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**Proverbs 17:6 - *Grandchildren are the crown of old men, and the glory of sons is their fathers.***

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Studying biblical fatherhood is incomplete without a generational perspective. Everyone has a dad. Most men will be a dad; Genesis 1 and 2 are clear - that is why God created the man (*"to multiply and fill the earth"*). Every man has grandfathers and every dad looks forward to being a grandparent. Single men anticipate fatherhood with excitement and perhaps a bit of healthy fear. Fathers are at the center of God's created cornerstone of civilization: the family.

This is not a parenting series. There will be some parenting application, of course. But, it will be aimed at God's design for every man as he considers and evaluates the men in his family who have gone before him (father and grandfather) and those who will come after him (children, grandchildren). Opinions and perspectives, looking both directions, are best informed by the Bible.

As we approach a series about the leadership, love, prayer, protection, provision, and wisdom of a dad, there must be understanding of the biblical criteria and boundaries for the authority and responsibility of a dad. This is particularly true as we approach the topic in this session about the leadership of a dad.

**Successful Leadership of a Dad  
Christian Conventional Wisdom**

Common Christian conventional wisdom is that a "good" dad has Christian children. A man with unbelieving children is obviously flawed and inadequate on some level. It is his fault; He certainly is not someone you should get family leadership advice from! A "successful" dad has children who obey the law, get good grades, achieve high athletic and academic performance, are popular at school, highly regarded, compliant, and they make everyone say, "Wow, he/she is just like dad." This conventional wisdom is rampant in the church.

No man is judged by how his own children turned out. Nor is he to take credit for how his children turn out. This is not to say that parenting and grandparenting is of no consequence. It is of enormous consequence and influence, and it is a divinely delegated responsibility. But how you evaluate your own fatherhood, your father, other men, or set expectations for your own future fatherhood, is very important. With biblically defined authority comes the requisite responsibility. It is also true that limited authority results in limited responsibility. Understanding biblically defined boundaries is, therefore, important in setting expectations.

Three passages are often used to justify the evaluation of a dad based on results:

- **Proverbs 22:6** – *"Train up a child in the way he should go, even when he is old he will not depart from it."* Like Proverbs 17:6, this is wisdom. A truism. It is not a contract. It describes the ordinary fruit of faithful training; your children will always remember what you taught them even as they make their own choices to follow it, or reject it.
- **1 Timothy 3:4-5** says that an elder in the church must be *"one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity."* None of this speaks of the children. It speaks of how the man leads in the home and the culture of his home. This is a test of present faithfulness and reputation of the father, not his children.
- **Titus 1:6** says that an elder must be *"above reproach, the husband of one wife, having children who believe, not accused of dissipation or rebellion."* An elder cannot save his children. *"Children who believe"* describes children still in the home whose profession and conduct do not openly contradict the gospel. He must conduct a household that is free of open unbelief, wild living, or insubordination. This is parallel to 1 Timothy 3:4-5.

**Is a Spiritual Leader Responsible For the Results?**

1 Corinthians 3:6-7 – *"I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth. So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth."*

Paul is talking about ministers and the church, not about dads. The principle still holds: Spiritual leaders (dads) are delegated the authority to plant and water. However, we are not the ones who produce life. How

we plant and water matters. For example, much of Paul's letter to the Corinthians address that very issue. Paul wrote two letters to young Timothy addressing his ministry (planting and watering) in that regard.

A dad's leadership is important. But the reach of his skill and ability is confined to the scope of his authority. So is the measure of his "success" in leadership. A dad cannot, and must not, ever claim credit or glory that belongs to God.

### Who Saves?

Ephesians 2:1-3 – *"And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest".*

This is how every baby enters this world. Children are spiritually ruined when they arrive. There is nothing a mom or dad can do to spiritually wreck somebody who is already spiritually wrecked.

You cannot find anywhere in the Bible that a dad or mom can reverse that. The salvation of children is completely outside the realm of authority or capability of a dad no matter how skilled or how knowledgeable about the Bible. Try as he might, he cannot achieve salvation for them or train, teach, discipline, or persuade a child to salvation. To claim otherwise is to steal the glory, authority, and imperative from God. It is also claiming a skill or ability that has not been given by God to the father. Therefore, responsibility as a parent is limited, and the evaluation of "successful" fatherhood is calibrated accordingly.

Ephesians 2:4-9 – *"But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast."*

Jesus saves. He makes us alive. He raises us up. He seats us with Him in the heavenly places. He shows the surpassing riches of His grace and kindness towards us. He gifts salvation to us. There is no mention of a dad anywhere in there. If you take pride in the salvation of your children, you are stealing the credit from a God who does not and will not ever give that up. If you evaluate your success or failure as a dad by the salvation of your children, you've got it wrong.

### Who is Responsible for Sin?

There are many men in the church who can give personal testimony to watching their children leave their home and make sinful choices that are a complete contradiction to everything they were taught and know. What is a dad's responsibility for his children's sinful choices?

This is most concisely presented in Proverbs 1:10, *"My son, if sinners entice you, do not consent."* This is a well-established principle throughout the Bible. Every individual is accountable for their own sin. Your sin is your own.

A man answers for his own life, his own words, and his own obedience. He is not credited with the salvation, obedience, or wisdom of family around him, nor is he accountable for it before God.

One of the most poignant historical accounts that make this point is the history of kings and their children in 1&2 Kings and 1&2 Chronicles.

From Asa to his grandson: a steady decline.

- **Asa** - 1 Kings 15:9-24: *"Asa did what was **right** in the sight of the Lord, like David his father."*
- **Jehoshaphat** - 1 Kings 22:41-50: *"... doing **right** in the sight of the Lord." **However....***  
(compromised in one single area)
- **Jehoram** - 2 Kings 8:16-24: *"... he did **evil** in the sight of the Lord."*

From Ahaz to exile:

- **Ahaz** - 2 Kings 16:1-20: "... he **did not do what was right** in the sight of the Lord his God...."
- **Hezekiah** - 2 Kings 18:1-20:21: "He trusted in the Lord, the God of Israel; so that after him there was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor among those who were before him. For he clung to the Lord; he did not depart from following Him, but **kept His commandments**, which the Lord had commanded Moses."
- **Manasseh** 2 Kings 21:1-18: "He did **evil** in the sight of the Lord... having done wickedly more than all the Amorites did who were before him...."
- **Amon** - 2 Kings 21:19-26: "He did **evil** in the sight of the Lord...."
- **Josiah** - 2 Kings 22:1-23:30: "He did **right** in the sight of the Lord and walked in all the way of his father David, nor did he turn aside to the right or to the left."
- **Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah** - all described as doing **evil** in the sight of the Lord as the kingdom completes its death spiral into exile.

Observations and conclusions:

- There is no pattern.
- What is described is each man's standing before God—on his own. He did what was right, or he did evil.
- Proverbs 21:1 is true of kings and family: *The king's heart is like channels of water in the hand of the Lord; He turns it wherever He wishes.* God is sovereign. His providence moves as it will, and it is undefeated.

### Successful Leadership of a Dad Deuteronomy 6

Deuteronomy 6 is a sermon by Moses to the nation about family. In this sermon, he defines and describes the biblical dad and established the clear and high expectations of a dad: How he leads.

#### 1. A Biblical Dad Is Obedient

<sup>1</sup> ...that you might **do them** and

<sup>2</sup> ...to **keep all His statutes** and His commandments which I command you....

<sup>17</sup> You should diligently **keep the commandments** of the Lord your God, and His testimonies and His statutes which He has commanded you.

<sup>18</sup> You shall **do what is right** and good in the sight of the Lord....

<sup>24</sup> So the Lord commanded us to **observe all these statutes**....

<sup>25</sup> It will be righteousness for us if we are careful to **observe all this** commandment before the Lord our God, just as He commanded us.

A father's obedience to the Bible is both before the Lord and as an example to his wife and children—the family. A biblical dad is obedient. It is as simple as that. A dad leads by example. That is the essence of family leadership. The influence of a father's leadership is drawn from the example of his own obedience. Without that, what he says to his family, to the extent it conflicts with how he lives, becomes optional, confusing, and it presents a false choice: Should I follow my father's words and teaching, or how he lives? Hypocrisy is deadly to effective leadership in the home.

#### 2. A Biblical Dad Fears God

<sup>2</sup> so that you and your son and your grandson might **fear the Lord** your God....

<sup>13</sup> You **shall fear only the Lord your God**; and you shall worship Him and swear by His name. <sup>14</sup> **You shall not follow other gods**, any of the gods of the peoples who surround you....

<sup>24</sup> So the Lord commanded us to observe all these statutes, to **fear the Lord** our God for our good always and for our survival, as it is today.

Children will leave the home of a biblical leader (dad) having been taught the choice they have to love God vs. be afraid of God—and the consequences of their choice. A dad does well when his children understand that nobody stands between them and accountability to God.

### 3. A Biblical Dad Is a Teacher

*<sup>7</sup> You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. <sup>8</sup> You shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. <sup>9</sup> You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.*

A dad, by this admonition, is not an endless talker. He does teach with his words, but he also teaches by how he interacts with every phase of life. Wisdom is taught with words and the example of his life.

### 4. A Biblical Dad Is an Evangelist

This is the message of Moses: Teach who God is! A dad plants, he waters, and he prays with a fervency unlike he prays for anything else. But, he trusts the Lord for the results.

*2 Timothy 3:14-15 - You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.*

### 5. A Biblical Dad Is Humble

The effectiveness of fatherhood is not measured in the metrics of results. He cannot look at the salvation or even the successful living of his children and take credit for any of it. A dad's decisions cannot be driven by, or affected by, some desire for his children to make him look good. He is simply a steward entrusted with precious children to lead biblically and then let them go.

*<sup>10</sup> "Then it shall come about when the Lord your God brings you into the land which He swore to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to give you, great and splendid cities which **you did not build**, <sup>11</sup> and houses full of all good things which **you did not fill**, and hewn cisterns which **you did not dig**, vineyards and olive trees which **you did not plant**, and you eat and are satisfied, <sup>12</sup> then watch yourself, that you **do not forget** the Lord who brought you from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery."*

1 Corinthians 4:7 – "For who regards you as superior? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?"

### Questions for Discussion:

1. How has measuring a man by his children shaped the way you see yourself, your own dad, or other men? What is the biblical measure of a man who leads in the home (dad)?
2. In the privacy of your home, which is weakest right now: your obedience, your fear of God, your teaching, pointing your family to the gospel, or your humility? What can you change this week to alter that?
3. If you have a child who has rejected Christ or is living in open rebellion, how has that affected your view of your own leadership as a dad? What would change in your leadership at home if you truly believed that you and your wife are not credited, or blamed, for the outcome?
4. When your children and grandchildren talk about you someday, what do you hope they say about who you were behind closed doors? What one concrete change needs to happen in your life to make that happen?

### Additional Resources:

*When A Child Breaks Your Heart*, Don Green; available at [www.ttwpres.com](http://www.ttwpres.com)

Read the words to the hymn, "All the Way My Savior Leads Me," Hymns of Grace, page 172

Read *Deuteronomy 6* every day for a week (or more!) to remember and review God's expectations of, and promises to, the family leader.

Next Week: October 14 – Evening of Prayer