. 19:4-6). Anything else will cause trouble. That was what Jacob found.

This lesson deals with the children born to Jacob. With the constant bickering and battling going on in the family, it is not surprising for the children to follow their parental example. This will serve to encourage God's people to follow His plan.

1. _____ **The Actions of Joseph's Brothers**

A family not built on biblical principles will always run the risk of troubles. Jacob was a trickster. When it came time for him to begin his own family, he saw what he wanted and pursued it no matter what. He ended up with multiple wives and many children. Each wife sought to advance her own children. But Jacob had his own preference. He loved Joseph the most. He was the son of his favorite wife and had been born only after many years of waiting. He treated Joseph differently. Naturally, this caused much conflict.

Joseph was a deep thinker. He thought about God and considered His will in the decisions he made. Joseph was also obedient to his father. The other sons were slack in their work, but Joseph was diligent and honest. He had some dreams which foretold an unexpected future. The dreams indicated that he would rule his family. The dreams irritated his brothers. "Shalt thou indeed reign over us?" (Gen. 37:8). The normal leader of a family would be the oldest son. Joseph was almost the youngest. Knowing his preference over them, maybe he would gain that position.

A day came when Jacob asked Joseph to go to the fields to make sure his brothers were doing their job. When they saw him in the distance, they said, “Behold, this dreamer cometh” (verse 19). Their dislike was evident. They had devised a plan. They would kill him and be rid of him. Later, they thought better of the murder. They could see no profit in it. They sold him into slavery. Now, they would be rid of him forever.

When people forget to consider God in their decisions, they will normally do the wrong thing. They are accustomed to thinking about personal profit or gain. They wonder how a certain action will benefit them. They do not consider the lasting effects. They just want what they want.

2. _____ **The Aftermath of Their Choice**

The evil actions of these brothers had results that they had not truly considered. They had to return to their father and tell him what had happened. They could not confess the truth. They had to devise another scheme to cover their actions. They devised a story to explain what happened to Joseph. They took his coat of many colors and dipped it into the blood of a goat. They presented it to their father and asked whether it was their brother's. He recognized it and assumed a wild animal had killed him. He mourned exceedingly. “I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning” (Gen. 37:35). The family tried to comfort him but was unable to bring him any consolation. He had lost his favorite son.

The evil choice of the brothers impacted Joseph even more dramatically. He went from a life of privilege as the favored son to a menial slave in a foreign land. He was unfamiliar with their customs and language. He was sold to a man named Potiphar, a chief official for Pharaoh in Egypt. As the lowest of the slaves, he would have the jobs no one else wanted. But Joseph never forgot his God. He knew the God of the universe was there for him even when removed from his family and put in desperate conditions. He faithfully performed his tasks as though they were the most honorable of works. Potiphar took notice of his faithfulness. He began promoting him. Soon, Joseph had risen through the ranks and was considered the most trusted servant in the household. He was the master's steward. All the master owned was entrusted to Joseph.

The day came when Potiphar's wife set her eyes on the attractive, young steward. She propositioned him, but he refused. He knew it would be wickedness against his master and a sin against God. He must do what was right. She was a wicked woman and accused him of inappropriate behavior. Joseph was taken from the household and thrown in prison. Once again, Joseph went from a favored state to that of desperation. But God was still with him. He was faithful in all he did, and the jailer placed trust in him. He was able to help others. He aided Pharaoh's disgraced butler. This ultimately brought Joseph into the employ of Pharaoh. Joseph was given authority in Egypt second only to Pharaoh. How could this happen? It could only come about through God's intervention. God had never abandoned His child.

3. _____ **The Attitude of Joseph**

After many years, a terrible famine struck the land. Joseph had prepared the land of Egypt for those difficult days. Back in the land of Canaan, the famine had begun to affect Jacob and his family. He sent his sons to Egypt because he heard that they had food there. Through the process of events, the brothers had to stand before Joseph as their ruler. What he had dreamed so many years before had come true. He was their master, and they were subject to his desires. Most people would have taken that opportunity to pay back those wicked men for what they had done. Joseph had a better heart than that. He could see things through God's perspective.

Many years passed and Jacob died. The brothers thought Joseph might have been biding his time until his father passed away. Then, he would seek retribution. They came humbly before Joseph and said, "Behold, we be thy servants" (Gen. 50:18). They knew they were vulnerable to his desires. Yet, Joseph replied, "Fear not: for am I in the place of God? But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good" (verses 19, 20). He would never seek revenge. They might have expressed bitterness and hatred toward him those many years before, but he would only extend God's love toward them. He continued to bless them.

People often face times when others who have hurt them are now in a position to be hurt. Many would want to heap coals of fire upon them, to kick them while they are down. It might be natural, but it is not pleasing to the Lord. He wants His people

to have an attitude of forgiveness and love. He wants His people to extend help to others. Paul taught this principle. He wrote, “If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head” (Rom. 12:20). Does this mean to do good so they will feel hurt? No, God’s people will help because it is the right thing to do.

Conclusion

Another dysfunctional family followed the path of wrong behavior. Decisions were made with lasting and dramatic consequences. Yet, through it all, one person maintained the right heart and attitude. How could he do right when so much wrong had been perpetrated upon him? He endeavored to remember God. With God in his heart and on his side, he could endure whatever life brought upon him.

We must have the mind of Christ (Phil. 2:5). When we seek to do things God’s way, we will have a positive impact on those around us. People will see the love of Christ flowing from us. This will give us the opportunity to help them come to a knowledge of Christ. That should be the goal of every child of God.

**Have you placed
your literature order?**



For more information, visit us on the web at:
www.bogardpress.org

The Children of Joseph

APPLICATION

The Lord can use every event in life for mankind's good and God's glory.

SCRIPTURES TO READ

Text: Genesis 41:50-52.

Related Scripture: Deuteronomy 6:5; Joshua 1:1-9; 24:14-28; 1 Samuel 12:24, 25; Proverbs 3:9; Romans 6:12, 13; 12:1, 2; 1 Corinthians 6:20; Philippians 1:20.

Devotional Reading: The Blessings of Focusing on God, Job 23:12.

Introduction

A study of Joseph is a most rewarding and instructive study. He was a man who had every right to be angry and bitter because of what happened to him. Undoubtedly, Joseph had times when he must have wondered exactly why this had all happened to him. He had been obedient to his father. He had loved the Lord. Yet, he had to face a life of servitude in a foreign land. Through all that happened both with his family and in Egypt, Joseph retained his integrity. He wanted to do what was right.

Then, circumstances in his life changed dramatically. He went from slavery and imprisonment to the heights of power. Because of his wisdom and honesty, Joseph was entrusted with the care of the kingdom of Egypt. A great famine was coming, and they needed someone to preserve the nation. Joseph was given authority second only to the Pharaoh. Through all the harsh days of his past, God had brought him to a new place. He was given a wife and began his life of plenty in Egypt. A new name was given to him meaning "sustainer of life." (See Genesis 41:45.) He and his wife Asenath had two sons, Manasseh and

Ephraim. The names Joseph gave to his two sons stand as a testimony of his continued godliness. God's hand had been in all that had happened.

1. _____ **Manasseh—To Forget**

Joseph named his firstborn son, Manasseh. This came from a word meaning "to forget." He declared the reason for giving this name to his son. God "hath made me forget all my toil, and all my father's house" (verse 51). This statement showed his heart and the longing he had felt.

He wanted to forget all his labor and worry over the years. How long had Joseph spent in Egypt from the time he was sold into slavery until he attained the heights of power? He had spent many years in slavery under the hand of Potiphar. After he had been falsely accused of a crime and sentenced to prison, Joseph had spent additional years there. Then, he attained the position of advisor to the Pharaoh. He needed to put all the hurt away. God had brought him through his troubles.

People often tend to hold on to hurts and grievances. They remember every deed done against them in the greatest of detail. It is far better for God's people to forget all the hurts of days gone by. Bitterness will consume a person. "Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: neither give place to the devil" (Eph. 4:26, 27). If people hold on to their anger, it will give the devil a foothold into their lives. Sin will stand at the door awaiting the opportunity to enter (Gen. 4:7). It is far better to forget offenses.

Joseph also said he needed to forget his father's house. Joseph wanted to forget what his brothers had done to him. He could look back and see the hand of God in what had been done. He expressed this when the brothers came to ask forgiveness. His heart was different than theirs had been. He could look back with the knowledge that God had used their actions to accomplish His will. "Ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good" (Gen. 50:20). Joseph forgot the worries and the turmoil of his past.

2. _____ **Ephraim—Fruitful**

Joseph's second son was born as the years of plenty drew to a close. Joseph saw all that God had done and named his

son, Ephraim. This name came from a word meaning “fruitful or having double fruit.” Coming to Egypt in the slave traders’ caravan, Joseph could never have expected this to have happened. God had brought him through the rain, and now, the sunshine of His blessings poured out on him. Now, God had given him a second son. He praised God by acknowledging the fruitful plenty He had brought into his life. This son’s name was that statement of worship and praise. “For God hath caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction” (Gen. 41:52). The good life he now had did not come because of his own worthiness or ability. It came because he had trusted God to help in difficult days.

When God’s people face hardness in life, their response speaks volumes about the condition of their relationship with God. Someone has said that your life is the only Bible some people will ever read. People watch those who claim to be Christians. When God’s people face harsh conditions and despair over their troubles, it gives the message that God cannot sustain them. This attitude will not draw others to Christ. But, when Christians face debilitating troubles with confidence in God, they paint a positive picture of One who cares when difficulties arise. Those without Christ see this kind of life and want what those people possess. This opens doors for God’s people to tell them their source of strength. They can tell them about Jesus.

Joseph’s life was a constant testimony of the goodness and strength of God. He trusted God when facing the direst circumstances imaginable. He trusted God when it appeared there was no reason to do so. He knew God was able to help. When the time came, God opened doors for Joseph to advance. Joseph testified of God’s blessings in his life.

3. _____ **Joseph’s Children Were Blessed**

After Joseph brought his extended family to live in Egypt, Jacob called his son to bring Manasseh and Ephraim into his presence. He wanted to place a blessing on them. Jacob knew his days on earth were limited, and he wanted to express his appreciation to God and Joseph for preserving his line. Jacob adopted Joseph’s sons into his family (Gen. 48:16). They would stand alongside his other sons and would have tribes named after them. They would be as fruitful as his other sons and would be like nations within the people of Israel (verse 19).

There can be generational blessings that pass from parents to children. The New Testament speaks of Lois, Eunice and Timothy. These three generations had been faithful to God and His Word (2 Tim. 1:5). The faith of the grandmother, Lois, was genuine (unfeigned). She had passed it down to her daughter, Eunice. Her faith was also genuine. She had passed it down to her son, Timothy. Paul spoke a promise to the Philippian jailer. The jailer had brought Paul and Silas out of the prison and asked how he could be saved. The response was, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house” (Acts 16:31). When one generation will faithfully serve the Lord and trust Him in all things, the next generation is likely to follow. This shows the importance of parents being fully committed to Christ. It makes it far easier for children to trust in Christ when they see their parents living their faith.

Conclusion

Joseph could have chosen to take life as it came. He could have held a grudge against many people. He could have remained angry at his brothers for their attack on him. He could have remained bitter at Potiphar’s wife because of her false accusation. He could have been irritated at the butler for forgetting to tell Pharaoh immediately of the Hebrew man who had helped him in prison. Instead, Joseph decided to forget the hurts and remember the blessings. God was able to use Joseph because he continued to trust Him.

Our attitude in life is seen by all people, especially our children. We can never expect our children to rise above our attitude and actions. Joseph gives a worthy example of how to handle the hurts of life. We must be forgetful—forget the pains people bring on us. We must be fruitful—serving God through all that comes in life. When we follow this example, our lives will have a greater impact on those around us. Everything that happens in life can be used to honor and glorify Him.

The Children of Amram

APPLICATION

The Lord uses those who have prepared themselves.

SCRIPTURES TO READ

Text: Exodus 2:1-15; 4:14-17, 15-20.

Related Scripture: Exodus 5:1, 2; 6:1-8; 12:3-14; 12:35, 36; 15:1-21; Deuteronomy 7:6-9; 11:26-28; Joshua 24:14, 15; 2 Kings 19:1-8; John 6:66-69; Romans 12:1; 2 Timothy 2:3-5.

Devotional Reading: A Believing People, Exodus 4:27-31.

Introduction

People often say that God works in mysterious ways. Then, they are surprised when He actually does. The people of Israel had gone to Egypt to preserve their existence. God allowed Joseph to be sold into slavery so he could be His tool. Now four hundred years had passed. The Egyptians had forgotten the Hebrew man who had saved them nationally. They only saw the Hebrews as a threat to their security. They decided to do something about it. They forced them into slavery. It might have started with a little menial labor, but it soon escalated into harsh treatment with the purpose of decreasing their numbers. The descendants of Jacob began crying out to God to help them. The help did not come immediately. God had to prepare a deliverer for them.

A man descended from Levi lived during that time. His name was Amram. He was a godly man who married a godly wife, Jochebed. They began raising a family. First, they had a daughter, Miriam. Later they had a son, Aaron. Sometime after Aaron was born, Pharaoh issued a decree that no more male children could be born to the Hebrews. If one were born, he was to be killed. There would be no exceptions. It was during that

time when Jochebed gave birth to a little boy. She feared the Lord more than Pharaoh and would not kill her baby. She hid him for three months. He was at the age she could no longer keep him hidden. She built a watertight basket and lined it with his blanket. Then, she set the baby afloat in the Nile River near the place where Pharaoh's daughter performed her daily bathing ritual. Jochebed gave God the opportunity to preserve the life of her baby. Pharaoh's daughter saw the baby and took him as her own child. God had shown His concern for this loving, devoted family.

The three children of Amram each played an important role during that era. Moses was selected by God to deliver the nation from bondage. However, he did not act alone. God allowed Aaron to act as his spokesman. This team successfully stood against the anger of Pharaoh and through the power of God was able to deliver God's people. They led the people through the Red Sea toward the land of promise. What role did Miriam play? She led the women in their praise and worship. This family helped the people of Israel learn how to respond to their great God.

1. _____

Moses—God's Man

Moses began his life in the most trying of circumstances. He was not supposed to survive his birth. His godly parents preserved the life of their son. When his mother left him to God's care in the Nile, he was found by Pharaoh's daughter. She expressed maternal concern for the child and took him as her own. She called his name Moses, which means "to draw out of the water." When Miriam offered the services of a Hebrew woman to nurse and care for the child, Pharaoh's daughter agreed. Miriam fetched Moses' mother to provide for his needs. Undoubtedly, she did far more than merely nurse the child. She must have told him of his natural heritage. Many years later, Moses chose to be identified with his Hebrew brothers instead of his adopted nation. The only way he could have known they were his kin was if his mother told him. God provided for Moses to have a spiritual education. His mother and father taught him about Jehovah God. They explained the promise made to Abraham that his descendants would be afflicted by a foreign power for four hundred years (Gen. 15:13). He had what was necessary to

gain a right relationship with God. He was being prepared for a mighty task by God.

Being raised in Pharaoh's household had certain benefits. He had the best education available during that era. The colleges of Egypt taught many things—military strategy, writing, science, history, mathematics and more. Only the elite in Egypt had access to this kind of education. If Moses were to lead the people of Israel out of bondage and help them form a sovereign nation, he would need this training. God equipped him for his purpose. This would include more than helping Israel form a government or a military. He needed to be able to pen God's instructions for the people. Moses was the author of the first five books of the Bible. Had he not been trained so completely, he would not have been prepared for his task of writing Scriptures.

His education did not stop there. A time came when Moses was ready to begin leading Israel out of Egypt. He saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew slave. He craftily killed the Egyptian and hid the body (Ex. 2:12). He thought it was time for the Jews to follow him in rebellion. Instead, he had to run for his life. Moses went to the back side of the desert and worked for Jethro tending his sheep. This was also a step of preparation for the man of God. Before coming there, he had been somewhat impulsive. Tending the flocks taught him enormous patience. God prepared him for the task of delivering Israel.

The time came when God was ready for Moses to return as Israel's deliverer. Now, Moses was unsure of his ability to accomplish the task. He replied to God, "O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant: but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue" (Ex. 4:10). But God did not let Moses neglect his duty. He gave him a helper for the task. That helper was his brother, Aaron.

2. _____ **Aaron—God's High Priest**

Aaron was the designated spokesman for Moses. God would speak to Moses, Moses would relate the words to Aaron, and Aaron would relay the message to Pharaoh. This pattern probably elevated Moses in the eyes of those who would witness such exchanges. It would appear that Moses would not even deign to speak to Pharaoh, the ruler of the most powerful nation of earth. Instead, he would let his subordinate speak for him.

These two made a good team in dealing with Pharaoh and his dishonesty. But the power behind all that was done was God. It was God who turned the rod into a serpent. It was God who afflicted Egypt with the plagues. It was God who brought the people of Israel out of Egyptian bondage.

After the people of God left Egypt, they traveled to Mount Sinai to receive the Law of God. As part of the Law, Aaron and his descendants were designated to be God's high priest. They were to care for the Tabernacle, the house of God. All sacrifices to the Lord came through the priests. No others had the authority to slay and burn an offering to God. This was a great honor. But with great honor came great responsibility. He and his descendants were to be the spiritual leaders of the nation. It is difficult for a people to rise higher than their spiritual leadership. This is why the pastor of a church must be committed to Christ and His way. He provides the example for the people to follow. If he will not serve the Lord, it is unlikely the people will be committed.

3. _____ **Miriam—God's Worship**

Miriam was in a special position among the children of Amram. She was the oldest child. As such, she took on herself a great amount of responsibility. At times she seemed to assume the authority to tell Moses what he should or should not do. However, the task of leading Moses really was God's work.

Miriam held a position of high honor among the ladies of Israel. When the Lord brought them through the Red Sea, Moses lifted up a new song for them to sing. As he led them in praise to God for His deliverance, Miriam took the lead in directing the women's choir (Ex. 15:20). Their song glorified God for what He had done in destroying their enemies. The women's choir must have had a beautiful sound.

All people in the church, women, men and children, should join in the worship of God. If there is anything good that has happened to the people, it has come from the hand of God (James 1:17). They needed to lift up the name of the One who had so blessed them. He was and is worthy of all glory. The Bible tells of a heavenly scene when all who will be there join in a wondrous anthem of praise to the Lamb. It begins with the angelic throng lifting up their voices. "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour,

and glory, and blessing” (Rev. 5:12) Then, every person in Heaven joins in a glorious song. “Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever” (verse 13). God’s people should want to offer Him that kind of praise today.

Conclusion

The children of Amram helped the people of Israel develop into the nation God wanted. Each had a role. They were not perfect. Moses struck the rock the second time when God told him to speak to it. Aaron formed the golden calf as a symbol of worship. Miriam questioned the leadership capabilities of Moses. In spite of their frailties, they were used by God in His service.

This is the way God always works. He takes us as we are and develops us into people of service and worship. We must yield to Him and become what He wants. This will take preparation on our part. Are we willing to let God lead where He wants us to go?

**It’s later than you
think. Order now!**



For more information, visit us on the web at:

www.bogardpress.org

The Children of Aaron

APPLICATION

God has the power to honor and humble His servants.

SCRIPTURES TO READ

Text: Exodus 6:23; 29:1-14.

Related Scripture: Genesis 4:3, 4; 8:20-22; 12:8; 35:6, 7;
Exodus 24:3-5, 11; 28; Leviticus 10:12; 16:4; 21:17;
Numbers 3:5-10; 18:1-7, 25, 26; Hebrews 7; 10:11, 12;
1 Peter 2:9.

Devotional Reading: Rebellion Toward God Is Not Good,
1 Samuel 15:1-26.

Introduction

Aaron had been chosen by God to serve as the priest for the nation of Israel. Up to this point, the people of Israel had served God under the patriarchal system. This means the eldest male in the family served as the family priest. An example of this practice was shown in the book of Job. He had ten children (seven sons and three daughters). They were a close-knit group and alternated eating at each others' houses. Job was a godly man and wanted his family to remain close to God. When their feasting was completed, Job would offer a sacrifice to God on behalf of his family. If someone had done something wrong or if one had an inappropriate thought, Job wanted to make intercession on his behalf. This was his continual practice (Job 1:5). He was the family priest.

When the people of Israel came to Mount Sinai, they had a new pattern of worship. Rather than having hundreds of family priests, God set aside one particular tribe to serve as the spiritual leaders of the nation. Out of that tribe (the tribe of Levi) God

chose Aaron and his sons to serve as the high priests. He would be the primary liaison between God and the nation. Sacrifices to be presented to God must be brought to Aaron or his sons.

A time came when some people questioned the authority of Aaron to stand in that position. The main leaders of this faction were Korah, Dathan and Abiram. They gathered up two hundred fifty other men to challenge Aaron. The Lord confirmed Aaron His choice to serve as high priest. No one else would have authority to serve in that capacity.

This lesson deals with two sets of Aaron's sons. Nadab and Abihu made a wrong choice in their decision to follow in their father's footsteps. Eleazar and Ithamar made a better choice. God wants to honor and bless His servants. It is sad when God's people make the wrong choices. God will not honor foolish and sinful choices. Instead, He will do what is necessary to maintain His own integrity and holiness. The choices of these men serve as a warning and an encouragement to the people of God.

1. _____

Nadab and Abihu Made a Foolish Choice

Nadab and Abihu were the older sons of Aaron. Traditionally, Nadab would follow his father as the next high priest. However, their hearts were not right with God. They did not really believe all that God had commanded their father. A time came when they were serving in the office of priest. They were to offer sacrifices to the Lord. He condemned them saying they "offered strange fire before the LORD, which he commanded them not" (Lev. 10:1). Exactly what was the offense described as offering strange (foreign or profane) fire to God?

The time of the offering could have been wrong. The priests were to burn incense in the morning and evening. The manner of the burning indicates burning would fill the Tabernacle with the fragrance. It would remain until the evening sacrifice. When the morning sacrifice was burned, the priest would take that fire and ignite the incense. If the morning sacrifice was not offered at the appropriate time, then, it was not acceptable to God. The fire would have been common and not sacred. It could be that Nadab and Abihu had not completed the sacrifice at the appropriate time, so they thought it proper to take any fire into

the Tabernacle and burn the incense. This strange fire would not be accepted by God.

Reading further in the passage of Scripture indicates they could have been intoxicated when trying to fill the office of priest. Verse 9 commands the priests to refrain from drinking any alcoholic beverage when serving in that position. Nadab and Abihu might have taken strong drink prior to their service. God wanted His spiritual leaders to be controlled only by Him, not by strong drink. This is true for God's people today. Some want to excuse social or occasional drinking. They think if a person does not drink to excess, then, it is fine with God. His admonition against the use of alcoholic beverages is clear. "Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright" (Prov. 23:31). The inspired warning of Solomon was not even to look upon it. It will bring sorrow to one's life. "Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise" (Prov. 20:1). God would not be pleased if His spiritual leaders resorted to such foolish behavior.

God was so displeased with the actions of Nadab and Abihu that He killed them on the spot. He did not allow them to complete their sinful act. The people needed to know the importance of the office of priest. Those who would follow in the office should be more mindful of the will of God.

2. _____

Eleazar and Ithamar Made the Right Choice

When the older sons of Aaron wrongfully offered fire before the Lord, they were killed and removed from their office. Aaron had two other sons who now were moved into the vacated positions. "Eleazar and Ithamar ministered in the priest's office in the sight of Aaron their father" (Num. 3:4). They had seen the bad example of their older brothers and determined they would follow the commandments of God.

Their responsibility from that day forward was to minister in the Tabernacle and serve the people of Israel. When people brought sacrifices to the Lord, they would properly and reverently handle what had been dedicated to the Lord. The prescribed methods of killing, apportioning and burning the offering must be followed. They knew the consequences of failure. They faithfully

discharged their duties. Their faithfulness to God was shown in the conduct of the next generation. Eleazar had a son named Phinehas. Some of the people grew lax in their commitment to the Word of God. He had forbidden them to intermarry with the Midianites. Yet, one man did so and brought his foreign wife to the house of God. Phinehas was overcome with righteous indignation. He took action which caused the sin of the man and the nation to be forgiven by God. Phinehas was not concerned with the approval of other people. He did what was pleasing to God. The faithfulness and commitment of the father had been taught to the son.

It is vital for God's people to make right decisions. When children in the family watch their father or mother claim Christian faith but walk by a different standard, the children are confused. They need a strong example that comes by living the truth of God's Word. When Christianity is practiced in the sight of a family's children, it influences their decisions. They will tend to follow the godly example of their parents.

3. _____

Eleazar Followed His Father as High Priest

The people of Israel had to spend forty years in the wilderness because of their failure to obey God. The generation which came out of Egypt died in the wilderness except Joshua and Caleb. The time for Aaron's departure came. Moses took the garments from his brother and clothed Eleazar with them. This was a transfer of authority and responsibility from one generation to the next. Aaron would soon die. The people of Israel would need a spiritual leader to keep their focus on God. He would have the responsibility of making sure the worship of Jehovah continued according to His Law. God would not leave the Israelites without that help.

God's plan is not one for the moment. It is a plan for the ages. He has given the promise, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Heb. 13:5). In every age He has a purpose for His people to follow. Since He wants the faith to continue from generation to generation, He provides those who will lead in His work. They have the opportunity to train others so they will also know the truth. Paul was a good example of this pattern. When he wrote his second letter to Timothy, Paul was approaching the end of

his life. He was in prison awaiting his execution. Until the end, he was intent in giving final words of advice to those who would follow in his footsteps. Every church is one generation away from dying. If there is no preparation made for a church to maintain its faith or if there is no preparation made to reach new converts for Christ, a church will fade away. God sets forth those who can teach and prepare the next generation.

Eleazar was used by God to continue His plan for worship, sacrifice and service in the nation of Israel. Aaron had been their leader for about forty years. His time had faded away. God passed the baton to the next generation by appointing Aaron's son, Eleazar, to fill his position. God always prepares for the future.

Conclusion

As has been seen in the families examined in this study, the sons of Aaron were raised in the same basic manner. The difference in their actions came down to their choices. In this lesson, God showed His displeasure with the rebellion of Nadab and Abihu. He punished them severely because they held a position with much influence. People needed to know not to disobey God.

In looking at God's plan for our lives, we must willingly, even joyfully respond to His call. What He wants is the right thing for life. When we obey and follow His direction, we will receive His approval. There can be nothing greater than to hear Him say one day, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant" (Matt. 25:21).

The Children of Samuel

APPLICATION

Godly parents may not have godly children even with godly training.

SCRIPTURES TO READ

Text: 1 Samuel 8:1-7.

Related Scripture: Numbers 20:3, 10; Judges 2:6-13; 3:9-11; 2 Samuel 9; 15:1-10; 16:1-3; Nehemiah 9:24-26; Psalm 107:11; Proverbs 11:18; Isaiah 1:2, 3; 58:1-3; Ephesians 6:1-4; Colossians 3:20; James 3:18.

Devotional Reading: Ministers Must Not Neglect Child Training, 1 Samuel 2:11-17.

Introduction

The story of Samuel is one that genders many emotions. To think of his birth generates feelings of compassion over a woman who desperately wanted to become a mother. She prayed diligently and fervently, and God finally blessed her with a son, Samuel. His childhood shows that even young children can be committed to God. He took the duties of the priesthood and was the servant of God.

Being reared in a godly home does not insure godly children will follow. Samuel was raised in such a home. His mother, Hannah, was totally committed to God. His father, Elkanah, also loved the Lord. He faithfully served Him and brought the needed sacrifices into His presence. Samuel was taught the most intricate details of the Law. One would naturally assume his sons would follow in his footsteps. Instead, they totally failed in spiritual matters. What sorrow must have come to Samuel's heart! But his disappointment did not keep him from serving

God. He continued in the proper course for the remainder of his life.

This lesson will deal with the matter of generational faith. This is a principle taught throughout Scripture. The New Testament tells of a young man named Timothy. He was a servant of the Lord who had gained his faith by watching the previous generations. His grandmother, Lois, was a faithful woman who loved the Lord. She taught her daughter, Eunice, the love of God. She, in turn, taught Timothy the way of the Lord. One generation taught the next, and they followed. This was, undoubtedly, what Samuel hoped would happen with his sons. He wanted them to serve the Lord. He had high spiritual hopes for his family.

1. _____ **Samuel Obeyed God**

Samuel's life had been dedicated to God. His birth came about because his mother brought her petitions before the Lord. She prayed year after year that she would have a child. Her son would be dedicated to the Lord. When Samuel was finally born, Hannah did not go back on her promise. When the child was weaned, she brought him to the house of God to be used in His service. Samuel was raised by the high priest, Eli. While Samuel was still a young boy, God began dealing with him. He spoke to him in the night. This was a rare occurrence during that time (1 Sam. 3:1). "And Samuel grew, and the LORD was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground" (verse 19). Nothing God said was unimportant to Samuel. The people had the opportunity to hear God's message because of Samuel's faithfulness.

The people of Israel were rebellious. They drifted in their worship. They embraced the gods of the people around them. When that happened, God brought punishment upon them. The people of Israel went out against the Philistines and were soundly defeated. They had been treating the ark of God as a good luck charm. The Philistines captured the ark and took it to their city. The people of Israel were in disarray. Eli, the old priest, was dead. They had no idea what to do. Samuel had grown up and was brought into the priesthood. He would draw them back to God. He prayed and brought an offering to the Lord. He told the people of their need to turn from their idolatry and worship God alone. God responded and gave them victory over

the Philistines. God blessed the people because they followed the godly leadership of Samuel.

God's people always need godly leadership. A church is truly blessed if it has a pastor who will seek God's face and endeavor to lead the people toward Him. They should honor the man who will faithfully minister the Word of God to the church (1 Tim. 5:17).

2. _____ **His Sons Disobeyed God**

Little is known of the sons God gave to Samuel. Samuel was committed to the work of God. He spent much time in accomplishing the responsibilities he had. He was not content to sit in one place and hope the people came to him for advice. He rode a circuit throughout the land so all people could hear God's message (1 Sam. 7:16, 17). Possibly because he was absent so much from his family's life, Samuel's sons did not turn out like he would have wanted. He wanted them to be judges over Israel, but their life-style was not up to Samuel's standard. They were greedy and perverted their judgment to gain wealth. They could not be trusted to lead in the way of God. The government leaders said to Samuel, "Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways" (1 Sam. 8:5). This judgment must have broken his heart. His sons were his pride and joy, yet, they had not learned from his example. Life would be different for the nation of Israel from that day forward.

Parents always have hopes and dreams for their children. They want them to follow the right paths, to be successful in life and to have a positive impact on others. Sometimes it does not work out the way they desire. A child might be rebellious and get involved in matters to be avoided. Parents are grieved when such things happen. Instead of wallowing in despair, they should objectively examine why the son or daughter turned out the way he or she did. Could the parent have done something more to direct the child toward Jesus? This is the reason parents must be careful about how they conduct their lives. Parents who try to teach honesty and integrity to their children live with honesty and integrity. To desire honesty, then to take office supplies from work gives a mixed signal. To desire truthfulness, then to lie on tax forms shows that telling the truth is not really

important. If God's people want their children to follow the path of righteousness, they must train them by example (Prov. 22:6). Then, they can have hope the children will turn out right.

3. _____ **Israel Rejected God as Their King**

When the people of Israel saw the wickedness of Samuel's sons, they refused to follow their leadership. They came to Samuel with a request. They wanted him to appoint them a king to reign over them. Samuel was not pleased with their request. He understood they were turning away from the method of government God wanted for them. Yet, they were persistent. They wanted to be like the nations around them. This would give them a centralized government. They felt this would provide a little more national security. Samuel took their request to God.

The Lord answered Samuel's prayer with words of enlightenment. Samuel was disturbed because they appeared to be questioning his character and his work among them. He had been honest and aboveboard throughout the years. Still, they had turned away from him. God told Samuel he had it all wrong. "They have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them" (1 Sam. 8:7). God had desired to be their King. He wanted to direct their steps and provide for their needs. The people were not satisfied with that kind of leadership. They wanted an earthly king to reign over them. Samuel was faithful once again and provided a king of their liking for them. Saul was tall, strong, good-looking and fierce. He was exactly what the people wanted. Samuel was obedient to God, even though the nation would experience trouble because of what they had chosen.

God still wants to rule over the lives of His people. The Bible describes Jesus as "the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords" (1 Tim. 6:15). He has the right to rule over the universe because He is its Creator. Nothing came into existence apart from His mighty hand. In spite of this, people do not want to relinquish control of their lives. It is as foolish to ignore God today as it was in Israel those thousands of years ago. No life will be what it should as long as God is neglected. Spiritual wisdom causes people to look to God for guidance and then to follow that leadership.

Conclusion

Samuel came on the scene when the nation was at a spiritually low point. The people did not look to God. Because of their neglect, He had not sent His message to them for a long time. When Samuel came along with his heart of devotion, things began to change. He endeavored to lead them in the right way. The problem was that his sons did not follow his godly example. They rebelled against God. This caused the people to turn away from God's plan and desire an earthly government. This came about because the children of godly parents did not follow the godly example.

Parents need to learn the important lesson of teaching children the ways of righteousness. Churches need godly parents leading families in the proper way. Then, children will be more likely to go in the right way. Does this mean every child will turn out the proper way? No, there will always be some who rebel. This does not lessen the responsibility of trying to teach children the right course of living.

How long does this instruction of children continue? The responsibility of giving the proper example for others to follow never leaves. When our children grow up and begin families of their own, we still should try to help them learn. We have made mistakes that can help them if we are willing to share. We must always seek to draw our children closer to the path of righteousness that God desires. Then, we can understand the statement of the writer of Proverbs. "A wise son maketh a glad father" (Prov. 10:1).



For more information, visit us on the web at:
www.bogardpress.org/vbs2010

The Children of Jesse

APPLICATION

God looks on the hearts of people, not their statures.

SCRIPTURES TO READ

Text: 1 Samuel 16:1-13.

Related Scripture: 1 Samuel 18:1-4; 20:42; 23:16-18; 24:4-12; 26:8-25; 30:7-9; 2 Samuel 8:6, 7; 22; Matthew 5:8; 22:37; Acts 13:22; Romans 10:1; Ephesians 3:17-21; Colossians 3:15; 1 Thessalonians 3:13; 1 Peter 3:15.

Devotional Reading: Seek the Lord's Will, 1 Samuel 23:1-4.

Introduction

Jesse was a man with a special heritage. His grandparents had been Boaz and Ruth. Ruth was the Moabite woman who had shown great commitment to her Jewish mother-in-law. Ruth had accepted the God of Israel. Her faithfulness was rewarded by God in that He gave her Boaz as a husband. This couple had a son named Obed. Obed had a son named Jesse. He had undoubtedly heard the story about how Ruth followed Naomi to Bethlehem and worked hard to provide for them both. He knew the story of God's blessing.

With such a spiritual heritage, one would naturally assume all offspring to be godly and committed to Jehovah. As has been seen throughout this study, that assumption is not necessarily true. It often happens that a majority of a generation thinks little of God, while one child continually considers the wonder and majesty of the Lord. The children of Jesse followed this pattern. Of the eight sons Jesse brought into the world, only one made his life available to God. The difference in priorities set the stage for future events.

People have always thought the strongest, fastest or smartest would be the ones who would prevail in any contest or situation. Solomon looked at life and concluded that “the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill” (Eccl. 9:11). He knew every person faced the same difficulties and failures. He had undoubtedly learned that lesson from listening to his father discussing his early life and his treatment by his brothers. This lesson will focus on the difference between David and his brothers. God does not make His decision based on the outer appearance of a person. He looks on the heart.

1. _____ **Selecting a King for Israel**

The nation of Israel desired a king so it could be like other nations. Saul had been selected to rule the nation. He did not obey the commandments of God and was rejected as king. The Lord instructed Samuel to select a candidate acceptable to God. He was to go to Bethlehem to the household of Jesse. There, he would find God’s choice for the next king (1 Sam. 16:1).

Samuel called for Jesse and his sons to pass before him. It would be natural for the oldest son to be the most prominent from a family. Eliab, the eldest brother, passed first before Samuel. He was handsome, tall and strong. When Samuel looked at him, he concluded, “Surely the LORD’s anointed is before him” (verse 6). God did not consider Eliab to be the proper choice for king. He warned Samuel to exercise care in anointing the next ruler of Israel. It was to be God’s choice, not the choice of human intellect. That was what had brought Saul to the position of leadership. He was tall and good-looking. He had all the physical attributes desired by human reasoning. Saul had no spiritual strength. God does not look on outer appearance. He looks on the heart. David had the kind of heart that pleased God. David’s attitude was far more important than his military prowess or physical strength. He was humble, loved God and would trust Him all of his life. Then, God would receive the glory for what was accomplished in the nation.

Samuel went through the brothers beginning at the eldest and continuing through the older seven sons. When they had all passed by, he asked, “Are here all thy children?” (verse 11).

There was one son remaining. David had remained in the fields watching over the flocks of his father. He loved the beauty of creation. He wrote many songs (psalms) describing the wonder of the universe. Samuel commanded him to be brought before him. They would not even sit down until the youngest son was presented to him. When David came to Samuel, he was a handsome, well-proportioned person. There was nothing about him that naturally disqualified him. He had been left out because of his age, not his quality. When Samuel saw David, the Lord spoke to him and said, “Arise, anoint him: for this is he” (verse 12). The next king of Israel was selected and anointed for the office.

What happened in Jesse’s household that day is something people do today. They look on the appearance of an individual and judge his or her ability by what they see. Spiritual strength is not determined by physical appearance. A person might be a physical giant and a spiritual pygmy. Saul proved this point. He stood head and shoulders taller than the average Israelite. He had physical strength and good looks. But those qualities will not qualify anyone to be a godly leader. There must be certain inner strength. God wanted the next king to be in tune with His will. He looked on David and declared, “I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfil all my will” (Acts 13:22). This is the heart and attitude God wants from His servants today. They need to know and follow God’s will for their lives.

2. _____ **The Attitude of the Brothers**

Sometime after David was anointed king, the people of Israel faced a battle against the Philistines. Three of the older sons of Jesse had joined the army of Israel. They served under King Saul. They did not accept their youngest brother as their king. They trusted and followed Saul.

The battle between the armies was set in array. The Philistines had their position and camp set on one mountain. The Israelites established their position on a hill across the valley. Both armies waited for the right time to attack. One day a Philistine soldier separated himself from his forces. He issued a challenge. The Israelite army would send out a champion to fight against him. The winner would be the victor of the battle, and the other army

would serve as slaves. The Philistine champion was the giant Goliath. Fear spread throughout the camp of the Israelites. No one could stand against such a monstrosity. What could they do?

About that time, Jesse sent David to see how his older brothers fared in the army. He arrived at the camp at the same moment Goliath issued his daily challenge. David was angry that an uncircumcised Philistine could insult Jehovah and get away with it. David wanted to do something. His oldest brother, Eliab, heard the questions he was asking and became angry. “Why camest thou down hither? and with whom hast thou left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know thy pride, and the naughtiness of thine heart; for thou art come down that thou mightest see the battle” (1 Sam. 17:28). Eliab was angry because David proposed to do something when the military had only been cowering in fear. Eliab had done nothing and did not want his brother to do anything. David answered, “Is there not a cause?” (verse 29). For forty days Eliab and all other members of the army had not considered a plan of attack to defeat the enemy of God. David knew the attack of Goliath was not solely against the army. It was blasphemy against God. He wanted to stand for the honor and integrity of His Redeemer. David was willing to go into battle because he would fight through God’s power.

In this instance, David showed his spiritual strength. He trusted the Lord. Many battles should not be fought through physical prowess. They should be approached on the bent knee. No real victory will come apart from His help. God’s people need to trust Him instead of running into battle with earthly weapons.

Conclusion

A great difference existed between David and his brothers. They probably were good people, but they did not have strong spiritual qualities. David knew every victory came through the power of God. He pressed forward in life because he trusted the Lord.

When attempting any work for the Lord, we would be wise to let God do the heavy lifting. We need to yield to Him and let Him work through us. Then, great things can be accomplished for His glory.

The Children of David

APPLICATION

David's love of women created problems in his family.

SCRIPTURES TO READ

Text: 1 Kings 11:1-6.

Related Scripture: Exodus 30:14; Deuteronomy 17:14-17; Psalms 81:11, 12; 106:14; Proverbs 6:25; Jeremiah 9:2; Matthew 5:28; 1 Corinthians 10:6; Galatians 5:16; 2 Timothy 2:22; James 1:15; 2 Peter 2:10; 1 John 2:15-17.

Devotional Reading: A Strong Lesson from God, 2 Samuel 12:1-13.

Introduction

When God instructed Samuel to search out a man after His heart (1 Sam. 13:14), the one who fit the criteria was David. His early life was filled with days beholding the beauty of the creation. He wrote and sang many psalms in honor of God. Yet, when his family is considered, one can see many horrible things they did. How can this be explained? His efforts as king must have dominated his time. It is possible that he spent little if any time with his children. This means the task of teaching them spiritual values fell to someone else. Not all of David's wives had the same spiritual concern he had. The luxuries of being raised in the king's palace could have contributed to their selfishness and worldly attitudes. Many things in the family life of David contributed to the sinful decisions of his children.

Someone has rightly said that everything counts! Everything that happens has an impact on the thought processes of the individual. Nobody knows all that goes on in a family except those who experience it. People in church may look at a family

and see their behavior while engaged in church activities. They might assume each person in that family is truly committed to Christ. They cannot hear the constant bickering and complaining that takes place on a daily basis. When parents offer one set of standards while in public and then another when in private, the children can only see the hypocrisy being exhibited. The children learn to hold church as having no importance or value. Parenting is truly a blessing, but it comes with responsibility. Parents must take every opportunity to train their children in the ways they should go. “Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it” (Prov. 22:6).

1. _____ **The Example of David**

Before examining the conduct of children, one must first remember his upbringing. David was considered a man after God’s own heart, but his life was far from perfect. Many things disagreed with God’s will. These things had a negative impact on his children.

David had numerous wives and concubines. When God gave instructions for the conduct of their ruler, He warned about the danger of the king taking many wives (Deut. 17:17). This would cause him to turn his heart away from God. When He established the union between husband and wife, He declared it was to be a lifelong joining of one man and one woman. He never intended a man to have multiple wives. Every example given in the Bible where a man married more than one wife showed troubles coming to the family. David’s multiple partners set a bad example for his sons to follow.

David had an adulterous affair with Bath-sheba. His actions on that day brought a legacy of trouble to his family. He had committed the sin and had tried to cover it up. But God sees all things. Nathan the prophet came to David with God’s judgment. “Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house” (2 Sam. 12:11). Once again, his actions had set a bad example for his sons, and they were quick to learn the wrong thing to do.

Parents must set the proper example for their children to follow. Children look up to their parents and want to imitate them. The wrong actions of parents are as easy to learn as good acts. Godly parents will seek to establish a spiritual heritage for their children to see.

The sons of David did not live to please God or their father. However, they had learned their lessons at their father's knee. They knew how to live according to the pleasures of their hearts.

Sometime after the affair between David and Bath-sheba, David's oldest son, Amnon, yielded to his lustful desires. The beauty of his half sister Tamar was such that he could not contain his passion. He conspired with an evil friend about how to have a physical relationship with her. When she refused, he was so consumed with lust that he forced himself upon her. When he got what he wanted, his attitude changed, and he cast her out of his presence. Tamar's brother was Absalom. He was as crafty as his half brother. He manipulated his father into causing Amnon to come to his house. At the chosen time, Absalom brought about the murder of his half brother. Sorrow had begun to come into the household of David.

But Absalom was not finished with his hateful, proud ways. He wanted to be king instead of his father. He began working among the people to steal their hearts away from his father. He accused David of being unconcerned with the needs of the people. Only he, Absalom, really cared for them. He proclaimed himself king of Israel. He sent his armies to pursue his father to kill him. He cared nothing about the man who had given him life. He only wanted to advance himself. In one battle against David, Absalom had to flee in fear. As his mule ran under the boughs of an oak tree, his hair caught in the branches and held him there. The chief captain of David's army, Joab, thrust lances through his heart and killed him. Sorrow continued to grow in the household of David.

Many years passed. David grew old and infirm. He had selected Solomon to succeed him as king. David was so weak he did not rise out of his bed. Adonijah, another of David's sons, decided to proclaim himself king. He chose certain of the leaders of Israel and brought them into his cabinet. He did everything he could to establish his right to the throne. He did this in spite of David's decision to have Solomon follow him on the throne. Word came to David, and he made certain that his choice and God's choice would sit on the throne of Israel. Even at the end of his life, David experienced the sorrow of a broken home.

The actions of a family's children can bring great sadness and sorrow to the hearts of the parents. Solomon wrote of this truth when he penned the words, "A foolish son is a grief to his father, and bitterness to her that bare him" (Prov. 17:25). He further wrote, "A foolish son is the calamity of his father" (Prov. 19:13). David would have borne witness to that truth. He knew the sorrow of sons making foolish choices.

3. _____ **The Experience of Solomon**

Solomon followed David as king. The young man began his reign with a marvelous attitude. He went to the place of sacrifice and offered a thousand burnt-offerings to God. The Lord came to him that night in a dream. Solomon could choose anything he wanted, and God would grant his request. Solomon could have asked for great wealth, long life or political power. Instead, he asked God to give him wisdom to lead the great people of Israel (1 Kings 3:9). The request pleased the Lord. He gave him what he wanted. But God was gracious to Solomon. Because he had been so humble in his prayer, God also granted those things he did not request. He would have wisdom, riches and honor (verse 13, 14). The Lord also promised if he would remain faithful in his worship, he would have a long life of peace. Solomon awoke from sleep and began another time of worship. He was thankful for the promise he had received.

Things would have been good in the life of Solomon if he had only maintained that humble, worshipful heart. Instead, he fell prey to the same vices that afflicted his father. He had a great desire for women. He married three hundred wives and had seven hundred concubines. Many of the wives and concubines were probably little more than prizes for peace treaties signed with various cities and nations surrounding Israel. He was foolish to unite with the pagans of those nations. His wives turned his heart away from God. He forsook the One who had placed him on the throne.

It is good for a person to have a godly heart. When people grow up knowing the Lord not only as Savior, but also as Lord, they tend to hold on to that mind-set as life continues. If the Lord is only considered on Sunday morning when it is time to go to church, then it is unlikely He will continue to influence their lives in later years. God does not want people only to serve Him

for a while. He wants them to be dedicated for life. God's people must teach their children more than ritual service to God. They must learn to love the Lord with all their hearts. Then, they will not drift away from Him when life grows difficult.

Conclusion

David had the potential to be a positive example to his children. He had grown up with a heart dedicated to God. He had written psalms of worship to the Lord. That same God had brought him to the throne. On various occasions in his life, David forgot that fact. He would engage in activities which caused a breach in his fellowship with God. When chastened, he would repent and return to the Lord. But those bad days left a lasting impression on the minds of his children. They often followed the bad influence instead of the good.

Parents must be careful not to be hypocritical in their lives. When we say one thing at church and another when we get home, we are showing our children that church is not really that important. May we always endeavor to set the right example for our children to follow.

The Children of Jona

APPLICATION

God calls men into His ministry, but they must answer His call.

SCRIPTURES TO READ

Text: Matthew 4:18, 19; 16:13-17.

Related Scripture: Matthew 10:2; 14:29; 15:15; 18:21; 19:27; 26:31-35; Mark 11:21; 13:3; Luke 5:1-9; 8:45; 12:41; John 12:20-22; 21:15-22; Acts 1:21, 22; 1 Corinthians 9:5.

Devotional Reading: Christlikeness Is Learning Restraint, 1 Peter 1:21-23.

Introduction

The children of Jona were Peter and Andrew. Little information is given about their upbringing. Most of what can be determined must be derived from deduction. They were raised in the region of Galilee in or around the city of Bethsaida (John 1:44). Their family probably had a fishing business because that was the occupation held by these two brothers. They owned a house in Capernaum (Mark 1:29). They fished in the same area as James and John.

Their spiritual education came as with most Jewish boys. They would have learned their letters and the Old Testament Scriptures. They must have been taught the reality of the coming Messiah. Their hearts were ready to believe. When John the Baptist began preaching, they traveled to hear him. His message touched their hearts. They believed his message of repentance and faith. They were baptized and followed him for a time.

These brothers show how different siblings can be. Born in the same family, raised in a similar fashion, yet, they were different in personality, demeanor and action. Though so dissimilar, they both had responsibilities in the work of the Savior. God does not want every person to be the same. People with their diverse personalities and distinct abilities should know what God wants. No two people will have the same tasks from the Lord. Paul compared the work people have to the function of the body. The body is more than hearing, seeing or smelling (1 Cor. 12:17). If everybody did the same job, much of God's work would go undone. God has various purposes for His children. They must be willing to find their responsibility and accomplish God's will.

1. _____ **Andrew, the Ready Witness**

When asked to name the twelve apostles, Andrew is rarely the first one people consider. Andrew was an unassuming, ordinary person. He was not the one in the crowd who always stuck out. He would fade into the background. In spite of this meek demeanor, Andrew was an important part of the first church. His greatest ministry was his desire to bring people to Jesus. He wanted to introduce them to the only One who could make a lasting difference in their lives. This work began when he drew his brother toward Christ.

Andrew and Peter had followed John the Baptist. John was to prepare a people to follow the coming Messiah. Some people came to John because they thought he was the Christ. He quickly told them, "I am not the Christ" (John 1:20). When asked his purpose of preaching, he replied, "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord" (verse 23). One day Jesus passed that way. Two disciples were with John when he said, "Behold the Lamb of God" (verse 36). One of those disciples was Andrew. Immediately, he began following Jesus. They briefly talked, and he stayed with Jesus that day. As soon as he was able, Andrew searched out his brother and said, "We have found the Messiah" (verse 41). He brought Peter to Jesus. He was thankful he could introduce his brother to the Christ. Everything Peter was to do can be traced to Andrew's willingness to bring him to Jesus. The great sermon on the day of Pentecost produced three thousand professions of faith. Though

Peter preached the sermon, Andrew will get some of the blessing because he brought Peter to Christ.

On another occasion some “Greeks” wanted to meet Jesus. They had come to the Temple to offer worship to God. They might have heard Jesus preach, or they might have only heard of His work. They wanted to meet Him. They approached the disciples with their request, “Sir, we would see Jesus” (John 12:21). The One who can meet the needs of all people is Jesus. Andrew and Philip brought them to meet the Savior. Were these men Gentiles or Hellenized Jews? While this question cannot be definitely answered, the importance of what Andrew and Philip did was important. These men (whether Gentiles or Hellenized Jews) would not have been accepted by orthodox Jews. Yet, they were readily admitted into the presence of the Christ. Andrew knew He was the Savior of all people, not only of the Jews.

When Jesus was in the mountainous area near the Sea of Galilee, a vast multitude came to listen to His preaching. As the day drew near its end, Jesus told the disciples to give the people food to eat. They had no food to give. Andrew brought a young lad into the presence of the Lord. This boy had offered his lunch to Jesus, but it was only five small loaves and two small fishes. As Andrew brought it to the Lord, he concluded, “But what are they among so many?” (John 6:9). The Lord would use Andrew’s meek statement to illustrate how great His power really was. He took those small pieces of bread and fish, broke them and fed five thousand men along with their families. This small work of introducing a lad to Jesus led to a marvelous manifestation of the power of God.

God’s people often think their work is of no value. They have no talents and they can do so little. The Lord has need of every person. Everybody has a circle of acquaintances who are unique to him. God can use any person who is willing to stand up for Him. If He could use meek and unassuming Andrew in such a dynamic way, He can use anyone. People need to yield to His will and submit to Him.

2. _____

Peter, the Bold Preacher

If Andrew was meek, Peter was the opposite. He was always strong willed and brash. He often did not think about the consequences of what he said or did. He saw something that

needed to be said or done, and he did it. Sometimes it was good; sometimes it was not so good. Andrew might fade into the background, but Peter would never be ignored. He was always out in front for everyone to see. He made his share of mistakes, but he always wanted to do something. He was definitely a man of action.

Peter first met the Lord the day Andrew brought him to Jesus. When He first looked at Simon (his given name), the Lord said, "Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas" (John 1:42). Cephas was the Aramaic equivalent of the Greek Peter. He would serve God from that day forward. Peter was used by Christ in the growth of His church. He would walk with Christ over the next three years and learn what it would take to serve Him. Peter's life would never be the same.

During His earthly ministry, Jesus faced much opposition. The Pharisees and Sadducees worked diligently to defeat Him. But Jesus continued pressing on in ministry. A day came when He asked the disciples a question. "Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?" (Matt. 16:13). Various ones reported what they had heard. Some people thought Jesus was John the Baptist come back to life. Others thought He was Elijah, Jeremiah or one of the other great Old Testament prophets. These were lofty ideas, but they were not good enough. Jesus then asked His followers, "But whom say ye that I am?" (verse 15). This was a test to see how much they understood. Without hesitation Peter spoke up with his take on the question. "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (verse 16). The other disciples could have given different answers. They could have argued with Peter. He declared what he believed. Jesus was the Son of God. The Lord's response showed His approval of the declaration. "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven" (verse 17).

On the night Jesus was betrayed into the hands of an angry mob, Peter was once again willing to stand for his Savior. Judas had brought the Temple guards to the Garden of Gethsemane to arrest Jesus. He betrayed his friend with a kiss. As Jesus was taken into custody, Peter took all he could. As they snapped the manacles around the wrists of his Savior, Peter drew out his sword and swung it at one of the high priest's servants. He did not kill him but did great damage. The Lord stopped his attack

and healed the servant (Luke 22:49-51; John 18:10). Peter has been criticized for this action, but at least he was willing to stand in defense of his Master.

Peter experienced a deep depression at the death of the Lord. He had denied Jesus three times as He had predicted (Luke 22:34). After the resurrection, the Lord had restored Peter to service. A few days later, it was Peter who preached the dynamic sermon on the day of Pentecost. Three thousand souls were saved, baptized and added to the church. Peter was bold to stand and speak the message of salvation. He was not ashamed of the gospel.

Conclusion

These two brothers give great examples of serving the Lord. No two people are the same, but God can use them all. Are you bold and outgoing? God can use you to reach those who are without Christ. You can talk about Him freely and convince people to come to Jesus. Are you like Andrew—a little shy and unassuming? Remember, God used Andrew as well. Maybe he did not preach great and dynamic sermons, but he did bring people to Jesus. No human can save a soul, but he can introduce people to the Savior Jesus Christ. Answer God's call in your life and get involved in service.

The Children of Zebedee

APPLICATION

Fishing is similar to soul-winning.

SCRIPTURES TO READ

Text: Mark 1:19, 20.

Related Scripture: Psalm 69:9; Matthew 20:20-24; 27:56;
Mark 3:17; 9:38; Luke 6:12-16; 9:51-56; John 13:23;
19:26; 21:7; Acts 12:1-4.

Devotional Reading: Believing and Behaving in the Truth,
3 John 1-4.

Introduction

When Jesus was ready to begin His earthly ministry, He traveled to the shores of the Sea of Galilee. It is a harp-shaped, fresh-water sea that is about seven miles wide and thirteen miles long. It teemed with fish and was the place where Zebedee and his family lived. Zebedee had a fishing business. He had been at least moderately successful for he had servants to help with the work. However, he did not let his sons go through life without a purpose. He had them work alongside the servants doing the work of fishermen. When Jesus arrived at the shores of this sea, He saw these men working. He knew they had been baptized at the hands of John the Baptist. He called them to follow Him.

What kind of men were these early disciples? One of the names given to them was the surname “Boanerges, which is, The sons of thunder” (Mark 3:17). Jesus gave names to His followers that fit their nature or talents. Something about their personality drew such a comparison to the thunder that rolls through the sky. They might have been loud and boisterous. They might have

been easily provoked. Passion and ambition was part of who they were. They probably thundered their opinions when they thought it necessary. One time Jesus was determined to travel to Jerusalem. One village was unwilling to house Him because “his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem” (Luke 9:53). This apparent affront to Jesus raised the anger in these two brothers. “Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did?” (verse 54). They condemned the village because they thought the people deserved it.

James and John were part of the inner circle of the Lord’s disciples. There were a few occasions when Jesus called three men apart from the others. James, John and Peter were always the three He singled out. On the mount of transfiguration when the glory of the Lord shone around them, it was these three men who saw Jesus conversing with Moses and Elijah (Matt. 17:1, 2). When Jairus’ daughter had died, it was James, John and Peter who were allowed to go in with the parents to see the power of the Master as He raised the young girl from death (Luke 8:51). On the final night before His crucifixion, Jesus brought His disciples to the Garden of Gethsemane. They were all to be in His general presence during that difficult night. Jesus drew James, John and Peter a bit farther to watch and pray with Him (Mark 14:32-34). These men were greatly blessed to be present for many of the wondrous events from the ministry of the Savior.

The Lord used these former fishermen in molding His church into what He wanted it to be. Those who had spent a lifetime catching fish now had another task. They were “fishers of men” (Matt. 4:19).

1. _____ **James, the Older Brother**

James, the son of Zebedee, is never mentioned in the gospels without his brother also being mentioned. James’ name was always mentioned first indicating he was the older brother. Some understanding of his character can be determined by an examination of the times he is mentioned in the Scriptures.

The Lord was ready to call out the nucleus of His church. He came to the Sea of Galilee. He called James and John to follow Him. They had been faithfully serving their father in his business. James would have been the one to inherit the majority

of the business. At least some wealth was available for their future. When the Lord called them to leave their occupation and become His disciples, James was ready to go. He immediately departed with Jesus. This act shows a heart of obedience. It does not mean he was without fault. There was a time when his mother approached Christ with a request. She wanted her sons to have the privilege of sitting on each side of Jesus when He established His earthly kingdom (Matt. 20:20-23). The one on the right would be considered the next in line to the throne. This was a lofty position, and she desired it for her son. James had not discouraged his mother from such a request. He might have considered it himself. Another time, the disciples disputed over which of them would be the greatest in God's kingdom (Mark 9:34). None of them were excluded from the discussion. They had the same inner desire of self-promotion that most people possess.

As Jesus trained His disciples in His ways, the Lord set aside twelve men to serve in a special office. They would become His apostles. The second name in the list of the apostles was James, the son of Zebedee (Mark 3:17; Acts 1:13). This means he was actively involved in the work of the Lord. At times the apostles thought they were going into danger. James was still obedient. He learned the ways of the Lord and was instrumental in the early development of the church Jesus had established.

After the crucifixion, resurrection and ascension of the Lord, James worked in the church at Jerusalem. During the days between the ascension and the day of Pentecost, James was part of its number (Acts 1:13). As the members began their outreach on that day, James was part of the work. He remained faithful to the Lord even when it brought him personal danger. Herod always wanted to do what was politically expedient. The members of the church at Jerusalem were reaching people with the gospel with amazing success. Thousands of people were being saved, baptized and added to the church. The Jewish leaders were fearful they might lose their political position. They wanted to bring down the followers of Christ. Herod decided to help them by raising his hands against the church. He arrested James and executed him (Acts 12:1, 2). Why was James the one to be killed? He was out in public doing the work of God. He remained faithful until the day of his death. James was the first of the apostles to suffer martyrdom.

James served as a prime example of simply being faithful to God. Too many people think they must be seen of others for their work to be successful. They need the praise of those around them to feel like they have accomplished anything. Jesus said that when a person does a work to be seen by people, “Verily I say unto you, They have their reward” (Matt. 6:2, 5, 16). While a person’s works will be seen by others, the purpose of doing good works is not to heap glory to self. It is to bring glory to God (Matt. 5:16). James endeavored to bring glory to his Savior.

2. _____ **John, the Beloved Apostle**

The younger son of Zebedee was John. He is often called the beloved apostle because of the special devotion he had for the Master. Like James, he was present at the special events during the ministry of Christ. There were a few special events which showed the deep commitment John had for the Lord.

The Lord had gathered His disciples to celebrate the Passover. This feast was to commemorate the deliverance God gave the people of Israel when He brought them out of Egyptian bondage. Each aspect of the feast was a reminder of what God had done. During the celebration Jesus declared that one of the disciples would betray Him to the Jewish leaders (Luke 22:21). John was sitting next to Jesus and had reclined in His direction. He leaned closer and asked, “Lord, who is it?” (John 13:25). He always wanted to be near the Lord.

When Jesus was betrayed by Judas Iscariot that night, all the disciples fled away from the danger (Mark 14:50). But two of them did not run far. They remained in fairly close proximity as the soldiers led Christ to the high priest’s house. These two were Peter and John. John was known to the high priest and was allowed into his house that night (John 18:16). He remained near the Lord even when facing difficult times.

The trial of Christ was completed, and He was led to Golgotha to be crucified. Around the cross was a great mob of people. Most were flinging their insults at those hanging there. One who was not crying out in anger was John. He had accompanied Mary, the mother of the Lord, to that horrid place. He stood by her while she watched her son hang in agony. John endured the pain along with Mary. As the crucifixion continued, Jesus looked down at His mother. In words of deepest compassion He said, “Woman,

behold thy son!” (John 19:26). Then, He turned His eyes toward John and said, “Behold thy mother!” (verse 27). From that day forward, John took Mary into his house to care for her as though she were his own mother. He could serve His Savior in this manner.

It was John whom God used to pen a personal and uplifting gospel. It was John who wrote wonderful letters about the love God’s people should have toward each other and toward God. It was John whom God used to record the final revelation of Jesus Christ and prophecy. John was willing to be used by God because of his great love for the Lord.

Conclusion

These brothers were not perfect, but they were willing to place their lives in the hands of their Savior. He took those willing vessels and used them to help His church grow. This is what God wants from each of His children. He wants them to be yielded to His purpose and plan. Will we be willing to yield to God and His will? Then, we can be used in His service.