

## Abraham: A Model Father Gen 18.19

Today is Father's Day, so I want to bring a message on fatherhood. The Bible contains a few examples of good fathers, but not many. In fact, many of the fathers we find in the Bible do not provide a good example for us to follow.

We would hope that a character in the Bible who has the word "father" in his name would be a good father, and there is a person like that. Of course, I'm talking about Abraham. Today, we're going to look at one particular verse about Abraham's quality as a father.

In Gen 17.5, God changed Abram's name to Abraham. "Abram" means, "exalted father." "Abraham" means, "father of a multitude." Remember that Abraham had only two sons, Ishmael and Isaac. But Abraham did indeed become the father of a multitude, because the entire Hebrew nation comes from him. Christians consider themselves to be sons of Abraham by faith. So Abraham certainly was a father of a multitude. Several billion people today trace their physical and/or spiritual ancestry or heritage back to Abraham.

Let's read Gen 18.19. In the middle of this story about God destroying Sodom and Gomorrah, we find an interesting comment that God makes about Abraham. All Christian fathers should hope to be described in this same way.

We can learn several important truths about godly fathers from this text.

- I. Godly fathers maintain a vital relationship with God. They are saved.
  - A. "I know him"
    1. Imagine the significance of God saying of someone, "I know him."
    2. In this case, "to know" God signifies a close, intimate relationship.
      - a) Amos 3.2 "You only have I *known* of all the families of the earth" (NIV "chosen")
      - b) Ps 1.6 "the LORD *knows* the way of the righteous"

- c) Being known by God signifies a saving relationship with him. God knew Abraham in the sense of having a proper relationship with him. To know God is to be saved. In fact, the Bible refers to Abraham as the friend of God.
- B. When did this relationship with God begin in Abraham's life? When did he come to know God? Gen 15.6 *Abraham believed the LORD and it was counted to him for righteousness.*
  - 1. The plan of salvation is the same for both OT and NT. Salvation by grace through faith has always been God's plan. Abraham was saved by faith just like we are.
  - 2. The *content* of saving faith has changed over time because of progressive revelation. OT saints knew very little about IX. Abraham believed in God and in his promises; he had faith. He knew God by faith.

**Trans:** Successful fatherhood begins with a positive relationship with God. If God is not your father, you certainly can't be a godly father. So make sure that you are like Abraham in this regard—that God knows you and you know him by faith.

- II. Godly fathers maintain good order in their households -- “he will command his children and his household after him”
  - A. “that...” – the Hebrew term (לְמַעַן) implies purpose or intent; the right relationship Abraham had with God had results or purpose—that he will command his children and household. Abraham did this *because* he had this relationship with God.
  - B. The word “command” (צִוָּה) is translated elsewhere as “set in order” (2 Kings 20:1). The father has the authority in the household. He is responsible to set things in order in his house. He must be proactive and intentional about this responsibility.
    - 1. In some households, the father is *passive*.  
1Ki 1:6 *[David] had not rebuked [Adonijah] at any time by saying, “Why have you done so?”* ... Adonijah tried to set himself up as king.

In some households, the children are in charge. Parents abdicate their responsibility and let the kids rule the roost.

**App:** Kids have to learn that they are not in charge. Parents must take command.

2. In some households, the father is *permissive*.

There is no ordering and commanding, no setting in order. The parents ask permission from their children. “Can you do this for mommy please?”

- C. Godly fathers are not afraid to use their God-given authority.

The father must maintain order in his house—organize it, make sure it runs well, make sure things are done properly, keep your children in line. Command that things are done properly; set your house in order.

- D. Two things fathers are to set in order/command:

1. their children

At this point Abraham had no children. Still, God knew that Abraham would command his children.

**App:** Children need order, rules, regulations. Children brought up with no limitations/rules wind up as spoiled brats. They need to be governed. Don’t be afraid to command your children—tell them what to do.

Proverbs 29:15 *The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left [to himself] bringeth his mother to shame.*

However, Eph 6:4 “Fathers, provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.”

Fathers have to seek a balance between discipline and love. Both have to be applied. You can be a strict disciplinarian and still very loving and affectionate.

## 2. Their households

- a) The word means “house, dwelling, home; family”
- b) Fathers are responsible to “set in order, command” their homes and families. Everything that goes on within the context of the home is under the father’s supervision. He’s responsible for everything that happens under his roof.
- c) He doesn’t do everything, but he has to manage what goes on there. He has to supervise and superintend to make sure that things are done right. He has to oversee the operation of his household.
- d) And of course things work best when the wife/mother agrees with her husband. She is not fighting against him or undercutting his authority.

E. The father is not to be a tyrant or dictator. He’s to love, nurture and cherish his wife and kids. His command and authority is not abusive.

**App:** Godly fathers bring order to their children and to their households.

How well are you managing your household? Are things done in an orderly way? Can you say that your home is “set in order”? That’s the goal; that’s what godly fathers do.

## III. Godly fathers are spiritual leaders.

.18b “they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment”

- A. “they shall keep” – i.e., the entire household will keep the way of the Lord because the husband/father has set things in order. Abraham had a large household, and he made sure they were keeping the way of the Lord.
- B. The Bible repeatedly puts the responsibility for the spiritual condition of the home on the father/husband. The father must be the spiritual leader of his household.

C. Texts:

Deut 6.6-7 *these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: 7 And thou shalt **teach them diligently unto thy children**, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.*

Josh 24.15c *as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD*

Eph 6.4 *and ye fathers,...*

1. Two aspects of spirituality in the home:

a) Toward God: “they shall keep the way of the LORD”

It’s up to fathers to insure that your household keeps the way of the Lord.

- (1) Who makes sure the family goes to church?
- (2) Who is the primary Bible teacher at home?
- (3) Who should lead in prayer?
- (4) Who should enforce biblical standards?
- (5) Obviously both parents work together on these things, but ultimately the responsibility rests with the father.
- (6) Fathers often abdicate this responsibility. They leave it up to the mom or the church — wrong.
- (7) Godly fathers lead by example: daily devotions, prayer, righteous lifestyle, speech, conduct. They see that you are sincere and dedicated to the Lord, not a hypocrite.
- (8) The father insures that his household is keeping the way of the Lord.

**Illus.:** Sadly, some of the most prominent spiritual leaders have not been good fathers. E.g., Francis Schaeffer.

- b) Toward others: Two important words: “justice and judgment” refer to our relationship with people.

“justice” -- צדק (*ts<sup>e</sup>daqah*): **righteousness**, rightness, i.e., the state of doing what is required according to a standard; i.e., fairly deciding what is right, doing the right thing, meeting the standard.

“judgment” -- משפט (*mishpat*) **judgment**, i.e., the act of deciding a legal dispute or case; i.e., a state or condition of fairness in disputes<sup>1</sup> —hence, be honest and fair.

**App:** The father has to make sure that rightness and fairness prevail in his home.

One reason children are often provoked unto wrath is that parents are not fair in how they treat their kids. If you want to make your kids bitter and resentful, neglect justice and judgment.

Children do not come out of the womb knowing the difference between right and wrong. They are tainted by sin from birth; they are corrupt and depraved from the womb.

Kids need strong direction in the area of ethics and morality. They need standards, need to know what is right and wrong. You must teach your kids to be honest and fair. Your kids may violate your standards, but at least they should know what those standards are.

Children need parents to be fair and impartial in judging disputes.

Fathers must teach their children these character qualities—to follow valid standards, to do the right thing, to seek honesty and justice.

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<sup>1</sup>Swanson, J. (1997). Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains : Hebrew (Old Testament) (electronic ed.) (HGK7407). Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

**Trans:** Fathers must “set their house in order” so that the household keeps the way of the Lord, which includes fairness and honesty, justice and judgment. Children and everyone connected with the household needs to know that the father is going to be a fair, impartial judge. He’s going to set the standards and live by those standards himself. He’s not a hypocrite; he’s sincerely seeking to live a godly Christian life. And that influence spreads to the rest of the household.

#### IV. Godly fathers leave a godly heritage.

A. God knew that Abraham would command his children and his household “after him” -- not only while he is around, but even after he is gone. Abe influenced the generations after him. He’s considered the patriarch of the entire Hebrew people.

B. Israel as a nation failed in this regard. A good example --

*Jud 2.7, 10-13 7 And the people served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the LORD, that he did for Israel.... 10 ... and there arose another generation after them, which knew not the LORD, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel. 11 And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served Baalim: 12 And they forsook the LORD God of their fathers, which brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods, of the gods of the people that were round about them, and bowed themselves unto them, and provoked the LORD to anger. 13 And they forsook the LORD, and served Baal and Ashtaroth.*

Why did that happen? Because the influence from one generation did not extend to the next generation. The children did not adopt the spiritual commitments of their fathers. The fathers did not command their children and their households after them.

One generation is all that stands between orthodoxy and apostasy. If we fail to pass on the faith to the next generation, they will not know the Lord.

- C. Several texts that suggest that fathers must be concerned about succeeding generations:

Deut 4.9 *Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life: but teach them thy sons, and thy sons' sons.*

Three generations covered here. You want to extend your godly influence to succeeding generations.

Ps 78.4, 7 *We will not hide [them] from their children, showing to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and his strength, and his wonderful works that he hath done. ... That they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments.*

**App:** Godly fathers seek to extend their godly influence as far down the line as possible.

**E.g.,** Story in Jeremiah about Jonadab the son of Rechab who commanded his children not to drink wine, and the succeeding generations kept that command (cf. Jer 35). The prophet found it remarkable that the succeeding generations kept that tradition.

Sadly, succeeding generations often do not uphold the standards and commitments of previous generations. It seems like succeeding generations lose something; they are less committed and more willing to compromise.

**Trans:** Godly fathers seek to transfer godly standards into their children so they will keep those standards into the future. Christian fathers must strive to leave a godly legacy or heritage for the future. *teach thy sons, and thy sons' sons.*



- V. Godly fathers enjoy the blessings of God on their families.
- A. Note the connection of Abraham's successful spiritual oversight of his family with the blessings that God had promised. "... that (יְהוָה) the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him."
  - B. What had the Lord spoken of Abraham? Cf. 18:18. He would have a large family, occupy a particular land area, and be a blessing to the entire world. That's what God said would happen, and God knew that Abraham would do his part in fulfilling this goal.
  - C. The blessings promised to Abraham seem to be contingent upon, or at least related to, Abraham's spiritual oversight of his family. God planned to bless Abraham because he knew that he would be a godly leader in his household.
- App:** If you want God to bless your family, then follow Abraham's example here. Strive to be a godly father. Fulfill your responsibilities to command your children and your household to keep the way of the Lord.

I wonder if God could say this statement of us: “I know him; he will order his children and household in the way of the Lord so that I may bring upon him the blessings that I plan.”

Abraham was certainly not a perfect father. If you read his story, you’ll find many examples of sin and failure. There are no perfect fathers; everyone falls short. But the fathers among us should strive to fulfill these responsibilities.

- Abe had a vibrant, close relationship with God. He was the friend of God. All fathers should pursue a close, personal relationship with God. Get yourself squared away first. Everything else hinges on your relationship with God.
- Abe set his household in order. He commanded his children and his household. He exercised his God-given authority in the right and proper way. That’s what godly fathers do. Your motto ought to be “As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”
- Abe influenced the spiritual condition of his household. He insisted upon justice and judgment. Govern your household with honesty and fairness. Set a godly standard for your household that you keep and you expect the others to keep.
- Abe left a godly heritage. He was a blessing to his family. All fathers should be interested in leaving a godly legacy and in influencing future generations for Christ. *teach thy sons, and thy sons’ sons.*

You may never be an “exalted father” or a “father of a multitude,” but you can be a godly father if you apply the principles of this text to your life.

And if you have a godly father or are married to one, I hope you will make this Father’s Day enjoyable for him.