

Family Bible Quotes

– rich treasure for families



**A selection of Bible passages showing
God's instructions and promised blessings
for family living**

*"He tends his flock like a shepherd:
He gathers the lambs in his arms
and carries them close to his heart;
He gently leads those that have young."*

Isaiah 40:11 NIV

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Quotations used

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INTRODUCTION - 'Rich treasure for families'

IT IS A GREAT PRIVILEGE to be a family member. God, our heavenly Father designed the Family for the great good of humankind. If we are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, we are already members of God's Family. He has not left us guessing about the best way to order our own family life and at the same time experience the great blessings he has promised.

God's abundant provision

'All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.' 2 Timothy 3:6,17 ESV

'His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.'

2 Peter 1:3,4 NIV

In the Bible we have God's principles and promises – all we need to live our lives for the Lord. *"Who is the man who fears the Lord? Him will he instruct in the way that he should choose. His soul shall abide in well-being, and his offspring shall inherit the land."* Psalm 25:12, 13 ESV

The Family in the Kingdom of God

The New Testament shows that God chose his loved ones before the foundation of the world to become family members of the kingdom of his Son.

- In order to enter the kingdom of heaven each of us needs to be *born* again and become a *baby* in Christ. (John 3:1-21; 1 Peter 1:3,23; 1 Peter 2:2)
- The Lord Jesus is the *firstborn* of many *brothers* and is bringing many *sons* to glory. (Romans 8:29; Hebrews 2:10)
- God the *Father* and God the *Son* send the *Spirit of Sonship* (or *Adoption*) into our hearts and by him we cry, *'Abba, Father'*. (Romans 8:12-17; Galatians 4:4-7)
- Because we are children, we are our *Father's heirs* along with our *elder Brother*. (Romans 8:17; Hebrews 2:11,12)
- The Church is the *Bride* and the *Wife* of Christ. (Ephesians 5:22-33; Rev. 21)
- The Church is made up of our spiritual *fathers, mothers, brothers* and *sisters*. (1 Timothy 5:1,2)

- We are the Lord's children who are taught to pray, "Our *Father*, in heaven, hallowed be your Name..." (Matthew 6:9)
- "How great is the love the *Father* has lavished on us, that we should be called the *children* of God! And that is what we are!" (1 John 3:1 NIV)

The family is essential in God's purpose for the world. Satan's attack on the family is aimed at destroying both God and his kingdom.

'Family Bible Quotes' – rich treasure for families

The selection of quotes is not exhaustive but aims to be sufficiently broad to give a balanced survey of God's provision and detailed directives for family living.

Why the headings?

Each quote comes with a heading which seeks to show an aspect or facet of the quote. There is danger in taking verses out of context (after the quote reference, the wider context is often indicated) but neither must we restrict God's word by wrongly tying it down to a particular time of history or situation.

Some examples of how the headings are used:

- to note teaching relevant to the family
- to show how a passage reflects God's concern for the family
- to draw attention to a principle embodied in the quote
- to make a reasonable deduction from a principle
- to make a reasonable observation in the light of an event or action
- to draw comfort and encouragement from a promise
- to apply a principle practically
- to draw attention to good or bad family practice / example
- to focus on a command, instruction or prohibition
- to indicate how a passage shows the Lord's desire to bless us
- to draw attention to a warning
- to stir expectation of God's blessing

Please test the headings and comments against Scripture.

Caution

Always bear in mind that God's word is not accepted by the world. The promises and principles contained in these pages lead in the opposite direction from that of today's society. When we follow them it may seem that we are behaving strangely but we must ask ourselves the question: "What I think may be strange to my friends and neighbours but is it strange to God?"

"Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it." Matthew 7:13,14

"For whoever is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels." Mark 8:38

Priceless family treasure

This book consists largely of Bible passages. Please read them, not just the headings or comments. The passages are the words of our loving heavenly Father and his beloved Son. If we listen to what he says we will hear his gracious invitation for us to ask him for his richest blessings on our family.

Do those blessings include the greatest of all blessings? "Taste and see!"

The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul;
The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple;
The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart ...

**More to be desired are they than gold,
Yea, than much fine gold;**
Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.
Moreover by them Your servant is warned,
And in keeping of them there is great reward.

More to be desired are they than gold! (Psalm 19)

May the Lord use his Word to equip us to honour him and, in his mercy, make every family member a fruitful member of his Family.

Steve Sherwood, 2022

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Genesis

IN THE BOOK OF GENESIS God tells us about our created status: Man created in the image of God. Genesis shows that the Family and its relationships are fundamental to our image-bearing nature.

"So God created man in his own image; in the image of God he created him: male and female he created them." Genesis 1:27

Being created in God's image makes each of us more significant, valuable and glorious than the whole of the rest of the universe. Genesis shows that God designed us to live in families. The Family is rooted in God himself. We learn the true concept of the family by getting to know the Father, his beloved Son and his holy Spirit. Genesis reveals how God's glory is to be reflected in the family relationships he has ordained: marriage, husbands, wives, children, brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, grandparents etc. (extending out to communities and nations).

Genesis is the story of the early families and nations of the world. It shows how God the Father chose particular people and their families eventually to become his own chosen nation, the Children of Israel. Through this nation he would bring his promised anointed king to be the Saviour of the world.

The CREATION of MAN and WOMAN

Genesis 1 & 2

God the Father always had a Son

"Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son also may glorify you ... O Father, glorify me together with yourself, with the glory which I had with you before the world was." See John 17:1-5

Jesus Christ is the Creator of the universe in harmony with his Father.

"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." Genesis 1:1

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made." John 1:1-3

God the Father spoke to his Son

'Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."' Genesis 1:26

Maleness and femaleness is rooted in God himself.

"So God created man in his own image; in the image of God he created him: male and female he created them." Genesis 1:27

Man is the **male image bearer of God**. Woman is the **female image bearer of God**. These two distinctive stewardships are perfectly designed to fit together in harmony. The man's role is only given to the man; the woman's role is only given to the woman. Together they proclaim and demonstrate God's glory. The glory is His. He will not give his glory to another (Isaiah 42:8). He will not give the glory of womanhood to a man. Neither will he give the glory of manhood to a woman.

God's first Great Commission was given to the first created family – man and woman.

"Then God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.'" Genesis 1:28

Notice that Woman is fully involved. She is man's helper (see below). Marriage, child-bearing and children's upbringing are essential to this Creation Mandate.

The second great commission is given in Matthew 28 – the Gospel Mandate. Woman is to fulfil the female role in that. E.g. Luke 1:30-32, Matt. 28:18-20, Eph. 5:22-33, 1 Pet. 3:1-7, 1 Tim. 2:1-5, 5:1-16, Titus 2:3,4, Rev. 12

Adam was made from the ground.

"Then the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature." Genesis 2:7 ESV

The Lord God gives Adam a message to pass on to his wife.

"The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, 'From every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat the fruit of it you shall surely die.'" Genesis 2:15-17

God prepares Adam for his greatest earthly blessing.

*"And the Lord God said, 'It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him **a helper comparable to him.**' Out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to Adam ..."*

"Adam gave names to all cattle, to the birds of the air, and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper comparable to him." Genesis 2:18-20

Our heavenly Father made Woman to be a helper to Man. **This is fundamental.**

Eve was not made from the ground; she was made from Adam.

"And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one

of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. Then the rib which the Lord God had taken from man He made into a woman and He brought her to the man.” Gen. 2:21,22

God’s word is consistent.

“Adam was formed first, then Eve.” 1 Timothy 2:13

“[Man] is the image and glory of God, but woman is the glory of man. For man was not made from woman, but woman from man. Neither was man created for woman, but woman for man ...” 1 Corinthians 11:7-9 ESV

And note this:

“... in the Lord woman is not independent of man nor man of woman; for as woman was made from man, so man is now born of woman ... ” 1 Cor. 11: 11,12 ESV

Adam and Eve – God’s first created son and daughter

“... the son of Enos, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God.” Luke 3:38

‘Then the Lord God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit [suitable] for him.”’ Genesis 2:18 ESV [NIV]

A wonderful gift from his Father! – Adam’s delight and, no doubt, Eve’s also.

“... and He brought her to the man. And Adam said:

‘This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh;

She shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.”’ Genesis 2:23

Christian men or women can ask their Father for a similar blessing.

“... and He brought her to the man.” Genesis 2:22

“He who finds a wife finds a good thing, and obtains favour from the Lord.” Prov. 18:22

And she who finds a husband does as well!

A man should leave his parents to join his wife; likewise should a woman.

“Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.” Genesis 2:24

Our being created in God’s image has profound implications.

‘For we [believers] are members of [Christ’s] body, of His flesh and of His bones. “For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.’ Ephesians 5:30-32

No shame (no sin) because God was at the heart of their marriage (Genesis 3:8).

“And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.” Gen. 2:25

Jesus confirms the marriage relationship established in Genesis.

"Have you not read that he who made them from the beginning made them male and female and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife and the two shall become one flesh'? So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate."

See Matthew 19:3-6. Also Mark 10:2-12

Adam and Eve, the pinnacle of God's perfect, loving, harmonious, glorious creation – "and behold, it was very good."

"... the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God ...

"[Man] is the image and glory of God; but woman is the glory of man. For man is not from woman, but woman from man. Nor was man created for the woman, but woman for the man ...

"Nevertheless, neither is man independent of woman, nor woman independent of man, in the Lord. For as woman came from man, even so man also comes through woman; but all things are from God" 1 Corinthians 11:3,7,8,9,11,12

These Creation benefits still bless relationships after the Fall.

The FALL

Genesis 3

Crafty Satan bypasses the family head and attacks the wife first.

"Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, 'Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?" Genesis 3:1

Eve deceived into believing an outright lie

'Then the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."' Genesis 3:4,5

Notice how Satan promotes discontent. He says, "God is not treating you fairly; he is depriving you of your rights. He is unjust; you are right to be suspicious of him. Don't just accept what you are told; God is a liar."

The work of the devil is to deceive men and women into thinking of the heavenly Father as remote, unkind, unloving, tyrannical etc. **This is fundamental.**

Throughout our lives we can expect him to stir up within us a discontented, grumbling attitude.

An infinitely important decision made without consulting God or husband.

"So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate." Genesis 3:6a

New Testament commentary

"... the woman being deceived, fell into transgression." 1 Timothy 2:14

The husband does not consult God. Uncritically following his wife's example and invitation, he rejects his Head.

"She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate." Genesis 3:6b

"The head of every man is Christ." 1 Corinthians 11:3

New Testament commentary

"Adam was not deceived." 1 Timothy 2:14

Adam sinned with his 'eyes open', knowing exactly what he was doing: breaking God's clear command.

"... through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned ..." Romans 5:12

Family joy replaced by family shame.

"Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings." Genesis 3:7

Family focus is turned away from God. He is now unwelcome.

"And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden." Genesis 3:8

Redeemed children of God can make every effort to keep him at the centre. God designed marriage to be a three-way relationship lived in his presence.

God addresses the family head who blames his wife and God for his sin.

'And He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?" Then the man said, "The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate."' Genesis 3:11,12

The wife says 'It's not my fault.'

'And the Lord God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."' Genesis 3:13

Amazing grace in action: Woman's unique role in God's plan of salvation

"... And I will put enmity between you [the Serpent] and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel." Gen. 3:15

"For as woman came from man, even so man also comes through woman."

1 Corinthians 11:12

"But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons." Galatians 4:4

Other scriptures fill out Genesis 3:15. For example:

"Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son and shall call His name Immanuel [God with us]." Isaiah 7:14

"Then Mary said to the angel, 'How can this be since I do not know a man?' And the angel answered and said to her, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore also that holy one who is to be born will be called the Son of God.'" Luke 1:34,35

Childbirth will involve great pain.

"To the woman He said: 'I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children.'" Genesis 3:16 ESV

Woman will suffer in her role of bearing children. Even women who do not bear children are subject to pain in their womanhood.

Pain has come on all creation.

"For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now." Romans 8:22

Further illustration of the Serpent's enmity towards 'the Woman' (& children)

"Then being with child, she cried out in labour and in pain to give birth ... And the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to give birth, to devour her Child as soon as it was born. She bore a male Child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron. And her Child was caught up to God and His throne ..." See Revelation 12:1-6

Woman's desire will be marriage but married life will be marred by harshness and rivalry.

"Your desire shall be for [or 'against' ESV margin] your husband, and he shall rule over you." Genesis 3:16b

"Husbands love your wives and do not be harsh with them." Colossians 3:19

Men in general are inclined to treat women harshly, often without realising it. Nevertheless, marriage is a wonderful gift of God (Psalm 113:9, Proverbs 31).

GOD'S ORIGINAL PURPOSE was for each man to have his own wife and each woman her own husband. *"It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a*

helper suitable for him". Thus: 'It is not good for the woman to be alone, I will make her a suitable helper for the man.'

This was Eve's delightful privilege and Adam was delighted with Eve's help and companionship.

Now we live in a fallen world, the desire to be married is still there but not every man has a wife and not every woman has a husband. Those who do often have suffering (1 Cor. 7:28).

Now it is good to remain unmarried as well as being good to marry. (1 Cor. 7:1 ff)

Sin's presence in the world has brought death, widowhood and unwelcome 'singleness' both to men and women. (Genesis 3:16 perhaps indicates this will be more painful for women to bear than men?)

Can unmarried women or men expect fulfilment and joy as they serve the Lord? What does our loving heavenly Father say in his Word?

The Lord rebukes Adam for submitting to his wife instead of to God's word.

'Then to Adam He said, "Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat of it': Cursed is the ground for your sake ...'" Genesis 3:17 Full quote: Genesis 3:17-19

"Wives, submit to your own husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as also Christ is the head of the church ... Husbands, love your wives just as Christ also loved the church and gave himself for it ..." See Ephesians 5:22-33.

Naming is an exercise of authority (see Genesis 2:19,20).

"And Adam called his wife's name Eve ['living'], because she was the mother of all living." Genesis 3:20

Eve exercised naming authority in Genesis 4:25.

The FIRST FAMILIES

Genesis 4 & 5

Eve acknowledges the Lord's role in childbirth. The first family grows.

'Adam lay with his wife Eve, and she conceived and gave birth to Cain. She said, "With the help of the Lord I have brought forth a man." Later she gave birth to his brother Abel.' Genesis 4:1,2 NIV

Sibling jealousy nurtures hatred and murder – the devil's work.

"Now Cain talked with Abel his brother; and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him." Genesis 4:8

Full story: Genesis 4:2-16

"... we should love one another. We should not be like Cain, who was of the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own deeds were evil and his brother's righteous." 1 John 3:11,12 ESV

Lamech, an early humanist, makes his own rules for marriage and justice.

'Then Lamech took for himself two wives: the name of one was Adah, and the name of the second was Zillah ... Then Lamech said to his wives: "Adah and Zillah, hear my voice; wives of Lamech, listen to my speech! For I have killed a man for wounding me, even a young man for hurting me. If Cain shall be avenged sevenfold, then Lamech seventy-sevenfold."' See Genesis 4:19-24

Eve again acknowledges God, possibly thinking of the promised 'Seed'.

'And Adam knew his wife again, and she bore a son and named him Seth, "For God has appointed another seed for me instead of Abel, whom Cain killed."' Genesis 4:25

The human race is named 'Man' by the Creator of the universe.

"This is the book of the generations of Adam. When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God. Male and female he created them, and he blessed them and named them Man when they were created." Genesis 5:1,2 ESV

Adam's family

"When Adam had lived for 130 years, he fathered a son in his own likeness, after his image, and named him Seth. The days of Adam after he fathered Seth were 800 years; and he had other sons and daughters. Thus all the days that Adam lived were 930 years, and he died." Genesis 5:3-5 ESV

IN GENESIS 5:3-32 God records the names of fathers (family heads). Does this mean that the un-named mothers are inferior in God's eyes? No, the Bible never teaches this. Satan spreads this lie. As at the beginning, he loves to stir up **discontent and resentment towards God**. Men have cruelly misused the authority God gave them and women have been deceived into blaming God for their plight. The 21st century is witnessing a reaction by women and demands for 'equality'. Since "there is no God (of the Bible)", no appeal is made to him for wisdom and help. The wonderful created differences, glorious gifts and roles of womanhood and manhood are rejected and we experience the Lord's wrath as he gives us up to foolish, perverted thinking and living (Romans 1).

From the beginning, God shows his intimate involvement with and loving concern for families. Each person may be unknown by the world but precious beyond measure to God.

"O Lord, you have searched me and known me! You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from afar. You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways." ESV See Psalm 139.
God is lovingly acquainted with all the ways of every member of every family on earth – men, women, boys and girls.

Jared's family

"When Jared had lived for 162 years he fathered Enoch. Jared lived after he fathered Enoch for 800 years and had other sons and daughters. Thus all the days of Jared were 962 years, and he died." Genesis 5:18-20 ESV

It is possible to be a father and walk with God.

"When Enoch had lived for 65 years, he fathered Methuselah. Enoch walked with God after he fathered Methuselah for 300 years and had other sons and daughters. Thus all the days of Enoch were 365 years. Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him." Genesis 5:22-24 ESV

Failure to walk with God, mars our fatherhood (and every calling of God).

The FLOOD and BABEL

Genesis 6-9

This man and his family were servants of God. What about us?

"These are the generations of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation. Noah walked with God. And Noah had three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth." Genesis 6:9,10 ESV

The man who wanted his family to be saved followed the Lord's instructions.

"Make yourself an ark of gopher wood; make rooms in the ark, and cover it inside and outside with pitch. And this is how you shall make it: ...

"I will establish My covenant with you; and you shall go into the ark—you, your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives with you. ...

"Thus Noah did; according to all that God commanded him, so he did." See Gen. 6:9-22

The father's actions proved his faith in God's ability and willingness to save.

"By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that comes by faith." Hebrews 11:7 NIV

Notice that God notices our obedience.

'The Lord then said to Noah, "Go into the ark, you and your whole family, because I have found you righteous in this generation. Take with you seven pairs of every kind of clean

animal, a male and its mate ... And Noah did all that the Lord commanded him.'
Genesis 7:1-5 NIV

"... male and female, came to Noah and entered the ark, as God had commanded Noah."
Genesis 7:9 NIV

"The animals going in were male and female of every living thing, as God had commanded Noah. Then the Lord shut him in." Genesis 7:16 NIV

The family was in the minority but they feared God and He kept them safe.

"Noah and his sons and his wife and his sons' wives with him went into the ark to escape the waters of the flood ... Only Noah was left, and those who were with him in the ark."
Genesis 7:7,23 ESV

The father's careful obedience continues.

'Then God spoke to Noah, saying, "Go out of the ark, you and your wife, and your sons and your sons' wives with you ..." So Noah went out, and his sons and his wife and his sons' wives with him.' Genesis 8:15-18

A father whose family the Lord has saved expresses his gratefulness.

"Then Noah built an altar to the Lord and, taking some of all the clean animals and clean birds, he sacrificed burnt offerings on it." Genesis 8:20 NIV

Always remember: our dear children have evil hearts.

"The Lord smelled the pleasing aroma and said in his heart: "Never again will I curse the ground because of man, even though every inclination of his heart is evil from childhood. And never again will I destroy all living creatures, as I have done." Gen. 8:21 NIV

This family had unique purposes to fulfil.

"So God blessed Noah and his sons, and said to them: "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth ..." Genesis 9:1

'Then God spoke to Noah and to his sons with him, saying: "And as for Me, behold, I establish My covenant with you and with your descendants after you, and with every living creature that is with you ...' Genesis 9:8-10

"Now the sons of Noah who went out of the ark were Shem, Ham, and Japheth. And Ham was the father of Canaan. These three were the sons of Noah, and from these the whole earth was populated." Genesis 9:18,19 Whole account: Genesis 9:1-19.

Does God, in his grace, also have a purpose in mind for us and our family members?
(See Ephesians 2:10.)

The son who despised and dishonoured his father

"And Noah began to be a farmer, and he planted a vineyard. Then he drank of the wine

and was drunk, and became uncovered in his tent. And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brothers outside.” Genesis 9:20-22

The sons who wanted to honour their father took appropriate action.

“But Shem and Japheth took a garment, laid it on both their shoulders, and went backward and covered the nakedness of their father. Their faces were turned away, and they did not see their father’s nakedness.” Genesis 9:23

Honouring a parent brought blessing; dishonouring a parent did the opposite.

When Noah awoke from his wine and found out what his youngest son had done to him, he said, “Cursed be Canaan! The lowest of slaves will he be to his brothers.” He also said, “Praise be to the Lord, the God of Shem! May Canaan be the slave of Shem. May God extend Japheth’s territory; may Japheth live in the tents of Shem, and may Canaan be the slave of Japheth.” Genesis 9:24-27 NIV

“Honour your father and mother,” which is the first commandment with promise: “that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth.” Ephesians 6:2

God built nations through these families.

“Now this is the genealogy of the sons of Noah: Shem, Ham, and Japheth. And sons were born to them after the flood. The sons of Japheth were Gomer, Magog, Madai, ...

These were the families of the sons of Noah, according to their generations, in their nations; and from these the nations were divided on the earth after the flood.”

Full quote: Genesis 10:1-32.

Humanism has not changed; it exalts man instead of God.

*God is “the **Father**, from whom every family in heaven and on earth **is named**.” Ephesians 3:15*

*‘And they said, “Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top is in the heavens; let us make **a name for ourselves**, lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth.”’ Genesis 11:4 Full story Genesis 11:1-9*

God the Father is concerned with family details. He is the same today.

“Now these are the generations of Terah. Terah fathered Abram, Nahor, and Haran; and Haran fathered Lot. Haran died in the presence of his father Terah in the land of his kindred, in Ur of the Chaldeans. And Abram and Nahor took wives. The name of Abram’s wife was Sarai, and the name of Nahor’s wife, Milcah, the daughter of Haran the father of Milcah and Iscah. Now Sarai was barren; she had no child.

Terah took Abram his son and Lot the son of Haran, his grandson, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, his son Abram’s wife, and they went forth together from Ur of the Chaldeans to go into the land of Canaan, but when they came to Haran, they settled there. The days of Terah were 205 years, and Terah died in Haran.” Genesis 11:27-32 ESV

Full list: Genesis 11:10-32

ABRAHAM, the father of all those who believe*

Genesis 12-25

ABRAHAM'S FAITH was worked out in his calling as the head of his family. The Lord promised him physical blessings and spiritual blessings. Abraham trusted God and obeyed him in the difficulties and harsh realities of family life. In our modern times we still have families and they still have physical and spiritual needs. We have the same God who has revealed his blessings more clearly to us than to Abraham. Let us not expect less than Abraham did.

God promised blessing to Abram, his family and many families.

'Now the Lord had said to Abram ... "... I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.'" Genesis 12:2,3

Abram's fear of man imperils his family. Fear of man still does this today.

'And Pharaoh called Abram and said, "What is this you have done to me? Why did you not tell me that she was your wife? Why did you say, 'She is my sister'? I might have taken her as my wife.'" Genesis 12:18,19 Read Genesis 12:10-20 for full story.

"The fear of man brings a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord shall be safe."
Proverbs 29:25

"He who fears the Lord has a secure fortress, and for his children it will be a refuge."
Proverbs 14:26 NIV

Lot chooses to move his family near to danger and temptation.

"So Lot chose for himself all the Jordan Valley, and Lot journeyed east ... Lot settled among the cities of the valley and moved his tent as far as Sodom. Now the men of Sodom were wicked, great sinners against the Lord." Genesis 13:11-13 ESV
Read Genesis 13:1-13

"Flee from sexual immorality." 1 Corinthians 6:18

"Flee from idolatry." 1 Corinthians 10:14

In contrast to Lot, Abram inherits great family blessings.

"... I will make your offspring as the dust of the earth, so that if one can count the dust of the earth, your offspring also can be counted. Arise, walk through the length and the breadth of the land, for I will give it to you ..." Genesis 13:16,17 ESV
Full promise: Genesis 13:14-18

We see that Lot has moved into Sodom itself and its spiritual danger.

"Then [the four kings] took all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah, and all their

* Romans 4:11 NIV

provisions, and went their way. They also took Lot, Abram's brother's son who dwelt in Sodom, and his goods, and departed." Genesis 14:11,12

God preserves his foolish child Lot by the courageous action of his uncle.

"[Abram] divided his forces against them by night, and he and his servants attacked them and pursued them as far as Hobah, which is north of Damascus. So he brought back all the goods, and also brought back his brother Lot and his goods, as well as the women and the people." Genesis 14:15,16 Whole story: Read Genesis 14

Abram brought his family worries and problems to the Lord. So should we.

'But Abram said, "Sovereign Lord, what can you give me since I remain childless ... And Abram said, "You have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir."' Genesis 15:2 NIV

God again promised family blessing for Abram and Abram believed God.

'Then the word of the Lord came to him: "This man will not be your heir, but a son coming from your own body will be your heir." He took him outside and said, "Look up at the sky and count the stars—if indeed you can count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be." Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness.' Genesis 15:3-6 NIV

By faith we are Abraham's children.

"Understand, then, that those who have faith are children of Abraham." Galatians 3:7 NIV

Has the Lord said nothing to us about our children? Do we believe God?

"As a father shows compassion to his children, so the Lord shows compassion to those who fear him ... the steadfast love of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear him, and his righteousness to children's children, to those who keep his covenant and remember to do his commandments." Psalm 103:13-17 ESV

Wife and husband discussed it but they didn't consult the Lord.

*'Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children. She had a female Egyptian servant whose name was Hagar. And Sarai said to Abram, "Behold now, the Lord has prevented me from bearing children. Go in to my servant; it may be that I shall obtain children by her." And Abram listened to the voice of Sarai. ...' ESV
Read the full story in Genesis 16:1-16*

Failure to consult God led to pride, jealousy, strife and hatred in the family.

'And he went in to Hagar, and she conceived. And when she saw that she had conceived, she looked with contempt on her mistress. And Sarai said to Abram, "May the wrong done to me be on you! I gave my servant to your embrace, and when she saw that she had conceived, she looked on me with contempt. May the Lord judge between

you and me!" But Abram said to Sarai, "Behold, your servant is in your power; do to her as you please." Then Sarai dealt harshly with her, and she fled from her.'

Genesis 16:4-6 ESV

A woman in distress discovers the tender care of her heavenly Father.

'The angel of the Lord said to her, "Return to your mistress and submit to her." The angel of the Lord also said to her, "I will surely multiply your offspring so that they cannot be numbered for multitude." And the angel of the Lord said to her, "Behold, you are pregnant and shall bear a son. You shall call his name Ishmael ['God hears'] because the Lord has listened to your affliction ..."

So she called the name of the Lord who spoke to her, "You are a God of seeing", for she said, "Truly here I have seen him who looks after me."'" Genesis 16:9-13 ESV

Whole account: Genesis 16:7-14

Compromise had far-reaching effects but all were in God's gracious purpose.

"And Hagar bore Abram a son, and Abram called the name of his son, whom Hagar bore, Ishmael. Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore Ishmael to Abram." Genesis 16:15,16 ESV

Abram's faith must be shown by obedience.

'When Abram was ninety-nine years old the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless, that I may make my covenant between me and you, and may multiply you greatly."'" Genesis 17:1,2 ESV

God announces wonderful, unique blessings for Abram's family.

'Then Abram fell on his face, and God talked with him, saying: "As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you, and you shall be a father of many nations. No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you a father of many nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you. Also I give to you and your descendants after you the land in which you are a stranger, all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting possession; and I will be their God."' Genesis 17:3-8

The promised blessings were connected to Abraham's practical obedience.

'And God said to Abraham, "As for you, you shall keep my covenant, you and your offspring after you throughout their generations. This is my covenant, which you shall keep, between me and you and your offspring after you: Every male among you shall be circumcised. You shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and you. He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised. Every male throughout your generations, whether born in your house or bought with your money from any foreigner who is not of your offspring, both he who is

born in your house and he who is bought with your money, shall surely be circumcised. So shall my covenant be in your flesh an everlasting covenant. Any uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin shall be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant.” Genesis 17:9-14 ESV

God confirms his promise and strengthens the father’s faith.

‘And God said to Abraham, “As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. I will bless her, and moreover, I will give you a son by her. I will bless her, and she shall become nations; kings of peoples shall come from her.” Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed and said to himself, “Shall a child be born to a man who is a hundred years old? Shall Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?” And Abraham said to God, “Oh that Ishmael might live before you!” God said, “No, but Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his offspring after him.”’ Genesis 17:15-19 ESV

Even the child born as a result of sin is blessed by his father’s prayer.

“As for Ishmael, I have heard you; behold, I have blessed him and will make him fruitful and multiply him greatly. He shall father twelve princes, and I will make him into a great nation. But I will establish my covenant with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear to you at this time next year.” Genesis 17:20,21 ESV

Q. How does a father show he trusts God to bless his family?

A. By prompt, detailed obedience to God’s word.

“When he had finished talking with him, God went up from Abraham. Then Abraham took Ishmael his son and all those born in his house or bought with his money, every male among the men of Abraham’s house, and he circumcised the flesh of their fore-skins that very day, as God had said to him. Abraham was ninety-nine years old when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin. And Ishmael his son was thirteen years old when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin. That very day Abraham and his son Ishmael were circumcised. And all the men of his house, those born in the house and those bought with money from a foreigner, were circumcised with him.” Genesis 17:23-27

The Lord’s desire for faith and obedience has not changed in today’s world.

God tests and strengthens a wife’s faith. Is anything too hard for the Lord?

‘Then they said to him, “Where is Sarah your wife?” So he said, “Here, in the tent.” And He said, “I will certainly return to you according to the time of life, and behold, Sarah your wife shall have a son.” (Sarah was listening in the tent door which was behind him.) Now Abraham and Sarah were old, well advanced in age; and Sarah had passed the age of childbearing. Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, “After I have grown old, shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?”’

And the Lord said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh, saying, 'Shall I surely bear a child, since I am old?' Is anything too hard for the Lord? At the appointed time I will return to you, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son." But Sarah denied it, saying, "I did not laugh," for she was afraid. And He said, "No, but you did laugh!" Genesis 18:9-15 Full account: Genesis 18:1-15

God's world-wide saving blessing will come through Abraham's family.

'The Lord said, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do, seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?"' Genesis 18:17,18 ESV

Supremely, the blessing comes through the promised Seed and faith in Him.

God's promise was to come through the appointed task assigned to Abraham.

Q. What was that task?

"For I have chosen him, that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice, so that the Lord may bring to Abraham what he has promised him." Genesis 18:17-19 ESV

Christian, has the Lord chosen you to be the father of children? Do you want the Lord to bless your children and make them a blessing to others? What is his appointed task for you that "the Lord may bring about what he has promised you"?

What promises does the Lord give to Christian fathers? – Two OT examples

"I have been young, and now am old, yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken or his children begging for bread. Psalm 37:25 ESV

Jesus said 'I am the Bread of Life' and he feeds his children by his Word.
Our children may lack physical bread but never the true bread.

"He [the righteous] is ever lending generously, and his children become a blessing."
Psalm 37:26 ESV

These are two of many promises. Are we going to let them lie on the surface of the Bible? Or take them up and ask our heavenly Father to fulfil them?

What promises does the Lord give to Christian fathers? – NT examples

"If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you." John 15: 7 ESV

Does 'whatever you wish' extend to our child's salvation and fruitfulness? Read John 14 - 16 for several such promises. As a Christian father, I am a child of Abraham (Galatians 3:7). A question worth repeating: What is God's appointed task for me?

New Testament statements of the appointed task for fathers.

"Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline

and instruction of the Lord.” Ephesians 6:4 ESV

"[A godly father] must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect." 1 Timothy 3:4 NIV

IF WE EXPECT the Lord to do what he has promised, we must carry out the task he has given. This cannot be done without prayer. But prayer must never be a substitute for obedience. "Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice ..." 1 Samuel 15:22

LOT - a righteous father influenced by the world

Genesis 18, 19

This father cared deeply about his nephew's family and other families.

'Abraham still stood before the Lord. And Abraham came near and said, "Would You also destroy the righteous with the wicked? ... Far be it from You to do such a thing as this, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous should be as the wicked; far be it from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"' Genesis 18:22-25.

Whole account: Genesis 18:22-33

Who gave Abraham that concern? Who was pleased that he argued with God?

The Lord answered his prayer.

"And it came to pass, when God destroyed the cities of the plain, that God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when He overthrew the cities in which Lot had dwelt." Genesis 19:29

Lot has learnt the ways of Sodom: his own daughters are expendable as long as he protects servants of the Lord!

"And [the men of Sodom] called to Lot, "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us, that we may know them." Lot went out to the men at the entrance, shut the door after him, and said, "I beg you, my brothers, do not act so wickedly. Behold, I have two daughters who have not known any man. Let me bring them out to you, and do to them as you please. Only do nothing to these men, for they have come under the shelter of my roof."' Genesis 19:5-8 ESV Read Genesis 19:1-11

The Lord mercifully kept the daughters from being taken.

Lot fails to sense imminent disaster for his family.

"As morning dawned, the angels urged Lot, saying, "Up! Take your wife and your two daughters who are here, lest you be swept away in the punishment of the city." But he lingered. So the men seized him and his wife and his two daughters by the hand, the Lord

being merciful to him, and they brought him out and set him outside the city. And as they brought them out, one said, "Escape for your life. Do not look back or stop anywhere in the valley. Escape to the hills, lest you be swept away."

Genesis 19:15-17 ESV Whole account: Genesis 19:12-29

Lot loses his wife – she had grown to love this world.

"The sun had risen on the earth when Lot came to Zoar. Then the Lord rained on Sodom and Gomorrah sulphur and fire from the Lord out of heaven. And he overthrew those cities, and all the valley, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground. But Lot's wife, behind him, looked back, and she became a pillar of salt."

Genesis 19:23-26 ESV

We must teach our families always to be ready for the Lord's return.

"... in the days of Lot: They ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built; but on the day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. Even so will it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed ... Remember Lot's wife." Luke 17:28-32

Context: Jesus citing Genesis when warning about his return (Luke 17:20-37)

Lot's daughters had imbibed Sodom's thinking and behaviour.

'Then Lot went up out of Zoar and dwelt in the mountains, and his two daughters were with him; for he was afraid to dwell in Zoar. And he and his two daughters dwelt in a cave. Now the firstborn said to the younger, "Our father is old, and there is no man on the earth to come in to us as is the custom of all the earth. Come, let us make our father drink wine, and we will lie with him, that we may preserve the lineage of our father." So they made their father drink wine that night. And the firstborn went in and lay with her father, and he did not know when she lay down or when she arose ... Thus both the daughters of Lot were with child by their father.' Genesis 19:30-33, 36

Full account: Genesis 19:30-38

ABRAHAM AND LOT – a study of two righteous fathers

Abraham "was looking forward to the city with foundations whose architect and builder is God" (Hebrews 11:10 NIV). Lot focused too much on the 'here and now' (Genesis 13:10-13). Abraham gained a rich eternal inheritance but Lot lost virtually everything of his earthly riches and perhaps even his family were eternally lost.

Lot was a true believer, horrified by the culture of Sodom.

"[God] delivered righteous Lot, who was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds)."

2 Peter 2:7,8 Context: New Testament warning against false teachers.

However, Lot freely chose to live in Sodom and thereby exposed himself, his wife and family to powerful immoral teaching and pressure. 21st century society is very like Sodom and Gomorrah. We must be careful that what we freely choose does not expose our children to unnecessary poisonous influence.

Lot seems to illustrate being saved "as through fire".

He is a warning to all Christian fathers and mothers.

"... each one should be careful how he builds. For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work. If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames." 1 Corinthians 3 :10-15 NIV

God's grace has abounded even through Lot's sin!

"Thus both the daughters of Lot were with child by their father. The firstborn bore a son and called his name Moab; he is the father of the Moabites to this day. And the younger, she also bore a son and called his name Ben-Ammi; he is the father of the people of Ammon to this day." Genesis 19:36-38

Ruth the Moabite was an ancestor of Jesus. (Ruth 4, Matthew 1:5)

ABRAHAM, SARAH and ISAAC

Genesis 20-25

The father again gives way to fear and jeopardizes his wife and family.

'And Abraham journeyed from there to the South, and dwelt between Kadesh and Shur, and stayed in Gerar. Now Abraham said of Sarah his wife, "She is my sister." And Abimelech king of Gerar sent and took Sarah ... Then Abimelech said to Abraham, "What did you have in view, that you have done this thing?" And Abraham said, "Because I thought, surely the fear of God is not in this place; and they will kill me on account of my wife."' " Genesis 20:1,2,10,11. Read the whole story in Genesis 20.

The next chapter shows that God remained faithful to his promise. But let us take warning to fear God rather than people.

The Lord closes or opens the womb. He is in overall control, not humans.

"So Abraham prayed to God; and God healed Abimelech, his wife, and his female servants. Then they bore children; for the Lord had closed up all the wombs of the house of Abimelech because of Sarah, Abraham's wife." Genesis 21:17,18.

See also chapter 21:1

It had been a painful journey but the mother's faith was not in vain.

'And the Lord visited Sarah as He had said, and the Lord did for Sarah as He had spoken. For Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him. And Abraham called the name of his son who was born to him—whom Sarah bore to him—Isaac. Then Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him. Now Abraham was one hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him. And Sarah said, "God has made me laugh, and all who hear will laugh with me." She also said, "Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? For I have borne him a son in his old age."'
Genesis 21:1-7

New Testament commentary:

"By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child when she was past the age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised. Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born as many as the stars of the sky in multitude—innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore." Hebrews 11:11,12

On-going family pain but God works to fulfil his loving purpose of grace.

'... But Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, laughing. So she said to Abraham, "Cast out this slave woman with her son, for the son of this slave woman shall not be heir with my son Isaac. And the thing was very displeasing to Abraham on account of his son." Genesis 21:9-10 ESV

Whole account: Genesis 21:8-21

"Abraham had two sons, one by a slave woman and one by a free woman. But the son of the slave was born according to the flesh, while the son of the free woman was born through promise. Now this may be interpreted allegorically: these women are two covenants ..." Galatians 4:22,23 ESV Full explanation: Galatians 4:21-31

Notice God's kind reassurance in family upset and grief.

'But God said to Abraham, "Be not displeased because of the boy and because of your slave woman. Whatever Sarah says to you, do as she tells you, for through Isaac shall your offspring be named. And I will make a nation of the son of the slave woman also, because he is your offspring.'"' Genesis 21:12,13 ESV

Abraham promptly obeys the Lord even with very mixed feelings.

"So Abraham rose early in the morning and took bread and a skin of water and gave it to Hagar, putting it on her shoulder, along with the child, and sent her away. And she departed and wandered in the wilderness of Beersheba." Genesis 21:14 ESV

God's ears are open to the cry of the destitute 'single' parent and her fatherless son.

'When the water in the skin was gone, she put the child under one of the bushes. Then she went and sat down opposite him a good way off, about the distance of a bowshot,

for she said, "Let me not look on the death of the child." And as she sat opposite him, she lifted up her voice and wept. And God heard the voice of the boy, and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, "What troubles you, Hagar? Fear not, for God has heard the voice of the boy where he is. Up! Lift up the boy, and hold him fast with your hand, for I will make him into a great nation." Then God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water. And she went and filled the skin with water and gave the boy a drink. And God was with the boy, and he grew up ...' Genesis 21:15-20 ESV

"The Lord relieves the fatherless and widow." Psalm 146:9

God tests Abraham at a fundamental level: the father-son relationship.

Now it came to pass after these things that God tested Abraham, and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." Then He said, "Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you." Genesis 22:1,2

Read the whole story in Genesis 22. Essential reading!

Isaac's father was known for prompt obedience to his heavenly Father.

"So Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son; and he split the wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him." Genesis 22:3 (Psalm 119:60)

A son who followed his father's example of trust and obedience

'But Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, "My father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son." Then he said, "Look, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" And Abraham said, "My son, God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering." So the two of them went together. Then they came to the place of which God had told him. And Abraham built an altar there and placed the wood in order; and he bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, upon the wood. And Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son.'" Genesis 22:7-9

This father's greatest desire was to obey the Lord. That is our calling too.

'But the Angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" So he said, "Here I am." And He said, "Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me." Genesis 22:11,12 (Psalm 119:57,58)

His son was spared by the Lord's provision on the 'Mount of the Lord'

'And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him was a ram, caught in a thicket by his horns. And Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son. So Abraham called the name of that place, "The Lord will provide"; as it is said to this day, "On the mount of the Lord it shall be provided.'" Genesis 22:13,14 ESV

How will our children be spared? By the Lord's provision: on the 'Mount of the Lord' God sacrificed his own Son.

A father obeyed God's word. Result: unimagined blessings the world over.

'Then the Angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time out of heaven, and said: "By Myself I have sworn, says the Lord, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son— blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the sea-shore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies. In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice."'

Genesis 22:15-18

The source of these blessings was not Abraham but the Son who was not spared by his Father: "God did not spare his own Son but delivered Him up for us all."

Romans 8:32

Q. What is the true test of (a father's) saving faith? A. Practical obedience

"Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless? Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar? You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works; and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness"—and he was called a friend of God. You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone." James 2:20-24 ESV

Abraham trusted God in his bereavement and honoured the Lord.

'Sarah lived for 127 years; these were the years of the life of Sarah. And Sarah died at Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron) in the land of Canaan, and Abraham went in to mourn for Sarah and to weep for her. And Abraham rose up from before his dead and said to the Hittites, "I am a sojourner and foreigner among you; give me property among you for a burying place, that I may bury my dead out of my sight."' Genesis 23:1-4 ESV

Full account: Genesis 23

Faith extends to the painful, practical realities of family life, now as then.

Abraham, in faith, took practical steps to find a good wife for his son.

'Now Abraham was old, well advanced in age; and the Lord had blessed Abraham in all things. So Abraham said to the oldest servant of his house, who ruled over all that he had, "Please, put your hand under my thigh, and I will make you swear by the Lord, the God of heaven and the God of the earth, that you will not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell; but you shall go to my country and to my family, and take a wife for my son Isaac."' Genesis 24:1-4

Read the story in Genesis 24.

We must teach our children to seek marriage partners from the Lord, if his will is for them to marry.

God answered prayer, showing great kindness to Abraham (and his son).

"... and by this I will know that You have shown kindness to my master." And it happened, before he had finished speaking, that behold, Rebekah, who was born to Bethuel, son of Milcah, the wife of Nahor, Abraham's brother, came out with her pitcher on her shoulder. Now the young woman was very beautiful to behold, a virgin; no man had known her ...' Genesis 24:15,16 This God is our God!

The young woman had faith like Abraham's (Heb. 11:8) and was blessed.

'So they said, "We will call the young woman and ask her personally." Then they called Rebekah and said to her, "Will you go with this man?" And she said, "I will go." So they sent away Rebekah their sister and her nurse, and Abraham's servant and his men. And they blessed Rebekah and said to her: "Our sister, may you become the mother of thousands of ten thousands; and may your descendants possess the gates of those who hate them."' Genesis 24:57-60

Isaac's heavenly Father abundantly comforted him in his family grief.

"And the servant told Isaac all the things that he had done. Then Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent; and he took Rebekah and she became his wife, and he loved her. So Isaac was comforted after his mother's death." Genesis 24:66,67.

His Father is our Father, the 'God of all comfort'. 2 Corinthians 1:3

Even Abraham's marriage was blighted by following prevailing pagan culture.

"And Abraham gave all that he had to Isaac. But Abraham gave gifts to the sons of the concubines which Abraham had; and while he was still living he sent them eastward, away from Isaac his son, to the country of the east." Genesis 25:5,6

Full quote: Genesis 25:1-6

The Lord is gracious and patient with sinful parents.

God's blessing on Abraham rests on his son, as promised.

"... Abraham breathed his last and died in a good old age, an old man and full of years, and was gathered to his people. And his sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah ... There Abraham was buried, and Sarah his wife. And it came to pass, after the death of Abraham, that God blessed his son Isaac ..." Full quote: Gen 25:7-11

Both sons came together to bury their father; though only Isaac was a son of the Promise.

ISAAC

Genesis 25-26

Isaac prays for God's promise to be fulfilled.

"Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah, the daughter of Bethuel the Aramean of Paddan-aram, the sister of Laban the Aramean, to be his wife. And Isaac prayed to

the Lord for his wife, because she was barren. And the Lord granted his prayer, and Rebekah his wife conceived.” Genesis 25:20,21 ESV

Husbands, are we praying for our wives? Or do we expect God’s blessing without prayer? (James 4:2 end)

A woman of faith brings her pregnancy to the Lord.

‘The children struggled together within her, and she said, “If it is thus, why is this happening to me?” So she went to enquire of the Lord.’ Genesis 25:22 ESV

The Lord answers, revealing his great sovereign purposes for her children.

‘And the Lord said to her, “Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you shall be divided; the one shall be stronger than the other, the older shall serve the younger.”’ Genesis 25:23 ESV

Our Father in heaven, may you have good purposes for our children!

Genesis often focuses on family details.

“When her days to give birth were completed, behold, there were twins in her womb. The first came out red, all his body like a hairy cloak, so they called his name Esau. Afterwards his brother came out with his hand holding Esau’s heel, so his name was called Jacob. Isaac was sixty years old when she bore them. Genesis 25:24-26. ESV

Favouritism leads to confusion and family fracture.

“So the boys grew. And Esau was a skilful hunter, a man of the field; but Jacob was a mild man, dwelling in tents. And Isaac loved Esau because he ate of his game, but Rebekah loved Jacob.” Genesis 25:28. See Genesis 27

A family blighted by a scheming son and his godless brother (Heb. 12:16).

*‘Jacob said, “Swear to me now.” So he swore to him and sold his birthright to Jacob. Then Jacob gave Esau bread and lentil stew, and he ate and drank and rose and went his way. Thus Esau despised his birthright.’ Full account: Genesis 25:29-34
See Hebrews 12:15-17*

Christian families, keep prayerful watch over each other; we are all sinners.

In spite of sin, God graciously repeats his promise.

‘Then the Lord appeared to [Isaac] and said: “Do not go down to Egypt; live in the land of which I shall tell you. Dwell in this land, and I will be with you and bless you; for to you and your descendants I give all these lands, and I will perform the oath which I swore to Abraham your father.’ Genesis 26:2,3

GOD’S BLESSING on Abraham’s and Isaac’s family was unique but God has promised blessings for all his people from the least to the greatest (Hebrews 8:10-12). That includes your family and mine.

Notice how a father's obedience features in God's promise to his children.

"And I will make your descendants multiply as the stars of heaven; I will give to your descendants all these lands; and in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed; because Abraham obeyed My voice and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws." Genesis 26:4,5

If we expect our Father to bless our children we must be careful to obey him.

Isaac repeats his father's sin.

'So Isaac dwelt in Gerar. And the men of the place asked about his wife. And he said, "She is my sister"; for he was afraid to say, "She is my wife," because he thought, "lest the men of the place kill me for Rebekah, because she is beautiful to behold."'

Genesis 26:6,7 Whole account: Genesis 26:6-11

Take care! Fathers' sinful traits can often be seen in their children.

Isaac was glad to have a beautiful wife.

'When Isaac had been there a long time, Abimelech king of the Philistines looked down from a window and saw Isaac caressing his wife Rebekah. So Abimelech summoned Isaac and said, "She is really your wife! Why did you say, "She is my sister"?"'

Genesis 26:8,9 NIV

God again reaffirms his promise to Isaac – and honours Isaac's father.

'Then [Isaac] went up from there to Beersheba. And the Lord appeared to him the same night and said, "I am the God of your father Abraham; do not fear, for I am with you. I will bless you and multiply your descendants for My servant Abraham's sake."'

Genesis 26:24

Godless choices by an adult son or daughter can bring grief to a family.

"When Esau was forty years old, he took Judith the daughter of Beeri the Hittite to be his wife, and Basemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite, and they made life bitter for Isaac and Rebekah." Genesis 26:24

JACOB - where sin increased, grace increased all the more*

Genesis 27-49

THERE ARE serious sins in this family but God's gracious purpose marches on. Both Rebekah and Jacob expected that Jacob would be blessed ahead of Esau according to God's promise (Genesis 25:23). They were right. However, they did not trust God to bring about his promise but used deception and lies to achieve God's will. (The end does not justify the means.) Isaac was in the wrong. He disregarded God's promise and planned to give the blessing to Esau.

* Romans 5:20 NIV

A wife who deceives her husband is not showing respect for him or the Lord.
'Now Rebekah was listening when Isaac spoke to Esau his son. And Esau went to the field to hunt game and to bring it. So Rebekah spoke to Jacob her son, saying, "Indeed I heard your father speak to Esau your brother, saying, 'Bring me game and make savory food for me, that I may eat it and bless you in the presence of the Lord before my death.' Now therefore, my son, obey my voice according to what I command you ...'
Genesis 27:5-8

"Let the wife see that she respects her husband." Ephesians 5:33

The son lies to his father, using God's name in confirmation.
'And [Isaac] said, "Here I am. Who are you, my son?" Jacob said to his father, "I am Esau your firstborn. I have done just as you told me; please arise, sit and eat of my game, that your soul may bless me." But Isaac said to his son, "How is it that you have found it so quickly, my son?" And he said, "Because the Lord your God brought it to me."... Then he said, "Are you really my son Esau?" He said, "I am."'
Genesis 27:18-24 See Commandments No 3, No 5, No 9 (Exodus 20).

Even in his confused family situation, Isaac's faith was active.
"By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come." Hebrews 11:20

Pray for your children and teach them to desire the Lord's marriage choice.
'So Isaac called for Jacob and blessed him. Then he commanded him: "Do not marry a Canaanite woman ..."' Genesis 28:1 Full quote Genesis 28:1-5

This weak, sinful father wanted God to bless his children down the generations and dared to ask Him to.

"May God Almighty bless you, and make you fruitful and multiply you, that you may be an assembly of peoples; and give you the blessing of Abraham, to you and your descendants with you ..." Genesis 28:3,4

Isaac's vision was wide because his God was great. We live in New Testament days – is our vision narrower? What about our children and their children? Is the Lord able to bless them down the generations? Is he willing?

Again, God's family promise comes – not by works but by amazing grace.
'[The Lord] said [to Jacob]: "I am the Lord God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and your descendants. Also your descendants shall be as the dust of the earth; you shall spread abroad to the west and the east, to the north and the south; and in you and in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed ..."' Genesis 28:13,14 Whole incident: Genesis 28:10-22

Is my family a 'family of the earth'? Can Christ, the promised Seed (Galatians 3:16), bless it? And use it to bless others outside the family? He loves us to ask.

The son who deceived his father was himself deceived by a relative.

'So Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and they seemed only a few days to him because of the love he had for her. Then Jacob said to Laban, "Give me my wife, for my days are fulfilled, that I may go in to her." ... Now it came to pass in the evening, that Laban took Leah his daughter and brought her to Jacob; and he went in to her ... So it came to pass in the morning, that behold, it was Leah! And he said to Laban, "What is this you have done to me? Was it not for Rachel that I served you? Why then have you deceived me?"' Genesis 29:20-25 Whole story: Genesis 29:1-30

Jacob was experiencing his Father's wise, loving discipline.

"My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; for whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives." Hebrews 12:5,6

Jacob's marriage featured bigamy from early on.

'And Laban said, "It must not be done so in our country, to give the younger before the firstborn. Fulfil her [bridal] week, and we will give you this one also for the service which you will serve with me still another seven years." Then Jacob did so and fulfilled her week. So he gave him his daughter Rachel as wife also ... Then Jacob also went in to Rachel, and he also loved Rachel more than Leah. And he served with Laban still another seven years.' Genesis 29:26-30

Jacob has our great sympathy, but it was against God's created order.

"You shall not take a woman as a rival wife to her sister, uncovering her nakedness while her sister is still alive." Leviticus 18:18 ESV

The God of love opens or closes the womb – he has the last word, not we.

"When the Lord saw that Leah was unloved, He opened her womb; but Rachel was barren. So Leah conceived and bore a son ... Then she conceived again and bore a son ... She conceived again and bore a son ... And she conceived again ... Then she stopped bearing." Genesis 29:31 ff

This woman of faith was thankful to God despite on-going family affliction.

'So Leah conceived and bore a son and she called his name Reuben; for she said, "The Lord has surely looked on my affliction. Now therefore, my husband will love me." Then she conceived again and bore a son, and said, "Because the Lord has heard that I am unloved, He has therefore given me this son also." And she called his name Simeon. She conceived again and bore a son, and said, "Now this time my husband will become attached to me, because I have borne him three sons." Therefore his name was called Levi. And she conceived again and bore a son, and said, "Now I will praise the Lord." Therefore she called his name Judah. Then she stopped bearing.' Genesis 29:31-35

Family distress, pain and envy

'When Rachel saw that she bore Jacob no children, she envied her sister. She said to Jacob, "Give me children, or I shall die!" Jacob's anger was kindled against Rachel, and he said, "Am I in the place of God, who has withheld from you the fruit of the womb?"' Genesis 30:1,2 ESV

Did husband and wife consult the Lord or adopt worldly expedience?

'Then she said, "Here is my servant Bilhah; go in to her, so that she may give birth on my behalf, that even I may have children through her." So she gave him her servant Bilhah as a wife, and Jacob went in to her. And Bilhah conceived and bore Jacob a son.' Genesis 30:3-5 ESV

'Success shows it was right!' says confused Rachel. Rivalry continues.

'Then Rachel said, "God has judged me, and has also heard my voice and given me a son." Therefore she called his name Dan. Rachel's servant Bilhah conceived again and bore Jacob a second son. Then Rachel said, "With mighty wrestlings I have wrestled with my sister and have prevailed." So she called his name Naphtali.' Gen. 30:6-8 ESV

The family head again allows worldly thinking to affect his household.

'When Leah saw that she had ceased bearing children, she took her servant Zilpah and gave her to Jacob as a wife. Then Leah's servant Zilpah bore Jacob a son. And Leah said, "Good fortune has come!" so she called his name Gad. Leah's servant Zilpah bore Jacob a second son. And Leah said, "Happy am I! For women have called me happy." So she called his name Asher.' Genesis 30:9-13 ESV

The 21st century has many 'sensible' expediences to offer. Husband, wife and family members, be on your guard.

This family repeatedly knew painful envy and rivalry.

'In the days of wheat harvest Reuben went and found mandrakes in the field and brought them to his mother Leah. Then Rachel said to Leah, "Please give me some of your son's mandrakes [used in ancient society to promote conception]." But she said to her, "Is it a small matter that you have taken away my husband? Would you take away my son's mandrakes also?"' Genesis 30:14,15 ESV

A husband letting himself be manipulated by his wife dishonours his Head.

'Rachel said, "Then he may lie with you tonight in exchange for your son's mandrakes." When Jacob came from the field in the evening, Leah went out to meet him and said, "You must come in to me, for I have hired you with my son's mandrakes." So he lay with her that night.' Genesis 30:15,16 ESV

"But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God." 1 Corinthians 11:3 ESV

She thinks she has earned God's blessing. But God still answers her prayer.

'And God listened to Leah, and she conceived and bore Jacob a fifth son. Leah said, "God has given me my wages because I gave my servant to my husband." So she called his name Issachar.' Genesis 30:17,18 ESV

How often the Lord answers our prayers for our family in spite of wrong attitudes and actions!

God's unrelenting blessing on this family

'And Leah conceived again, and she bore Jacob a sixth son. Then Leah said, "God has endowed me with a good endowment; now my husband will honour me, because I have borne him six sons." So she called his name Zebulun. Afterwards she bore a daughter and called her name Dinah.' Genesis 30:19-21

"Children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb is a reward." Psalm 127:3

In spite of all, Rachel keeps praying for children – and what an answer!

Then God remembered Rachel, and God listened to her and opened her womb. She conceived and bore a son and said, "God has taken away my reproach." And she called his name Joseph, saying, "May the Lord add to me another son!" Genesis 30:22-24 ESV

SEE HOW the Lord blessed Jacob's family in spite of a confusing array of godless compromises and sins. This family was blessed by God according to his promises to Abraham and Isaac. It grew into the twelve tribes of Israel. The Christ (Messiah) would come from this nation and "all the nations on earth will be blessed through him" (Gen. 22:18). Doesn't that encourage us to ask him to forgive our sinful failures and bless even our family for Christ's sake (not for ours)?

A family united in doing God's will is a great blessing – 'I will be with you'.

'Then the Lord said to Jacob, "Return to the land of your fathers and to your kindred, and I will be with you." ... Then Rachel and Leah answered and said to him, "... All the wealth that God has taken away from our father belongs to us and to our children. Now then, whatever God has said to you, do."' Genesis 31: 3, 14-16 ESV

Whole account Genesis 31:1-21

Both father and grandfather have deeply impressed this son.

"Unless the God of my father, the God of Abraham and the Fear of Isaac, had been with me, surely now you would have sent me away empty-handed. God has seen my affliction and the labour of my hands, and rebuked you last night." Genesis 31:42

"... And Jacob swore by the Fear of his father Isaac." Genesis 31:53

Whole episode: Genesis 31:22-55

'There was a father greatly afraid. But in his fear, the father prayed.'

JACOB wrestles with God for his family

Genesis 32, 33

Returning to the wider family means asking his brother's forgiveness.

God gives extra assurance of safety for him and the family.

'So Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him. When Jacob saw them, he said, "This is God's camp." And he called the name of that place Mahanaim. Then Jacob sent messengers before him to Esau his brother in the land of Seir, the country of Edom.' Genesis 32:1-3

The father realises that his family is threatened with death.

'And the messengers returned to Jacob, saying, "We came to your brother Esau, and he is coming to meet you, and there are four hundred men with him." Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed.' Genesis 32:6,7 ESV

Jacob prays during the night.

"Then Jacob was left alone; and a Man wrestled with him until the breaking of day." Genesis 32:24

"In [Jacob's] strength he struggled with God. Yes, he struggled with the Angel and prevailed; he wept, and sought favour from Him." Hosea 12:3,4

JACOB, no doubt, continues his prayers as outlined in Genesis 32:9-12:

1. The father reminds God that he is following God's word, not his own idea.

'And Jacob said, "O God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac, O Lord who said to me, 'Return to your country and to your kindred, that I may do you good ...'"' Genesis 32:9 ESV

HOLD 1 You told me to come back here and promised to bless me.

2. He confesses that he doesn't deserve any of God's blessings.

"I am not worthy of the least of all the deeds of steadfast love and all the faithfulness that you have shown to your servant, for with only my staff I crossed this Jordan, and now I have become two camps." Genesis 32:10 ESV

HOLD 2 Realistic self-assessment – he knows he doesn't deserve any favour but dares to ask for mercy from the God of steadfast love.

3. He tells God how afraid he is and asks the Lord's help.

"Please deliver me from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau, for I fear him, that he may come and attack me, the mothers with the children." Genesis 32:11 ESV

HOLD 3 A direct request to his Father.

4. He repeats God's promise - 'You promised – I heard you!'

"But you said, 'I will surely do you good, and make your offspring as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude.'" Genesis 32:12 ESV

HOLD 4 The strongest of all: God's promise to Abraham and Isaac.

Why did Jacob win the wrestling match? – because he was the stronger one?

"Then Jacob was left alone; and a Man wrestled with him until the breaking of day. Now when He saw that He did not prevail against him, He touched the socket of his hip; and the socket of Jacob's hip was out of joint as He wrestled with him." Genesis 32:24,25

God says, "Leave go!" but the father says, "No!"

'And He said, "Let Me go, for the day breaks." But he said, "I will not let You go unless You bless me!"' Genesis 32:26

Jacob knows he has God's Angel in a hold! He knows he has received what he asked for. (See Mark 11:22-25)

JACOB REJOICES that he has a hold on God which God cannot break! What is the hold? This: God has spoken and it cannot be reversed: *"For You said, 'I will surely treat you well, and make your descendants as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude.'"* Genesis 32:12

Is God displeased that his child would not take No for an answer?

'So He said to him, "What is your name?" He said, "Jacob."

And He said, "Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel; for you have struggled with God and with men, and have prevailed.'" Genesis 32:28

Compare this father with the mother in Matthew 15:21-28.

Now Jacob wants to know God more – and his family is blessed.

'Then Jacob asked, saying, "Tell me Your name, I pray."

*And He said, "Why is it that you ask about My name?" **And He blessed him there.**'* Genesis 32:29

Wrestling with God has been costly but worth it.

'So Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: "For I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved." Just as he crossed over Penuel the sun rose on him, and he limped on his hip.' Genesis 32:30,31

One answer to Jacob's prayer was immediate.

"Then [Jacob] crossed over before them and bowed himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother. But Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept." Genesis 33:3,4 Whole account: Gen. 33

HERE IS encouragement for fathers and mothers:

- Jacob found his family in difficulties because he had followed God's word. If he hadn't done that he would have avoided the dangerous situation.
- He knew he didn't deserve God's special favour – he'd made such a mess of his life, family included.
- He was very worried and afraid. He had to admit he was utterly unable to cope.
- He remembered a promise of God to bless his family. He got hold of that promise and took it to the Lord. He believed the promise. He was able to say, "You said it Lord, not me. It's not my idea. If you are going to allow me and my family to miss the blessing you promised, then why did you promise? Does that honour your Name?"

21st century children of God who are seriously trying to follow God's word can find God's promises to bless their children (by grace, not desert). They can say to their heavenly Father: "If you didn't want to bless me and my family, then why did you write these promises and encouragements and say that you want us to bring our requests to you? What are they in your Word for? I've seen wonderful words of blessing for families in your Word. Do you expect me to admire them from a distance and not bring them to you and humbly ask you to fulfil them – even for me?"

JACOB'S family life continues

Genesis 34-38

Did parents and brothers fail to protect her or did she disregard family warning about the dangers of that society?

"Now Dinah the daughter of Leah, whom she had borne to Jacob, went out to see the women of the land. And when Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite, the prince of the land, saw her, he seized her and lay with her and humiliated her." Genesis 34:1,2 ESV
Full story: Genesis 34

Fearing God more than his household, Jacob gave a bold command.

"God said to Jacob, "Arise, go up to Bethel and dwell there. Make an altar there to the God who appeared to you when you fled from your brother Esau." So Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him, "Put away the foreign gods that are among you and purify yourselves and change your garments. Then let us arise and go up to Bethel, so that I may make there an altar to the God who answers me in the day of my distress and has been with me wherever I have gone." So they gave to Jacob all the foreign gods that they had, and the rings that were in their ears. Jacob hid them under the terebinth tree that was near Shechem. Genesis 35:1-4 ESV

God again records his determination to bless Israel's family.

Should we ask Him to bless ours?

'And God said to him, "I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply. A nation and a company of nations shall come from you, and kings shall come from your own body. The land that I gave to Abraham and Isaac I will give to you, and I will give the land to your offspring after you."' Genesis 35:11,12 ESV

What blessing do we want him to give our children? Salvation or a lesser blessing?

Jacob overrules his wife in naming their son.

"Rachel went into labour, and she had hard labour. And when her labour was at its hardest, the midwife said to her, "Do not fear, for you have another son." And as her soul was departing (for she was dying), she called his name Ben-oni ['Son of my sorrow']; but his father called him Benjamin ['Son of my right hand'] ..."

Genesis 35:16-18 ESV Full account: Genesis 35:16-20

Poor Rachel was in great pain. No wonder she was pessimistic.

JACOB ALLOWED his wives to name every son except one. In this he was exercising his family headship. See Numbers 30. There we see God's loving provision of family security for wives and young daughters. The concept of husbands' headship is increasingly disregarded by present day society. Is it outdated in the Lord's view? (1 Corinthians 11:1-16)

Shocking immorality in the home.

"And it happened, when Israel dwelt in that land, that Reuben went and lay with Bilhah his father's concubine; and Israel heard about it." Genesis 35:22

Consequences followed years later (Genesis 49:3,4).

Our family members are sinners like us. Never be complacent; keep praying.

God cares about every family's details – not only those of his 'elect nation'.

"These were the sons of Zibeon: both Ajah and Anah. This was the Anah who found the water in the wilderness as he pastured the donkeys of his father Zibeon. These were the children of Anah: Dishon and Aholibamah the daughter of Anah."

Genesis 36:24,25 For a full list of Esau's descendants see Genesis 36.

Grief for Jacob: a son who married without regarding the Lord

"And Judah saw there a daughter of a certain Canaanite whose name was Shua, and he married her and went in to her. So she conceived and bore a son, and he called his name Er." Genesis 38:2,3 For more see Genesis 38:1-4

More grief for Jacob: God-rejecting grandsons

'Then Judah took a wife for Er his firstborn, and her name was Tamar. But Er, Judah's firstborn, was wicked in the sight of the Lord, and the Lord killed him. And Judah said to

Onan, "Go in to your brother's wife and marry her, and raise up an heir to your brother." Genesis 38:6-8 Full story: Genesis 38:6-11

The aftermath: yet more immorality in the family

"Now in the process of time the daughter of Shua, Judah's wife, died; and Judah was comforted, and went up to his sheepshearers at Timnah ..."

Read the account in Genesis 38:12-26

In all the sin, what grace to this family! The Messiah's line continues!

'When the time of her labour came, there were twins in her womb. And when she was in labour, one put out a hand, and the midwife took and tied a scarlet thread on his hand, saying, "This one came out first." But as he drew back his hand, behold, his brother came out. And she said, "What a breach you have made for yourself!" Therefore his name was called Perez. Afterwards his brother came out with the scarlet thread on his hand, and his name was called Zerah.' Genesis 38:27-30 ESV

"... and Judah the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, and Perez the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Ram ..." Matthew 1:3 ESV – ancestry of Jesus

The sin of favouritism strains the family's harmony – with devastating results.

"Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age. Also he made him a tunic of many colours. But when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him and could not speak peaceably to him." Genesis 37:3,4. See James 2:1-4.

Results are described in chapter 37 and following chapters of Genesis.

God foretells that he will give one brother authority over the rest of the family including his father.

'Then he dreamed still another dream and told it to his brothers, and said, "Look, I have dreamed another dream. And this time, the sun, the moon, and the eleven stars bowed down to me." So he told it to his father and his brothers; and his father rebuked him and said to him, "What is this dream that you have dreamed? Shall your mother and I and your brothers indeed come to bow down to the earth before you?" And his brothers envied him, but his father kept the matter in mind.' Genesis 37:9-11

For the full account of Joseph's dreams read Genesis 37:5-11.

God continues to fulfil his gracious purposes for this family.

'Now when they saw him afar off, even before he came near them, they conspired against him to kill him. Then they said to one another, "Look, this dreamer is coming! Come therefore, let us now kill him and cast him into some pit; and we shall say, 'Some wild beast has devoured him.' We shall see what will become of his dreams!'"

Genesis 37:18-20 Read chapter 37:12-36 for the full account of the brothers' murderous thoughts, callous treatment of their brother and cruel deceit of their father.

JACOB'S FAMILY was troubled by the sin of each member. Out of their hearts came "evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness" (Mark 7:21,22). It is natural to think of ourselves or our children as not like other people (Luke 18:9-14). Do not be surprised at your own or your family's sins. Be realistic and thankful that it is by grace that we or they will be saved. Let your focus be on the Lord alone. What does the He want us to expect as we pray for our family members? God's deserved wrath or **God's undeserved mercy**?

JOSEPH in EGYPT

Genesis 39-50

Adultery is sin against our neighbour and sin against God.

"My master has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?" And though she spoke to Joseph day after day, he refused to go to bed with her or even be with her.'

Genesis 39:9,10 NIV Whole story: Genesis 39:1-23

Adultery –the quick way to ruin families. Get away **fast**.

'She caught him by his cloak and said, "Come to bed with me!" But he left his cloak in her hand and ran out of the house.' Genesis 39:12 NIV

"Flee sexual immorality." 1 Corinthians 6:18

Is Joseph a vindictive brother? No, he loves his brothers!

"And Joseph's brothers came and bowed themselves before him with their faces to the ground. Joseph saw his brothers and recognized them, but he treated them like strangers and spoke roughly to them ..." Genesis 42:6,7 ESV

"... And he put them all together in custody for three days." Genesis 42:17

Jesus is our loving brother with authority over us.

"Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent." Rev. 3:19 ESV

JOSEPH IS God the Father's chosen instrument to bring His essential discipline and provision to His children: Jacob (Israel) and the children of Israel. This is remarkable; God appoints Joseph to exercise His authority over the family – including his father. (Genesis 37:5-11). This special scenario gives insight into how our Father disciplines us. God the Father is the example for human fathers. Remember, this is not a usual family situation. Grown men are being helped, not children. God's guiding principles are unchanging but procedures and outworking differ according to age. (See the book of Proverbs.)

Joseph knew that his requirement would bring pain to his father.

'On the third day Joseph said ... "... bring your youngest brother to me. So your words will be verified, and you shall not die.'" Genesis 42:18-20 ESV

"No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful ..." Hebrews 12:11 NIV

God is doing his merciful work in the unpleasant disciplinary process.

'Then they said to one another, "In truth we are guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the distress of his soul, when he begged us and we did not listen. That is why this distress has come upon us." And Reuben answered them, "Did I not tell you not to sin against the boy? But you did not listen. So now there comes a reckoning for his blood.'" Genesis 42 21,22 ESV

Joseph's heart is moved with compassion but in spite of his pain he continues the discipline – loving his brothers more than his own feelings.

"They did not know that Joseph understood them, for there was an interpreter between them. Then he turned away from them and wept. And he returned to them and spoke to them. And he took Simeon from them and bound him before their eyes."

Genesis 42:23,24 ESV

More of Joseph's 'loving harshness' and more of God's gracious convicting work

'[One of them] said to his brothers, "My money has been put back; here it is in the mouth of my sack!" At this their hearts failed them, and they turned trembling to one another, saying, "What is this that God has done to us?"' Genesis 42:28 ESV

Joseph's actions bring great distress to his father.

'When they came to Jacob their father in the land of Canaan, they told him all that had happened to them, saying, "The man, the lord of the land, spoke roughly to us ... "'

Genesis 42:29,30 ESV

'As they were emptying their sacks, there in each man's sack was his pouch of silver! When they and their father saw the money pouches, they were frightened. Their father Jacob said to them, "You have deprived me of my children. Joseph is no more and Simeon is no more, and now you want to take Benjamin. Everything is against me!"'

Genesis 42:35,36 NIV – Just the opposite was the case (Romans 8:28).

The son's ill thought-out offer confirms the father's refusal to face reality.

"Then Reuben said to his father, "Kill my two sons if I do not bring him back to you. Put him in my hands, and I will bring him back to you." But he said, "My son shall not go down with you, for his brother is dead, and he is the only one left. If harm should happen to him on the journey that you are to make, you would bring down my grey hairs with sorrow to Sheol." Genesis 42:37 ESV

GOD IS USING all this pain and distress to produce His fruit in Jacob and his family. Is it necessary? Yes, the Lord 'does not willingly afflict or grieve the children of men' (Lamentations 3:33). Joseph knows the pain that his demand will cause but he knows it is essential for his father's and brothers' good.

See the change in Judah! (Compare with Genesis 37.)

And Judah said to Israel his father, "Send the boy with me, and we will arise and go, that we may live and not die, both we and you and also our little ones. I will be a pledge of his safety. From my hand you shall require him. If I do not bring him back to you and set him before you, then let me bear the blame for ever. If we had not delayed, we would now have returned twice." Genesis 43:8-10 ESV

The father's faith is seen again – he gives up his favourite son to God's will.

'Then their father Israel said to them ... "Take also your brother, and arise, go again to the man. May God Almighty grant you mercy before the man, and may he send back your other brother and Benjamin. And as for me, if I am bereaved of my children, I am bereaved." ESV See Genesis 43:11-14

Joseph's tender brotherly compassion can scarcely be hidden.

'Then he lifted his eyes and saw his brother Benjamin, his mother's son, and said, "Is this your younger brother of whom you spoke to me?" And he said, "God be gracious to you, my son." Now his heart yearned for his brother; so Joseph made haste and sought somewhere to weep. And he went into his chamber and wept there.' Genesis 43:29,30

True (family) love is self-controlled.

'Then he washed his face and came out. And controlling himself he said, "Serve the food."' Genesis 43:31 ESV

Joseph wants to discern the brothers' attitude to their youngest brother.

"And the men looked in astonishment at one another. Then he took servings to them from before him, but Benjamin's serving was five times as much as any of theirs. So they drank and were merry with him." Genesis 43:33,34

The last and most painful part of the Lord's discipline of the brothers.

'And he commanded the steward of his house, saying, "Fill the men's sacks with food, as much as they can carry, and put each man's money in the mouth of his sack. Also put my cup, the silver cup, in the mouth of the sack of the youngest, and his grain money."' Genesis 44:1,2 Read Genesis 44

"And he searched, beginning with the eldest and ending with the youngest. And the cup was found in Benjamin's sack. Then they tore their clothes, and every man loaded his donkey, and they returned to the city.' Genesis 44:12,13 ESV

Notice the repentant attitude!

'Then Judah said, "What shall we say to my lord? What shall we speak? Or how shall we clear ourselves? God has found out the iniquity of your servants; here we are, my lord's slaves, both we and he also with whom the cup was found."' Genesis 44:16

Joseph faithfully brings in God's last test.

'But he said, "Far be it from me that I should do so; the man in whose hand the cup was found, he shall be my slave. And as for you, go up in peace to your father."' Gen. 44:17

Remember, Joseph is acting on God's behalf. In our family discipline, father and mother do not act on their own behalf; they act on God's behalf. They prayerfully follow his word, actively trusting him to bring his Holy Spirit's fruit into their children's lives. They are very fallible and need the Lord's continual grace and patience.

God's fatherly discipline at work

"No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it."

Hebrews 12:11 NIV

IN GENESIS 44:18-34 (essential reading!) we have one of the most eloquent and moving speeches in the whole Bible. What a harvest of righteousness! Peace will follow shortly.

A repentant son sacrifices himself for his brother, father and family.

"So now, if the boy is not with us when I go back to your servant my father, and if my father, whose life is closely bound up with the boy's life, sees that the boy isn't there, he will die. Your servants will bring the grey head of our father down to the grave in sorrow. Your servant guaranteed the boy's safety to my father. I said, 'If I do not bring him back to you, I will bear the blame before you, my father, all my life!' Now then, please let your servant remain here as my lord's slave in place of the boy, and let the boy return with his brothers. How can I go back to my father if the boy is not with me? No! Do not let me see the misery that would come upon my father." Genesis 44:30-34 NIV

Brotherly love no longer hidden

'Then Joseph could not control himself before all those who stood by him. He cried, "Make everyone go out from me." So no one stayed with him when Joseph made himself known to his brothers. And he wept aloud ...

So Joseph said to his brothers, "Come near to me, please." And they came near. And he said, "I am your brother, Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. And now do not be distressed or angry with yourselves because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life."' Genesis 45:1-5 ESV Whole episode: Genesis 45:1-15

The Lord's family discipline - the outworking of love

"My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives. It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons ... [The Lord] disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it." Hebrews 12:5-11 ESV

Old family habits die hard – we always need a heavenly Father's caution.

"Then he sent his brothers away, and as they departed, he said to them, "Do not quarrel on the way."" Genesis 45:24 ESV

To be a father is painful but the heavenly Father is infinitely kind.

'Jacob was stunned; he did not believe them. But when they told him everything Joseph had said to them, and when he saw the carts Joseph had sent to carry him back, the spirit of their father Jacob revived. And Israel said, "I'm convinced! My son Joseph is still alive. I will go and see him before I die."' Genesis 45:26-28 NIV

Jacob remembers his father's faith and example as he thanks God.

"So Israel took his journey with all that he had and came to Beersheba, and offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac." Genesis 46:1 ESV

God calls himself by Jacob's father's name and reassuringly directs him.

'And God spoke to Israel in visions of the night and said, "Jacob, Jacob." And he said, "Here am I." Then he said, "I am God, the God of your father. Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for there I will make you into a great nation. I myself will go down with you to Egypt, and I will also bring you up again, and Joseph's hand shall close your eyes."' Genesis 46:2,3 ESV

EVERY FATHER in this family line (Abraham, Isaac and Jacob) was inconsistent, weak and sinful. But God gave them faith and commanded his blessing on their children. On what basis? The firmest basis in the universe:

"All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." Romans 3:24 ESV

"Whoever believes in him will not be put to shame." 1 Peter 2:6 ESV

ISRAEL in EGYPT

Genesis 46-50

The fathers' prayers based on God's promise have not been in vain.

"[Jacob] took with him to Egypt his sons and grandsons and his daughters and grand-daughters—all his offspring." Genesis 46:7 NIV

"All the persons who went with Jacob to Egypt, who came from his body, besides Jacob's sons' wives, were sixty-six persons in all. And the sons of Joseph who were born to him in Egypt were two persons. All the persons of the house of Jacob who went to Egypt were seventy." Genesis 46:26,27

After the painful separation, father and son meet again. Praise God!

'So Joseph made ready his chariot and went up to Goshen to meet his father Israel; and he presented himself to him, and fell on his neck and wept on his neck a good while. And Israel said to Joseph, "Now let me die, since I have seen your face, because you are still alive."' Genesis 46:29,30

The great-grandfather believed that 'the Lord will provide' and the Lord continues to be faithful to his name.

'And Joseph situated his father and his brothers, and gave them a possession in the land of Egypt, in the best of the land, in the land of Rameses, as Pharaoh had commanded. Then Joseph provided his father, his brothers, and all his father's household with bread, according to the number in their families.' Genesis 47:11,12 (See Genesis 22.)

God's family blessing in action (a unique family but also an invitation to us)

'And he blessed Joseph and said, "The God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, the God who has been my shepherd all my life long to this day, the Angel who has redeemed me from all evil, bless the boys; and in them let my name be carried on, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth." Gen. 48:15,16 ESV Read Genesis 48 for the whole account.

In New Testament times, will God be pleased if we ask him to carry on His name and the name of his Son in our family members and let them grow in fruitful membership of his Kingdom 'in the midst of the earth'?

A parent's preferences (and the norm) may be overruled by the Lord.

'When Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand on the head of Ephraim, it displeased him, and he took his father's hand to move it from Ephraim's head to Manasseh's head. And Joseph said to his father, "Not this way, my father; since this one is the first-born, put your right hand on his head." But his father refused and said, "I know, my son, I know. He also shall become a people, and he also shall be great. Nevertheless, his younger brother shall be greater than he ..." Genesis 48:17-19 ESV

God's purpose will be fulfilled in this (and every) family.

'Then Jacob called his sons and said, "Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you what shall happen to you in days to come. "Assemble and listen, O sons of Jacob, listen to Israel your father.'" Genesis 49:1,2 ESV

There follows in Genesis 49:3-27 a description of God's coming dealings.

These range from loss of honour by Reuben to gain of honour by Judah and Joseph (only by grace).

This son's family sin had continuing consequences.

"Reuben, you are my firstborn, my might and the beginning of my strength, the excellency of dignity and the excellency of power. Unstable as water, you shall not excel, because you went up to your father's bed; then you defiled it— he went up to my couch." Genesis 49:3,4

But 'there is forgiveness with the Lord' so don't give way to self-pity.

Messianic blessings for this son

"Judah, you are he whom your brothers shall praise; your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies; your father's children shall bow down before you ... The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh comes; and to Him shall be the obedience of the people." See Genesis 49:8-12 for full description.

Further blessings for this brother!

"By the God of your father who will help you, and by the Almighty who will bless you with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lies beneath, ... They shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him who was separate from his brothers." See Genesis 49:25,26 for full list.

"To everyone who has more will be given and he will have abundance ..." Matt. 25:29

Another brother who was prepared to stand out in his family

'Jabez was more honourable than his brothers. His mother had named him Jabez, saying, "I gave birth to him in pain." Jabez cried out to the God of Israel, "Oh, that you would bless me and enlarge my territory! Let your hand be with me, and keep me from harm so that I will be free from pain." And God granted his request.'

1 Chronicles. 4:9,10 NIV

God's favour is offered to every brother or sister in the family, if they have ears to hear. "The one who overcomes will receive ..." (Revelation 2 & 3)

The family unite to honour their father

"So [Israel's] sons did for him just as he had commanded them. For his sons carried him to the land of Canaan, and buried him in the cave of the field of Machpelah, before Mamre, which Abraham bought with the field from Ephron the Hittite as property for a

burial place. And after he had buried his father, Joseph returned to Egypt, he and his brothers and all who went up with him to bury his father.” Genesis 50:13,14

Full account: Genesis 50:1-14

Natural feelings continue and fears again arise in the family.

‘When Joseph’s brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, “Perhaps Joseph will hate us, and may actually repay us for all the evil which we did to him.” ... “Now, please, forgive the trespass of the servants of the God of your father.” And Joseph wept when they spoke to him. Then his brothers also went and fell down before his face, and they said, “Behold, we are your servants.”’ Genesis 50:15-18

The mistreated brother held no grudges and reassured them from his heart.

“Joseph said to them, ‘Do not be afraid, for am I in the place of God? But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good ... Now therefore, do not be afraid; I will provide for you and your little ones.’ And he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.” Genesis 50:19-21 Compare with Matthew 6:14,15, 18:35.

This father had great hope for his family because of God’s promises.

‘So Joseph remained in Egypt, he and his father’s house ... And Joseph saw Ephraim’s children of the third generation. The children also of Machir the son of Manasseh were counted as Joseph’s own. And Joseph said to his brothers, “I am about to die, but God will visit you and bring you up out of this land to the land that he swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.” Genesis 50:22-24 ESV

Our family hope is based on ‘better promises’. **Let us have faith in God.**

Exodus

God’s promised blessing on this family continues.

“These are the names of the sons of Israel who came to Egypt with Jacob, each with his household: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, and Benjamin, Dan and Naphtali, Gad and Asher. All the descendants of Jacob were seventy persons; Joseph was already in Egypt. Then Joseph died, and all his brothers and all that generation. But the people of Israel were fruitful and increased greatly; they multiplied and grew exceedingly strong, so that the land was filled with them. Exodus 1:1-7 ESV

Government policy was set to devastate the families of God’s children.

‘The king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives, whose names were Shiprah and Puah, “When you are helping the Hebrew women during childbirth on the delivery stool, if you see that the baby is a boy, kill him; but if it is a girl, let her live.” Ex. 1:15,16 NIV

Whose malice and evil scheme was behind this? Revelation 12:4 illustrates his settled attitude towards the children of God's children.

These women of faith risked their lives to protect God's little children.

'The midwives, however, feared God and did not do what the king of Egypt had told them to do; they let the boys live. Then the king of Egypt summoned the midwives and asked them, "Why have you done this? Why have you let the boys live?" The midwives answered Pharaoh, "Hebrew women are not like Egyptian women; they are vigorous and give birth before the midwives arrive."' Exodus 1:17-19 NIV

God sees their faith and, against all odds, protects and blesses them.

"So God was kind to the midwives and the people increased and became even more numerous. And because the midwives feared God, he gave them families of their own." Exodus 1:20,21 NIV

Satan's opposition increases.

'Then Pharaoh gave this order to all his people: "Every Hebrew boy that is born you must throw into the Nile, but let every girl live."' Exodus 1:22 NIV

Faith sees that our children are not ordinary and acts accordingly.

"By faith Moses' parents hid him for three months after he was born, because they saw he was no ordinary child, and they were not afraid of the king's edict." Hebrews 11:23 NIV. Full story: Exodus 2:1-10, Acts 7:18-22

"Have faith in God." Mark 11:22

"The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their cry ... The righteous cry out and the Lord hears, and delivers them out of all their troubles." Psalm 34:15-17

Read Exodus 2:1-10. Notice the vital roles God gave to women including Miriam.

'... And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Go." So the girl went and called the child's mother. And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Take this child away and nurse him for me, and I will give you your wages." So the woman took the child and nursed him. When the child grew up, she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter ...' ESV

The time Moses spent with his parents was key to realising he was a child of God (Heb. 11:24-26). Let us be determined that our children's short time with us bears similar fruit.

The Lord saw their faith and saved and used each of their children.

"The name of Amram's wife was Jochebed the daughter of Levi, who was born to Levi in Egypt; and to Amram she bore Aaron and Moses and their sister Miriam." Num. 26:59

Moses, now a family man himself, sets off on God's mission.

"Then Moses took his wife and his sons and set them on a donkey, and he returned to the land of Egypt. And Moses took the rod of God in his hand.

Exodus 4:20 Full account: Exodus 4:18-31

The Lord identifies himself as Israel's Father and insists that Pharaoh (also a father) obey him.

'And the Lord said to Moses, "... Then you shall say to Pharaoh, 'Thus says the Lord: "Israel is My son, My firstborn. So I say to you, let My son go that he may serve Me. But if you refuse to let him go, indeed I will kill your son, your firstborn."'" Exodus 4:21-23

Moses had not carried out his fatherly responsibility; his Father insists that he does.

'And it came to pass on the way, at the encampment, that the Lord met him and sought to kill him. Then Zipporah took a sharp stone and cut off the foreskin of her son and cast it at Moses' feet, and said, "Surely you are a husband of blood to me!" So He let him go. Then she said, "You are a husband of blood!"—because of the circumcision.'

Exodus 4:24-26

From Old Testament history we can trace genuine faith from Abraham to Isaac to Jacob to Levi and onward to Phinehas - 9 generations (at least)!

*"These are the names of the sons of **Levi** according to their generations: Gershon, **Kohath**, and Merari, the years of the life of Levi being 137 years. The sons of Gershon: Libni and Shimei, by their clans. The sons of **Kohath**: **Amram**, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel, the years of the life of **Kohath** being 133 years. The sons of Merari: Mahli and Mushi. These are the clans of the Levites according to their generations. **Amram** took as his wife Jochebed his father's sister, and she bore him **Aaron** and **Moses**, the years of the life of **Amram** being 137 years ... **Aaron** took as his wife Elisheba, the daughter of Amminadab and the sister of Nahshon, and she bore him Nadab, Abihu, **Eleazar**, and Ithamar ... **Eleazar**, **Aaron's son**, took as his wife one of the daughters of Putiel, and she bore him **Phinehas**. These are the heads of the fathers' houses of the Levites by their clans." Exodus 6:16-25 ESV*

Tell your children and grandchildren what the Lord has done.

"Now the LORD said to Moses, 'Go in to Pharaoh ... that I may show these signs of Mine before him, and that you may tell in the hearing of your son and your son's son the mighty things I have done in Egypt, and My signs which I have done among them, that you may know that I am the LORD.'" Exodus 10:1,2

The Lord specifically wanted whole families to serve him.

So Moses and Aaron were brought back to Pharaoh. And he said to them, "Go, serve the Lord your God. But which ones are to go?" Moses said, "We will go with our young and our old. We will go with our sons and daughters and with our flocks and herds, for

we must hold a feast to the Lord.” But he said to them, “The Lord be with you, if ever ‘I let you and your little ones go! Look, you have some evil purpose in mind. No! Go, the men among you, and serve the Lord, for that is what you are asking.” And they were driven out from Pharaoh’s presence. Exodus 10:8-11 ESV

The Lord wanted every member of the family to be saved.

[The Lord said to Moses and Aaron] “Tell the whole community of Israel that on the tenth day of this month each man is to take a lamb for his family, one for each household.” Exodus 12:3 NIV For the whole account of the Passover see Ex. 11:1 - 13:16.

Did any family member deserve to be saved?

No, but the Lord graciously saved them all. Make sure the children understand.

“And it shall be, when your children say to you, ‘What do you mean by this service?’ that you shall say, ‘It is the Passover sacrifice of the Lord, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt when He struck the Egyptians and delivered our households.’” Exodus 12:26,27

We live in the Day of Grace. What is the message for our family?

In these NT days how does God regard his children’s children? (1 Cor. 7:14)

‘Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, “Consecrate [set apart] to Me all the firstborn, whatever opens the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and beast; it is Mine.”’ Exodus 13:1,2

Order your family traditions to focus attention on the Lord and his actions.

Aim to plant his word in your life and in your children’s lives.

“On that day tell your son, ‘I do this because of what the Lord did for me when I came out of Egypt.’ This observance will be for you like a sign on your hand and a reminder on your forehead that this law of the Lord is to be on your lips. For the Lord brought you out of Egypt with his mighty hand. You must keep this ordinance at the appointed time year after year.” Exodus 13: 8-10 NIV

“In days to come, when your son asks you, ‘What does this mean?’ say to him, ‘With a mighty hand the Lord brought us out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. When Pharaoh stubbornly refused to let us go, the Lord killed the firstborn of both people and animals in Egypt. This is why I sacrifice to the Lord the first male offspring of every womb and redeem each of my firstborn sons.’ And it will be like a sign on your hand and a symbol on your forehead that the Lord brought us out of Egypt with his mighty hand.” Exodus 13:14-16 NIV Full quote Exodus 13:1-16

God noticed Miriam’s and Aaron’s parents’ faith (Heb. 11:23); he gave their children important roles in his service.

‘Then Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took the timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances. And Miriam answered

them: "Sing to the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously! The horse and its rider He has thrown into the sea!" Exodus 15:20,21

Small family or large, the Lord provides for us all.

Shall the Bread of Life leave us without bread? (John 6:35-59, 63,68)

'Moses said to them, "This is the bread which the Lord has given you to eat. This is the thing which the Lord has commanded: 'Let every man gather it according to each one's need, one omer for each person, according to the number of persons; let every man take for those who are in his tent.' " Then the children of Israel did so and gathered, some more, some less. So when they measured it by omers, he who gathered much had nothing left over, and he who gathered little had no lack. Every man had gathered according to each one's need.' Exodus 16:15-18

The word of God is more important than physical bread (Deuteronomy 8:3).

Our Father in heaven, give each family member this day his/her daily bread.

The Ten Commandments incorporate serious family concerns:

No 2: Punishment to avoid and blessing to seek

How our Father encourages us to expect generations of family blessings!

"You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand {generations} of those who love me and keep my commandments."

Exodus 20:4 NIV

No 4: The seventh day is a rest day for the whole family.

"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labour and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter ..." Exodus 20:8-11

It is important to establish a one-in-seven family routine focused on the first day of the week as 'the Lord's day'. We must avoid the Pharisees' error and actively remember that God made the rest day for us, not us for the day (Mark 2:23-28).

No 5: God's law for fathers, mothers, sons and daughters, whatever their age

"Honour your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the LORD your God is giving you." Exodus 20:12

No 7: A prohibition that guards the family

"You shall not commit adultery." Exodus 20:14

No. 10: Guard your thoughts; guard your family.

"You shall not covet your neighbour's house. You shall not covet your neighbour's wife ..." Exodus 20:17

Illustrations of the importance of God's 5th Commandment

"Whoever strikes his father or his mother shall be put to death."

"Whoever curses his father or his mother shall be put to death."

Exodus 21:15,17 ESV See also Proverbs 30: 11, 17

Jesus upheld his Father's words

[Jesus said] "... God commanded, saying, 'Honour your father and your mother'; and, 'He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.' Matthew 15:4

Whole quote: Matt. 15:1-9

The Lord is very concerned for one-parent families and orphans.

Notice that he listens when we cry out to him.

"You shall not mistreat any widow or fatherless child. If you do mistreat them, and they cry out to me, I will surely hear their cry, and my wrath will burn, and I will kill you with the sword, and your wives shall become widows and your children fatherless."

Exodus 22:22-24 ESV

The Lord wants to have mercy on our children and grandchildren and ...

"The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands {to the thousandth generation}, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin ..." Exodus 34:6,7a
ESV {margin}. Context: The Lord proclaims his Name to Moses, Exodus 33:12-34:35.

Parents, we must not 'sin that grace may abound'.

"The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness ... but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation." Exodus 34:6,7b ESV

Marrying against God's will risks great harm.

"Be careful not to make a treaty with those who live in the land; for when they prostitute themselves to their gods and sacrifice to them, they will invite you and you will eat their sacrifices. And when you choose some of their daughters as wives for your sons and those daughters prostitute themselves to their gods, they will lead your sons to do the same." Exodus 34:15,16 NIV

Leviticus

The Lord expects a father to take responsibility for his family.

"Aaron is to offer the bull for his own sin offering to make atonement for himself and his household." Leviticus 16:6 Context: the Day of Atonement

Let us be careful who or what we subject our children to.

"You shall not give any of your children to offer them to Molech, and so profane the name of your God: I am the LORD." Leviticus 18:21 ESV

Context: Leviticus 18 - laws of sexual morality. Read the whole chapter to get an impression of the Lord's attitude to sinful sexual behaviour.

This passage shows the Lord's view of homosexual practice and other customs.

"You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination.

And you shall not lie with any animal and so make yourself unclean with it, neither shall any woman give herself to an animal to lie with it: it is perversion.

Do not make yourselves unclean by any of these things, for by all these the nations I am driving out before you have become unclean, and the land became unclean, so that I punished its iniquity, and the land vomited out its inhabitants ... So keep my charge never to practise any of these abominable customs that were practised before you, and never to make yourselves unclean by them: I am the LORD your God."

Leviticus 18:22-30 ESV

Honouring mother and father is honouring the Lord.

'And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say to them: 'You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy. 'Every one of you shall revere his mother and his father, and keep My Sabbaths: I am the LORD your God.' Leviticus 19:1-3 - the Lord is holy.

Honouring grandparents and great-grandparents honours the Lord also.

"You shall rise before the grey headed and honour the presence of an old man, and fear your God: I am the Lord." Leviticus 19:32

A real danger in ancient society. Are there 21st Century lessons?

'The Lord spoke to Moses, saying, "Say to the people of Israel, Any one of the people of Israel or of the strangers who sojourn in Israel who gives any of his children to Molech shall surely be put to death. The people of the land shall stone him with stones. I myself will set my face against that man and will cut him off from among his people, because he has given one of his children to Molech, to make my sanctuary unclean and to profane my holy name. And if the people of the land do at all close their eyes to that man when he gives one of his children to Molech, and do not put him to death, then I will set

my face against that man and against his clan and will cut them off from among their people, him and all who follow him in whoring after Molech.’ Leviticus 20:1-5 ESV

A reminder of the Lord’s holy zeal for his appointed guardians of the family
“Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am the Lord your God. And you shall keep My statutes, and perform them: I am the Lord who sanctifies you. For every-one who curses his father or his mother shall surely be put to death. He has cursed his father or his mother. His blood shall be upon him.” Leviticus 20:7-9

The Lord jealously guards marriage, the basis of family life.

“The man who commits adultery with another man’s wife, he who commits adultery with his neighbour’s wife, the adulterer and the adulteress, shall surely be put to death.” Leviticus 20:10 Context: Lev. 20:10-24 - punishments for sexual sin

“If a man lies with a male as he lies with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination. They shall surely be put to death. Their blood shall be upon them.” Leviticus 20:13 For a fuller picture read the whole chapter.

Inexpressible family suffering because of stubborn refusal to obey the Lord

“Then if you walk contrary to me and will not listen to me, I will continue striking you, sevenfold for your sins. And I will let loose the wild beasts against you, which shall bereave you of your children and destroy your livestock and make you few in number, so that your roads shall be deserted ...”

“But if in spite of this you will not listen to me, but walk contrary to me, then I will walk contrary to you in fury, and I myself will discipline you sevenfold for your sins. You shall eat the flesh of your sons, and you shall eat the flesh of your daughters ...”

Leviticus 26:21,22, 27-29 (See 2 Kings 6:26-30)

Context: Leviticus 26: God’s great desire for the good of his people, his promises of blessing and warnings about the results of persistent rebellion.

Numbers

Family jealousy

‘Then Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married; for he had married an Ethiopian woman. So they said, “Has the Lord indeed spoken only through Moses? Has He not spoken through us also?” And the Lord heard it.’ Numbers 12:1,2 Full account: whole chapter.

Compare with John 7:5 and Mark 6:3,4

God’s appointments overrule natural family relationships.

“Why then were you not afraid to speak against My servant Moses?” Numbers 12:8

A brother prays for his erring sister.

'So Moses cried out to the Lord, saying, "Please heal her, O God, I pray!"' Num. 12:13

The Lord wants us to keep praying for our siblings.

A father's faith brings blessing for his children.

"But My servant Caleb, because he has a different spirit in him and has followed Me fully, I will bring into the land where he went, and his descendants shall inherit it."

Numbers 14:24 Context: Numbers 13 & 14

God blessed the children but they suffered for their fathers' faithlessness.

"But your little ones, who you said would become a prey, I will bring in, and they shall know the land that you have rejected. But as for you, your dead bodies shall fall in this wilderness. And your children shall be shepherds in the wilderness forty years and shall suffer for your faithlessness, until the last of your dead bodies lies in the wilderness."

Numbers 14:31,32 ESV

Fathers' rebellion brought ruin on their families.

"So they got away from around the tents of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram; and Dathan and Abiram came out and stood at the door of their tents, with their wives, their sons, and their little children ... Now it came to pass, as he finished speaking all these words, that the ground split apart under them ..." Read full account: Numbers 16.

These brothers were disciplined by their Father.

'Then the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, "Because you did not believe Me, to hallow Me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them."' Numbers 20:12 Full story: Numbers 20:1-13

This father was blessed by the faith of his fathers (Exodus 6:16-25).

His faithful zeal, in turn, blessed his children and subsequent generations.

'Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: "Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, has turned back My wrath from the children of Israel, because he was zealous with My zeal among them, so that I did not consume the children of Israel in My zeal. Therefore say, 'Behold, I give to him My covenant of peace; and it shall be to him and his descendants after him a covenant of an everlasting priesthood, because he was zealous for his God, and made atonement for the children of Israel.'"

Numbers 25:10-13 Full account: Numbers 25

"... they aroused the Lord's anger by their wicked deeds, and a plague broke out among them. But Phinehas stood up and intervened, and the plague was checked. This was credited to him as righteousness for endless generations to come." Psalm 106:28-31

The Lord noticed Phinehas's faith and zeal. God has not changed – does he see zealous faith in us? Will that not bring blessing to our children?

The Lord treats women with forbearance as the 'weaker vessel' (1 Peter 3:7)

"This is what the LORD commands: 2 When a man makes a vow to the LORD or takes an oath to obligate himself by a pledge, he must not break his word but must do everything he said.

3 When a young woman still living in her father's house makes a vow to the LORD or obligates herself by a pledge 4 and her father hears about her vow or pledge but says nothing to her, then all her vows and every pledge by which she obligated herself will stand. 5 But if her father forbids her when he hears about it, none of her vows or the pledges by which she obligated herself will stand; the LORD will release her because her father has forbidden her.

6 "If she marries after she makes a vow or after her lips utter a rash promise by which she obligates herself 7 and her husband hears about it but says nothing to her, then her vows or the pledges by which she obligated herself will stand. 8 But if her husband forbids her when he hears about it, he nullifies the vow that obligates her or the rash promise by which she obligates herself, and the LORD will release her.

9 "Any vow or obligation taken by a widow or divorced woman will be binding on her ... [vv 10-15] ... These are the regulations the LORD gave Moses concerning relationships between a man and his wife, and between a father and his young daughter still living in his house.' Numbers 30:1-16 NIV

Notice the distinctions in the Lord's mind. The women who could be overruled were under the authority of a father or a husband. Widows or divorced women were not under such authority; neither was an older woman who had left her father's home (v 3, v 16). The vows included rash promises (v 6). The Lord knows the vulnerability of his children and provided a way of protection.

The principle has benefits for today: a young unmarried woman can enjoy the security of living with her parents under her father's protection and care until such a time as she is married or becomes a more mature unmarried woman. Society today rejects the concept of a husband's or father's authority but the New Testament upholds it (e.g. Colos. 3:18-21, 1 Cor. 11:3). The Lord cares for his daughters and wishes men to understand and respect their great honour. God's appointed role for a woman is to do what is impossible for a man: to model the Church in its relationship to Christ. This is of eternal importance. God purposely created woman to be the 'weaker vessel' in order to achieve his glorious intention. See Ephesians 5:22-33, 1 Peter 3:1-7.

NUMBERS 27 AND 36 show women demonstrating female strength, dignity and respect:

Daughters who honoured their dead father, boldly standing up for his interests.

'The daughters of Zelophehad ... stood before Moses ... and said, "Our father died in the wilderness; but he was not in the company of those who gathered together against the Lord, in company with Korah, but he died in his own sin; and he had no sons. Why should

the name of our father be removed from among his family because he had no son? Give us a possession among our father's brothers." Numbers 27:1-4

The Lord honoured the daughters and used their efforts to make a law for the whole nation's benefit. (The Lord has no second-class children. How could he?)

'And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: "The daughters of Zelophehad speak what is right; you shall surely give them a possession of inheritance among their father's brothers, and cause the inheritance of their father to pass to them.' Numbers 27:6,7

Full account: Numbers 27:1-11

The women continued to honour the Lord – in their choice of husband.

"This is what the Lord commands concerning the daughters of Zelophehad, saying, 'Let them marry whom they think best, but they may marry only within the family of their father's tribe.'... Just as the Lord commanded Moses, so did the daughters of Zelophehad; for Mahlah, Tirzah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Noah, the daughters of Zelophehad, were married to the sons of their father's brothers. They were married into the families of the children of Manasseh the son of Joseph, and their inheritance remained in the tribe of their father's family." Numbers 36:6,12 Full account: Numbers 36

Deuteronomy

Teaching children and grandchildren requires vigilance.

"Take heed to yourself, and diligently keep yourself, lest you forget the things your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life. And teach them to your children and your grandchildren." Deuteronomy 4:9

The Lord really wants the children to hear his word.

"The Lord said to [Moses], 'Gather the people to Me, and I will let them hear My words, that they may learn to fear Me all the days they live on the earth, and that they may teach their children.'" Deuteronomy 4:10

Parents' obedience brings blessing for children.

"... the LORD Himself is God in heaven above and on the earth beneath; there is no other. You shall therefore keep His statutes and His commandments which I command you today, that it may go well with you and with your children after you, and that you may prolong your days in the land which the LORD your God is giving you for all time." Deuteronomy 4:39,40

Parents' disobedience leads to trouble for children – but note the contrast.

"You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship

them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments."
Deuteronomy 5:8-10 NIV . See also Exodus 20:4-6

The 'punishment' is not automatic; read Ezekiel 18 for God's detailed explanation and reaffirmation of his great desire to show mercy and love.

Children's obedience leads to well-being for children (and parents).

"Honour your father and your mother, as the Lord your God has commanded you, that your days may be long, and that it may be well with you in the land which the Lord your God is giving you." Deuteronomy 5:16

How much family misery has been caused by neglect of these commands!

"You shall not commit adultery." "You shall not covet your neighbour's wife ..."
Deuteronomy 5:18,21

The heavenly Father's great desire for parents

"Oh, that they had such a heart in them that they would fear Me and always keep all My commandments, that it might be well with them and with their children forever!"
Deuteronomy 5:29

Repeated statement of the Lord's desire for parents and grandparents

"Now this is the commandment, and these are the statutes and judgments which the Lord your God has commanded to teach you, that you may observe them ... that you may fear the Lord your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments which I command you, you and your son and your grandson, all the days of your life, and that your days may be prolonged. Therefore hear, O Israel, and be careful to observe it, that it may be well with you ..." Deuteronomy 6:1-3

God's marching orders for parents

*"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one! You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.
And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates."* Deut. 6:4-9

Teach your children about the Lord's redemption and his commands.

"When your son asks you in time to come, saying, 'What is the meaning of the testimonies, the statutes, and the judgments which the Lord our God has commanded you?' then you shall say to your son: 'We were slaves of Pharaoh in Egypt, and the Lord

brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand ... And the Lord commanded us to observe all these statutes, to fear the Lord our God, for our good always ...' See Deut 6:20-25.

This is not ritualistic telling 'Bible stories'; it is giving children an understanding of God's word and how it applies to us personally in all aspects of life.

We can pray for our own coming generations. What blessing shall we ask for?

"Therefore know that the Lord your God, He is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments ..." Deuteronomy 7:9 Context: Deuteronomy 7:6-11

A word for the head of the household

"And you shall not bring an abominable thing into your house and become devoted to destruction like it. You shall utterly detest and abhor it, for it is devoted to destruction." Deuteronomy 7:26 ESV Context: Israel's duty to get rid of idolatry Deut.7:23-26

The same principle applies for fathers today. What we bring into or allow to be in our home must not be displeasing to our heavenly Father.

The Lord is a Father who disciplines his children.

"So you should know in your heart that as a man chastens his son, so the LORD your God chastens you." Deuteronomy 8:5

The Father of the fatherless and Defender of widows

BECAUSE WE LIVE in a sinful world the weaker will always have to experience thoughtless (and often deliberate) unkindness from the stronger. Throughout history this has taken place:

"Again I saw all the oppressions that are done under the sun. And behold, the tears of the oppressed, and they had no one to comfort them! On the side of their oppressors there was power, and there was no one to comfort them." Ecclesiastes 4:1 ESV

Among the most vulnerable in society are orphans, widows and immigrants. The Lord is very concerned for any person who is disadvantaged, vulnerable, downtrodden, despised, marginalised, persecuted, overlooked, left out, ignored, ostracised, not appreciated, poor, weak, destitute, exploited, cheated, oppressed etc. In Scripture this is summarised by "fatherless, widows and strangers (sojourners ESV)". God wants us to call to him in our distress.

"The Lord upholds all who are falling and raises up all who are bowed down ... The Lord is righteous in all his ways and kind in all his works. The Lord is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth. He fulfils the desire of those who fear him; he also hears their cry and saves them." Psalm 145:14-19

The Lord is concerned for the disadvantaged.

"[The Lord] administers justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the stranger, giving him food and clothing. Therefore love the stranger ..."

Deuteronomy 10:18,19 Context: Deut. 10:12-22

The poor 'stranger' (immigrant) outside God's family is 'Fatherless' too and must be welcomed.

GOD DESIGNED the family to have a father and a mother. This has implications for every aspect of family life. The good news for one-parent families is that God is *the Father of the fatherless and the Defender of widows* (Ps. 68:5) who invites us to trust him in all our worries (1 Timothy 5:5).

The Lord wants families he has blessed to share with those who are less well off.

"At the end of every third year you shall bring out the tithe of your produce of that year and store it up within your gates. And the Levite, because he has no portion nor inheritance with you, and the stranger and the fatherless and the widow who are within your gates, may come and eat and be satisfied, that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hand which you do." Deuteronomy 14:28,29

Families, have a good time and give the left-out a good time as well.

"You shall rejoice before the Lord your God, you and your son and your daughter, your male servant and your female servant, the Levite who is within your gates, the stranger and the fatherless and the widow who are among you, at the place where the Lord your God chooses to make His name abide."

"And you shall rejoice in your feast, you and your son and your daughter, your male servant and your female servant and the Levite, the stranger and the fatherless and the widow, who are within your gates." Deuteronomy 16:11,14 Context: OT feasts.

The Lord wants to bless a family generous toward the poor and vulnerable.

"When you reap your harvest in your field, and forget a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it; it shall be for the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hands. When you beat your olive trees, you shall not go over the boughs again; it shall be for the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow. When you gather the grapes of your vineyard, you shall not glean it afterward; it shall be for the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow."

Deuteronomy 24:19-21

The Lord is looking for genuine, loving, kind families.

"So you shall rejoice in every good thing which the Lord your God has given to you and your house, you and the Levite and the stranger who is among you. When you have finished laying aside all the tithe of your increase in the third year—the year of tithing and have given it to the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, so that they may eat within your gates and be filled, then you shall say before the Lord your God:

'I have removed the holy tithe from my house, and also have given them to the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, according to all Your commandments which You have commanded me; I have not transgressed Your commandments, nor have I forgotten them.' Deuteronomy 26:12,13 ESV

Context: Gratefulness for the Lord's blessings, Deut. 26

What blessings the Lord promised to obedient Israel!

"And the Lord has declared today that you are a people for his treasured possession, as he has promised you, and that you are to keep all his commandments, and that he will set you in praise and in fame and in honour high above all nations that he has made, and that you shall be a people holy to the Lord your God, as he promised."

Deuteronomy 26:18,19 ESV

"But now He [Jesus] has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises." Heb. 8:6

The better promises to New Covenant families come by faith. Heads of families must have faith. Faith is obedient; it works by love (Galatians 5:6)

The Lord wanted Old Testament children to be shown how to apply his Word in every detail of life. How much more in these New Testament days!

"Therefore you shall lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul, and bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall teach them to your children, speaking of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates, that your days and the days of your children may be multiplied in the land of which the Lord swore to your fathers to give them, like the days of the heavens above the earth. " Deuteronomy 11:18-21

Context: the blessing of loving obedience, Deut. 11

The head of the household was to worship the Lord with his whole family.

"And there you shall eat before the Lord your God, and you shall rejoice in all to which you have put your hand, you and your households, in which the Lord your God has blessed you."

"And you shall rejoice before the Lord your God, you and your sons and your daughters ..."

"But you must eat them before the Lord your God in the place which the Lord your God chooses, you and your son and your daughter ..." Deuteronomy 12:7, 12, 18

See also Deuteronomy 16:11,14.

What does the Lord expect of Christian fathers?

Children blessed by parental obedience – God reminds us again.

"You shall not eat it, that it may go well with you and your children after you, when you do what is right in the sight of the LORD ..."

"Observe and obey all these words which I command you, that it may go well with you and your children after you forever, when you do what is good and right in the sight of the LORD your God." Deuteronomy 12:25 & 28

Following human anti-God traditions leads to disaster.

"... be careful not to be ensnared by enquiring about their gods, saying, How do these nations serve their gods? We will do the same. You must not worship the LORD your God in their way, because in worshipping their gods, they do all kinds of detestable things the LORD hates. They even burn their sons and daughters in the fire as sacrifices to their gods." Deuteronomy 12:30,31 NIV

Idolatry – an evil not to be tolerated even among nearest and dearest.

"If your brother, the son of your mother, your son or your daughter, the wife of your bosom, or your friend who is as your own soul, secretly entices you, saying, 'Let us go and serve other gods,' which you have not known, ... you shall not consent to him or listen to him, nor shall your eye pity him, nor shall you spare him or conceal him; but you shall surely kill him ..." Full quote: Deuteronomy 13:6-11

Jesus affirms the same principle: no loved-one should be in the place of God.

"If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple." Luke 14:26

The Lord wanted the king to obey his law and teach it to his children.

"[the king] shall read [the book of the law] all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the Lord his God and be careful to observe all the words of this law and these statutes, that his heart may not be lifted above his brethren, that he may not turn aside from the commandment to the right hand or to the left, and that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he and his children in the midst of Israel." Deuteronomy 17:18,19
Context: Deuteronomy 17:14-20

How much more does the Lord want Christian fathers to do the same!

Yet another warning from the Lord. Can we learn from this?

"When you enter the land the Lord your God is giving you, do not learn to imitate the detestable ways of the nations there. Let no one be found among you who sacrifices his son or daughter in the fire ..." Deuteronomy 18:9,10 NIV

In Israel, the Lord showed how he hates rebellion against parents.

"If a man has a stubborn and rebellious son who will not obey the voice of his father or the voice of his mother, and who, when they have chastened him, will not heed them,

then his father and his mother shall take hold of him and bring him out to the elders of his city, to the gate of his city. And they shall say to the elders of his city, 'This son of ours is stubborn and rebellious; he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton and a drunkard.' Then all the men of his city shall stone him to death with stones; so you shall put away the evil from among you, and all Israel shall hear and fear." Deut. 21:18-21

The Lord is gracious and kind.

"If a man has recently married, he must not be sent to war or have any other duty laid on him. For one year he is to be free to stay at home and bring happiness to the wife he has married." Deuteronomy 24:5 NIV

Children cannot be blamed for parents' sin.

And children cannot blame parents for theirs.

"Fathers shall not be put to death for their children, nor shall children be put to death for their fathers; a person shall be put to death for his own sin." Deuteronomy 24:16

Further reminders of God's love for the weak and destitute.

"You shall not pervert the justice due to the sojourner or to the fatherless, or take a widow's garment in pledge ..." Deuteronomy 24:17 ESV

"'Cursed be anyone who perverts the justice due to the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow.' And all the people shall say, 'Amen.'" Deuteronomy 27:19 ESV

God highlights his 5th commandment.

"'Cursed be anyone who dishonours his father or his mother.' And all the people shall say, 'Amen.'" Deuteronomy 27:16 Context: Curses and blessings in Deut. 27-28

Extreme family immorality forbidden

See Deuteronomy 27:20-23.

Obedience brought family blessing in Old Testament times.

Can we expect spiritual family blessing in New Covenant days?

*"And if you faithfully obey the voice of the Lord your God, being careful to do all his commandments that I command you today, the Lord your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth. And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, if you obey the voice of the Lord your God. blessed shall you be ... blessed shall be the **fruit of your womb** ..." ESV Full quote: Deuteronomy 28:1-14*

"If you love me," says Jesus, "you will obey my commands" and great blessing will follow – see John 14:15 ff.

Failure to obey the Lord's commands led towards disaster in all aspects of life – including family disaster.

"But if you will not obey the voice of the Lord your God or be careful to do all his

*commandments and his statutes that I command you today, then all these curses shall come upon you and overtake you. Cursed shall you be in the city, and cursed shall you be in the field ... Cursed shall be the **fruit of your womb** ... Cursed shall you be when you come in, and cursed shall you be when you go out ..."*

Deuteronomy 28:15-19 ESV (compare Deut. 6:4-9)

"Your sons and your daughters shall be given to another people ..." Deut. 28:32 ESV

"You shall father sons and daughters, but they shall not be yours, for they shall go into captivity ..." Deuteronomy 28:41 ESV

*"All these curses shall come upon you and pursue you and overtake you till you are destroyed, because you did not obey the voice of the Lord your God, to keep his commandments and his statutes that he commanded you. They shall be a sign and a wonder against you and **your offspring** for ever. Because you did not serve the Lord your God with joyfulness and gladness of heart, because of the abundance of all things ..." Deuteronomy 28:45-47 ESV*

Unspeakable family suffering caused by disobedience

*"If you are not careful to do all the words of this law that are written in this book, that you may fear this glorious and awesome name, the Lord your God, then the Lord will bring on you and **your offspring** extraordinary afflictions, afflictions severe and lasting, and sicknesses grievous and lasting." Deuteronomy 28:58,59 ESV*

For a list of some of these see Deuteronomy 28:52-57.

"Everything written in the past was written to teach us ..." Romans 15:4 NIV

Children are not out of place in the congregation of God's people.

"All of you stand today before the Lord your God: your leaders and your tribes and your elders and your officers, all the men of Israel, your little ones and your wives—also the stranger who is in your camp ..." Deuteronomy 29:10,11

Context: Renewal of the Covenant in Deuteronomy 29, 30

Children should recognise their parents' sins and learn from them.

"Your children who follow you in later generations ... will see the calamities that have fallen on the land and the diseases with which the Lord has afflicted it."

Deuteronomy 29:22 NIV

The Lord wants obedient parents and obedient children.

"The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law."

Deuteronomy 29:29

This Old Testament promise will not fail in the New.

"[When you] return to the LORD your God, you and your children, and obey his voice in

all that I command you ... the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, so that you will love LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live.” Deuteronomy 30:6 ESV Context: Deut. 30:1-6

The Lord wants to bless us and our children with life – temporal or eternal?

“... Therefore choose life, so that you and your children may live ...” NIV

See Deuteronomy 30:19,20

Children will be impressed by meeting with the gathered church.

“... you shall read this law before all Israel in their hearing. Gather the people together, men and women and little ones, and the stranger who is within your gates, that they may hear and that they may learn to fear the LORD your God and carefully observe all the words of this law, and that their children, who have not known it, may hear and learn to fear the LORD your God as long as you live in the land ...” Deut. 31:11-13

We were created to be the children of God our Father, but our sin destroyed the Father- child relationship.

“They have dealt corruptly with [the Lord]; they are no longer his children because they are blemished; they are a crooked and twisted generation. Do you thus repay the Lord, you foolish and senseless people? Is not he your father, who created you, who made you and established you?” Deuteronomy 32:5,6 ESV

Context: the Song of Moses, Deuteronomy 32

Teaching God-centred history is an essential aspect of education.

“Remember the days of old; consider the years of many generations; ask your father, and he will show you, your elders, and they will tell you.” Deuteronomy 32:7 ESV

“These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfilment of the ages has come. So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don’t fall!” 1 Corinthians 10:11,12 NIV

THE WORD OF GOD provides God’s own history syllabus and curriculum.

The non-narrative parts provide God’s commentary on the historical facts. If we learn how to apply God’s commentary and explanation to Bible history, we can learn from any period of history, ancient or modern.

God, our loving heavenly Father, experienced his children deserting him.

‘You deserted the Rock, who fathered you; you forgot the God who gave you birth. The Lord saw this and rejected them because he was angered by his sons and daughters. “I will hide my face from them,” he said, “and see what their end will be; for they are a perverse generation, children who are unfaithful.’ Deuteronomy 32:18-20 NIV

Family suffering caused by departing from God the Father.

“Outdoors the sword shall bereave, and indoors terror, for young man and woman alike,

the nursing child with the man of grey hairs.” Deuteronomy 32:25 ESV

God the Father has the last word – his mercy will triumph.

“Rejoice, O Gentiles, with His people ... He will provide atonement for His land and His people.” Deuteronomy 32:43 - That is our Father’s great purpose!

The Lord always has the children in mind – very seriously. He wants them to grow up knowing his Word.

“Take to heart all the words I have solemnly declared to you this day, so that you may command your children to obey carefully all the words of this law. They are not just idle words for you—they are your life. By them you will live long in the land ...”

Deuteronomy 32:46,47 NIV

THE LORD has, at great cost, provided UK children of God with his Word translated into English. What a talent! When the Master returns he will be very interested in our use of it, and how we helped our children to know it and to put it into practice. See Matthew 25:14-30.

Joshua

Rahab, the woman who asked the Lord to save all her family members

Joshua 2 and 6

THOUSANDS OF YEARS ago, a pagan prostitute dared to believe the ‘gospel’ of her day – that there was mercy for her from the Lord.

She wanted the Lord to save every member of her family:

“Now then, please swear to me by the Lord that you will show kindness to my family ... Give me a sure sign that you will spare the lives of my father and mother, my brothers and sisters, and all who belong to them—and that you will save us from death.”

Joshua 2:12,13 NIV Read the whole account in Joshua 2:1-24.

The spies knew the Lord was *able* and *willing* to answer Rahab’s prayer. Imagine if the spies’ reply had been, “The Lord is able to save you, but we are not sure whether he can save your family members. Or even if he wants to, for that matter.” No, they staked their lives on God’s willingness to show mercy (2:19).

Did God answer her request or were only some of them saved?

‘Joshua said to the two men who had spied out the land, “Go into the prostitute’s house and bring her out and all who belong to her, in accordance with your oath to her.” So the young men who had done the spying went in and brought out Rahab, her father and

mother, her brothers and all who belonged to her. They brought out her entire family and put them in a place outside the camp of Israel ... Joshua spared Rahab the prostitute, with her family and all who belonged to her, because she hid the men Joshua had sent as spies to Jericho—and she lives among the Israelites to this day.'

Joshua 6:22-25 NIV Context: Joshua 6:1-27

The Lord had more honours in store for this woman than she could ever imagine. She was given a husband and bore a child of outstanding faith and godliness (Ruth 2-4). And hundreds of years later an even greater blessing became known (Matthew 1:5-16). And 'she lives among the true Israelites' in heaven to this day.

Rahab had limited understanding of God's love and being 'saved from death'. As 21st century children of God, we have much greater understanding. Do we have less expectation of the Lord's mercy for our family than she did? Or does the Good News give us a better hope? In Hebrews 11 and James 2, Rahab is commended for her faith. What will we be commended for?

Remind your children of what the Lord has done for you.

"... *When your children ask in time to come, 'What do those stones mean to you?' then you shall tell them ...*" See Joshua 4:4-7 ESV Context: Josh. 3 & 4 Crossing the Jordan

As well as making sure our children read, know and understand the Scriptures – their historical narrative and spiritual teaching, we have our own personal, 'family history' to tell them. We can show how the Lord has been gracious to us just as he was to the people in Bible times.

Tell your children what the Lord has done so that they will tell their children and they will tell theirs and ... The Lord wants all nations to know (Matt 28:18-20).

'Then [Joshua] spoke to the children of Israel, saying: "When your children ask their fathers in time to come, saying, 'What are these stones?' then you shall let your children know ... that all the peoples of the earth may know the hand of the Lord, that it is mighty, that you may fear the Lord your God forever."' Full quote: Joshua 4:20-24

A father whose greed brought terrible disaster on his family

Read about him in Joshua chapter 7.

God's Word is for everyone – children included.

"There was not a word of all that Moses had commanded which Joshua did not read before all the assembly of Israel, with the women, the little ones, and the strangers who were living among them." Josh. 8:35 Context: Renewal of the Covenant, Josh. 8:30-35

Determined, active faith brings great benefits for our children.

"Surely the land where your foot has trodden shall be your inheritance and your

children's forever, because you have wholly followed the LORD my God."

See Josh. 14:6-15: the Lord's reward for Caleb's faith.

To lead the family in the right way needs determination.

"But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD." See Joshua 24:14,15

Judges

Parents failed to teach their children and the children forsook the Lord.

"When all that generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation arose after them who did not know the LORD nor the work which He had done for Israel.

Then the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served the Baals; and they forsook the LORD God of their fathers ..." Judges 2:10-12 Context Judges 2:6-15

The parents were quite faithful in other ways but neglected their children's spiritual welfare. One generation was all it took for establishing sinful customs in society.

Living in humanistic society tempts us to view its lifestyles as harmless.

"Thus the children of Israel dwelt among the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. And they took their daughters to be their wives, and gave their daughters to their sons; and they served their gods. So the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord. They forgot the Lord their God, and served the Baals and Asherahs." Judges 3:5,7

Jesus said: *"I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth."* John 17:15-17

Barak failed to recognise the male authority the Lord had given him.

'Barak said to her, "If you go with me, I will go; but if you don't go with me, I won't go."

"Very well," Deborah said, "I will go with you. But because of the way you are going about this, the honour will not be yours, for the LORD will hand Sisera over to a woman."" Judges 4:8,9 NIV Whole account: Judges 4 & 5

In the Lord's grace, the men did behave as men.

'On that day Deborah and Barak son of Abinoam sang this song: "When the princes in Israel take the lead, when the people willingly offer themselves praise the LORD ..."

Judges 5:2 NIV

Shame on the timid men of Israel! The Lord raised up a mother to lead his people.

"In the days of Shamgar son of Anath, in the days of Jael, the roads were abandoned;

travellers took to winding paths. Village life in Israel ceased, ceased until I, Deborah, arose, arose a mother in Israel. When they chose new gods, war came to the city gates, and not a shield or spear was seen among forty thousand in Israel." Judges 5:6-8 NIV

We live in a sinful, non-ideal world. Deborah was raised up by the Lord to be a judge. This is not a usual female role (e.g. 1 Tim. 2:12b). In the present day, God's daughters may find themselves in places of authority over men. Let them exercise such roles with diligence.

The mother was delighted to see that at last the men were obedient.

"My heart is with Israel's princes, with the willing volunteers among the people. Praise the LORD!" Judges 5:9 NIV

Notice Deborah's pleasure when the men did take on their proper role. She wasn't in it to make a name for herself. She was not trying to assert that women should be given male roles to gain long overdue emancipation. The Lord sees the attitude of our hearts.

This woman did what she could, even doing 'the job of a soldier' and the Lord blessed her. (Compare Mark 14:8)

"Most blessed of women be Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite, most blessed of tent dwelling women. He asked for water, and she gave him milk; in a bowl fit for nobles she brought him curdled milk. Her hand reached for the tent peg, her right hand for the workman's hammer..." Judges 5:24-27 NIV

A man of faith's foolishness ensnared his family.

"Gideon made the gold into an ephod, which he placed in Ophrah, his town. All Israel prostituted themselves by worshipping it there, and it became a snare to Gideon and his family." NIV See Judges 8:23-27

A father's rashness brought trouble for his daughter.

"And it came to pass, when he saw her, that he tore his clothes, and said, 'Alas, my daughter! You have brought me very low! You are among those who trouble me! For I have given my word to the LORD, and I cannot go back on it.'" See Judges 11:29-40

A daughter who honoured her father for the Lord's sake

'So she said to him, "My father, if you have given your word to the LORD, do to me according to what has gone out of your mouth..."' See Judges 11:29-40

This father showed practical faith.

'Then Manoah prayed to the LORD: "O LORD, I beg you, let the man of God you sent to us come again to teach us how to bring up the boy who is to be born..."' Judges 13:8 NIV. See Judges 13:2-24, Samson's birth.

A wise wife calms her fearful, pessimistic husband.

"We are doomed to die!" he said to his wife. "We have seen God!"

But his wife answered, "If the Lord had meant to kill us, he would not have accepted a burnt offering and grain offering from our hands, nor shown us all these things or now told us this." Judges 13:22,23 NIV

Mother's and father's faith was rewarded.

"So the woman bore a son and called his name Samson; and the child grew, and the Lord blessed him." Judges 13:24

The Lord gave faith to their son also. See Judges 14-16 and Hebrews 11:32.

Samson was a true believer but brought grief and dishonour to his parents in various ways. However, the Lord used even him in His service. He is an example of God's truly amazing grace. As parents we may have sinned greatly but the Lord has unimaginable patience and great desire to bless our family. So let us not give up hope!

Ruth

This widowed woman's faith in God brought great, unimagined blessings.

'But Ruth said: "Entreat me not to leave you, or to turn back from following after you; For wherever you go, I will go; and wherever you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God, my God.

Where you die, I will die, and there will I be buried.

The Lord do so to me, and more also, if anything but death parts you and me."

Ruth 1: 16,17. See the whole book and Ruth 4:13-22.

Ruth's attitude shows what the Lord values in his weak, disadvantaged children.

"The widow who is really in need and left all alone puts her hope in God and continues night and day to pray and to ask God for help." 1 Timothy 5:5 NIV

"[Boaz said] 'The Lord repay your work, and a full reward be given you by the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings you have come for refuge.'" See Ruth 2:11,12

The Lord watches over the foreigner and sustains the fatherless and widow, Ps. 146.

"So Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife; and when he went in to her, the Lord gave her conception, and she bore a son." Ruth 4:13

It seemed that the Lord was against his daughter. The opposite was the case.

'But she said to them, "Do not call me Naomi ['pleasant']; call me Mara ['bitter'], for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me. I went out full, and the Lord has brought me home again empty. Why do you call me Naomi, since the Lord has testified against me, and the Almighty has afflicted me?" Ruth 1:20,21

By faith Naomi, the bereaved widow, became a grandmother.

'Then the women said to Naomi, "Blessed be the Lord, who has not left you this day without a close relative; and may his name be famous in Israel!

And may he be to you a restorer of life and a nourisher of your old age; for your daughter-in-law, who loves you, who is better to you than seven sons, has borne him." Then Naomi took the child and laid him on her bosom, and became a nurse to him. Also the neighbour women gave him a name, saying, "There is a son born to Naomi." And they called his name Obed. He is the father of Jesse, the father of David.'" Ruth 4:13-17

"The [woman] who trusts in Him will never be put to shame." (1 Peter 2:6 NIV)

Part of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David

"Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab, and Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of David the king." Matthew 1:5,6 ESV

1 Samuel

A despised, persecuted woman took her trouble to the Lord. That is what He wants us to do. Beware of Satan's whisperings.

'She was deeply distressed and prayed to the Lord and wept bitterly. And she vowed a vow and said, "O Lord of hosts, if you will indeed look on the affliction of your servant and remember me and not forget your servant, but will give to your servant a son, then I will give him to the Lord all the days of his life, and no razor shall touch his head." '

1 Samuel 1:10,11 ESV Context: 1 Samuel 1

We have a Father who loves to hear his sons and daughters talking to him every day.

"... your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

This, then, is how you should pray: 'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.'" Matthew 6:8-13 NIV

Will he refuse these requests? Beware of a resentful heart (v 14,15).

The Lord delights to answer our requests.

'... And Elkanah knew Hannah his wife, and the Lord remembered her. And in due time Hannah conceived and bore a son, and she called his name Samuel, for she said, "I have asked for him from the Lord." ' 1 Samuel 1:19,20 ESV

A desperate woman's faith brought incalculable benefits to God's people.

' "I prayed for this child, and the Lord has granted me what I asked of him. So now I give him to the Lord. For his whole life he will be given over to the Lord." And he worshipped

the Lord there. 1 Samuel 1:27,28.

Full quote: 1 Samuel 1:25-27. Consider the rest of Samuel's life.

The Lord was fulfilling Hannah's desire for her son.

"Samuel was ministering before the Lord, a boy clothed with a linen ephod. And his mother used to make for him a little robe and take it to him each year when she went up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice ... And the boy Samuel grew in the presence of the Lord." 1 Samuel 2:18,19, 21b ESV

The Lord answers faith more abundantly than we imagine.

'Then Eli would bless Elkanah and his wife, and say, "May the Lord give you children by this woman for the petition she asked of the Lord." So then they would return to their home. Indeed the Lord visited Hannah, and she conceived and bore three sons and two daughters.' 1 Samuel 2:20,21a ESV

We can fear our children more than we fear God.

"Why do you scorn my sacrifice and offering that I prescribed for my dwelling? Why do you honour your sons more than me by fattening yourselves on the choice parts of every offering made by my people Israel?... Those who honour me I will honour, but those who despise me will be disdained." 1 Samuel 2:29,30b NIV See 1 Samuel 2:12-36

A serious family warning from our heavenly Father

"At that time I will carry out against Eli everything I spoke against his family—from beginning to end. For I told him that I would judge his family forever because of the sin he knew about; his sons made themselves contemptible and he failed to restrain them." 1 Samuel 3:12,13 NIV Full quote: 1 Samuel 3:11-14

Disciplining our children consistently in a Christ-like manner is only possible by looking to our Father for his help. If we look elsewhere, we'll give way to fear of our child's disapproval and the disapproval of our friends and neighbours. We are not disciplining on our own behalf; we are doing it because our heavenly Father has commissioned us to do it for Him. See the Book of Proverbs.

Inevitable family tragedy? How does faith answer?

"Now it came to pass when Samuel was old that he made his sons judges over Israel. The name of his firstborn was Joel, and the name of his second, Abijah; they were judges in Beersheba. But his sons did not walk in his ways; they turned aside after dishonest gain, took bribes, and perverted justice." 1 Samuel 8:1-3

2 Samuel

DAVID

DAVID was a man after God's own heart but the way he raised his family was often not in keeping with this. We read of this mainly in 2 Samuel.

From early on David followed godless marriage traditions.

David had 6 sons by six wives in Hebron. Then he married even more women.

"And David took more concubines and wives from Jerusalem, after he had come from Hebron." 2 Samuel 5:13

The pagan custom of polygamy was devastating to the Family. How could a father be an effective head of his household and bring his children up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord?

An example of God's abundant grace to David as a father

'[The Lord said,] "When your days are over and you rest with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his father, and he will be my son ..."'

2 Samuel 7:12-14 NIV Full quote: 2 Samuel 7:11-16. Context: 2 Samuel 7:1-29

Discipline shows the heavenly Father's love to his son.

"I will be his Father, and he will be my son. When he does wrong, I will punish him with the rod of men, with floggings inflicted by men. But my love will never be taken away from him ..." 2 Samuel 7:14,15 NIV

God's promised blessing for David's house

"Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever." 2 Samuel 7:16 NIV

The parallel verse identifies 'David's house' as the house of God himself.

"I will set him over my house and my kingdom for ever; his throne will be established for ever." 1 Chronicles 17:14 NIV.

See 1 Chron. 17:10-14 – David's greater Son is the prime focus.

Despite all his failings, this father prays for God's promised blessing.

'And now, O Lord God, confirm forever the word that you have spoken concerning your servant and concerning his house, and do as you have spoken. And your name will be magnified forever, saying, 'The Lord of hosts is God over Israel,' and the house of your servant David will be established before you. For you, O Lord of hosts, the God of Israel,

have made this revelation to your servant, saying, 'I will build you a house.' Therefore your servant has found courage to pray this prayer to you. And now, O Lord God, you are God, and your words are true, and you have promised this good thing to your servant. Now therefore may it please you to bless the house of your servant, so that it may continue forever before you. For you, O Lord God, have spoken, and with your blessing shall the house of your servant be blessed forever." 2 Samuel 7:25-29 ESV

This prayer had its greatest answer in Christ.

I am a member of Christ's household (Galatians 6:10). Has the Lord given no promise to bless **my** family? What blessing will I ask him for – salvation or something else?

Wives, resist the temptation to despise your husbands.

"Now as the ark of the Lord came into the City of David, Michal, Saul's daughter, looked through a window and saw King David leaping and whirling before the Lord; and she despised him in her heart." 2 Samuel. 6:16

Whole incident: 2 Samuel 6:16-23 See Ephesians 5:33

A father's (Jonathan's) faithfulness brought blessings on his son.

'So David said to him, "Do not fear, for I will surely show you kindness for Jonathan your father's sake ..." 2 Samuel 9:7 Context: the whole chapter.

David undermines his family.

A father's slackness brought great suffering and harm to his family.

"In the spring of the year, the time when kings go out to battle ... David remained at Jerusalem. It happened, late one afternoon, when David arose from his couch and was walking on the roof of the king's house, that he saw from the roof a woman bathing; and the woman was very beautiful ..." 2 Samuel 11:1,2 ESV Context: 2 Sam. 11:1-27

'A man's ways are in full view of the Lord, and he examines all his paths.' Prov. 5:21

"When the wife of Uriah heard that Uriah her husband was dead, she mourned for her husband. And when her mourning was over, David sent and brought her to his house, and she became his wife and bore him a son. But the thing that David had done displeased the Lord." 2 Samuel 11:26.

'... Nathan said to David, "You are the man!"' Read 2 Samuel 12:1-24

David's Father describes how he has dishonoured Him.

"Why have you despised the word of the Lord, to do what is evil in his sight? You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and have taken his wife to be your wife and have killed him with the sword of the Ammonites." 2 Samuel 12:9 ESV

The heavenly Father announces his perfect discipline for this disobedient son.

"My son, do not despise the Lord's discipline or be weary of his reproof, for the Lord reproves him whom he loves, as a father the son in whom he delights."

Proverbs 3:11,12 ESV

"Now therefore the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised me and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife. Thus says the Lord, 'Behold, I will raise up evil against you out of your own house. And I will take your wives before your eyes and give them to your neighbour, and he shall lie with your wives in the sight of this sun. For you did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel and before the sun.'" 2 Samuel 12:10-12 ESV

The guilty son accepts his Father's rebuke; his Father reassures him.

'David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the Lord." And Nathan said to David, "The Lord also has put away your sin; you shall not die.'" 2 Samuel 12:13 ESV

The Father takes his son David's sin away by putting it on his one and only Son. That Son did die.

A repentant son still needs to learn how seriously he has sinned.

"Nevertheless, because by this deed you have utterly scorned the Lord, the child who is born to you shall die." Then Nathan went to his house.' 2 Samuel 12:14,15 ESV

True repentance expressed as the child returns to his Father.

"Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness; according to the multitude of Your tender mercies, blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin." Psalm 51:1,2 See the whole psalm.

The father does not give up praying for the child of his sin.

He knows that God's lovingkindness is great.

"And the Lord struck the child that Uriah's wife bore to David, and it became ill. David therefore pleaded with God for the child ... On the seventh day the child died."

2 Samuel 12:15, 18

David hints that the Lord has heard his prayer for his son.

'And he said, "While the child was alive, I fasted and wept; for I said, 'Who can tell whether the Lord will be gracious to me, that the child may live?' But now he is dead; why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.'" 2 Samuel 12:22,23 ESV

Where is the child? He is where David will be.

The God of grace continues to fulfil his promises to this father.

"Then David comforted Bathsheba his wife, and went in to her and lay with her. So she

bore a son, and he called his name Solomon. Now the Lord loved him, and He sent word by the hand of Nathan the prophet: So he called his name Jedidiah ['loved by the Lord'], because of the Lord." 2 Samuel 12:24

David's sexual immorality is followed by his son's sexual immorality.

"In the course of time, Amnon son of David fell in love with Tamar, the beautiful sister of Absalom son of David ... Now Amnon had a friend named Jonadab son of Shimeah, David's brother. Jonadab was a very shrewd man ..." NIV

Read the whole account in 2 Samuel 13:1-21

The father was angry but did nothing about his son's behaviour.

"But when King David heard of all these things, he was very angry." 2 Samuel 13:21

The father's failure to act allowed more family disaster to brew.

"And Absalom spoke to his brother Amnon neither good nor bad. For Absalom hated Amnon, because he had forced his sister Tamar." 2 Samuel 13:22

David's murder of his servant is followed by his son's murder of his brother.

"Now Absalom had commanded his servants, saying, 'Watch now, when Amnon's heart is merry with wine, and when I say to you, 'Strike Amnon!' then kill him. Do not be afraid. Have I not commanded you? Be courageous and valiant.'" So the servants of Absalom did to Amnon as Absalom had commanded. Then all the king's sons arose, and each one got on his mule and fled." 2 Samuel 13:28,29 Full story: 2 Sam.13: 23-29

Natural fatherly desires must be subjected to God's word – these were not.

"And the spirit of the king longed to go out to Absalom, because he was comforted about Amnon, since he was dead. Now Joab the son of Zeruiah knew that the king's heart went out to Absalom." 2 Samuel 13:33-14:1 ESV Result: 2 Samuel 14: 1-33

Fatherly forbearance is good but not at the expense of obeying God.

'[Absalom said] "Now therefore let me go into the presence of the king, and if there is guilt in me, let him put me to death." Then Joab went to the king and told him, and he summoned Absalom. So he came to the king and bowed himself on his face to the ground before the king, and the king kissed Absalom.' ESV Full quote: 2 Sam. 14:32,33

The king favoured his son above God's law. See Num. 35:16-33 and Deut. 19:11-13.

The 'pardoned' son then undermined his father.

"... he came to the king and bowed himself on his face to the ground before the king. Then the king kissed Absalom ... After this it happened that Absalom provided himself with chariots and horses, and fifty men to run before him. Now Absalom would rise early and stand beside the way to the gate ..." 2 Samuel 14:33-15:2 ESV

Aftermath: 2 Samuel 15:2-19:43.

God's words fulfilled

"So they pitched a tent for Absalom on the top of the house, and Absalom went in to his father's concubines in the sight of all Israel." 2 Samuel 16:22

"Thus says the Lord, 'Behold, I will raise up evil against you out of your own house. And I will take your wives before your eyes and give them to your neighbour..."
2 Samuel 12:11

Some of David's anguish as a father

'Then the king was deeply moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept. And as he went, he said thus: "O my son Absalom—my son, my son Absalom—if only I had died in your place! O Absalom my son, my son!"' 2 Sam. 18:33 Context: Ch. 18

"Now therefore, the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised Me, and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife." Ch. 12:10

WHAT A PAINFUL FAMILY LIFE this father had! And it stemmed from his **sin of adultery**. David was a beloved child of God, a man after God's own heart (1 Sam. 13:14). God's discipline of David is for our warning. We live in a time in which adultery and sexual immorality are paraded in front of us and our families. We must be on our guard.

"Watch and pray lest you enter into temptation." Mark 14:38

Our Father doesn't want us to bring misery and destruction into our family as David did. But God's servants who are sexually immoral cannot prevent it! Fathers, we must take warning and warn our children often. Do not think adulterous thoughts. Do not listen! Do not look! Keep away!

"These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the culmination of the ages has come. So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!" 1 Corinthians 10:11,12 NIV

1 Kings

More evidence of David's fatherly weakness

'Then Adonijah the son of Haggith exalted himself, saying, "I will be king"; and he prepared for himself chariots and horsemen, and fifty men to run before him. And his father had not rebuked him at any time by saying, "Why have you done so?"...'
1 Kings 1:5,6. Full story: 1 Kings 1 & 2

David's words to his son carried God's authority and are a model for all fathers.

"... be strong, therefore, and prove yourself a man. And keep the charge of the Lord your God: to walk in His ways, to keep His statutes, His commandments, His judgments, and

His testimonies, as it is written in the Law of Moses, that you may prosper in all that you do and wherever you turn; that the Lord may fulfil His word which He spoke ..."

1 Kings 2:2-4. Full quote in context: 1 Kings 2:1-12

Solomon took his father's words seriously.

"And Solomon loved the Lord, walking in the statutes of his father David ..."

1 Kings 3:3. For more details see 1 Kings 3:3-15.

He also followed his father's bad example: marrying without consulting the Lord.

"What the father does in 'moderation', the son does in excess." – old adage

'Now King Solomon loved many foreign women ... from the nations concerning which the Lord had said to the people of Israel, "You shall not enter into marriage with them, neither shall they with you, for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods." Solomon clung to these in love ... And his wives turned away his heart.'

1 Kings 11:1-3 ESV Full quote 1 Kings 11:1-10

A single parent's faith tested and strengthened

She and her family are in desperate need but the Lord has her specifically in mind.

'And she said, "As the Lord your God lives, I have nothing baked, only a handful of flour in a jar and a little oil in a jug. And now I am gathering a couple of sticks that I may go in and prepare it for myself and my son, that we may eat it and die." 1 Kings 17:12 ESV

Whole quote: 1 Kings 17:9-16.

Our heavenly Father has our family's needs specifically and constantly in his mind.

God the Father comforts the mother (his child) by his promise.

'And Elijah said to her, "Do not fear; go and do as you have said. But first make me a little cake of it and bring it to me, and afterwards make something for yourself and your son. For thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, 'The jar of flour shall not be spent, and the jug of oil shall not be empty, until the day that the Lord sends rain upon the earth.'"

1 Kings 17:14 ESV

True to his name the Lord did not abandon this one-parent family.

"So she went away and did according to the word of Elijah; and she and he and her household ate for many days. The bin of flour was not used up, nor did the jar of oil run dry, according to the word of the Lord which He spoke by Elijah."

1 Kings 17:15,16 See Psalm 68:5.

The Father again takes his daughter through distress.

'After this the son of the woman, the mistress of the house, became ill. And his illness was so severe that there was no breath left in him. And she said to Elijah, "What have

you against me, O man of God? You have come to me to bring my sin to remembrance and to cause the death of my son!" 1 Kings 17:17,18 ESV Whole account: Ch. 17:17-24

The widow and the fatherless rejoice and faith in the 'Father of the fatherless and Defender of widows' grows more certain than ever.

'And Elijah took the child and brought him down from the upper room into the house, and gave him to his mother. And Elijah said, "See, your son lives!" Then the woman said to Elijah, "Now by this I know that you are a man of God, and that the word of the Lord in your mouth is the truth."' 1 Kings 17:23,24

This father's sin resulted in the destruction of his family.

"This was the sin of the house of Jeroboam that led to its downfall and to its destruction from the face of the earth." 1 Kings 13:34 NIV

"[The LORD said] ... 'Because of this, I am going to bring disaster on the house of Jeroboam. I will cut off from Jeroboam every last male in Israel—slave or free ...'"

1 Kings 14:10 NIV Whole story: 1 Kings 11:26 - 15:32

2 Kings

The Lord regards deliberate sin in children very seriously.

"[Elisha] went up from there to Bethel, and while he was going up on the way, some small boys came out of the city and jeered at him, saying, "Go up, you baldhead! Go up, you baldhead!" And he turned round, and when he saw them, he cursed them in the name of the Lord. And two she-bears came out of the woods and tore forty-two of the boys." 2 Kings 2:23,24 ESV

The Lord includes children's sin in his lists of what he hates.

"But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy ..." 2 Timothy 3:1,2 NIV See also Romans 1:30.

This Moabite practice became accepted by some Israelite fathers.

"... the king of Moab saw that the battle was too fierce for him ... Then he took his eldest son who would have reigned in his place, and offered him as a burnt offering upon the wall ..." 2 Kings 3:26,27 Context 2 Kings 3:1-27

A single parent who cried to God in her distress. Was she heard?

'The wife of a man from the company of the prophets cried out to Elisha, "Your servant my husband is dead, and you know that he revered the Lord. But now his creditor is coming to take my two boys as his slaves.'" 2 Kings 4:1 NIV

Full quote: 2 Kings 4:1-7. See 1 Timothy 5:5

The Shunammite - an example of female tenacity

This woman showed initiative in opening her home for the Lord's service.

'Now it happened one day that Elisha went to Shunem, where there was a notable woman, and she persuaded him to eat some food. So it was, as often as he passed by, he would turn in there to eat some food. And she said to her husband, "Look now, I know that this is a holy man of God, who passes by us regularly. Please, let us make a small upper room on the wall; and let us put a bed for him there, and a table and a chair and a lampstand; so it will be, whenever he comes to us, he can turn in there."'

2 Kings 4:8-10 Full story: 2 Kings 4:8-37

The woman who honoured the Lord had a great desire. The Lord knew that desire and was far more willing to grant it than she imagined.

'So [Elisha] said, "Call her." When he had called her, she stood in the doorway. Then he said, "About this time next year you shall embrace a son." And she said, "No, my lord. Man of God, do not lie to your maidservant!" But the woman conceived, and bore a son when the appointed time had come, of which Elisha had told her.' 2 Kings 4:15-17

The Lord is very concerned for his children's children. The Shunammite acts on that.

*'And the child grew. Now it happened one day that he went out to his father, to the reapers. And he said to his father, "My head, my head!" So he said to a servant, "Carry him to his mother." 20 When he had taken him and brought him to his mother, he sat on her knees till noon, and then died. 21 And she went up and laid him on the bed of the man of God, shut the door upon him, and went out. 22 Then she called to her husband, and said, "Please send me one of the young men and one of the donkeys, that I may run to the man of God and come back." 23 So he said, "Why are you going to him today? It is neither the New Moon nor the Sabbath." And she said, **"It is well."** 24 Then she saddled a donkey, and said to her servant, "Drive, and go forward; do not slacken the pace for me unless I tell you." 25 And so she departed, and went to the man of God at Mount Carmel.'* 2 Kings 4:18-25

Notice where she puts the dead child (v 21). Her husband does not help but she replies in faith (v 23). Again her faith is shown by decisive, purposeful action.

Her faith shines in great trial.

*'So it was, when the man of God saw her afar off, that he said to his servant Gehazi, "Look, the Shunammite woman! Please run now to meet her, and say to her, 'Is it well with you? Is it well with your husband? Is it well with the child?'" And she answered, **"It is well."** ...'* 2 Kings 4:25,26

Faith is opposed but she still holds on to the Lord. (Compare Matthew 15:23)

'Now when she came to the man of God at the hill, she caught him by the feet, but

Gehazi came near to push her away. But the man of God said, "Let her alone; for her soul is in deep distress, and the Lord has hidden it from me, and has not told me." So she said, "Did I ask a son of my lord? Did I not say, 'Do not deceive me?'"
2 Kings 4:27,28

"I will not let you go unless you bless me." (See Genesis 32, Mark 7:28.)
'And the mother of the child said, "As the Lord lives, and as your soul lives, I will not leave you." So he arose and followed her.' 2 Kings 4:30 Compare with 2 Kings 2:1-6

THE LORD is a Father himself and knows the distress we feel when our family members are threatened with death. Every family member has 'built in' compassion for his or her own loved ones. "As a father pities his children, So the Lord pities those who fear Him." Psalm 103:13. I can't pray for your family members as you can, neither can you pray for mine as I can. Since the Lord has created in us this natural affinity let it spur us on as we pray for our own families.

The heavenly Father had compassion on His daughter and His daughter's child.
'And [the man of God] called Gehazi and said, "Call this Shunammite woman." So he called her. And when she came in to him, he said, "Pick up your son." So she went in, fell at his feet, and bowed to the ground; then she picked up her son and went out.'
2 Kings 4:36,37

She trusted the Lord to provide for her and He did – richly!
'Then Elisha spoke to the woman whose son he had restored to life, saying, "Arise and go, you and your household, and stay wherever you can; for the Lord has called for a famine, and furthermore, it will come upon the land for seven years." So the woman arose and did according to the saying of the man of God, and she went with her household and dwelt in the land of the Philistines seven years ...' 2 Kings 8:1,2
Read the full story of the Lord's accurately-timed provision in 2 Kings 8:1-6.

"Do not be yoked together with unbelievers." (2 Corinthians 6:14)
"Jehoram the son of Jehoshaphat began to reign as king of Judah ... And he walked in the way of the kings of Israel, just as the house of Ahab had done, for the daughter of Ahab was his wife; and he did evil in the sight of the Lord." 2 Kings 8:16-18
Full story: 2 Kings 8:16-24

Parents' bad example followed by their son
"Ahaziah was twenty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned one year in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Athaliah the granddaughter of Omri, king of Israel. And he walked in the way of the house of Ahab, and did evil in the sight of the Lord, like

the house of Ahab, for he was the son-in-law of the house of Ahab.” 2 Kings 8:26,27
Full story: 2 Kings 8:26-29 & 9:14-29

Ahab shows that no father can say, “My sin will affect only me.” (Compare Ex.20:4-6)
“When Jehu came to Samaria, he killed all who were left there of Ahab’s family; he destroyed them, according to the word of the Lord spoken to Elijah.”
2 Kings 10:17 NIV. Context : the whole story of Ahab in 1 & 2 Kings.

He followed the traditions of pagan society and killed his son.

“... Ahaz son of Jotham king of Judah began to reign. Ahaz was twenty years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem sixteen years. Unlike David his father, he did not do what was right in the eyes of the Lord his God. He followed the ways of the kings of Israel and even sacrificed his son in the fire, engaging in the detestable practices of the nations the Lord had driven out before the Israelites ...” 2 Kings 16:1-3 NIV
Other events: 2 Kings 16:1-19

Pursuing sin made parents heartless.

“So they left all the commandments of the Lord their God, made for themselves a moulded image and two calves, made a wooden image and worshiped all the host of heaven, and served Baal. And they caused their sons and daughters to pass through the fire ...” 2 Kings 17:16,17 Whole description: 2 Kings 17:5-23

“... and the Avites made Nibhaz and Tartak; and the Sepharvites burned their children in fire to Adrammelech and Anammelech, the gods of Sepharvaim.” 2 Kings 17:31

Why does the Lord refer so much to child sacrifice in his word? Does modern society sacrifice its children? Or is it free from such traditions?

Family tradition is powerful and can be sinful.

“Even while these people were worshipping the Lord, they were serving their idols. To this day their children and grandchildren continue to do as their fathers did.”
2 Kings 17:41 NIV Full account: 2 Kings 17:24-41

This son rejected his father’s sinful tradition, following his ancestor David’s example. God blessed him.

“Hezekiah the son of Ahaz, king of Judah, began to reign ... and he did what was right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his father David had done ...”
2 Kings 18:2,3 Full story: 2 Kings 18-20

History repeats itself: embedded cultural traditions destroy a child.

“And he [Manasseh] did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, according to the despicable practices of the nations whom the Lord drove out before the people of Israel. For he rebuilt the high places that Hezekiah his father had destroyed, and he erected altars for

Baal ... And he burned his son as an offering ...” ESV See 2 Kings 21:1-18.
Also 2 Chronicles 33:3-6 but wait for 2 Chronicles 33:10-20!

How easily children follow bad parental example!

"And he [Amon] did evil in the sight of the Lord, as his father Manasseh had done. So he walked in all the ways that his father had walked; and he served the idols that his father had served, and worshipped them. He forsook the Lord God of his fathers, and did not walk in the way of the Lord." 2 Kings 21:20-22 Fuller story: 2 Kings 22:19-26

Early teaching brought the Lord's blessing for him and many others.

"Josiah was eight years old when he became king, and he reigned thirty-one years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Jedidah, the daughter of Adaiah of Bozkath. And he did what was right in the sight of the Lord, and walked in all the ways of his father David; he did not turn aside to the right hand or to the left." 2 Kings 22:1,2

Whole story: 2 Kings 22:1 - 23:30

Child-sacrifice had become an established practice.

"And he [Josiah] defiled Topheth, which is in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, that no one might burn his son or his daughter as an offering to Molech." 2 Kings 23:10 ESV

Like father, like son – the usual tragic story

"And he [Jehoaquin] did evil in the sight of the Lord according to all that his father had done." 2 Kings 24:9 See also 2 Kings 23:36,37

1 Chronicles

THE FIRST PART of 1 Chronicles underlines the Lord's deep concern and involvement with families – fathers, mothers, sons and daughters. Each person may be unknown by the world but precious beyond measure in God's eyes. Here is an invitation to expect great things for our own children and grandchildren and not to give up praying for them and training them in the Lord's ways.

God provided a line of faith as well as a physical line.

"Adam, Seth, Enosh; Kenan, Mahalalel, Jared; Enoch, Methuselah, Lamech; Noah, Shem ..." 1 Chronicles 1:1 ESV

Faith in our family as well? Yes, He is able. Ask Him!

This son and brother did not accept gloomy predictions.

'Jabez was more honourable than his brothers; and his mother called his name Jabez, saying, "Because I bore him in pain." Jabez called upon the God of Israel, saying, "Oh that you would bless me and enlarge my border, and that your hand might be with me,

and that you would keep me from harm so that it might not bring me pain!" And God granted what he asked.' 1 Chronicles 4:9,10 ESV

Father, mother, brother, sister, do not accept gloomy predictions. Pray, 'Oh that you would bless my family!'

Amram had believing children, grandchildren and great-grandchild (at least).

"The children of Amram: Aaron, Moses and Miriam. The sons of Aaron: Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar. Eleazar was the father of Phinehas ..." 1 Chronicles 6:3,4 NIV

Their stories are found in the Old Testament from Exodus to Joshua.

Is the Lord's mercy only for Jacob's children or is it wide enough to reach mine?

*"Remember the wonders he has done, his miracles, and the judgments he pronounced, you his servants, the descendants of Israel, his chosen ones, the children of Jacob. He is the Lord our God; his judgments are in all the earth. He remembers his covenant forever, the promise he made, **for a thousand generations** ..." 1 Chronicles 16:14,15 NIV*

Context: 1 Chronicles 16:7-36, God's faithfulness.

The prayerful desire of a Christian parent

"Now, my son, the Lord be with you, so that you may succeed ... may the Lord grant you discretion and understanding, that ... you may keep the law of the Lord your God. Then you will prosper if you are careful to observe the statutes and the rules that the Lord commanded Moses for Israel. Be strong and courageous. Fear not; do not be dismayed." 1 Chronicles 22:11-13 ESV

Context: 1 Chron. 22: David speaks to his son.

Children are God's blessing.

"Of Heman, the sons of Heman: Bukkiah, Mattaniah, ... Hothir, Mahazioth. All these were the sons of Heman the king's seer, according to the promise of God to exalt him, for God had given Heman fourteen sons and three daughters." 1 Chronicles 25:4,5 ESV

See Psalm 127.

Repeat: children are God's blessing.

"Obed-Edom also had sons: Shemaiah the firstborn, Jehozabad the second, Joah the third, Sakar the fourth, Nethanel the fifth, Ammiel the sixth, Issachar the seventh and Peullethai the eighth. For God had blessed Obed-Edom." 1 Chronicles 26:4,5 NIV

The Lord blessed the grandchildren and great grandchildren of Obed-Edom.

"Obed-Edom's son Shemaiah also had sons, who were leaders in their father's family because they were very capable men. The sons of Shemaiah: Othni, Rephael, Obed and Elzabad; his relatives Elihu and Semakiah were also able men. All these were descendants of Obed-Edom; they and their sons and their relatives were capable men with the strength to do the work—descendants of Obed-Edom, 62 in all." 1 Chron. 26:6-9 NIV

Only the Lord can bless our children; what blessings are we asking Him for?

What promises to a father and to the other fathers listening!

"Now He said to me, 'It is your son Solomon who shall build My house and My courts; for I have chosen him to be My son, and I will be his Father. Moreover I will establish his kingdom forever, if he is steadfast to observe My commandments and My judgments, as it is this day.' Now therefore, in the sight of all Israel, the assembly of the Lord, and in the hearing of our God, be careful to seek out all the commandments of the Lord your God, that you may possess this good land, and leave it as an inheritance for your children after you for ever." 1 Chronicles 28:6-8

New Testament Christians have greater family blessings to pray and work for.
Does our heavenly Father want us to settle for less?

David's wise words to his son

"As for you, my son Solomon, know the God of your father, and serve Him with a loyal heart and with a willing mind; for the Lord searches all hearts and understands all the intent of the thoughts. If you seek Him, He will be found by you; but if you forsake Him, He will cast you off forever. Consider now, for the Lord has chosen you to build a house for the sanctuary; be strong, and do it." 1 Chron. 28:9,10 Context: 1 Chron. 28:1-21

Let us ask the Lord to make our children his workers.

'And David said to his son Solomon, "Be strong and of good courage, and do it; do not fear nor be dismayed, for the Lord God—my God—will be with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you, until you have finished all the work for the service of the house of the Lord.' 1 Chronicles 28:20

Praying for our children

"And give my son ... a loyal heart to keep Your commandments and Your testimonies and Your statutes ..." 1 Chronicles 29:19 Context: 1 Chronicles 29:10-20

2 Chronicles

A father can destroy his family by following the world's ways.

"He [Ahaz] burned incense in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, and burned his children in the fire, according to the abominations of the nations whom the Lord had cast out before the children of Israel." 2 Chronicles 28:3 Context: 2 Chronicles 28:1-27

But God's grace rescued this son from his father's sin.

"Hezekiah became king when he was twenty-five years old, and he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Abijah the daughter of Zechariah. And he did what was right in the sight of the Lord." 2 Chronicles 29:1,2

Encouragement to reject sinful (family) traditions and receive the Lord's blessing.

"Do not be like your fathers and your brothers, who were faithless to the Lord God of their fathers, so that he made them a desolation, as you see. Do not now be stiff necked as your fathers were, but yield yourselves to the Lord ... and serve the Lord your God, that his fierce anger may turn away from you. For if you return to the Lord, your brothers and your children will find compassion with their captors and return to this land. For the Lord your God is gracious and merciful and will not turn away his face from you, if you return to him." 2 Chronicles 30:7-9 ESV Context: 2 Chron. 30:1-27

A twelve-year-old boy is responsible to the Lord.

"Manasseh was twelve years old when he became king, and he reigned fifty-five years in Jerusalem. But he did evil in the sight of the Lord, according to the abominations of the nations whom the Lord had cast out before the children of Israel."

2 Chronicles 33:1,2 Read more: 2 Chronicles 33:1-20 (Compare Luke 2:49)

We are again reminded that serving sin destroys fatherly love.

"Also Manasseh caused his sons to pass through the fire in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom ..." 2 Chronicles 33:6

No doubt, Hezekiah had prayed for his disobedient son.

"And the Lord spoke to Manasseh and his people, but they would not listen. Therefore the Lord brought upon them the captains of the army of the king of Assyria, who took Manasseh with hooks, bound him with bronze fetters, and carried him off to Babylon. Now when he was in affliction, he implored the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, and prayed to Him; and He received his entreaty, heard his supplication, and brought him back to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the Lord was God ..." 2 Chron. 33:10-13 For rest of story see v 14-20.

A son who followed his father's bad example and refused the good.

"Amon was twenty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned two years in Jerusalem. But he did evil in the sight of the Lord, as his father Manasseh had done; for Amon sacrificed to all the carved images which his father Manasseh had made, and served them. And he did not humble himself before the Lord, as his father Manasseh had humbled himself; but Amon trespassed more and more." 2 Chronicles 33:21-23

Again grace abounds in this family line. What is the message for my family?

"Then the people of the land made [Amon's] son Josiah king in his place. Josiah was eight years old when he began to reign, and he reigned for thirty-one years in Jerusalem. And he did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, and walked in the ways of David his father; and he did not turn aside to the right hand or to the left. For in the eighth year of his reign, while he was yet a boy, he began to seek the God of David his father ..." 2 Chronicles 33:25-34:3 ESV Whole story: 2 Chronicles 34,35

Ezra

The right way for our family is found by humble submission to God.

"Then I proclaimed a fast ... that we might humble ourselves before our God, to seek from him the right way for us and our little ones ..." Ezra 8:21

Context: the physical journey in Ezra 8:15-36

Even spiritual leaders can ignore God's word when marrying.

"When these things were done, the leaders came to me, saying, "The people of Israel and the priests and the Levites have not separated themselves from the peoples of the lands, with respect to the abominations of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians, and the Amorites. For they have taken some of their daughters as wives for themselves and their sons, so that the holy seed is mixed with the peoples of those lands. Indeed, the hand of the leaders and rulers has been foremost in this trespass." ' Ezra 9:1,2 Context: Ezra 9: 1-15

Children were not excluded from knowledge of serious adult concerns.

"Now while Ezra was praying, and while he was confessing, weeping, and bowing down before the house of God, a very large assembly of men, women, and children gathered to him from Israel; for the people wept very bitterly." Ezra 10:1 Context: Ezra 9 and 10

Nehemiah

Fathers, we must expect to fight against the spiritual enemies of our families.

'And I ... said to the nobles and to the officials and to the rest of the people, "Do not be afraid of them [God's enemies]. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome, and fight for your brothers, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your homes."'

Nehemiah 4:14 ESV Context: Building up the walls of Jerusalem, Neh. 3 & 4

Who are the enemies of our family? We fight against "the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience" (Eph. 2:2). If we do not recognise this, our children will not have their father's protection. "The spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places" (Eph. 6:12) are intent on destroying us and our children. We need to put on "the full armour of God" and train our family in spiritual warfare. This will not happen by accident. By God's grace, it will take place as we apply the word of God (the sword of the Spirit) to every aspect of our family life (Deut. 5:29, 6:1-9). The Lord who is 'great and awesome' will take note and He is the one who will save us and our loved ones from our enemies.

Children blessed by attendance at an important event.

"Also that day they offered great sacrifices, and rejoiced, for God had made them

rejoice with great joy; the women and the children also rejoiced, so that the joy of Jerusalem was heard afar off.” Nehemiah 12:43

Occasion: dedication of the rebuilt wall of Jerusalem (Nehemiah 12:27-47)

An example of long-term effects of marrying against God’s will.

"In those days I also saw Jews who had married women of Ashdod, Ammon, and Moab. And half of their children spoke the language of Ashdod, and could not speak the language of Judah, but spoke according to the language of one or the other people."

Nehemiah 13:23,24. Full account: Nehemiah 13:23-27

Esther

THE BOOK OF ESTHER shows how God can use even a compromised, non-ideal marriage for great good – in this case the saving of God’s people from destruction. The Lord gave Esther faith and that faith overcame great odds.

Sacrificial family love was to have momentous results.

"Mordecai had a cousin named Hadassah, whom he had brought up because she had neither father nor mother. This girl, who was also known as Esther, was lovely in form and features and Mordecai had taken her as his own daughter when her father and mother died." Esther 2:7 NIV

Early family training strengthened her in adult life.

"Esther had not made known her kindred or her people, as Mordecai had commanded her, for Esther obeyed Mordecai just as when she was brought up by him." Es. 2:20 ESV

Haman’s self-focus/worship resulted in family destruction. Fathers beware.

"Calling together his friends and Zeresh, his wife, Haman boasted to them about his vast wealth, his many sons, and all the ways the king had honoured him ... "

Esther 5:10,11 NIV Read the whole story.

Job

Job was a diligent and exemplary father, commended by God himself.

"His sons used to go and hold a feast in the house of each one on his day, and they would send and invite their three sisters to eat and drink with them. And when the days of the feast had run their course, Job would send and consecrate them, and he would rise early in the morning and offer burnt offerings according to the number of them all. For Job said, 'It may be that my children have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts.' Thus Job did continually." Job 1:4,5 ESV See Job 1:1-5.

Job's sons and daughters loved each other and enjoyed family fellowship. Job knew that the human heart is desperately wicked (Jeremiah 17:9) and therefore that his own children had need of God's saving mercy.

Christian families are not exempt from great suffering.

"Your sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house, and suddenly a great wind came from across the wilderness and struck the four corners of the house, and it fell on the young people, and they are dead ..." Job 1:18,19

The father acknowledges that his children belong to God who gave them.

'... he said: "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return there. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; Blessed be the name of the Lord."' Job 1:21

The poor wife gives way under the strain of her own and her husband's suffering.

'Then his wife said to him, "Do you still hold fast to your integrity? Curse God and die!"' Job 2:9

The husband's gracious, measured response

'But he said to her, "You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?" In all this Job did not sin with his lips.' Job 2:10 Context: Job 1:1-2:10

God's discipline is a blessing.

"Behold, happy is the man whom God corrects; therefore do not despise the chastening of the Almighty. For He bruises, but He binds up; He wounds, but His hands make whole." Job 5:17 Context: Eliphaz's advice (Job 4 & 5) – misapplied but true.

Job was a family man who shared his blessings with fatherless and widows.

"... I delivered the poor who cried out, the fatherless and the one who had no helper. The blessing of a perishing man came upon me, and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy." Job 29:12,13

"If I have denied the desires of the poor or let the eyes of the widow grow weary, if I have kept my bread to myself, not sharing it with the fatherless— but from my youth I reared them as a father would, and from my birth I guided the widow ..."

Job 31:16-18 NIV

Job knew the danger of a spiritual man falling into adultery.

"I made a covenant with my eyes not to look lustfully at a young woman."

"If my heart has been enticed by a woman, or if I have lurked at my neighbour's door, then may my wife grind another man's grain, and may other men sleep with her. For that would have been wicked, a sin to be judged. It is a fire that burns to Destruction; it would have uprooted my harvest." Job 31:1, 9,10 NIV

This man's faith was not in vain. His family was greatly blessed.

"Job also had seven sons and three daughters. And he called the name of the first Jemimah, the name of the second Keziah, and the name of the third Keren-Happuch. In all the land were found no women so beautiful as the daughters of Job; and their father gave them an inheritance among their brothers.

After this Job lived one hundred and forty years, and saw his children and grandchildren for four generations. So Job died, old and full of days."

Why not 14 sons and 6 daughters (the other possessions were doubled and nothing is impossible with God)? Job did have that number if we include the ones who died in chapter 1. Was his earnest, sincere prayer for them heard by his heavenly Father?

Psalms

To feed our little children with the Word of God has great potential.

"Out of the mouths of babes and infants You have ordained strength." Psalm 8:2.
See Matthew 21:15,16.

Atheistic humanism

*"In his pride the wicked man does not seek him;
in all his thoughts there is no room for God."* Psalm 10:4 NIV

Our society educates its children to have the same attitude. In UK society's educators' thoughts, initiatives and curricula there is no room for God as revealed in his Word. (Except a 'nod' in the Religious Studies lesson.)

Our Father is the Helper of the fatherless. We should reflect our Father's concern.

"You are the helper of the fatherless ... You will cause Your ear to hear, to do justice to the fatherless and the oppressed ..." Psalm 10:14,17,18

An accurate picture of UK society

'The fool says in his heart, "There is no God." They are corrupt, they do abominable deeds, there is none who does good. The Lord looks down from heaven on the children of man, to see if there are any who understand, who seek after God. They have all turned aside; together they have become corrupt; there is none who does good, not even one.' Psalm 14:1-3 ESV

Parents, we must teach our children to view the world through the spectacles of God's Word. If we don't, they will think that it is normal and acceptable to the Lord to speak and behave as if there is no God. This is not God's will for them – he can abundantly help us if we call to him in this sensitive, uphill task.

We are children of the heavenly King (David's greater Son).

"Therefore I will give thanks to You, O Lord, among the Gentiles, and sing praises to Your name. Great deliverance He gives to His king, and shows mercy to His anointed, to David and his descendants forevermore." Psalm 18:50

The King's desire for his children

"May he grant you your heart's desire and fulfil all your plans! May we shout for joy over your salvation, and in the name of our God set up our banners! May the Lord fulfil all your petitions!" Psalm 20:4,5 ESV

What is our heart's desire for our family? What is our petition? An impulsive, despot king asked a similar question to a child of God. He answered her positively (Esther 7). "We are coming to a King; large petitions let us bring." – John Newton.

God's wrath on children of those who hate God. Who is their father? (1 John. 3:10)

"You shall make them as a fiery oven in the time of Your anger; the Lord shall swallow them up in His wrath and the fire shall devour them. Their offspring You shall destroy from the earth, and their descendants from among the sons of men." Psalm 21:9,10

Baby Jesus' absolute dependence on God.

Every human being is also entirely indebted to the care of his/her Creator.

"But You are He who took me out of the womb; You made me trust while on my mother's breasts. I was cast upon You from birth. From my mother's womb You have been my God. Be not far from me, for trouble is near; for there is none to help." Psalm 22:9-11

Jesus is not ashamed to call us his brothers. We are his family members!

"I will tell of your name to my brothers; in the midst of the congregation I will praise you: You who fear the Lord, praise him! All you offspring of Jacob, glorify him, and stand in awe of him, all you offspring of Israel!" Psalm 22:22,23 ESV (See Hebrews 2:12.)

Our family is a tiny 'family of the nations'. May his promise be fulfilled in it!

"All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the Lord, and all the families of the nations shall worship before you." Psalm 22:27

The Lord wants us to tell the good news to our children and grandchildren. Why?

"Posterity shall serve him; it shall be told of the Lord to the coming generation; they shall come and proclaim his righteousness to a people yet unborn, that he has done it." Psalm 22:30, 31 ESV

The Good Shepherd cares for parents bringing up their children.

"He tends his flock like a shepherd: He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart; he gently leads those that have young." Isaiah 40:11 NIV

Parents are the Lord's under-shepherds caring for the family he has given them.

The Lord is the great Shepherd on whom we must rely for all our family life.

Praying for our family (guided by Psalm 23)

"O Lord be our shepherd; then we shall not want. Make us lie down in green pastures; and lead us beside the still waters.

Keep bringing us back to your Word; lead us in the paths of righteousness for your name's sake.

Even though we walk through the valley of the shadow of death, may we fear no evil, realising that you are with us; may your rod and staff [the correction and support of your Word] comfort us.

Prepare a table before us in the presence of our enemies;

Anoint our heads with oil; and make our cup run over.

May goodness and mercy follow us all the days of our lives; and may we each dwell in the house of the Lord forever."

The true foundation of all geography lessons

"The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it ..." Ps. 24:1

The Lord guides obedient parents and blesses their children.

"Who is the man who fears the LORD? Him will he instruct in the way that he should choose. His soul shall abide in well-being, and his offspring shall inherit the land."

Psalm 25:12,13 ESV

Human parents may fail but the Lord's mercy is beyond imagination.

"When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take care of me."

Psalm 27:10

An appropriate marriage motto

"Oh, magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt His name together." Psalm 34:3

A Christian parent's words

"Come, you children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the LORD." Psalm 34:11

What is the heart's desire of a Christian father and mother?

"Trust in the Lord, and do good; dwell in the land and befriend faithfulness.

Delight yourself in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart.

Commit your way to the Lord; trust in him, and he will act." Psalm 37:3-5 ESV

Our Father in heaven, always give our children daily bread (your Word).

"I was young and now I am old, yet I have never seen the righteous forsaken or their children begging bread." Psalm 37:25 NIV

Our Father, please fulfil your promise in us.

"They [the righteous] are always generous and lend freely; their children will be blessed." Psalm 37:26 NIV

Hardships which come upon men and women have a loving purpose.

"You rebuke and discipline men for their sin; you consume their wealth like a moth – each man is but a breath." Psalm 39:11 NIV

"Those whom I love, I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest and repent." Rev. 3:19 NIV

These fathers taught their children history. Let us do the same.

"We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us, the deeds You did in their days, in days of old ..." Psalm 44:1

The Bridegroom and his bride – Christ and his church

"Daughters of kings are among your honoured women; at your right hand is the royal bride in gold of Ophir. Listen, O daughter, consider and give ear: Forget your people and your father's house. The king is enthralled by your beauty; honour him, for he is your lord." Psalm 45:9-11 NIV Context: the whole psalm is on this theme.

No matter what our status in this world, we are fully privileged members of Christ's bride. The best is yet to come! (Rev. 19:6-9, 21)

Teach your children to love Christ's Church.

"Walk about Zion, go around her, number her towers, consider well her ramparts, go through her citadels, that you may tell the next generation that this is God, our God forever and ever. He will guide us forever." Psalm 48:12-14 ESV

Grown-up children can ruin the family which raised them. 'Deliver us from evil'.

"[You] have been a partaker with adulterers. You give your mouth to evil, and your tongue frames deceit. You sit and speak against your brother; you slander your own mother's son." Psalm 50:18-20

This man was a sinner from birth. Our precious children are no different.

"Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me." Ps. 51:5 NIV

Atheistic thinking dominates UK society and its education.

*'The **fool** has said in **his heart**, "There is no God."'* Psalm 53:1

*"... since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became **futile in their thoughts**, and their **foolish hearts were darkened**. Professing to be wise, they became **fools**, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man ..." See Rom. 1:18-32*

*"So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the **futility of their thinking**. They are **darkened in their understanding** and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the **hardening of their hearts**." Ephesians 4:17,18 NIV*

Thus, Western society is drinking in the devil's deceit. The Lord does not want us to be deceived nor our children. Education based on 'no God' trains children in futility of thought and darkens their understanding.

The Lord is able to enable us to provide for our children an education centred on Him. At first sight that may seem impossible but we should not let impossibility get in the way of making request to our almighty heavenly Father.

Another reminder of the nature of atheistic/humanistic society and its teaching

"Do you indeed speak righteousness, you silent ones? Do you judge uprightly, you sons of men? No, in heart you work wickedness; you weigh out the violence of your hands in the earth. The wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies. Their poison is like the poison of a serpent ..." Psalm 58:1-4

Compare Romans 3:13-18.

God's compassionate fatherly care

"A father of the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in His holy habitation.

God sets the solitary in families ..." Psalm 68:5,6

"Is God really like that?" says the serpent. (Genesis 3:1)

The Son of God experienced misunderstanding and hostility from his family.

"I have become a stranger to my brothers, and an alien to my mother's children; because zeal for Your house has eaten me up, and the reproaches of those who reproach You have fallen on me." Psalm 69:8,9 See John 2:17, 7:2-9.

'The promise is to us and our children.' (Acts 2:39)

"For God will save Zion and build up the cities of Judah, and people shall dwell there and possess it; the offspring of his servants shall inherit it, and those who love his name shall dwell in it." Psalm 69:35,36 ESV

The heavenly Father's care is over his children from cradle to grave.

"For You are my hope, O Lord God; you are my trust from my youth. By You I have been upheld from birth; You are He who took me out of my mother's womb. My praise shall be continually of You ... Do not cast me off in the time of old age; do not forsake me when my strength fails." Psalm 71:5,6, 9

May our children be 'born in Zion'.

'Indeed, of Zion it will be said, "This one and that one were born in her, and the Most High himself will establish her." The Lord will write in the register of the peoples:

"*This one was born in Zion.*" Psalm 87:5,6 NIV Full quote: the whole psalm.
See Rev. 21:26,27

In verse 4, there are five unexpected names written in God's 'register' (Egypt, Babylon, Tyre etc.). The fact that they got there is a miracle of grace! Why does the Lord record this for us? Surely he wants us to be thrilled with the prospect of both ourselves and our children being members of his kingdom. He loves to hear our bold requests.

God's educational curriculum

A parent's (and grandparents') prayer. Why has the Lord written it down for us?
Since my youth, God, you have taught me, and to this day I declare your marvellous deeds. Even when I am old and grey, do not forsake me, my God, till I declare your power to the next generation, your mighty acts to all who are to come. Psalm 71:17,18

The Lord wants us to teach HisStory to our children.

*"O my people, hear my teaching; listen to the words of my mouth.
I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter hidden things, things from of old—
what we have heard and known, what our fathers have told us.
We will not hide them from their children; we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the LORD, his power, and the wonders he has done."* Psalm 78:1-4 NIV
Context: The rest of the psalm is full of history lessons.

CHILDREN need to be taught **history**, also **science** and **every other area** of knowledge. The whole world is full of the Lord's 'praiseworthy deeds', 'his power and the wonders he has done'. A Christ-centred education is essential: viewing all subjects through the lens of God's word. Is God's curriculum unrealistic? It is only as unrealistic as all his standards: "*Be perfect just as your father in heaven is perfect*" Mt. 5:47. He wants us to adopt his curriculum as far as we are able; it isn't optional. This requires much effort and organisation. Among God's people there are many gifts, abilities and much expertise which can be used to help parents in their God-appointed role. If we are keen to obey the Lord, will he not help us? Is he hearing our prayers for this? (John 15:7)

The Lord wants us to teach his principles to our children.

"He decreed statutes for Jacob and established the law in Israel, which he commanded our forefathers to teach their children, so the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would tell their children." Psalm 78:5,6 NIV

Why the Lord wants us to teach our children

"... and they in turn would tell their children. Then they would put their trust in God and

would not forget his deeds but would keep his commands. They would not be like their forefathers—a stubborn and rebellious generation, whose hearts were not loyal to God, whose spirits were not faithful to him.” Psalm 78:6-8 NIV See Judges 2:10-12.

Let us gladly fulfil our obligation – what a privilege!

“But we your people, the sheep of your pasture, will give thanks to you for ever; from generation to generation we will recount your praise.” Psalm 79:13 ESV

Hope for needy parents

“He will bring justice to the poor of the people; He will save the children of the needy, and will break in pieces the oppressor.” Psalm 72:4. Compare with Matthew 5:3

God wants us to care for the marginalised and unjustly treated.

“Give justice to the weak and the fatherless; maintain the right of the afflicted and the destitute. Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked.” Psalm 82:3,4 ESV Context: God’s complaint against unjust rulers.

The MESSIAH brings children into his family.

Psalm 89

‘David’ will have children who will live eternally.

‘You have said, “I have made a covenant with my chosen one; I have sworn to David my servant: ‘I will establish your offspring for ever, and build your throne for all generations.’” v 3,4 ESV

“I will set his hand on the sea and his right hand on the rivers. He shall cry to me, ‘You are my Father, my God, and the Rock of my salvation.’ And I will make him the first-born, the highest of the kings of the earth. My steadfast love I will keep for him for ever, and my covenant will stand firm for him. I will establish his offspring for ever and his throne as the days of the heavens.” v 25-29 ESV

The Messiah’s children are eternally safe in his Father’s family. He will discipline them when they need it (Hebrews 12:1-13).

“If his children forsake my law and do not walk according to my rules, if they violate my statutes and do not keep my commandments, then I will punish their transgression with the rod and their iniquity with stripes, but I will not remove from him my steadfast love or be false to my faithfulness. I will not violate my covenant or alter the word that went forth from my lips. Once for all I have sworn by my holiness; I will not lie to David. His offspring shall endure for ever, his throne as long as the sun before me. Like the moon it shall be established for ever, a faithful witness in the skies.” v 30-37 ESV Notice similar language in 2 Samuel 7:12-16.

This is how the children were made eternally safe:

"In bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through suffering. Both the one who makes people holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers." Hebrews 2:10,11 NIV

Psalm 89:38-50 graphically describes the Messiah's suffering for his children.

"But you have rejected, you have spurned, you have been very angry with your anointed one." v 38 NIV [Compare: "My God, my God why have you forsaken me." Ps. 22]

"You have cut short the days of his youth; you have covered him with a mantle of shame. How long, Lord? Will you hide yourself forever? How long will your wrath burn like fire?" v 45,46 NIV

"Lord, where is your former great love, which in your faithfulness you swore to David? Remember, Lord, how your servant has been mocked, how I bear in my heart the taunts of all the nations, the taunts with which your enemies, Lord, have mocked, with which they have mocked every step of your anointed one.

Praise be to the Lord forever! Amen and Amen." v 49-52 NIV

Praying for Christian parents and their children

"Let Your work appear to Your servants, and Your glory to their children." Psalm 90:16

Reassurance to grandparents. To whom will they "declare that the Lord is upright"?

"Those who are planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bear fruit in old age; they shall be fresh and flourishing, to declare that the Lord is upright; He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in Him."

Psalm 92:13-15

The Lord sees our attitude to those who lack family benefits.

'They kill the widow and the sojourner, and murder the fatherless; and they say, "The Lord does not see; the God of Jacob does not perceive."' Psalm 94:6 ESV

God's discipline is a blessing for nations and a blessing for His children.

"Does he who disciplines nations not punish? Does he who teaches man lack knowledge? The Lord knows the thoughts of man; he knows that they are futile.

Blessed is the man you discipline, O Lord, the man you teach from your law ..."

Psalm 94:10-13 NIV Context: Psalm 94:1-15

Men and women think they can gain knowledge without God. But it is only in God's goodness that they are able to understand *anything*. Otherwise, "their thoughts are futile". Education has no lasting value except by God's grace.

God's requirement for all educators and the only true foundation of any curriculum.
'Ascribe to the Lord, O families of the peoples, ascribe to the Lord glory and strength! Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name ... tremble before him, all the earth! Say among the nations, "The LORD reigns! ... he comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness, and the peoples in his faithfulness." Psalm 96:7-13

The Lord's glory and judgement should not be only for Sunday school lessons. Children should be taught every day, in all subjects, that the Lord reigns and that the whole creation, visible and invisible, declares his glory. And also that Jesus Christ is the Saviour and Judge of the world.

"The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead." Acts 17:30,31 ESV

Day school education based on a denial of this (or which overlooks this) is nowhere approved of in God's word. (Matt. 28:18-20)

The Lord's mercy doesn't stop with my children or their children or their children ...
"For the Lord is good; his steadfast love endures for ever, and his faithfulness to all generations." Psalm 100:5 ESV

Family entertainments

Psalm 101 NIV

The determination of a father who wants to please his Father
"I will be careful to lead a blameless life –when will you come to me? I will walk in my house with blameless heart." Psalm 101:2

Pleasing his Father in the home entertainment he chooses
"I will set before my eyes no vile thing. The deeds of faithless men I hate; they will not cling to me. Men of perverse heart shall be far from me; I will have nothing to do with evil." v 3,4

"My eyes will be on the faithful in the land, that they may dwell with me; he whose walk is blameless will minister to me." v 6

E.g. my family home will source media exemplifying Philippians 4:8,9.

He will guard his family from feeding themselves on leisure material which promotes the devil's deceit.

"No one who practises deceit will dwell in my house; no one who speaks falsely will stand in my presence." v 7 (Rev. 20:10)

*"Whoever slanders his neighbour in secret, him will I put to silence;
whoever has haughty eyes and a proud heart, him will I not endure." v 5*

"For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world." 1 John 2:16

*Every morning I will put to silence all the wicked in the land; I will cut off every evildoer
from the city of the LORD. v 8*

Every day I will make sure that no media posing as wholesome entertainment (but with hidden anti-God agendas) gain a place in my family.

Q. Wasn't David speaking as the king of Israel, not as a father?

A. A king is to shepherd his people; a father is to shepherd his children.

The Lord wants us teach our children, grandchildren and all who follow.

*"But You, O Lord, shall endure forever,
and the remembrance of Your name to all generations ..." Psalm 102:12*

*"This will be written for the generation to come,
that a people yet to be created may praise the Lord ..." Psalm 102:18*

A promise to lay hold of

*"The children of your servants shall dwell secure;
their offspring shall be established before you." Psalm 102:28 ESV*

Our Father's compassion – the source of our parental love

*"As a father pities his children, so the LORD pities those who fear Him.
For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust." Psalm 103:13,14*

Does faith expect undeserved mercy for our children, or deserved wrath?

*"The mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear Him, and
His righteousness to children's children, to such as keep His covenant and to those who
remember His commandments to do them." Psalm 103:17,18*

The Lord wants each generation to know him for 'a thousand' generations.

*"Remember His marvellous works which He has done, His wonders, and the judgments
of His mouth, O seed of Abraham His servant, you children of Jacob, His chosen ones! ...
He remembers His covenant forever, the word which He commanded, for a thousand
generations, the covenant which He made with Abraham, and His oath to Isaac, and
confirmed it to Jacob for a statute, to Israel as an everlasting covenant ..."*

Psalm 105:5-10. Context: a psalm which stresses the importance of knowing history and obeying the word of God.

Abraham passed God's word on to Isaac who passed it on to Jacob. Fathers and mothers, it is our duty to pass it on to the next generations – to our children and grandchildren (Psalm 78:1-8, Joel 1:3). By God's grace they will gain the appetite not for entertaining themselves but for knowing the Lord through the Bible and his 'marvellous works' in history and in creation (Rom. 1:18-20 Rev. 4:11).

Fathers' unbelief and grumbling brought suffering to their children.

"... they did not believe His word, but complained in their tents, and did not heed the voice of the Lord. Therefore He raised His hand in an oath against them, to overthrow them in the wilderness, to overthrow their descendants among the nations, and to scatter them in the lands." Psalm 106:24-27

This father's zealous concern brought great blessing to his children.

"... they provoked the Lord to anger with their deeds and a plague broke out among them. Then Phinehas stood up and intervened, and the plague was stayed. And that was counted to him as righteousness from generation to generation for ever." Psalm 106:28-31 ESV. See Numbers 25.

Accepting worldly standards led to family disaster.

"They did not destroy the peoples as the LORD had commanded them, but they mingled with the nations and adopted their customs. They worshiped their idols, which became a snare to them. They sacrificed their sons and their daughters to demons. They shed innocent blood, the blood of their sons and daughters, whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan, and the land was desecrated by their blood." Psalm 106:34-38 NIV

The Lord gives large families as a blessing.

"He raises up the needy out of affliction and makes their families like flocks. The upright see it and are glad, and all wickedness shuts its mouth. Whoever is wise, let him attend to these things; let them consider the steadfast love of the Lord." Psalm 107:41-43 ESV Compare with Psalm 127 and 128.

The word of God repeatedly mentions the blessing of having not a few children. Was He just pandering to primitive middle-eastern culture? There are tangible benefits for large, loving families, e.g. for aged parents and unmarried family members. Western society is 'wiser' than the Lord and tends to frown on large families.

Psalm 109, a vivid warning

The psalm contains terrible description of a man's sin being passed on and accepted by his family rendering them liable to the same judgement.

*"... Let his days be few, and let another take his office.
Let his children be fatherless, and his wife a widow ..."* Psalm 109:8,9 ff

Does God punish children for the sins of their fathers?

"Fathers shall not be put to death for their children, nor shall children be put to death for their fathers; a person shall be put to death for his own sin." Deuteronomy 24:16

The tragedy in Psalm 109 is that the children have adopted the same practice as their father and made his sin their own.

Ezekiel 18 explains in detail.

"Behold, all souls are Mine; the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is Mine; the soul who sins shall die." Ezekiel 18:4 Read the whole chapter.

In Ezekiel 18 we see that the Lord is absolutely fair and greatly desires our repentance: *"For why should you die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of one who dies," says the Lord God. "Therefore turn and live!"* Ezekiel 18:29-32

God records these warnings so that we and our children will take warning.

"Be sober-minded; be watchful ..." 1 Peter 5:8

Obedience to God brings spiritual strength and riches to our children.

"Praise the Lord! Blessed is the man who fears the Lord, who greatly delights in his commandments! His offspring will be mighty in the land; the generation of the upright will be blessed. Wealth and riches are in his house, and his righteousness endures for ever."

Psalm 112:1,2 ESV

Rich family blessing

"He settles the barren woman in her home as a happy mother of children.

Praise the Lord." Psalm 113:9 NIV. For an example of this, see 1 Samuel 2:21

Those who have, in faithfulness to the Lord, gone without these family blessings will not miss out in the slightest. See Mark 10:29,30.

"Don't be naïve! God is denying you his blessings." Where does that thought come from? (Genesis 3:4,5)

The Lord's great desire to protect and bless the families of those who trust him.

"O house of Israel, trust in the Lord – he is their help and shield.

O house of Aaron, trust in the Lord – he is their help and shield.

You who fear him, trust in the Lord – he is their help and shield.

The Lord remembers us and will bless us:

He will bless the house of Israel,

He will bless the house of Aaron,

He will bless those who fear the Lord – small and great alike.

May the Lord make you increase, both you and your children.

May you be blessed by the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth." Psalm 115:9-15 NIV

Q. We live in New Testament times, weren't these OT promises just about physical blessings? Do such promises still apply?

A. In these 'last days' Christ has become our mediator and we are under "*a better covenant, which was established on better promises*" (See Heb. 8:6). All the Old Testament promises still apply: "*For no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ.*" (2 Cor. 1:20 NIV). The promises are fulfilled in a better way; they are full of God's permanent, eternal blessings. The Lord Jesus emphasised his desire to bless our children (e.g. Mark 10:13-16).

God's method of keeping a teenager (or an older person) from lust.

"How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word. With my whole heart I seek you; let me not wander from your commandments!"
Psalm 119:9,10

The testimony and desire of a Christian parent

"Blessed are those who keep His testimonies, who seek Him with the whole heart! ... You have commanded us to keep Your precepts diligently. Oh, that my ways were directed to keep Your statutes! Then I would not be ashamed, when I look into all Your commandments." Psalm 119:2-5

Psalm 119 is full of a child of God's desire **to apply God's word in every area of his/her life**. As Christian parents we have the inestimable privilege of searching God's word to find his instructions and promised help on how to live family life in His way. Let us resist and discard the world's 'wisdom' and rejoice in a different family lifestyle – with the sure prospect of God's eternal grace for our loved ones.

"I rejoice in following your statutes as one rejoices in great riches [they have priceless family wisdom]. I meditate on your precepts and consider your ways [to find out what pleases you in family life.]" Psalm 119:14,15 NIV [Eph. 5:10]

"Direct my footsteps [- my daily actions and policies] according to your word; let no sin rule over me, [my wife or my children]. Redeem me from the oppression of men [there is great pressure to conform to majority opinion], that I may obey your [family] precepts. Make your face shine upon your servant and teach me your decrees [continually]." Psalm 119:133-135 NIV

Father and Mother, without the Lord you can achieve nothing. Don't be anxious.

"Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labour in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain. It is in vain that you rise up early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil; for he gives to his beloved sleep." Psalm 127:1,2 ESV

But *with the Lord* your labour is not in vain; your children will be blessed by the Maker of heaven and earth.

Children are the Lord's blessing.

"Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD, the fruit of the womb is a reward."

Psalm 127:3

Whose words will stand, God's or the world's?

"Like arrows in the hand of a warrior so are the children of one's youth.

Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them; they shall not be ashamed but shall speak with their enemies in the gate." Psalm 127:4,5

Family blessings and church blessings go together

"Blessed is every one who fears the LORD, who walks in His ways. When you eat the labour of your hands, you shall be happy, and it shall be well with you. Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine in the very heart of your house, your children like olive plants all around your table. Behold, thus shall the man be blessed who fears the LORD. The LORD bless you out of Zion and may you see the good of Jerusalem all the days of your life. Yes, may you see your children's children. Peace be upon Israel!" Psalm 128

A beautiful family scene illustrates how we should trust the Lord absolutely.

"Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor my eyes lofty. Neither do I concern myself with great matters, nor with things too profound for me. Surely I have calmed and quieted my soul, Like a weaned child with his mother; like a weaned child is my soul within me. O Israel, hope in the Lord from this time forth and forever." Psalm 131

"Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it." Mark 10:15

An oft-repeated principle: God sees parents' obedience and blesses their children.

"The Lord swore to David a sure oath from which he will not turn back: "One of the sons of your body I will set on your throne. If your sons keep my covenant and my testimonies that I shall teach them, their sons also for ever shall sit on your throne."

Psalm 132:11,12 ESV

Guard family unity – it is very precious.

"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! ... For there the LORD commanded the blessing — Life for evermore." Full quote: Psalm 133

The devil is the ruler of 'Babylon' (Is.14:1-23). His children will be punished.

"O daughter of Babylon, who are to be destroyed, happy the one who repays you as you have served us! Happy the one who takes and dashes your little ones against the rock!"

Psalm 137:8,9 (Compare with Isaiah 13:16-18 and Rev. 19:1-5).

Through his death, Christ broke the power of the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and he frees those who were subject to lifelong slavery (see Heb.

2:14). He rescues children of the devil and makes them into his own children.
"Here I am and the children God has given me." Hebrews 2:13.

Mum is expecting another baby! The Lord is creating a new child in His own image.

"... You created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb ... My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body ..."

Psalms 139:13-16 NIV

From this moment on, give thanks and pray for the eternal safety of this child who is infinitely precious to God. Plan your home life to invite the Lord to answer your prayers.

The world is deceitful – we call on the Lord to save us and our children from it.

"Rescue me and deliver me from the hand of foreigners, whose mouth speaks lying words, and whose right hand is a right hand of falsehood—

That our sons may be as plants grown up in their youth; that our daughters may be as pillars, sculptured in palace style." Psalm 144: 11,12

Let us eagerly teach our children to recognise the hand of God in all things.

*"One generation shall commend your works to another,
and shall declare your mighty acts ...*

*They shall pour forth the fame of your abundant goodness
and shall sing aloud of your righteousness."* Psalm 145:4,7 ESV

The whole psalm resounds with this message and reminds us that 'the Lord is near to all who call on him'.

The Lord often speaks of his care for his disadvantaged children.

*"Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the Lord his God ...
who executes justice for the oppressed, who gives food to the hungry ...*

The Lord lifts up those who are bowed down; the Lord loves the righteous.

The Lord watches over the sojourners; he upholds the widow and the fatherless ..."

Psalms 146:5-9 ESV

Are you unmarried and often left out and overlooked? A single parent? Pray to the One who has deep concern for you in your distress.

Praise the Lord, all members of the family, young and old together!

"[Praise the Lord!] Both young men and maidens; old men and children.

Let them praise the name of the Lord!" Psalm 148:12,13.

Proverbs

THE BOOK OF PROVERBS presents God's wisdom for everyday life in every age. It equips families for present needs and eternal safety.

This selection focuses mainly on specific references to family matters: wise words for husbands and wives, fathers and mothers, sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, aunts and uncles... However, this is just a taster; the whole of Proverbs is essential, on-going reading for every family member.

Proverbs – God's wisdom for family members, young and old

"The proverbs of Solomon son of David, king of Israel: for attaining wisdom and discipline; for understanding words of insight; for acquiring a disciplined and prudent life, doing what is right and just and fair; for giving prudence to the simple, knowledge and discretion to the young— let the wise listen and add to their learning, and let the discerning get guidance ..." NIV Full quote: Proverbs 1:1-6

The only true basis for education; atheistic, humanistic education has a sandy basis.

"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction." Proverbs 1:7

Teachable children will be blessed.

"My son, hear the instruction of your father, and do not forsake the law of your mother; for they will be a graceful ornament on your head, and chains about your neck." Proverbs 1:8,9

A father's wise instruction

"My son, if sinners entice you, do not consent ..." Proverbs 1:10

A wise son/daughter will avoid bad company.

"My son, do not walk in the way with them, keep your foot from their path ..." Proverbs 1:15 See Proverbs 1:10-19.

God's wisdom: our Father's desire for us – our desire for our child

"My son, if you receive my words, and treasure my commands within you, so that you incline your ear to wisdom, and apply your heart to understanding; yes, if you cry out for discernment, and lift up your voice for understanding, if you seek her as silver, and search for her as for hidden treasures; then you will understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God." Proverbs 2:1-5

The only sure basis for bringing up a family

"My son, do not forget my [God's] law, but let your heart keep my commands ... Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding;

*in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.
Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and depart from evil ..."*
Full quote: Proverbs 3:1-10

This shows the focus for the whole of our family life – 'in **all** its ways'.

Discipline demonstrates a father's love and delight in his child.

*"My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, nor detest His correction;
for whom the LORD loves He corrects, just as a father the son in whom he delights."*
Proverbs 3:11,12. See also Hebrews 12:5-11.

The way of safety for our children

*"My son, let [godly wisdom and understanding] not depart from your eyes—
keep sound wisdom and discretion; so they will be life to your soul and grace to your
neck. Then you will walk safely in your way, and your foot will not stumble ..."*
Full quote: Proverbs 3:21-26

The Lord watches over our homes.

*"The LORD's curse is on the house of the wicked,
but he blesses the home of the righteous."* Proverbs 3:33 NIV

Fathers must instruct their children, but only in God's truth.

*"Hear, my children, the instruction of a father, and give attention to know understand-
ing; for I give you good doctrine: do not forsake my law ...
Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom. And in all your getting, get
understanding."* Full quote: Proverbs 4:1-9

A good parent's instruction is positive and negative.

*"Hear, my son, and receive my sayings, and the years of your life will be many ...
Take firm hold of instruction, do not let go; keep her, for she is your life.
Do not enter the path of the wicked, and do not walk in the way of evil.
Avoid it, do not travel on it; turn away from it and pass on."* Full quote: Prov. 4:10-19

A promise for grandparents to remember

*"But the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn,
which shines brighter and brighter until full day."* Proverbs 4:18 ESV

The foundation of education and the key to life

*"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One
is understanding. For by me your days will be multiplied, and years of life will be added
to you."* Proverbs 9:10,11

PROVERBS 5, 6 AND 7: Essential reading for teenagers

We must warn our children against immorality.

"My son, pay attention to my wisdom; lend your ear to my understanding, that you may preserve discretion, and your lips may keep knowledge. For the lips of an immoral woman drip honey, and her mouth is smoother than oil; but in the end she is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword. Her feet go down to death, her steps lay hold of hell ..." Full quote: Proverbs 5:1-6

Children, listen! How to avoid sexual immorality.

"Therefore hear me now, my children, and do not depart from the words of my mouth. Remove your way far from her, and do not go near the door of her house ..." Full quote: Proverbs 5:7-23

Run away like Joseph (Gen. 39:12), "Flee youthful lusts." 2 Tim. 2:22. 'Don't click on the link.' "If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away." Mt. 5:5;29

Young man, the Lord gives richly – marriage is a powerful antidote to immorality.

"Drink water from your own cistern, and running water from your own well. Should your fountains be dispersed abroad, streams of water in the streets? Let them be only your own, and not for strangers with you. Let your fountain be blessed and rejoice with the wife of your youth ..." Proverbs 5:15-23 See also 1 Corinthians 7:1-7.

Children! Take care in your associations and your commitments.

"My son, if you become surety for your friend, if you have shaken hands in pledge for a stranger, you are snared by the words of your mouth; you are taken by the words of your mouth. So do this, my son, and deliver yourself for you have come into the hand of your friend: go and humble yourself; plead with your friend ..." Full quote: Prov. 6:1-5

A warning for children – and parents

"Go to the ant, you sluggard! Consider her ways and be wise ... A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep— so shall your poverty come on you like a prowler, and your need like an armed man." Full quote: Proverbs 6:6-11

Escape from immorality starts at home.

"My son, keep your father's command, and do not forsake the law of your mother. Bind them continually upon your heart; tie them around your neck. When you roam, they will lead you; when you sleep, they will keep you; and when you awake, they will speak with you. For the commandment is a lamp, and the law a light; reproofs of instruction are the way of life, to keep you from the evil woman, from the flattering tongue of a seductress. Do not lust after her beauty in your heart nor let her allure you with her eyelids ..." Full quote: Proverbs 6:20-35

Keeping God's word will save our children from a deadly snare.

*"My son, keep my words, and treasure my commands within you.
Keep my commands and live, and my law as the apple of your eye.
Bind them on your fingers; write them on the tablet of your heart.
Say to wisdom, 'You are my sister,' and call understanding your nearest kin,
that they may keep you from the immoral woman, from the seductress who flatters
with her words ..." Proverbs 7:1-5 Full quote Proverbs 7:1-27*

Even with the best of motives, it is possible to resemble a prostitute in dress.

"... behold, the woman meets him, dressed as a prostitute, wily of heart." Prov. 7:10 ESV

A woman may have a pure heart but unwittingly adopt dress styles which give immoral hints. To abide in Christ (John 15) he wants us to consult him (i.e. apply his Word) in all matters great and small.

"So whether you eat or drink [or choose clothes] or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. Do not cause anyone to stumble ..." See 1 Corinthians 10:31,32.

Sexual immorality is primed by Satan to bring eternal death.

"... With her enticing speech she caused him to yield, with her flattering lips she seduced him. Immediately he went after her, as an ox goes to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks, till an arrow struck his liver. As a bird hastens to the snare, he did not know it would cost his life ..."

"Now therefore, listen to me, my children; pay attention to the words of my mouth: Do not let your heart turn aside to her ways, do not stray into her paths; for she has cast down many wounded, and all who were slain by her were strong men. Her house is the way to hell, descending to the chambers of death." Full quote: Proverbs 7:6-27

In the 21st century many 'strong men' including church leaders have been 'slain by her'. *"We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day ... Therefore let anyone [whatever age or status] who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall." 1 Corinthians: 10:8,12 ESV*

Family joy or grief

*"A wise son makes a glad father,
but a foolish son is the grief of his mother." Proverbs 10:1 (See also 15:20, 17:25)*

Remind your children of this.

*"Whoever heeds discipline shows the way to life,
but whoever ignores correction leads others astray." Proverbs 10:17 NIV*

Does the Lord encourage us to strive for our children's salvation?

"Be assured, an evil person will not go unpunished,

but the offspring of the righteous will be delivered.” Proverbs 11:21 ESV

A warning for fathers

*“Whoever troubles his own household will inherit the wind,
and the fool will be servant to the wise of heart.” Proverbs 11:29 ESV*

Love discipline!

*“Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge,
but he who hates reproof is stupid.” Proverbs 12:1*

Commendation for wives – and warning

*“An excellent wife is the crown of her husband,
but she who causes shame is like rottenness in his bones.” Proverbs 12:4*

Righteous behaviour promotes family security (a gracious gift of God).

*“The wicked are overthrown and are no more,
but the house of the righteous will stand.” Proverbs 12:7 (See also 14:11)*

Wisdom for children

*“A wise son heeds his father’s instruction,
but a scoffer does not listen to rebuke.” Proverbs 13:1*

Children, when you have disobeyed, remember this:

*“He who ignores discipline comes to poverty and shame, but whoever heeds correction is
honoured.” Proverbs 13:18 NIV (See also Prov. 15:32.)*

Guide your children in friendship.

*“He who walks with wise men will be wise,
but the companion of fools will be destroyed.” Proverbs 13:20*

Following the Lord now helps our family for years to come.

*“A good man leaves an inheritance to his children’s children,
but the wealth of the sinner is stored up for the righteous.” Proverbs 13:22*

Loving parents’ discipline includes physical punishment.

*“He who spares his rod hates his son,
but he who loves him disciplines him promptly.” Proverbs 13:24*

‘PROMPTLY’ means ‘without undue delay’ and obviously includes ‘early in a child’s life’. Early discipline saves heartache later on when a child’s natural stubbornness has had chance to grow and assert itself by unwise parental indulgence. See Proverbs 29:15.

We have an enemy who wants to devour our children (1 Peter 5:8). It would be remarkable if Satan did not try to undermine parents' confidence in God's childcare instructions. He then renders little children more liable to his influence. We would expect him to do this promptly – at the earliest opportunity. The Bible leaves us in no doubt: the devil is no gentleman who fights fairly, showing pity to defenceless children. He is a subtle, deceitful, vicious murderer (Revelation 12:4, John 8:44).

At the present time (early 21st Century), there is a climate of fear surrounding the use of Biblical corporal discipline. Modern society believes it is a form of child abuse. This shows ignorance of the heavenly Father's loving kindness reflected in the loving, secure, Christ-centred principles of family-care found in his word. Whose teaching will we follow, the God of love's or an alternative? Who is behind the pressure being brought on God's people?

"For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places ..." See Ephesians 6:10-20.

A mother needs God's wisdom.

*"The wise woman builds her house,
but the foolish pulls it down with her hands." Proverbs 14:1*

Living obediently to our heavenly Father invites his blessing on our family.

*"The house of the wicked will be overthrown,
But the tent of the upright will flourish." Proverbs 14:11*

The key to family security

*"He who fears the LORD has a secure fortress,
and for his children it will be a refuge." Proverbs 14:26 NIV*

Wise words for fathers and each family member

*"Whoever is slow to anger has great understanding,
but he who has a hasty temper exalts folly." Proverbs 14:29 ESV*

A valuable principle for family fellowship

"A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger." Proverbs 15:1

The Lord's discipline is invaluable.

*"Harsh discipline is for him who forsakes the way,
and he who hates correction will die." Proverbs 15:10*

Another warning, Father - the fruit of the Spirit is patience, gentleness & self-control.

*"A hot-tempered man stirs up dissension,
but a patient man calms a quarrel." Proverbs 15:18 NIV*

Children, accepting correction helps us to become wise.

*"A fool despises his father's instruction,
but he who receives correction is prudent." Proverbs 15:5*

Children who despise their parents are foolish.

*"A wise son makes a father glad,
but a foolish man despises his mother." Proverbs 15:20*

Fathers, be careful.

*"A greedy man brings trouble to his family,
but he who hates bribes will live." Proverbs 15:27 NIV*

Discipline may feel painful but it is immensely valuable when heeded.

*"He who listens to a life-giving rebuke will be at home among the wise.
He who ignores discipline despises himself,
but whoever heeds correction gains understanding." Proverbs 15:32 NIV*

Beware of waiting to discipline until our child 'understands'. The purpose of discipline is to *impart* understanding. Our heavenly Father doesn't wait until we understand before he corrects us – then we 'gain understanding'.

Only the Lord can teach wisdom to a child or an adult.

*"The fear of the LORD teaches a man wisdom, and humility comes before honour."
Proverbs. 15:33 NIV*

Parents and grandparents have a noble calling.

*"Children's children are the crown of old men,
and the glory of children is their father." Proverbs 17:6*

Corporal discipline alone will not knock wisdom into a stubborn, self-willed child.

"Rebuke is more effective for a wise man than a hundred blows on a fool." Prov. 17:10

Only the Lord can impart wisdom. We must ask our heavenly Father to give wisdom as we use his means. "The rod and rebuke give wisdom ..." (Prov. 29:15). Beware of unthinking over-reliance on corporal discipline.

A word for husbands and wives (and other family members)

*"Starting a quarrel is like breaching a dam;
so drop the matter before a dispute breaks out." Proverbs 17:14 NIV*

Brothers (and sisters) are the closest friends.

*"A friend loves at all times,
and a brother is born for adversity." Proverbs 17:17*

Children, consider your parents!

*"To have a fool for a son brings grief;
there is no joy for the father of a fool."* Proverbs 17:21 NIV

Parents, make sure your child is actually to blame before you punish him.

*"It is not good to punish an innocent man,
or to flog officials for their integrity."* Proverbs 17:26

A foolish son or daughter behaves as if there is no God (Psalm 14:1)

*"A foolish son brings grief to his father
and bitterness to the one who bore him."* Proverbs 17:25 NIV

Be careful; family rifts can be deep and long-lasting.

*"A brother offended is harder to win than a strong city,
and contentions are like the bars of a castle."* Proverbs 18:19

Our Saviour

"... there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother." Proverbs 18:24

God's first family blessing

*"He who finds a wife finds a good thing,
and obtains favour from the LORD."* Proverbs 18:22

If one of the Father's children doesn't find a wife, is he disfavoured?

"Yes he is; the Lord is unfair. Some of us have to go through life suffering disadvantage because he doesn't really care." – so whispers the devil. (Genesis 3:4,5)

Family dangers

*"A foolish son is ruin to his father,
and a wife's quarrelling is a continual dripping of rain."* Proverbs 19:13 ESV

Satan's whisperings of discontent are likewise a continual dripping.

What a blessing!

*"Houses and riches are an inheritance from fathers,
but a prudent wife is from the LORD."* Proverbs 19:14

The vital need for fatherly discipline

*"Discipline your son, for in that there is hope;
do not be a willing party to his death."* Proverbs 19:18 NIV

Note the contrast: hope or death. Why do we need to discipline? Because of Sin. Sin brings eternal death. The Lord does not want our child to die. He says that discipline is essential – we can only avoid it at our child's peril.

Father, your family will suffer through your hastiness.

*"A hot-tempered man must pay the penalty;
if you rescue him, you will have to do it again."* Proverbs 19:19 NIV

Children need humility.

"Listen to counsel and receive instruction, that you may be wise in your latter days."

*"Cease listening to instruction, my son,
and you will stray from the words of knowledge."* Proverbs 19:20, 27

Children, be careful.

*"He who mistreats his father and chases away his mother
is a son who causes shame and brings reproach."* Proverbs 19:26

Good motivation for fathers

*"The righteous man walks in his integrity;
his children are blessed after him."* Proverbs 20:7

Regard your child with discernment.

*"Even a child is known by his deeds,
whether what he does is pure and right."* Proverbs 20:11

Sin against parents may be common but it is serious. (See Romans 1:30)

*"Whoever curses his father or his mother,
his lamp will be put out in deep darkness."* Proverbs 20:20

God's purpose for discipline

*"Blows that wound cleanse away evil;
strokes make clean the innermost parts."* Proverbs 20:30 ESV

One of God's family warnings

*"It is better to live in a corner of the housetop
than in a house shared with a quarrelsome wife."* Proverbs 21:9 ESV.

Another reminder

*"Better to live in a desert,
than with a quarrelsome and ill-tempered wife."* Proverbs 21:19 NIV

An apt warning for today's children and young people

*He who loves pleasure will be a poor man;
He who loves wine and oil will not be rich.* Proverbs 21:17

"Solid joys and lasting treasure none but Zion's children know." – John Newton.

Wise parents think ahead, see spiritual danger and plan accordingly.

*"A prudent man foresees evil and hides himself,
but the simple pass on and are punished."* Proverbs 22:3 Also in Proverbs 27:12

Unwise parents fail to see danger signs and, before they know it, their children fall into a trap.

What instruction to obey and what promise to pursue!

*"Train up a child in the way he should go,
and when he is old he will not depart from it."* Proverbs 22:6

The Lord gives this warning to men (married or unmarried) many times.

*"The mouth of an adulterous woman is a deep pit;
he who is under the Lord's wrath will fall into it."* Proverbs 22:14 NIV

The rod is an essential part of training.

*"Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child;
the rod of correction will drive it far from him."* Proverbs 22:15

Our beautiful children have folly bound up in their hearts (Mark 7:21-23). Only the Lord can drive it from them. The same Lord has told us how to prayerfully cooperate with him. The Lord wants us to pray for our child's salvation and expect God to bless our use of his specified means. If we don't do what he tells us, how can we expect him to listen to our prayers?

The Lord Jesus' description of our little child's heart. That heart will take her to hell unless the Lord saves her.

"For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness." Mark 7:21,22

Only the Lord knows the depth of this depravity (Jeremiah 17:9,10). Modern society says, "Surely our little child is not really 'sinful'. She is too young, lovable and cute." If we fall for this view we align ourselves with those who contradict the One who sent his Son to undergo the agony of God's anger against the sin which grips every human heart. The Lord Jesus never treats sin as if it were cute. Children created in God's image are wonderfully cute but to be saved from the sin in their childish hearts needs the full atoning work of the Creator of the universe.

Lack of self-control teaches our children and ensnares them.

"Do not make friends with a hot-tempered man, do not associate with one easily angered, or you may learn his ways and get yourself ensnared." Proverbs 22:24,25 NIV

By grace, obedience to God brings saving blessing.

"Do not withhold discipline from a child; if you strike him with a rod, he will not die. If you strike him with the rod, you will save his soul from Sheol [hell, NKJV]." Proverbs 23:13,14 ESV

Notice again the Lord's requirement. Sin is so deceitful and wicked that it needs pain to restrain it. A child cannot be trained in Christ's way without painful discipline. "For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it." (Hebrews 12:11 ESV). If we prayerfully do our part, will our Father not do his unique saving work? Or will he 'give a scorpion' in answer to his children's prayers?

THE ABOVE PROVERB is 'abhorrently primitive' to self-sufficient modern man, as is hell, about which the Lord Jesus warned more than any other teacher. Fear of man will cause us and our child to fall into a snare (Proverbs 29:25). Fear of the Lord is the basis of wise childcare. We live in days of governmental persecution of those who follow God's instructions in various areas of life. Let us pray that the Lord will make us 'wise as serpents and harmless as doves' (Matthew 10:16) and that he will keep our children safe. *"Our Father in heaven, deliver us from evil."*

A father's desire

"My son, if your heart is wise, my heart will rejoice—indeed, I myself; Yes, my inmost being will rejoice when your lips speak right things. Do not let your heart envy sinners, but be zealous for the fear of the Lord all the day; for surely there is a hereafter, and your hope will not be cut off." Proverbs 23:15-18

The exploited and cheated can appeal to the Lord. He wants them to.

"Do not remove the ancient landmark, nor enter the fields of the fatherless; For their Redeemer is mighty; He will plead their cause against you." Proverbs 23:10,11

Wise words for a teenager

"Hear, my son, and be wise; and guide your heart in the way. Do not mix with winebibbers, or with gluttonous eaters of meat; for the drunkard and the glutton will come to poverty, and drowsiness will clothe a man with rags." Proverbs 23:18-21

Honour your father and mother always.

"Listen to your father who begot you, and do not despise your mother when she is old." Proverbs 23:22

Wisely-educated children who gain wisdom promote parents' joy.

"Buy the truth, and do not sell it, also wisdom and instruction and understanding.

The father of the righteous will greatly rejoice, and he who begets a wise child will delight in him. Let your father and your mother be glad, and let her who bore you rejoice.” Proverbs 23:23-25

A heart set on God avoids immorality.

“My son, give me your heart, and let your eyes observe my ways. For a harlot is a deep pit, and a seductress is a narrow well. She also lies in wait as for a victim, and increases the unfaithful among men.” Proverbs 23:26-28

Another warning for young people. Alcohol is one of many drugs open to misuse.

*“Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has strife? Who has complaints? Who has need-
less bruises? Who has bloodshot eyes? Those who linger over wine, who go to sample
bowls of mixed wine ...” Proverbs 23:29,30 NIV Full quote: Prov. 23:29-35*

Families thrive on wisdom, understanding and knowledge.

*“Through wisdom a house is built, and by understanding it is established;
by knowledge the rooms are filled with all precious and pleasant riches.” Prov. 24:3,4*

Instruction relevant to parents – the Lord wants us to keep our children safe:

“Deliver those who are drawn toward death, and hold back those stumbling to the slaughter. If you say, “Surely we did not know this,” does not He who weighs the hearts consider it? He who keeps your soul, does He not know it? And will He not render to each man according to his deeds?” Proverbs 24:11,12

We are the Lord’s servants whom he has chosen to care for his created children in their early years. A fundamental duty of parents is to guard the health and safety of their children. The biggest danger for our children is not physical but spiritual (Ephes. 6:10 ff). There are many influences in our society which ‘draw our children toward death’. We can be tempted not to examine the situation in the light of Scripture and to adopt a position of ‘we did not know this’. The Lord wants us protect them from harm while training them in Biblical discernment. By his grace this will enable them to resist the devil as they progress from childhood to adulthood.

Advice for our children: enjoy God’s gifts and seek his wisdom.

“My son, eat honey, for it is good, and the drippings of the honeycomb are sweet to your taste. Know that wisdom is such to your soul; if you find it, there will be a future, and your hope will not be cut off.” Proverbs 24:13,14 ESV

Children, respect those in authority and beware of bad company.

“My son, fear the Lord and the king, and do not join with those who do otherwise, for disaster will arise suddenly from them, and who knows the ruin that will come from them both?” Proverbs 24:21,22 ESV

Don't jump to conclusions, especially when you suspect a child has misbehaved.

"What your eyes have seen do not hastily bring into court, for what will you do in the end, when your neighbour puts you to shame?" Proverbs 25:8 ESV

Check the facts thoroughly. If you make a hasty judgement, you could easily cause a 'miscarriage of justice' and treat your son or daughter harshly and unfairly.

The third time in Proverbs that the Lord gives this warning. Why?

"It is better to dwell in a corner of a house-top, than in a house shared with a contentious woman." Proverbs 25:24

Danger for the family – a father without self-control

"A man without self-control is like a city broken into and left without walls." Proverbs 25:28 ESV

Husbands and fathers take warning.

"Like a bird that strays from its nest is a man who strays from his home." Prov. 27:8 ESV

A desire that the Lord can fulfil

"My son, be wise, and make my heart glad, that I may answer him who reproaches me." Proverbs 27:11

Wise parents see danger for their children and put appropriate safeguards in place.

"The prudent see danger and take refuge, but the simple keep going and suffer for it." Proverbs 27:12 NIV Also in Proverbs 22:3

A fourth warning. Who warns us?

"A continual dripping on a rainy day and a quarrelsome wife are alike; to restrain her is to restrain the wind or to grasp oil in one's right hand." Proverbs 27:15,16 ESV

Fathers, teach your children to fear the Lord. See Psalm 34:11-14

"Whoever keeps the law is a discerning son, but a companion of gluttons shames his father." Proverbs 28:7

Dishonouring parents is very serious.

'Whoever robs his father or his mother and says, "That is no transgression," is a companion to a man who destroys.' Proverbs 28:24 ESV

Young people, pursue wisdom; flee immorality.

"Whoever loves wisdom makes his father rejoice, But a companion of harlots wastes his wealth." Proverbs 29:3

Godly childcare: wise supervision with verbal and physical correction

*"The rod and rebuke give wisdom,
but a child left to himself brings shame to his mother."* Proverbs 29:15

A child needs to be trained by the rod as well as by verbal instruction and reproof. Without this, the child is effectively 'left to himself' – he is the one who decides what to do, not his mother or father.

OUR FATHER is the loving Creator of children and he knows best how to train them in way they should go. Government 'expertise' has not superseded the Word of God. As we obey the Lord, we will be painfully aware that most child psychologists view 'parental authority', and 'required obedience to commands' as outmoded concepts, damaging to children.

Obedient parents: Christ-centred in how they discipline and what they teach.

"Fathers do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord." Ephesians 6:4 ESV

Disciplined parents will seek to do things in ways which will not 'provoke' their children, e.g. not beyond their ability level. Develop a good relationship of activity and interest with the child where 'love and laughter' are integral. Be careful not to make unreasonable demands when the child is not well or very tired. Guide them in the way to go. Loving correction must go hand in hand with daily, lovingly applied, exemplified Bible teaching in the family circle.

Good discipline brings joy.

*"Discipline your son, and he will give you rest;
he will give delight to your heart."* Proverbs 29:17 ESV

How do we give delight to our Father's heart? Training obediently, according to God's word invites his wonderful family blessings. *'Those who honour Me I will honour'* was spoken in the context of a father's failure to discipline (1 Sam. 2:29,30).

Some extended comments on this:*

* These comments are included because today there is much misunderstanding and confusion about the Bible's teaching on Discipline. The notes are very limited and not a full discussion.

PARENTS eager to honour the Lord will be keen to apply his methods as soon as is fitting – 'promptly' (Proverbs 13:24). Commencing at an early age is designed to bring early obedience. Procrastination and timid half-heartedness is a form of disobedience to God. It brings parental anguish and increased pain and difficulty for the child. Training a child to voluntarily obey his parent's instructions should begin when a child is capable of controlling his own movements, e.g. the ability of deliberately reaching out to touch something and the ability to deliberately remove his hand. A normal child will no doubt have a

growing vocabulary (understood if not expressed). Such a child easily understands the words 'Mummy', 'Daddy', and other words such as 'No!', expressed firmly. For example, he can easily be trained to respond to his parent's wish by a little smack on his hand which is painful enough to cause him to desist from touching. His pride is naturally offended and he cries but he soon learns that doing what Mummy or Daddy says is good and disobeying is not good. I.e. he '*gains understanding*' (Proverbs 15:32). As we teach him about God, he will understand that Daddy and Mummy are trying to obey their Father and He wants the little child to obey them for His sake. This must be *consistent* and not spasmodic, capricious or haphazard. A child thrives on knowing where the boundaries are.

A child trained early on will occasionally need further corporal discipline (suited to his age and development). But the child by then will be used to submitting to his loving parents and know in his conscience that the Lord himself wants him to do what Daddy or Mummy says. Little children are not yet hardened in the expression of the sinful bias of their hearts. Failure to discipline in God's way and following the world's patterns will cause premature hardening.

Corporal discipline is ideally suited to young children. It is short, sharp and to the point. A painful (Hebrews 12:11) smack brings a young child up short and shows that you mean what you say – it must be *sufficiently* painful, otherwise it is useless. It can hurt as little or as much as necessary. A sensitive child with a trained, responsive conscience may only need a light tap on the hand as a reminder. A harder, more self-assertive, boisterous personality may need something more painful (e.g. a spanking on the rear).

This deals quickly and promptly with the disobedience. It is efficient – after a very short time normal activities can resume in the usual loving family atmosphere. It bases obedience on word only without the need for repetition of instruction, raising of voices or losing of tempers. It is the only means which can consistently ensure immediate response. It impresses the lessons of obedience on a young child as nothing else can. It is a constant witness to our heavenly Father who wants our prompt obedience and desires that each child confesses his or her own sin and turns to Jesus, the "Friend of little children".

Contrast this with 'metaphorical (non-physical) uses of the rod':

1. Keep repeating the instruction. 2. Remove freedom ('grounding').
3. Remove privilege. 4. Negotiate over a reward.

A simple scenario involving a young child (for illustration):

Dad or Mum says, "Pick up your book and put it on the shelf." The young child says, 'No' or refuses without saying anything. What does the parent do?

1. Keep repeating the instruction. This can lead to shouting at the child and/or struggling physically with him to make him do as he was told. In practice, this 'method' is not sustainable. A wilful child will get used to it and shouting will become a settled feature of our relationship. Shouting at a child tends towards loss of temper, works against love and exacerbates the frustration and pain in Dad or Mum. *"... rash words are like sword thrusts, but the tongue of the wise brings healing."* (Proverbs 12:18). Obedience may be achieved sometimes but at what price?

2. & 3. Send him to his room? Put him to bed? Remove a forthcoming treat? This will bring a cloud over parent and child which has to be followed through for a period of time and has interrupted the loving atmosphere and schedule. And the book remains on the floor. The child has succeeded in defying the parent's will and the parent has to pick it up herself.

4. "If you do what I say, I'll give you a treat." (resembles bribery). Such a child is taught to obey if he can see what's in it for himself. *"Children obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord."* Colossians 3:20 (not 'well pleasing to yourself'). However, when our child makes genuine efforts to please us by being obedient or helpful, it gives great joy. We should be quick to notice, encourage him and assure him of our love and thankfulness to the Lord. And always be eager to give treats when appropriate!

Continuing the scenario: The toddler has been up in his room (playing) and is now back downstairs. Mum or Dad says, "Stop shouting now and do something quieter." Child carries on shouting. Request repeated, no response After several repetitions and the parent's inner distress, the child obeys – but according to his own schedule, not his parent's. The child is hardening himself and training himself to be stubborn.

Perhaps 'the non-physical rod of discipline' will help:

"Because you disobey Daddy/Mummy by refusing to stop shouting straight away, go to your room again and lie on the bed." Or alternatively, another privilege besides the last one will be removed.

What will happen the next time he goes against your word? More time in his room under a cloud? A third privilege removed? You are forced to leave the child to himself and that will bring you shame in the end (Proverbs 29:15). The child learns that his will is king; his parent has to submit to his will, not the other way round. The parents dare not cross him; the 'tantrum' scene is too painful for everyone, so better let him be.

The defiant child unwittingly (or knowingly – Jeremiah 17:9) brings great pressure on parents. So they come to believe that it is wrong to command or

instruct their child: 'Give the child a suggestion – not a command; distract the child's attention; try to avoid requiring your child to do anything which displeases him'.

Calm (loving, not bad-tempered) use of the rod, actively trusting the Lord's help, will ensure that the book is picked up, and that the shouting stops. And the child is taught that the heavenly Father is a God who means what he says. The one thinking twice before acting will be the child and not the parent. The smack ensures prompt compliance and change of behaviour.

When corporal discipline is not used early enough, or when parents are not consistent, children become used to getting their own way and easily develop 'strong wills' making subsequent proper discipline more difficult. But if we confess our failures to the Lord who understands our sinful weaknesses, will he not help us to love our children in his way?

"Without me you can do nothing," says the Lord Jesus and he has promised to honour those who honour him. We must pray to him and put his words into practice. If we are not really sure that God's word can be trusted, we will always be half-hearted, timid and open to making excuses. We will end up thinking that God's way of discipline 'doesn't work'.

A father's hastiness and impulsiveness can cause trouble for his family.

"Do you see a man hasty in his words? There is more hope for a fool than for him."

Proverbs 29:20. See many references in Proverbs (e.g. 16:12, 17:27, 18:6-7,13, 20:25, 21:5) and also Ecclesiastes 5:1-7. Hastiness can mar our fatherly discipline.

Modern family fashions exert much pressure to conform (Romans 12:2)

"The fear of man brings a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord shall be safe." Pr. 29:25

Our Father, have mercy on this generation.

"There is a generation that curses its father, and does not bless its mother." Prov. 30:11

Another vivid warning

*"The eye that mocks his father, and scorns obedience to his mother,
The ravens of the valley will pick it out, and the young eagles will eat it."* Proverbs 30:17

This is the way of UK society in which our children are growing up.

*'This is the way of an adulterous woman: she eats and wipes her mouth,
and says, "I have done no wickedness."*' Proverbs 30:20 (Isaiah 5:20, Romans 1:32)

A mother's advice

"The words of King Lemuel, the utterance which his mother taught him:

*What, my son? And what, son of my womb? And what, son of my vows?
Do not give your strength to women, Nor your ways to that which destroys kings."*
Proverbs 31:1-3. Full quote: 31:1-9

The wife of noble character

Proverbs 31:10-31

A priceless treasure

"A wife of noble character who can find? She is worth far more than rubies." v 10 NIV

God's bountiful gift to a husband

*"The heart of her husband safely trusts her; so he will have no lack of gain.
She does him good and not evil all the days of her life." v 11,12*

This wife works hard for her family.

"She seeks wool and flax, and willingly works with her hands." v 13

She wants to provide the best food for her family.

"She is like the merchant ships, she brings her food from afar." v 14

A good wife's zeal for her work

*"She also rises while it is yet night, and provides food for her household,
and a portion for her maidservants." v 15*

She shows wise initiative.

"She considers a field and buys it; from her profits she plants a vineyard." v 16

An industrious wife

*"She girds herself with strength, and strengthens her arms.
She perceives that her merchandise is good,
and her lamp does not go out by night. She stretches out her hands to the distaff,
and her hand holds the spindle." v 17-19*

Her care reaches beyond her family.

"She extends her hand to the poor, yes, she reaches out her hands to the needy." v 20

Every family member receives her best provision.

*"She is not afraid of snow for her household, for all her household is clothed with scarlet.
She makes tapestry for herself; her clothing is fine linen and purple." v 21,22*

She promotes her husband's honour and usefulness.

"Her husband is known in the gates, when he sits among the elders of the land." v 23

Home industry increases family prosperity.

"She makes linen garments and sells them, and supplies sashes for the merchants." v 24

This mother's confidence is in the Lord.

"Strength and honour are her clothing; she shall rejoice in time to come." v 31:25

She seeks to be Christ-like in speech.

"She opens her mouth with wisdom, and on her tongue is the law of kindness." v 26

The homemaker

*"She watches over the ways of her household,
and does not eat the bread of idleness." v 27*

A helper exactly suited to her husband and children

*'Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her:
"Many daughters have done well, but you excel them all." ' v 28,29. See Genesis 2:18.*

This wife and mother receives the Lord's commendation.

*"Charm is deceitful and beauty is passing,
But a woman who fears the Lord, she shall be praised.
Give her of the fruit of her hands,
And let her own works praise her in the gates." v 30,31 See Matthew 25:14-30.*

Ecclesiastes

ECCLESIASTES teaches all age groups that if we miss God out of our thinking, nothing makes sense – everything is meaningless. That is the wisdom of the world, its education and media. "Where is the wise man? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?" 1 Corinthians 1:20 NIV.

Ecclesiastes also teaches that when we think in a Christ-centred way, everything has worth and meaning. "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him ..." ESV See Col. 1:15-20. Sound education promotes this understanding of reality. Unsound education interprets reality without reference to God.

Essential words for teenagers

"Rejoice, O young man, in your youth, and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth; Walk in the ways of your heart, and in the sight of your eyes;

But know that for all these God will bring you into judgment.” Ecclesiastes 11:9

Childhood and teenage years are quickly gone; make the best use of them.

“Therefore remove sorrow from your heart, and put away evil from your flesh, for childhood and youth are vanity. Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth before the difficult days come ...” Eccl. 11:10, 12:1 Full quote: Eccl. 11:9-12:8

The words of a Christian father: be warned, my son, my daughter

“The Teacher searched to find just the right words, and what he wrote was upright and true. The words of the wise are like goads, their collected sayings like firmly embedded nails – given by one shepherd. Be warned, my son, of anything in addition to them.” Ecclesiastes 12:10-12a NIV

Who is the Teacher? See John 13:14. Who is the Shepherd? See John 10.
What are his sayings? See 2 Timothy 3:16,17.

Son, daughter, give priority to the written Word of God.

“Of making many books there is no end, and much study wearies the body.” Ecclesiastes 12:12b NIV

Education is inadequate unless it teaches children to trust Christ and do their duty.

“Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter:

Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.

For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil.” Ecclesiastes 12:13,14 NIV Full quote: Ecclesiastes 12:9-14

Song of Songs

THE BRIDEGROOM and his Bride – Song of Songs 1-8.

See also Ephesians 5:22-33 and Revelation 21,22

*“Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm;
For love is as strong as death, jealousy as cruel as the grave;
Its flames are flames of fire, a most vehement flame.
Many waters cannot quench love, nor can the floods drown it.
If a man would give for love all the wealth of his house,
It would be utterly despised.” Song 8:6,7*

Isaiah

The Lord knows what it is like to have rebellious children.

"Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth! For the Lord has spoken: I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against Me ..." Is.1:2 Context: Is. 1:1-31

God calls his people his daughter – the daughter of Zion.

"So the daughter of Zion is left as a booth in a vineyard, as a hut in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city."

Isaiah 1:8 Context: the behaviour of a rebellious daughter in chapter 1

To have no husband/father makes families vulnerable. They need protection.

"Cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, rebuke the oppressor; defend the fatherless, plead for the widow."

"Your princes are rebellious ... They do not defend the fatherless, nor does the cause of the widow come before them." Isaiah 1:17,23

This has implications for church life in the 21st century. There are many struggling one-parent families and fatherless children.

Marks of God's displeasure – overturning of family and societal order. Read Isaiah 3.

"And I will make boys their princes, and infants shall rule over them ... the youth will be insolent to the elder ... My people—infants are their oppressors, and women rule over them." ESV "... they parade their sin like Sodom; they do not hide it ... The women of Zion are haughty, walking along with outstretched necks, flirting with their eyes ..." NIV
'Gay pride' is nothing new.

The Son who gives hope for our children

"Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel." Isaiah 7:14 Context: Isaiah 7:1-25

The Son has children – brothers and sisters (see Hebrews 2:10-18).

"Here am I and the children whom the Lord has given me! We are for signs and wonders in Israel from the Lord of hosts, Who dwells in Mount Zion." Is. 8:18 Context: Is. 8:1-22

The Author of all sonship. Notice that his Fatherhood is also emphasised.

"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." Isaiah 9:6 Context: Isaiah 9:1-7

The Lord is no respecter of persons, fatherless and widows included.

"Therefore the Lord will have no joy in their young men, nor have mercy on their fatherless and widows; for everyone is a hypocrite and an evildoer, and every mouth

speaks folly." Isaiah 9:17 Context: the Lord's anger against Israel, Isaiah 9:8-10:4

The Lord reiterates his concern for the poor and downtrodden.

"Woe to those who make unjust laws, to those who issue oppressive decrees, to deprive the poor of their rights and withhold justice from the oppressed of my people, making widows their prey and robbing the fatherless." Isaiah 10:2 NIV

Are you a single parent? Pray to the One who has deep concern for you in your distress. "He upholds the widow and the fatherless." Psalm 146:9

A picture of the New Testament church which has its complete fulfilment in the new heavens and new earth. Notice the safety of the young.

*"The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and **a little child shall lead them**. The cow and the bear shall graze; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play by the cobra's hole, and the weaned child shall put his hand in the viper's den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea."* Isaiah 11:6-9

"Whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it." Mark 10:15

The complete safety of 'the young' and 'children' in the new age is in contrast to the danger facing children in the present world. Only the Lord can save them from the Wolf, Leopard, Lion, Bear, Cobra and Viper etc. His protection is absolute and we can demonstrate our trust in him by applying his protective wisdom in our family. E.g. Ephesians 6:10-18, Matthew 7:15, 18:5-7, John 10:11-13, Acts 20:28,29.

The Lord foretells the punishment of a nation which defied him. He highlights horrific family suffering. (Psalm 137:8,9; Rev. 19:1-5)

"Their infants will be dashed to pieces before their eyes; their houses will be looted and their wives ravished. See, I will stir up against them the Medes, who do not care for silver and have no delight in gold. Their bows will strike down the young men; they will have no mercy on infant nor will they look with compassion on children." Isaiah 13:16-18 NIV Context: Prophecy against Babylon in Isaiah 13 & 14

The God who loves the world so much that he gave his one and only Son wants us to face up to the reality of his judgement on sin and the punishment of sinners. Jesus himself did not minimise the reality of hell. He does not want us or our family to perish but to believe what he says and have eternal life.

The ruler of Babylon (Rev. 18) is the devil ('Lucifer', Isaiah 14:12) and he has children.

"Prepare slaughter for his children because of the iniquity of their fathers, lest they rise

up and possess the land, and fill the face of the world with cities. For I will rise up against them," says the Lord of hosts, and cut off from Babylon the name and remnant, and offspring and posterity," says the Lord.' Isaiah 14:21,22

"The field is the world, and the good seed is the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one, and the enemy who sowed them is the devil." Matt. 13:38,39 ESV

Do we want our children to be sons of the devil? Of course not! Praise our gracious heavenly Father that his gospel is Good News for parents **and** children! *"The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil."* 1 Jn. 3:8 ESV. He has given *this 'reason'* to ask him to save our children – what does He expect us to ask?

Our Father in heaven, deliver us including our dear children from the evil one.

Prophecy about the work of the Great Son and his Father.

"And I will place on his shoulder the key of the house of David. He shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open. And I will fasten him like a peg in a secure place, and he will become a throne of honour to his father's house. And they will hang on him the whole honour of his father's house, the offspring and issue, every small vessel, from the cups to all the flagons. In that day, declares the Lord of hosts, the peg that was fastened in a secure place will give way, and it will be cut down and fall, and the load that was on it will be cut off, for the Lord has spoken."

Isaiah 22:22-25 ESV Context: prophecy about Shebna and Eliakim, Isaiah 22:15-25

In devotion to his Father's will this Son was 'cut down' on our behalf!

One of many references to the pain of childbirth

"Like a pregnant woman who writhes and cries out in her pangs when she is near to giving birth, so were we because of you, O Lord ..." Isaiah 26:17 ESV Context: Judah's distress. Another example: Isaiah 42:14

Our children are the work of God's hands.

"When they see among them their children, the work of my hands, they will keep my name holy; they will acknowledge the holiness of the Holy One of Jacob, and will stand in awe of the God of Israel." Isaiah 29:23 Context: Is. 29:17-24

Consult the Lord in decisions and show your children how to follow the Word.

"Woe to the rebellious children," says the Lord, who take counsel, but not of Me, and who devise plans, but not of My Spirit ... this is a rebellious people, lying children, children who will not hear the law of the Lord." Isaiah 30:1 & 9. Context: Is. 30:1-26

Another reference to the Lord's daughter

'... this is the word the Lord has spoken against him: "Virgin Daughter Zion despises and mocks you. Daughter Jerusalem tosses her head as you flee.' Isaiah 37:22 NIV ²⁰¹¹
Context: Assyrian invasion of Judah, Isaiah 37

A number of times in the Old Testament the Lord refers to a city as a virgin daughter. The Bride of Christ is described as a city. See Revelation 21:9-27.

Thankful parents praise the Lord and make sure the children are listening.

"The living, the living—they praise you, as I am doing today; fathers tell their children about your faithfulness." Isaiah 38:19 NIV Context: Is. 38:1-22

Bringing up children is hard but remember this promise!

"He will feed His flock like a shepherd; He will gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and gently lead those who are with young." Isaiah 40:10,11

The Lord brings many sons and daughters into his family.

"Fear not, for I am with you; I will bring your offspring from the east, and from the west I will gather you. I will say to the north, Give up, and to the south, Do not withhold; bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the end of the earth, everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made." Isaiah 43:5-7
ESV Context: Isaiah 43:1-13

In God's grace, some parents are able to adopt outside children into their own families – a living demonstration of the Lord's gracious kindness. He wants us to show hospitality to non-family members.

What is the Lord's desire for his children's children?

"I will pour My Spirit on your descendants, and My blessing on your offspring; They will spring up among the grass like willows by the watercourses. One will say, 'I am the Lord's; another will call himself by the name of Jacob; Another will write with his hand, 'The Lord's,' and name himself by the name of Israel."
Isaiah 44:3-5. Full quote: Isaiah 44:1-5.

Disrespect to parents is disrespect to God our Maker.

"Woe to him who says to a father, 'What are you begetting?' or to a woman, 'With what are you in labour?' Thus says the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, and the one who formed him: 'Ask me of things to come; will you command me concerning my children and the work of my hands?'" Isaiah 45:10,11
ESV Context: Isaiah 45

God's grace to Israel's children – may the same grace save our children.

"I am the Lord, and there is no other. I did not speak in secret, in a land of darkness; I did not say to the offspring of Jacob, 'Seek me in vain.' I the Lord speak the truth; I declare what is right ... In the Lord all the offspring of Israel shall be justified and shall glory."
Isaiah 45:18,19, 25
ESV Context: Isaiah 45

The Lord's assurance to his children – lifelong safety.

"Listen to me, you descendants of Jacob, all the remnant of the people of Israel, you

whom I have upheld since your birth, and have carried since you were born. Even to your old age and grey hairs I am he, I am he who will sustain you. I have made you and I will carry you; I will sustain you and I will rescue you." Is. 46:3,4 NIV Context: Ch. 46

May our children not imitate the children of Babylon or be impressed by the World.
"Therefore hear this now, you who are given to pleasures, who dwell securely who say in your heart, 'I am, and there is no one else besides me; I shall not sit as a widow, nor shall I know the loss of children'; but these two things shall come to you In a moment, in one day: the loss of children, and widowhood. They shall come upon you in their fulness because of the multitude of your sorceries, for the great abundance of your enchantments." Isaiah 47:8,9 Context: the humiliation of Babylon. See Rev. 18.

Following the Lord's instructions brings eternal blessing to our children.
Oh, how the Lord desires it!

'Thus says the Lord, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: "I am the Lord your God, who teaches you to profit, who leads you in the way you should go.

Oh that you had paid attention to my commandments!

Then your peace would have been like a river,

and your righteousness like the waves of the sea;

your offspring would have been like the sand, and your descendants like its grains;

their name would never be cut off or destroyed from before me."

Isaiah 48:17-19 ESV Context: Isaiah 48:12-22

A mother's love comes from the Lord but only His love is perfect.

"Can a woman forget her nursing child, and not have compassion on the son of her womb? Surely they may forget, yet I will not forget you ..."

Isaiah 49:15,16 Context: Isaiah 49:13-21

New Covenant gospel blessings described in family terms (Isaiah 49:14-26)

*'**Your sons** hasten back, and those who laid you waste depart from you. Lift up your eyes and look around; **all your sons** gather and come to you. "As surely as I live," declares the Lord, "you will wear them all as ornaments; you will put them on, **like a bride** ... The **children born** during your bereavement will yet say in your hearing, 'This place is too small for us; give us more space to live in.' Then you will say in your heart, '**Who bore me these?**...'"* Isaiah 49:17-21 NIV

The gospel will come to the nations. He "will bring many sons to glory" Heb. 2:10.

*'This is what the Sovereign Lord says: "See, I will beckon to the Gentiles, I will lift up my banner to the peoples; they will bring **your sons** in their arms and carry **your daughters** on their shoulders. Kings will be your **foster fathers**, and their queens your **nursing mothers** ..."* Isaiah 49:22,23 NIV

My loved-ones are so helpless and the devil seems to have them in his grip.

*"... you will know that I am the Lord; those who hope in me will not be disappointed. Can plunder be taken from warriors, or captives **rescued from the fierce**? But this is what the Lord says: "Yes, captives will be taken from warriors, and plunder retrieved from the fierce; I will contend with those who contend with you, and your children I will save." Isaiah 49:23-25 NIV Compare with Mark 3:23-27.*

On the strength of these promises, "Our Father in heaven, deliver my children from the evil one. 'Those who hope in Me will not be disappointed.' – You said it."

Note: the promise is primarily for 'Zion's children' (v 14). But by His grace I am one of Zion's children. Will the Lord not answer the plea of one of Zion's children for his/her own natural children?

The Lord has experienced divorce first-hand.

"Where is the certificate of your mother's divorce, whom I have put away? Or which of My creditors is it to whom I have sold you? For your iniquities you have sold yourselves, and for your transgressions your mother has been put away." Isaiah 50:1

Context: Israel's sin and the Lord's redemptive power, Isaiah 50:1-3.

A sinful father and mother to whom the Lord chose to give family blessings.

"Listen to me, you who pursue righteousness, you who seek the Lord: look to the rock from which you were hewn, and to the quarry from which you were dug. Look to Abraham your father and to Sarah who bore you; for he was but one when I called him, that I might bless him and multiply him." Isaiah 51:1,2 ESV

"Those who have faith are children of Abraham ... So those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham." Galatians 3:7-9. That means us! Let us ask the Lord for rich family blessings – he can give more than we ask or imagine.

Christ's sufferings brought him children.

"Yet it was the will of the Lord to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the Lord shall prosper in his hand." Isaiah 53:10 ESV Context Isaiah 53.

"Here I am and the children whom God has given me." Isaiah 8:18, Hebrews 2:13

The Lord is our husband and the church is his bride.

"... For you will forget the shame of your youth, and will not remember the reproach of your widowhood anymore. For your Maker is your husband, the Lord of hosts is His name; and your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel; He is called the God of the whole earth. For the Lord has called you like a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, like a youthful wife when you were refused," says your God. ...' Isaiah 54:4-6

Full quote Is. 54:1-8 Context: the glory of Christ's church, Isaiah 54.

A promise for Zion – how desirable for Zion's children's children!

Too much to ask for?

*"All your children shall be taught by the Lord,
And great shall be the peace of your children."* Isaiah 54:13

There is something better than having our own children.

'For thus says the Lord: "To the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths, who choose the things that please me and hold fast my covenant, I will give in my house and within my walls a monument and a name better than sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off ..."' Isaiah 56:4,5 ESV Context: Isaiah 56

"There are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake." Matthew 19:12

'So He said to them, "Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or parents or brothers or wife or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, who shall not receive many times more in this present time, and in the age to come eternal life."' Luke 18:28,29

A description of the children of the devil (See John 8:44, 1 John 3:10)

"But come here, you sons of the sorceress, you offspring of the adulterer and the harlot! Whom do you ridicule? Against whom do you make a wide mouth and stick out the tongue? Are you not children of transgression, offspring of falsehood, inflaming yourselves with gods under every green tree, slaying the children in the valleys, under the clefts of the rocks?" Isaiah 57:3-5 Context: Israel's idolatry

Who is the author of sorcery, adultery, prostitution, ridiculing God's word, transgression, falsehood, idolatry and child-murder? This is great motivation to pray for our Father to rescue our children from the evil one. Only he can do it. And will he not answer the cry of his children on behalf of their loved-ones?

Does the Redeemer want to bless my family or not? What do these verses imply?

"The Redeemer will come to Zion, to those in Jacob who repent of their sins," declares the Lord. "As for me, this is my covenant with them," says the Lord. "My Spirit, who is on you, will not depart from you, and my words that I have put in your mouth will always be on your lips, on the lips of your children and on the lips of their descendants—from this time on and forever," says the Lord.' Is. 59:20,21 NIV Compare Is. 48:17-19

The glory of the church and gospel age described in family terms.

"And nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising. Lift up your eyes all round, and see; they all gather together, they come to you; your sons shall come from afar, and your daughters shall be carried on the hip." Isaiah 60:4 ESV Context: whole chapter.

God's family blessings will be seen by others.

"... I will reward [my people] and make an everlasting covenant with them. Their descendants will be known among the nations and their offspring among the peoples. All who see them will acknowledge that they are a people the Lord has blessed." Is. 61:8,9 NIV

God exalts marriage to unimaginable heights. He is our heavenly Bridegroom.

"... But you shall be called Hephzibah ['my delight is in her'], and your land Beulah ['married']; for the Lord delights in you, and your land shall be married. For as a young man marries a virgin, so shall your sons marry you; and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you." Isaiah 62:4,5 Full quote: Isaiah 62:1-5

INNUMERABLE PASSAGES in God's word refer to the blessings of salvation in family terminology. God gave us family relationships and blessings to show how much he loves us and wants us to be with him for ever.

The Lord's 'daughter of Zion' is his bride. (Compare Is. 54:4-6; Rev. 21)

'Indeed the Lord has proclaimed to the end of the world: "Say to the daughter of Zion, 'Surely your salvation is coming; behold, His reward is with Him, and His work before Him.'" And they shall call them the Holy People, the Redeemed of the Lord; and you shall be called Sought Out, A City Not Forsaken.' Isaiah 62:11,12

The Lord experiences the pain of deceitful, rebellious children.

'For he said, "Surely they are my people, children who will not deal falsely." And he became their Saviour. In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the Angel of his Presence saved them; in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; he lifted them up and carried them all the days of old. But they rebelled and grieved his Holy Spirit ..."

Isaiah 63:8 Context: reminder of the Lord's faithful mercies to Israel.

"And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption." Ephesians 4:30

This Father yearns for his children but has to punish them for their disobedience.

"The stirring of your inner parts and your compassion are held back from me. For you are our Father, though Abraham does not know us, and Israel does not acknowledge us; you, O Lord, are our Father, our Redeemer from of old is your name." Isaiah 63:16 ESV

Whole quote: Isaiah 63:15-19

Context: Is. 63:7-64:12 God's discipline and Israel's heartfelt response.

The children are beginning to see how unlike Abraham and Jacob they have been. They long for God's favour again and dare to call him 'Father' and 'Redeemer'. God's fatherly discipline is having the desired effect. "Discipline your son, and he will give you rest; he will give delight to your heart." Prov. 29:17 ESV

The Father's discipline brings repentance

"For You have hidden Your face from us, and have consumed us because of our iniquities. But now, O Lord, You are our Father; we are the clay, and You our potter; and all we are the work of Your hand. Do not be furious, O Lord, nor remember iniquity forever; indeed, please look—we all are Your people!" Isaiah 64:7-9

"As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent." Rev. 3:19

Our heavenly Father will compassionately listen to our troubled cries.

"But now, O Lord, You are our Father; we are the clay, and You our potter; and all we are the work of Your hand. Do not be furious, O Lord, nor remember iniquity forever; indeed, please look—we all are Your people!" Isaiah 64:8,9 Context: the whole chapter

These children followed their parents' example and imitated their behaviour.

"Behold, it is written before me: I will not keep silent, but I will repay; I will indeed repay into their bosom both your iniquities and your fathers' iniquities together, says the Lord ..." Isaiah 65:6,7 ESV Context: God's judgement on Israel, Isaiah 65:1-7

The Lord's promise of mercy – he will create children for himself (Is. 53 10).

"I will bring forth offspring from Jacob, and from Judah possessors of my mountains; my chosen shall possess it, and my servants shall dwell there." Isaiah 65:9 ESV

Our children are "the offspring of the blessed of the Lord", even now!

"They shall not labour in vain or bear children for calamity, for they shall be the offspring of the blessed of the Lord, and their descendants with them.

Before they call I will answer; while they are yet speaking I will hear."

Isaiah 65:23,24 ESV Context: Isaiah 65:17-25, the new heavens and new earth

Why has the Lord told us this? To inform us that we can't expect eternal blessings for our children now? Or to stir us up to "call" on him to give the Lord's eternal blessings to the children he gave us? Our children are in an infinitely privileged position: they are "offspring of the blessed of the Lord".

The Lord longs for this attitude in all his children, unmarried or married.

"All these things my hand has made, and so all these things came to be, declares the Lord. But this is the one to whom I will look: he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word." Isaiah 66:2 ESV Context: whole chapter (See Is. 48:17-19).

Family life involves many choices. We must ensure that our choices please the Lord.

"They have chosen their own ways, and their souls delight in their abominations; so I also will choose harsh treatment for them and will bring upon them what they dread. For when I called, no one answered, when I spoke, no one listened. They did evil in my sight and chose what displeases me." Isaiah 66:3,4 NIV

Parents, we must teach our children how to make choices which show gratefulness and honour to Jesus Christ.

Listening to the Lord may be misunderstood by relatives but He understands.

"Hear the word of the Lord, you who tremble at his word: "Your brothers who hate you, and exclude you because of my name, have said, 'Let the Lord be glorified, that we may see your joy!' Yet they will be put to shame." Isaiah 66:5

The Lord controls each baby's birth.

"Shall I bring to the time of birth, and not cause delivery?" says the Lord.

"Shall I who cause delivery shut up the womb?" says your God.'

Isaiah 66:9 Full quote Isaiah 66:7-9 Context: Isaiah 66:7-13

Motherly instincts and love are from the Lord, illustrating his delight in his children.

'Rejoice with Jerusalem, and be glad for her, all you who love her; rejoice with her in joy, all you who mourn over her; that you may nurse and be satisfied from her consoling breast; that you may drink deeply with delight from her glorious abundance. For thus says the Lord:

"Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the nations like an overflowing stream; and you shall nurse, you shall be carried upon her hip, and bounced upon her knees. As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you; you shall be comforted in Jerusalem. You shall see, and your heart shall rejoice ..."' Is. 66:10-14 ESV

The everlasting life of the children of the Lord.

"For as the new heavens and the new earth that I make shall remain before me, says the Lord, so shall your offspring and your name remain. From new moon to new moon, and from Sabbath to Sabbath, all flesh shall come to worship before me, declares the Lord." Isaiah 66:23 Yet another invitation from our Father to pray for our family.

Jeremiah

This is true of every child of God.

"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you ..." Jeremiah 1:5 Context: Jeremiah's call

Unfaithfulness in parents affects children and grandchildren.

'Hear the word of the Lord, O house of Jacob and all the families of the house of Israel. Thus says the Lord: "What injustice have your fathers found in Me, that they have gone far from Me, have followed idols, and have become idolaters? ...

"Therefore I will yet bring charges against you," says the Lord, "And against your children's children I will bring charges." ' Jeremiah 2:4,5 & 9 Context: Jeremiah 2:1-12

The Lord loves his unfaithful wife.

"Return, faithless people," declares the Lord, "for I am your husband ..." Jer. 3:14 NIV

Sins which ruin and destroy marriage and the family are used in graphic descriptions of sin's offensiveness to our heavenly Father.

"[The Lord declared,] 'I myself said, "How gladly would I treat you like my children and give you a pleasant land, the most beautiful inheritance of any nation." I thought you would call me "Father" and not turn away from following me. But like a woman unfaithful to her husband, so you, Israel, have been unfaithful to me,' declares the Lord."

Jeremiah 3:19-20 NIV Read the whole chapter for a much fuller picture.

Children, don't be stupid like your friends who think it is 'cool' to ignore God's word.

"... my people are foolish; they know me not; they are stupid children; they have no understanding. They are 'wise'—in doing evil! But how to do good they know not."

Jeremiah 4:22 ESV

The Bible never pretends that childbirth is easy.

"Thus says the Lord ... 'I have heard a voice as of a woman in labour, the anguish as of her who brings forth her first child.' " Jeremiah 4:31 Context: Jeremiah 4:27-31

See also, for example, Genesis 3:16, and nine other references in Jeremiah.

Families prospered but cared only for their own interests.

"They have grown fat, they are sleek; yes, they surpass the deeds of the wicked; they do not plead the cause, the cause of the fatherless; yet they prosper, and the right of the needy they do not defend. Shall I not punish them for these things?" says the Lord ..."

Jeremiah 5:28,29 Context: God's judgment, Jeremiah 5

Orphans are precious to the Lord and should be precious in our eyes too.

Let us make sure our homes are not places of deceitful influence.

"As a cage is full of birds, so their houses are full of deceit ..." Jeremiah 5:27

Context: description of Israel's evil behaviour

No family age-group is exempt from the wages of sin – even children.

"Behold, the word of the Lord is to them an object of scorn; they take no pleasure in it. Therefore I am full of the wrath of the Lord; I am weary of holding it in. Pour it out upon the children in the street, and upon the gatherings of young men, also; both husband and wife shall be taken, the elderly and the very aged. Their houses shall be turned over to others, their fields and wives together for I will stretch out my hand against the inhabitants of the land," declares the Lord ...' Jeremiah 6:10-12 ESV Context: Jeremiah 6

The Lord cares for those who do not have family blessings.

"... do not oppress the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, and do not shed innocent blood in this place ..." Jeremiah 7:6

Context: The Lord calling Judah to repentance, Jeremiah 7:1-11

Family celebrations – fun for the kids but vehicles for the devil's deceit.

"The children gather wood, the fathers kindle the fire, and the women knead dough, to make cakes for the queen of heaven; and they pour out drink offerings to other gods, that they may provoke Me to anger."

Jeremiah 7:18 Context: Judah's sin - Jeremiah 7:16-34

Parents who adopted the practices of pagan society destroyed their children.

'For the children of Judah have done evil in My sight," says the Lord. "They have set their abominations in the house which is called by My name, to pollute it. And they have built the high places of Tophet, which is in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire, which I did not command, nor did it come into My heart."

Jeremiah 7:30,31.

Does 21st century society conform to God's heart or the devil's blinding influence and his deadly purposes for children? (John 8:44).

Unfaithful fathers poisoned future generations.

'And the Lord said, "... they have forsaken My law which I set before them, and have not obeyed My voice, nor walked according to it, but they have walked according to the dictates of their own hearts and after the Baals, which their fathers taught them." ...'

Jeremiah 9:13,14 Context: Jeremiah 9:7-26

The terrible effects of parents' sins on children and young people

"Hear, O women, the word of the Lord, and let your ear receive the word of his mouth; teach to your daughters a lament, and each to her neighbour a dirge. For death has come up into our windows; it has entered our palaces, cutting off the children from the streets and the young men from the squares." Jer. 9:20,21. Compare with Deut. 28

Learning based on false human traditions is worthless.

"Learn not the way of the nations, nor be dismayed at the signs of the heavens because the nations are dismayed at them, for the customs of the peoples are vanity."

Jeremiah 10:2,3 Context: Israel's idolatry.

The 21st century has its own godless philosophies and fashions. Children's education naturally incorporates these. Thus children grow up with a false world-view and values. These remain undetected unless compared with God's word. As adults we need to check our assumptions – are they from the Word or from the World?

According to God, teachers who do not enquire of the Lord will not prosper.

"For the shepherds are stupid and do not enquire of the Lord; therefore they have not prospered, and all their flock is scattered." Jeremiah 10:21 ESV

Rejecting God's word brought his judgement on them and their families.

"Therefore thus says the Lord concerning the men of Anathoth who seek your life, saying, 'Do not prophesy in the name of the Lord, lest you die by our hand'— therefore thus says the Lord of hosts: 'Behold, I will punish them. The young men shall die by the sword, their sons and their daughters shall die by famine; and there shall be no remnant of them, for I will bring catastrophe on the men of Anathoth, even the year of their punishment.' " Jeremiah 11:21-23

Sin can bring horrible deceit into families (Compare Matthew 10:21,34-36).

"For even your brothers and the house of your father, even they have dealt treacherously with you; they are in full cry after you; do not believe them, though they speak friendly words to you." Jeremiah 12:6 Context: Israel's unfaithfulness

Dreadful family suffering brought on by evil behaviour

*"I will make their widows more numerous than the sand of the sea.
At midday I will bring a destroyer against the mothers of their young men;
suddenly I will bring down on them anguish and terror.
The mother of seven will grow faint and breathe her last.
Her sun will set while it is still day; she will be disgraced and humiliated ..."*
Jeremiah 15:8,9 NIV Context: the sin of Judah during Manasseh's reign.

God's wrath against sin described in terms of horrific family destruction

'For thus says the Lord concerning the sons and daughters who are born in this place, and concerning their mothers who bore them and their fathers who begot them in this land: "They shall die gruesome deaths; they shall not be lamented nor shall they be buried, but they shall be like refuse on the face of the earth. They shall be consumed by the sword and by famine, and their corpses shall be meat for the birds of heaven and for the beasts of the earth ..." Jer. 16:3,4 Context: Judah's defiant refusal to obey the Lord

Rebellious fathers gave rise to insolent, rebellious children.

"And it shall be, when you show this people all these words, and they say to you, 'Why has the Lord pronounced all this great disaster against us? Or what is our iniquity? Or what is our sin that we have committed against the Lord our God?' Then you shall say to them, 'Because your fathers have forsaken Me,' says the Lord; 'they have walked after other gods and have served them and worshipped them, and have forsaken Me and not kept My law. And you have done worse than your fathers, for behold, each one follows the dictates of his own evil heart, so that no one listens to Me ..."
Jeremiah 16:10-12 Context: as above

Children learn by parents' example and easily repeat their folly.

"Even their children remember their altars and Asherah poles beside the spreading trees and on the high hills." Jeremiah 17:2 NIV Context: as above

Following humanistic/atheistic teaching leads to God's curse.

'Thus says the Lord: "Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, Whose heart departs from the Lord. For he shall be like a shrub in the desert, And shall not see when good comes, but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, In a salt land which is not inhabited. Jeremiah 17:5,6

Following Christ-centred teaching leads to God's blessing.

"Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, and whose hope is the Lord. For he shall be like a tree planted by the waters, which spreads out its roots by the river, and will not fear when heat comes; but its leaf will be green, and will not be anxious in the year of drought, nor will cease from yielding fruit. Jeremiah 17:7,8

Parents, be aware of your natural bias and that of your children.

"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it? I, the Lord, search the heart, I test the mind, even to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his doings." Jeremiah 17:9,10 Compare Mark 7:21,22

Parents are capable of barbaric treatment of children. Let us take warning.

"... and they have filled this place with the blood of the innocent. They have built the high places of Baal to burn their children in the fire as offerings to Baal—something I did not command or mention, nor did it enter my mind. So beware, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when people will no longer call this place Topheth or the Valley of Ben Hinnom, but the Valley of Slaughter ..." Jer. 19:4-6 NIV Context: whole chapter

21st century UK society "fills the place with the blood of the innocent" by encouraging women to murder babies in their own wombs. Does it also damage children in other ways or is it careful not to harm them?

Another example of appalling results of sin.

"... I will devastate this city and make it an object of horror and scorn; all who pass by will be appalled and will scoff because of all its wounds. I will make them eat the flesh of their sons and daughters, and they will eat one another's flesh during the stress of the siege imposed on them by the enemies who seek their lives ..." Jeremiah 19:8,9 NIV

The Lord hates oppression and shedding 'innocent blood'.

"And do no wrong or violence to the resident alien, the fatherless, and the widow, nor shed innocent blood in this place. For if you will indeed obey this word, then there shall enter the gates of this house kings who sit on the throne of David ..." Jeremiah 22:3,4 ESV Context: God's message to evil kings.

Every year the UK kills hundreds of thousands of babies in their mothers' wombs.

The Lord values a father's faithfulness and uses it to teach his son.

"Did not your father have food and drink? He did what was right and just, so all went well with him. He defended the cause of the poor and needy, and so all went well."

Jeremiah 22:15,16 Context: God's warnings to Jehoiakim, son of Josiah

A false teacher endangers his own family as well as God's people.

"And as for the prophet, priest, or one of the people who says, 'The burden of the Lord', I will punish that man and his household." Jeremiah 23:34 ESV

Context: God's warning to Judah's false prophets, Jeremiah 23

Parents can have a role in whom their children decide to marry.

"Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat their produce. Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease."

Jer. 29:6 ESV Context: God's desire that his people prosper while in Babylon.

The Lord again speaks of the deadly 'family legacy' of a false teacher.

"Thus says the Lord concerning Shemaiah the Nehelamite: Because Shemaiah has prophesied to you, and I have not sent him, and he has caused you to trust in a lie—therefore thus says the Lord: Behold, I will punish Shemaiah the Nehelamite and his family: he shall not have anyone to dwell among this people, nor shall he see the good that I will do for My people, says the Lord, because he has taught rebellion against the Lord." Jeremiah 29:31,32 Whole account: Jeremiah 29:24-32

When the Lord promises to bless, he often includes reference to our children.

"Then fear not, O Jacob my servant, declares the Lord, nor be dismayed, O Israel; for behold, I will save you from far away, and your offspring from the land of their captivity. Jacob shall return and have quiet and ease, and none shall make him afraid."

Jer. 30:10 ESV See also verse 20. Context: Restoration of Israel and Judah, Jer. 30

The Lord is a Father who disciplines his children in his merciful kindness.

"For I am with you to save you, declares the Lord; I will make a full end of all the nations among whom I scattered you, but of you I will not make a full end. I will discipline you in just measure, and I will by no means leave you unpunished." Jeremiah 30:11 ESV

See also Jeremiah 46:28

The Lord makes no mistakes in his discipline; he neither over-disciplines nor is too lenient. Notice that the nations are 'made a full end of' but God's children are disciplined so that they will not suffer the same fate as the unbelieving world.

An example of our Father's discipline in a modern church – same purpose

"... For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. But if

we judged ourselves truly, we would not be judged. But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world."

1 Corinthians 11:29-31 ESV Context: Abuse of the Lord's supper 1 Cor. 11:17-34

Mothers and children – specifically mentioned as recipients of God's grace.

'For thus says the Lord: "Sing with gladness for Jacob, and shout among the chief of the nations ... Behold, I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the ends of the earth, among them the blind and the lame, the woman with child and the one who labours with child, together; a great throng shall return there ...'

Jeremiah 31:7,8 Context: Restoration of Israel and Judah, Jeremiah 31.

This chapter frequently alludes to family relations.

Our Father smoothes the path for his children. We should do the same for ours.

"I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters, in a straight way in which they shall not stumble; for I am a Father to Israel, and Ephraim is My firstborn." Jeremiah 31:9

Parents experience terrible grief when their children seem utterly lost.

'Thus says the Lord: "A voice is heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping. Rachel is weeping for her children; she refuses to be comforted for her children, because they are no more.'" Jeremiah 31:15 ESV

But wait! The Lord has great, unfathomable saving mercy.

"Thus says the Lord: "Keep your voice from weeping, and your eyes from tears, for there is a reward for your work, declares the Lord, and they shall come back from the land of the enemy. There is hope for your future, declares the Lord, and your children shall come back to their own country." Jeremiah 31:16,17 ESV

Fathers and Mothers, never lose hope! What about 'the innocents' in Matthew 2? Eternally lost? Is that the emphasis of Jeremiah 31:17? To which 'own country' will the children come back – an earthly country or a heavenly one? See Heb. 11:14-16.

Look at the effect that the Father's discipline had on His son! (Jeremiah 30:11)

"I have heard Ephraim [i.e. Israel] grieving, 'You have disciplined me, and I was disciplined, like an untrained calf; bring me back that I may be restored, for you are the Lord my God. For after I had turned away, I relented, and after I was instructed, I struck my thigh; I was ashamed, and I was confounded, because I bore the disgrace of my youth.'"

Jeremiah 31:18,19 ESV

What a wonderful change of heart in God's unruly child! – only achieved by the Father's faithful discipline. Our Father knows what he is doing. If we are without his discipline we are illegitimate and not true sons. (Hebrews 12)

Israel's repentance stirs up the Lord's great Fatherly yearning.

"Is Ephraim my dear son? Is he my darling child? For as often as I speak against him, I do remember him still. Therefore my heart yearns for him; I will surely have mercy on him, declares the Lord." Jeremiah 31:20 ESV

The fatherly or motherly yearning for our children that we experience is a pale reflection of our heavenly Father's love for us.

Israel is compared this time to an unfaithful daughter.

"Turn back, O virgin of Israel, turn back to these your cities. How long will you gad about, O you backsliding daughter? For the Lord has created a new thing in the earth—A woman shall encompass a man." Jeremiah 31:21,22

Is verse 22 a reference to the Messiah's virgin birth?

The Lord corrects a false understanding of his 'family justice'.

"And it shall come to pass, that as I [the Lord] have watched over them to pluck up, to break down, to throw down, to destroy, and to afflict, so I will watch over them to build and to plant, says the Lord. In those days they shall say no more: 'The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge.' But every one shall die for his own iniquity; every man who eats the sour grapes, his teeth shall be set on edge."

Jeremiah 31:28-30

Another facet of the Lord's 'family' relationship with his people: he is our Husband.

"... they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them," declares the Lord ...'

Jeremiah 31:32 Context: Promise of the New Covenant, Jeremiah 31:33-37

God's mercy and justice have parents and children in focus.

"Ah, Lord God! It is you who have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and by your outstretched arm! Nothing is too hard for you. You show steadfast love to thousands, but you repay the guilt of fathers to their children after them, O great and mighty God, whose name is the Lord of hosts, great in counsel and mighty in deed, whose eyes are open to all the ways of the children of man, rewarding each one according to his ways and according to the fruit of his deeds." Jeremiah 32:17-19 ESV

Context: whole chapter. Compare with Deuteronomy 5:9,10

Parents' refusal to listen to the Lord led to socially acceptable infanticide.

"... And they have turned to Me the back, and not the face; though I taught them, rising up early and teaching them, yet they have not listened to receive instruction. But they set their abominations in the house which is called by My name, to defile it. And they built the high places of Baal which are in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, to cause their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire to Molech, which I did not command them, nor did it come into My mind that they should do this abomination, to cause Judah to sin." Jeremiah 32:33-35 Context: whole chapter

21st century western society refuses to listen to the Lord. How has it been led to treat babies and children? Can the Lord forgive such rebellion?

The Gospel Age brings unimagined grace to parents **and** children.

An encouragement to Christian families!

*"They shall be My people, and I will be their God; then I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear Me forever, for the good of **them and their children** after them. And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from doing them good; but I will put My fear in their hearts so that they will not depart from Me. Yes, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will assuredly plant them in this land, **with all My heart and with all My soul.**"* Jeremiah 32:38-41

Context: the Lord's gracious promise of prosperity, foreshadowing the blessings of the New Covenant (Jeremiah 32:36-44).

How the Lord wants to bless our children!

Jonadab - a father who was honoured

Jonadab's children obeyed their father even though his commands were extreme and embarrassingly unusual. The Lord noticed.

'But they said, "We will drink no wine, for Jonadab the son of Rechab, our father, commanded us, saying, "You shall drink no wine, you nor your sons, forever. You shall not build a house, sow seed, plant a vineyard, nor have any of these; but all your days you shall dwell in tents, that you may live many days in the land where you are sojourners." Thus we have obeyed the voice of Jonadab the son of Rechab, our father, in all that he charged us, to drink no wine all our days, we, our wives, our sons, or our daughters, nor to build ourselves houses to dwell in; nor do we have vineyard, field, or seed. But we have dwelt in tents, and have obeyed and done according to all that Jonadab our father commanded us ..."' Jeremiah 35:6-10 Context: whole chapter

Notice similarity to the 5th Commandment: 'that you may live many days in the land'. (See Ephesians 6:1-3.)

God uses the Rechabite family to highlight Israel's rebellion.

'"... Surely the sons of Jonadab the son of Rechab have performed the commandment of their father, which he commanded them, but this people has not obeyed Me."' Jeremiah 35:16 Full quote Jeremiah 35:12-17

This family honour their father. The Lord graciously blesses future generations.

'And Jeremiah said to the house of the Rechabites, "Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: 'Because you have obeyed the commandment of Jonadab your father, and kept all his precepts and done according to all that he commanded you, therefore thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: "Jonadab the son of Rechab shall not lack a

man to stand before Me forever.” Jeremiah 35:18,19

IN THE OLD COVENANT time, the Lord blessed the descendants of his faithful children. These blessings have come on us – the children of the New Covenant. What about our physical children? Does our Father want us only to expect temporary physical blessing for them? Or to ask him to continue in them the spiritual, eternal blessing he has given *us*?

More Old Covenant promises: those who faithfully serve the Lord “shall not lack a man” in future generations.

‘In those days Judah will be saved, and Jerusalem will dwell safely. And this is the name by which she will be called: THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS. “For thus says the Lord: ‘David shall never lack a man to sit on the throne of the house of Israel; nor shall the priests, the Levites, lack a man to offer burnt offerings before Me, to kindle grain offerings, and to sacrifice continually.’” Jeremiah 33:16-18 Full quote: Jer. 33:14-26

The ultimate fulfilment is in Christ the King and High Priest but the Lord speaks of it in terms of his servants’ descendants. Similar honour was given to Phinehas when the Lord commended his faithful zeal. See Numbers 25:10-13 and Psalm 106:28-31. What should such promises stir up in us?

In contrast to Jonadab, Jehoiakim brought evil on his family.

‘Therefore thus says the Lord concerning Jehoiakim king of Judah: “He shall have no one to sit on the throne of David, and his dead body shall be cast out to the heat of the day and the frost of the night. I will punish him, his family, and his servants for their iniquity ...”’ Jer. 36:30,31. Context: Jehoiakim’s insolent rejection of God’s word in Jer. 36

God promises the king: ‘Obedience will save you, the city and your family.’

‘Then Jeremiah said to Zedekiah, “Thus says the Lord, the God of hosts, the God of Israel: ‘If you surely surrender to the king of Babylon’s princes, then your soul shall live; this city shall not be burned with fire, and you and your house shall live.’”’ Jer. 38:17

The Lord graciously underlines his promise with a warning. Disobedience will bring disaster for Zedekiah, the city and his family.

‘But Jeremiah said, “... Please, obey the voice of the Lord which I speak to you. So it shall be well with you, and your soul shall live. But if you refuse to [obey], this is the word that the Lord has shown me: ... they shall surrender all your wives and children to the Chaldeans. You shall not escape from their hand, but shall be taken by the hand of the king of Babylon. And you shall cause this city to be burned with fire.”’ Jer. 38:20-23

God’s word fulfilled – the father brings disaster on his family.

“Then the king of Babylon killed the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes in Riblah; the king

of Babylon also killed all the nobles of Judah. Moreover he put out Zedekiah's eyes, and bound him with bronze fetters to carry him off to Babylon." Jeremiah 39:6,7

Context: The fall of Jerusalem in Jeremiah 39

Isn't it common sense that a man's sins affect his family? Yes it is, but the Lord doesn't rely on our common sense; he often speaks to warn us.

An expression of marital harmony but a sinful harmony, defying the Lord

'And the women said, "When we made offerings to the queen of heaven and poured out drink offerings to her, was it without our husbands' approval that we made cakes for her bearing her image and poured out drink offerings to her?"' Jeremiah 44:19 ESV

These wives and husbands brought a curse on themselves and their children as described in chapter 44.

The Lord had rebellious children and yet brought them back to himself.

"But do not fear, O My servant Jacob, and do not be dismayed, O Israel! For behold, I will save you from afar, and your offspring from the land of their captivity; Jacob shall return, have rest and be at ease; no one shall make him afraid." Jer. 46:27

If our child is rebellious, remember that the Lord knows what it feels like. He is able to bring our child back from captivity – back to himself.

Rebellious nations were not God's children; his judgement came upon them.

Rebellious Jacob was his child; God's discipline came upon him.

"Do not fear, O Jacob My servant," says the Lord, "For I am with you; for I will make a complete end of all the nations to which I have driven you, but I will not make a complete end of you. I will rightly correct you, for I will not leave you wholly unpunished." Jeremiah 46:28

Gentile idolatry judged. But notice God's concern for orphans and widows.

"Woe to you, O Moab! The people of Chemosh perish; for your sons have been taken captive, and your daughters captive." Jeremiah 48:46

"But I have stripped Esau bare; ... His children are destroyed, and his brothers, and his neighbours; and he is no more. Leave your fatherless children; I will keep them alive; and let your widows trust in me." Jeremiah 49:10,11 ESV

Modern idolatry is equally dangerous and God's compassion just as great.

Lamentations

Lamentations is full of grief and suffering but its words are in this context:

'This I recall to my mind, therefore I have hope. Through the Lord's mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness. "The Lord is my portion," says my soul, "Therefore I hope in Him!" The Lord is good to those who wait for Him, to the soul who seeks Him.'

"For the Lord will not cast off forever. Though He causes grief, yet He will show compassion according to the multitude of His mercies. For He does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men." Lamentations 3: 21-25, 31-33

Lamentations records intense family suffering brought about by the sins recorded in Jeremiah.

"Because of the multitude of [Zion's] transgressions. Her children have gone into captivity before the enemy." Lamentations 1:5

'My eyes fail with tears, my heart is troubled; my bile is poured on the ground because of the destruction of the daughter of my people, because the children and the infants faint in the streets of the city. They say to their mothers, "Where is grain and wine?" as they swoon like the wounded in the streets of the city, as their life is poured out in their mothers' bosom.' Lamentations 2:11,12

"Arise, cry out in the night, at the beginning of the watches; pour out your heart like water before the face of the Lord. Lift your hands toward Him for the life of your young children, who faint from hunger at the head of every street. See, O Lord, and consider! To whom have You done this? Should the women eat their offspring, the children they have cuddled?" Lamentations 2:19,20

"Even the jackals present their breasts to nurse their young; but the daughter of my people is cruel, like ostriches in the wilderness. The tongue of the infant clings to the roof of its mouth for thirst; the young children ask for bread, but no one breaks it for them." Lamentations 4:3,4

"The hands of the compassionate women have cooked their own children; they became food for them in the destruction of the daughter of my people." Lamentations 4:10

"Remember, O Lord, what has come upon us; look, and behold our reproach! Our inheritance has been turned over to aliens, and our houses to foreigners. We have become orphans and waifs, our mothers are like widows." Lamentations 5:1-3

This is painful to read but our heavenly Father has recorded it for our learning. It is a vivid reminder that his warnings through the prophets were not idle threats.

The scenes described in Lamentations are what happened to families in Jeremiah's days. The Lord's compassion was as great in those days as it is now (Lamentations 3). Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and for ever.

He has shown great mercy and grace to us. In the beginning of the 21st century we have rich physical comfort and spiritual provision. We rejoice that His faithfulness is great and new every morning. Let us take his (family) warnings as seriously as we delight in his kindness.

"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." 1 Peter 5:8

Lamentations ends in sure, certain hope – families included or excluded?

"You, O Lord, reign forever; your throne endures from generation to generation.

Why do you always forget us? Why do you forsake us so long?

Restore us to yourself, Lord, that we may return; renew our days as of old unless you have utterly rejected us and are angry with us beyond measure."

Lamentations 5:19-22 NIV

We can appeal for the Lord's mercy on our family, even though our sins cry out against us. In the face of all the sins of generations of God's children, this man dares to ask the Lord to forgive and restore them to himself. He is so bold as to challenge the Lord! "Will You keep Your anger for ever, even though we call to You?!"

Does the Lord want me to be bold and expect his undeserved mercy or to give up asking and assume he will give us what our sins deserve?

"The Lord is my portion," says my soul, "Therefore I hope in Him!" The Lord is good to those who wait for Him, to the soul who seeks Him ... For the Lord will not cast off forever. Though He causes grief, yet He will show compassion according to the multitude of His mercies. For He does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men." Ch. 3

"The one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out." John 6:37

If I, a sinner, come to Him on behalf of my sinful loved ones, will He send me away? Examine the Old and New Testament scriptures; find one person who humbly came to the Lord for help and went away disappointed.

Ezekiel

God makes fathers watchmen for their households, like Ezekiel for the house of Israel. (See Ephesians 6:4. Compare Acts 20:28)

"... the word of the Lord came to me: "Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel. Whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you shall give them warning from me." ESV See Ezekiel 3:16-21. Context: Ezek. 3:16-27, warnings to Israel.

See also Ezek. 33:7-9.

It is parents' duty to faithfully bring the 'word from God's mouth' to their children – both pleasant words and warning words. Children are weak and impressionable and gain strength gradually. We need wisdom as we teach them to recognise the Good Shepherd's voice (John 10:2-13).

The book of Ezekiel underlines the warnings of Jeremiah.

"Therefore thus says the Lord God ... I will do among you what I have never done, and the like of which I will never do again, because of all your abominations. Therefore fathers shall eat their sons in your midst, and sons shall eat their fathers." Ezek. 5:8-10

The Lord knows those who put their trust in him.

'... and the Lord said to him, "Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and put a mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and cry over all the abominations that are done within it." Ezekiel 9:4

He also notices those who defy him – even children.

To the others He said in my hearing, "Go after him through the city and kill; do not let your eye spare, nor have any pity. Utterly slay old and young men, maidens and little children and women; but do not come near anyone on whom is the mark; and begin at My sanctuary." Ezekiel 9:5,6

Read the account of this episode of Ezekiel's vision in Ezekiel 9:1-11

EZEKIEL 14 is relevant to families in every age.

The elders led the way into idolatrous sin. Each father, mother, aunt, uncle, grandparent etc. is an elder to children. Parents can "put before themselves what causes them to stumble into iniquity". Parents who stumble into sin cannot help influencing their children to do likewise.

The elders of God's people came to enquire of the Lord but he knew their hearts.

Secretly they preferred other things to God.

*"Now some of the elders of Israel came to me and sat before me. And the word of the Lord came to me, saying, "Son of man, these men have set up their idols in their hearts, and put before them **that which causes them to stumble into iniquity**. Should I let Myself be inquired of at all by them?" Ezekiel 14:1-3*

Their inward preferences were seen by outward focus on things which became snares, increasing their entanglement in sin.

*"Therefore speak to them, and say to them, 'Thus says the Lord God: "Everyone of the house of Israel who sets up his idols in his heart, and puts before him **what causes him to stumble into iniquity**, and then comes to the prophet, I the Lord will answer him who comes, according to the multitude of his idols, that I may seize the house of Israel*

by their heart ['recapture their hearts' NIV], because they are all estranged from Me by their idols." Ezekiel 14:4,5

The Lord warns us to turn away from idols both inwardly and outwardly.

*"Therefore say to the house of Israel, 'Thus says the Lord God: "Repent, turn away from your idols, and turn your faces away from all your abominations. For anyone of the house of Israel, or of the strangers who dwell in Israel, who separates himself from Me and sets up his idols in his heart and puts before him **what causes him to stumble into iniquity**, then comes to a prophet to inquire of him concerning Me, I the Lord will answer him by Myself. I will set My face against that man and make him a sign and a proverb, and I will cut him off from the midst of My people. Then you shall know that I am the Lord."* Ezekiel 14:6-8

God's purpose in speaking this way to his people

"... that the house of Israel may no longer stray from Me, nor be profaned anymore with all their transgressions, but that they may be My people and I may be their God," says the Lord God.'" Ezekiel 14:11 This has its fulfilment in the New Testament church.

THE LORD JESUS warns of the danger of leading 'little ones' to sin in Matthew 18, Mark 9 and Luke 17. Those of us responsible for children must examine what we 'put before' our children or encourage them to put before themselves.

The 21st century is an age in which adults and children spend hours putting enthralling entertainment before their faces. Much of this 'causes them to stumble into iniquity'. Will the Lord be pleased if we, his people, choose such material for our own recreational interests and those of our children?

"Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers." Acts 20:28 NIV

Yet another reminder that parents can bring disaster on their children

"And you took your sons and your daughters, whom you had borne to me [the Lord], and these you sacrificed to [the idols] to be devoured. Were your whorings so small a matter that you slaughtered my children and delivered them up as an offering by fire to them?...

Your lust was poured out and your nakedness uncovered in your whorings with your lovers, and with all your abominable idols, and because of the blood of your children that you gave to them ..." Ezekiel 16:20,21, 36 ESV

Context: Ezekiel 16: the allegory of the Lord's adulterous wife

Despising our own family members is possible. We must guard against it.

"Everyone who quotes proverbs will quote this proverb about you: 'Like mother, like daughter.' You are a true daughter of your mother, who despised her husband and her children; and you are a true sister of your sisters, who despised their husbands and their

children." Ezek. 16:44,45 NIV Context: the allegory of the unfaithful wife.

The unfaithful wife broke her marriage covenant but the allegory points toward unimagined grace: a New Covenant!

"Nevertheless I will remember My covenant with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish an everlasting covenant with you ...

Then you shall know that I am the Lord, that you may remember and be ashamed, and never open your mouth anymore because of your shame, when I provide you an atonement for all you have done," says the Lord God." Ezekiel 16:59-63

God knows every individual family member; each is responsible to him.

"The word of the Lord came to me again, saying, "What do you mean when you use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying: 'The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge'? "As I live," says the Lord God, "you shall no longer use this proverb in Israel. "Behold, all souls are Mine; the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is Mine; the soul who sins shall die." Ezekiel 18:1-4

Context: The whole chapter explains the Lord's merciful dealing with each family member and reiterates his great desire:

"... get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit. For why should you die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of one who dies," says the Lord God. "Therefore turn and live!" Ezekiel 18:31,32

God points out their parents' sins but the children defiantly continue in them.

"But I said to their children in the wilderness, 'Do not walk in the statutes of your fathers, nor observe their judgments, nor defile yourselves with their idols. I am the Lord your God: Walk in My statutes, keep My judgments, and do them ...' Notwithstanding, the children rebelled against Me; they did not walk in My statutes, and were not careful to observe My judgments ..." Ezekiel 20:18,19, 21 Context: Ezekiel 20:1-28

The fathers' sins infect the children who then destroy the grandchildren.

"... because they had not executed My judgments, but had despised My statutes, profaned My Sabbaths, and their eyes were fixed on their fathers' idols. Therefore I also gave them up to statutes that were not good, and judgments by which they could not live; and I pronounced them unclean because of their ritual gifts, in that they caused all their firstborn to pass through the fire ..." Ezekiel 20:24-26

The parents say they want to follow the Lord but meanwhile kill their children.

"For when you offer your gifts and make your sons pass through the fire, you defile yourselves with all your idols, even to this day. So shall I be inquired of by you, O house of Israel? As I live," says the Lord God, "I will not be inquired of by you." Ezekiel 20:31 Context: Ezekiel 20:30-34 (Compare Ezekiel 14:3.)

Traditional idolatry can blind us to the most obvious child-care issues.

Parents, widows, orphans and immigrants suffer from godless behaviour.

"Father and mother are treated with contempt in you; the sojourner suffers extortion in your midst; the fatherless and the widow are wronged in you."

Ezekiel 22:7 ESV Context: Jerusalem's sins, Ezekiel 22.

UK society is not exempt from such sins. The church, being made up of sinful people will always be susceptible to unfair/unkind treatment of weaker members. We should guard against it. (Acts 6:1-4)

Examples of the godless ruin of family life

"One commits abomination with his neighbour's wife; another lewdly defiles his daughter-in-law; another in you violates his sister, his father's daughter."

Full quote: Ezekiel 22:6-12

The idolatry of God's people is compared to sexual immorality and adultery.

"The word of the Lord came to me: 'Son of man, there were two women, daughters of the same mother. They became prostitutes in Egypt, engaging in prostitution from their youth ...'" Ezekiel 23:1-3 NIV

There follows a whole chapter illustrating the sin of Israel's and Judah's adulterous behaviour towards their Husband.

The Lord highlights child-sacrifice yet again.

'The Lord also said to me: "Son of man, will you judge Oholah and Oholibah [Israel and Judah]? Then declare to them their abominations. For they have committed adultery, and blood is on their hands. They have committed adultery with their idols, and even sacrificed their sons whom they bore to Me, passing them through the fire, to devour them ...'" Ezekiel 23:36,37

God's people were blind to their sin. They thought that killing their children was acceptable to God.

"Moreover they have done this to Me: They have defiled My sanctuary on the same day and profaned My Sabbaths. For after they had slain their children for their idols, on the same day they came into My sanctuary to profane it; and indeed thus they have done in the midst of My house." Ezekiel 23:38,39

IN THE OLD TESTAMENT, the traditional practice of child-sacrifice to false gods is mentioned about twenty times. Plainly, it was one of the worst sins committed by Israel and Judah. *"[The Lord says,] 'I did not command them, nor did it come into My mind that they should do this abomination.'"*

Jeremiah 32:35

What is the Lord teaching? Is he warning **us**? Are modern hearts not as deceitful as those people's?

Q. Are **we** causing our children to “pass through fire”?

In our society, we cause babies in the womb to pass through procedures that will kill them, telling women that it is their right to do so if they wish.

There are spiritual equivalents of fire. Some examples:

Atheism and humanism are deadly fires. Our society’s education system is riddled with them.

Many pleasurable, exciting activities which captivate young minds are sexually enticing and/or God-rejecting. These fires kill their victims painlessly and unnoticed.

Fathers, Mothers, Aunts, Uncles... we have responsibilities. Our almighty heavenly Father wants us to ask **Him** to help us fulfil them. He understands and sympathises with our weakness.

Some of the Lord’s threatened punishment – children not excluded

“This is what the Sovereign Lord says: Bring a mob against them and give them over to terror and plunder. The mob will stone them and cut them down with their swords; they will kill their sons and daughters and burn down their houses. Ezekiel 23:46,47
See chapter 23:22- 49 for more details of Israel/Judah’s adultery and judgement.

Another reminder of our responsibility to keep watch for our family.

“So you, son of man, I [the Lord] have made a watchman for the house of Israel. Whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you shall give them warning from me.” ESV
Full quote: Ezekiel 33:7-9 Context: Ezek. 33:1-20. See also Ezek. 3:16-21.

We must bring the ‘word from God’s mouth’ to our children, not our own ideas.

Promise of the New Testament age: Christ [‘David’] is our shepherd and king.

*“David My servant shall be king over them, and they shall all have one shepherd; they shall also walk in My judgments and observe My statutes, and do them. Then they shall dwell in the land that I have given to Jacob My servant, where your fathers dwelt; and they shall dwell there, **they, their children, and their children’s children, forever**; and My servant David shall be their prince forever.”* Ezekiel 37:24,25
More in 37:24-27 See also Ezekiel 34:23,24

Why has the Lord written this for us? To fill us with desire and expectancy of his blessing on our children or to say, “We don’t know if our children will turn out to love the Lord. We’ll have to wait and see.”? Is that what the Lord wants from the parents He has appointed to care for the precious children He created?

Parents have shepherding responsibility for their little flock. They need wisdom and grace from the Good Shepherd himself. A fatalistic philosophy is not from the Good Shepherd. *“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.”* Jn. 10:27

The Lord is interested in what we pass on to our children.

'Thus says the Lord God: "If the prince gives a gift of some of his inheritance to any of his sons, it shall belong to his sons [i.e. the son's sons]; it is their possession by inheritance ... his inheritance shall belong to his sons; it shall become theirs ... he shall provide an inheritance for his sons from his own property ..."' Ezekiel 46:16-18

Context: temple worship in Ezekiel's vision

What spiritual legacy will we pass to our children?

Daniel

THE FIRST PART of Daniel tells of the interaction of children of God with a humanistic education system. [Humanism is based on the belief that the God of the Bible does not exist and that man-made religious or 'non-religious' systems are valid.]

It is generally agreed that Daniel and his three friends were in their teens, which makes them roughly equivalent to today's university undergraduates. They had a three year 'university education' to be followed by their finals over which the king himself would preside.

A key to understanding their remarkable faithfulness to God is that in their childhood in Israel they were thoroughly grounded in the word of God. Their education whether through parents or otherwise was obviously God-centred. As a result they gave no credence to the humanistic idolatry which was common even in Israel. By grace they had believed the Scriptures and had set their hearts on serving the Lord from their childhood.

The whole Old Testament including Daniel was "written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come" 1 Corinthians 10:11 ESV. It is no wonder that it is so suitable for Christians living in the 21st century.

God's children forced to receive government 'higher education'

"Then the king instructed Ashpenaz, the master of his eunuchs, to bring some of the children of Israel and some of the king's descendants and some of the nobles, young men in whom there was no blemish, but good-looking, gifted in all wisdom, possessing knowledge and quick to understand ..." Daniel 1:3,4

A Godless curriculum: much useful knowledge alongside idolatry and immorality

"... who had ability to serve in the king's palace, and whom they might teach the language and literature of the Chaldeans." Daniel 1:4

Elite education to broaden horizons and leave the 'restrictions' of God's word.

"The king assigned them a daily portion of the food that the king ate, and of the wine that he drank. They were to be educated for three years, and at the end of that time they were to stand before the king. Among these were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah of the tribe of Judah. And the chief of the eunuchs gave them names: Daniel he called Belteshazzar, Hananiah he called Shadrach, Mishael he called Meshach, and Azariah he called Abednego." Daniel 1:6,7 ESV

Daniel and co. had names centred on the Lord but their new identity and daily schedule focused them on official government ideology. [The Babylonian names were based on gods of Mesopotamia (e.g. Dan 4:8).]

'University fresher' Daniel nails his colours to the mast, trusting God for the consequences.

"But Daniel resolved that he would not defile himself with the king's food, or with the wine that he drank. Therefore he asked the chief of the eunuchs to allow him not to defile himself." Daniel 1:8 ESV Full quote Daniel 1:8-16

Don't be afraid, 'Those who honour the Lord, he will honour.' (1 Sam. 2:30)

"At the end of ten days it was seen that they were better in appearance and fatter in flesh than all the youths who ate the king's food. So the steward took away their food and the wine they were to drink, and gave them vegetables." Daniel 1:15,16 ESV

The true aim of education: God-given wisdom applied in all subjects.

"As for these four youths, God gave them learning and skill in all literature and wisdom, and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams." Daniel 1:17 ESV

The three years are up – time for final exams!

"At the end of the time, when the king had commanded that they should be brought in, the chief of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar." Daniel 1:18 ESV

God-given wisdom recognised by a godless chief examiner.

"The king talked with them, and he found none equal to Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah; so they entered the king's service. In every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king questioned them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters in his whole kingdom." Daniel 1:19,20 NIV

That is what we aim for with our children's early and secondary education. By God's grace, in answer to our prayers, when they leave to continue higher-level training they will excel in quality. May we trust the Lord to give 'them learning and skill in all literature and wisdom' in a society of politically correct intimidation. It may cost them but the Lord is able to make them stand as salt and light in the world on behalf of Christ and his kingdom.

They learned to stand when they were younger and continued when older.
'Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego answered and said to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. If that is the case, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king. But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up." Daniel 3:16-18
Whole story: Daniel 3

Such clarity of thought and boldness do not come by accident. They come from diligently applying God's word to all matters great and small. Such should be the aim of a child's early education in the 21st century.

God expects us to learn from our own family history.

"But you his son, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, although you knew all this. And you have lifted yourself up against the Lord of heaven ..."

Daniel 5: 22, 23 Context: Belshazzar's failure to learn from Nebuchadnezzar's God-given affliction (Daniel 5)

Yet another reminder that a father's sin can bring disaster to his whole family

"And the king commanded, and those men who had maliciously accused Daniel were brought and cast into the den of lions—they, their children, and their wives ..."

Daniel 6:24 ESV Context: the whole chapter.

Hosea

THE BOOK OF HOSEA demonstrates that the Lord is the Husband of his people. Disobedience to the Lord and putting other things in God's place is spiritual adultery. Hosea's marriage to an unfaithful, promiscuous wife graphically illustrates what God wants us to understand about the vileness of idolatry.

Hosea eventually buys back his wife from prostitution. This is a pale reflection of the price paid by Christ out of love for his Bride, the Church.

"You are not your own for you were bought at a price." 1 Corinthians 6:19,20

21st century western society is awash with sexual immorality stemming from the same root as Israel's idolatry in Hosea's time.

"Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body ..."

1 Corinthians 6:18-20

"Husbands love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself for her ..."

"So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife

loves himself." Ephesians 5:25,28

Spiritual adultery against the Lord illustrated in the prophet's experience

"When the Lord began to speak by Hosea, the Lord said to Hosea:

"Go, take yourself a wife of harlotry and children of harlotry, for the land has committed great harlotry by departing from the Lord." Hosea 1:2 Whole account: Hosea 1:2-2:13

'Children of harlotry' are outside of God's family.

"When she had weaned No Mercy, she conceived and bore a son. And the Lord said, "Call his name Not My People, for you are not my people, and I am not your God."

Hosea 1:8,9 ESV

But God is able to bring them into his family after all!

Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be like the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured or numbered. And in the place where it was said to them, "You are not my people", it shall be said to them, "Children of the living God." Hosea 1:10 ESV

See Romans 9:25,26.

The Lord's rebuke for Israel, his unfaithful wife

"Rebuke your mother, rebuke her, for she is not my wife, and I am not her husband ...

I will not show my love to her children, because they are the children of adultery.

Their mother has been unfaithful and has conceived them in disgrace ..."

Hosea 2:2-5 NIV Read chapter 2 for the details.

Amazing grace to an utterly corrupt wife

"Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak tenderly to her ... "And in that day, declares the Lord, you will call me 'My Husband', and no longer will you call me 'My Baal.'... And I will betroth you to me for ever. I will betroth you to me in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love and in mercy. I will betroth you to me in faithfulness. And you shall know the Lord." Hosea 2:14-20 ESV

This points forward to the Lord's Bride of the New Covenant.

"Then I will sow her for Myself in the earth, and I will have mercy on her who had not obtained mercy; then I will say to those who were not My people, 'You are My people!' And they shall say, 'You are my God!'" Hosea 2:23 Whole quote: Hosea 2:14-23

Every one of God's people belongs to the Bridegroom. He is coming soon! (Rev. 22)

Hosea pays a price to buy back his adulterous wife.

'And the Lord said to me, "Go again, love a woman who is loved by another man and is an adulteress, even as the Lord loves the children of Israel, though they turn to other gods and love cakes of raisins." So I bought her for fifteen shekels of silver and a homer and a lethech of barley ...' Hosea 3:1-3 ESV

Christ paid an incalculable price to buy and purify his adulterous wife.

"For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect." 1 Peter 1:18 NIV

Ignoring God's word has dire effects on a society's children.

"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being priest for Me; Because you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children." Hosea 4:6 Context: Hos. 4 - Israel's idolatry

Conversely, if we remember God's word, we are inviting the Lord to remember our children.

An idolatrous society is an adulterous, sexually immoral society.

"A spirit of prostitution leads them astray; they are unfaithful to their God."

Hos 4:12 NIV For full description of Israel's adultery/idolatry read the whole chapter.

A reminder of idolatry and immorality in Moses time – still affecting God's people.

Notice the resulting effects on family life.

"But they came to Baal-peor and consecrated themselves to the thing of shame and became detestable like the thing they loved. Ephraim's glory shall fly away like a bird—no birth, no pregnancy, no conception! Even if they bring up children, I will bereave them till none is left." Hosea 9:10-12 ESV Context: Punishment for Israel, Hosea 9

The Lord had warned Israel in Lev. 26 and Deut. 28 that their families would suffer because of their stubborn disobedience.

"Ephraim, as I have seen, was like a young palm planted in a meadow; but Ephraim must lead his children out to slaughter. Give them, O Lord — what will you give? Give them a miscarrying womb and dry breasts." Hosea 9:13,14 ESV

"Ephraim is stricken; their root is dried up; they shall bear no fruit.

Even though they give birth, I will put their beloved children to death." Hosea 9:16 ESV

"... as Shalman destroyed Betharbel on the day of battle; mothers were dashed in pieces with their children. Thus it shall be done to you, O Bethel, because of your great evil."

Hosea 10:14,15 ESV

The heavenly Father loves his son.

"When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son."

Hosea 11:1 ESV Context: The Lord's love for Israel (Hosea 11:1-11)

These are also prophetic Fatherly words about God's one and only Son (Matt. 2:15).

God knows bitter fatherly disappointment and pain.

"The more they were called, the more they went away; they kept sacrificing to the Baals and burning offerings to idols." Hosea 11:2 ESV

This Father cared tenderly and practically for his children.

"Yet it was I who taught Ephraim to walk; I took them up by their arms, but they did not know that I healed them. I led them with cords of kindness, with the bands of love, and I became to them as one who eases the yoke on their jaws, and I bent down to them and fed them." Hosea 11:3,4 ESV

God's children did not appreciate his love but he loved them nonetheless. As parents, don't we want to do the best for our children whether or not they realise it?

We, God's children, often do not appreciate his love but he loves us nonetheless. Let us love our brothers and sisters whether or not they appreciate it.

The Lord is a Father who feels more pain at the suffering of his children than we can ever imagine. (The father of lies constantly whispers the opposite.)

"How can I give you up, O Ephraim? How can I hand you over, O Israel? How can I make you like Admah? How can I treat you like Zeboiim? My heart recoils within me; my compassion grows warm and tender. I will not execute my burning anger; I will not again destroy Ephraim ..."

"... his children shall come trembling from the west; they shall come trembling like birds from Egypt, and like doves from the land of Assyria, and I will return them to their homes, declares the Lord." Hosea 11:8-11 ESV

The Lord is Father of the fatherless and those who are ignored and marginalised.

"We will never again say 'Our gods' to what our own hands have made, for in you the fatherless find compassion." Hosea 14:3 NIV Context: Israel's repentance in Hosea 14

Those who call to him will never be disappointed (Romans 10:11).

Joel

God wants us to teach our children and grandchildren about his judgements.

"Hear this, you elders, and give ear, all you inhabitants of the land! Has anything like this happened in your days, Or even in the days of your fathers? Tell your children about it, let your children tell their children, and their children another generation." Joel 1:2,3 Context: a disaster sent by the Lord.

Four generations are mentioned. Does the Lord want that to be the limit?

The Lord considered it important that children were included in the assembly.

"Blow the trumpet in Zion; consecrate a fast; call a solemn assembly; gather the people. Consecrate the congregation; assemble the elders; gather the children, even nursing infants. Let the bridegroom leave his room, and the bride her chamber." Joel 2:15,16
Context: Israel called to repentance

Today, does the Lord still want children to be included in congregational worship and response to his Word? Consider Mark 10:13,14 and Luke 18:15,16.

We live in the 'last days' when the Holy Spirit is given to young and old. Good news for families!

"And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions and also on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days ..." Joel 2:28,29 Full quote: Joel 2:28-32

In the context of this prophecy, Peter says, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to *you and to your children, and to all who are afar off*, as many as the Lord our God will call." Acts 2:39

Amos

In Old Covenant times the Lord chose a family for himself: the Children of Israel.

"Hear this word that the Lord has spoken against you, O children of Israel, against the whole family which I brought up from the land of Egypt, saying: "You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities."

Amos 3:1,2

In New Covenant times the Lord has chosen a family for himself: the Children of God (1 John 3:1). We have his word written on our hearts and minds (Hebrews 8:7-13). What a basis for family blessing!

These women defied the Lord's will for married women.

'Hear this word, you cows of Bashan, who are on the mountain of Samaria, Who oppress the poor, who crush the needy, who say to your husbands, "Bring wine, let us drink!" The Lord God has sworn by His holiness: "Behold, the days shall come upon you when He will take you away with fishhooks, and your posterity with fishhooks ...'

Amos 4:1,2 Context: Israel's refusal to return to God

Compare with Proverbs 31:20 and Ephesians 5:22-24.

Amaziah's refusal to listen to the Lord brought disaster on himself, his wife, his sons and his daughters. It also contributed to Israel's downfall.

'... the Lord said to me [Amos], 'Go, prophesy to my people Israel.' Now therefore hear the word of the Lord. "You [Amaziah] say, 'Do not prophesy against Israel, and do not preach against the house of Isaac.' Therefore thus says the Lord: 'Your wife shall be a prostitute in the city, and your sons and your daughters shall fall by the sword, and your land shall be divided up with a measuring line; you yourself shall die in an unclean land,

and Israel shall surely go into exile away from its land.” Amos 7:14-17 ESV
Whole account: Amos 7:10-17

Obadiah

The Lord wants brothers to care for each other, not hate each other.

“Because of the violence done to your brother Jacob, shame shall cover you, and you shall be cut off for ever ... do not gloat over the day of your brother in the day of his misfortune ...” Obadiah 10, 12 ESV Full quote: Obadiah 10-16

Context: prophecy against Esau (Edom)

In Scripture, children of God are likened to the house [i.e. family] of Jacob and Joseph. Children of the devil are likened to the house [i.e. family] of Esau

“But in Mount Zion there shall be those who escape, and it shall be holy, and the house of Jacob shall possess their own possessions. The house of Jacob shall be a fire, and the house of Joseph a flame, and the house of Esau stubble; they shall burn them and consume them, and there shall be no survivor for the house of Esau, for the Lord has spoken.” Obadiah 17,18

Believers are called ‘the household of God’ in Galatians 6:10.

Unbelievers are called ‘children of the devil’ in 1 John 3:10:

“By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practise righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother.” ESV Notice the similarity to Esau’s attitude and behaviour.

Jonah

The Lord is concerned even for animals; how much more for little children!

“And should I not pity Nineveh, that great city, in which are more than one hundred and twenty thousand persons who cannot discern between their right hand and their left—and and much livestock?” Jonah 4:11

Micah

It is natural even for godless people to love their children (by God’s common grace).

“Shave your head in mourning for the children in whom you delight; make yourself as bald as the vulture, for they will go from you into exile.”

Micah 1:16 NIV Context: God’s coming judgement on Samaria and Israel.

False teaching can ruin families (compare Titus 1:10,11).

"You drive the women of my people from their pleasant homes.

You take away my blessing from their children forever." Micah 2:9 NIV

Context: God's description of false prophets in Micah 2:6-11

The Lord often reminds us that childbirth is very painful.

"Writhe in agony, O Daughter of Zion, like a woman in labour, for now you must leave the city to camp in the open field." Micah 4:10 NIV Happy result: John 16:21

Family relationship is not sufficient to ensure belief in the truth.

Only the Lord can save our family from the dreadful effects of sin.

"Do not trust a neighbour; put no confidence in a friend. Even with her who lies in your embrace be careful of your words. For a son dishonours his father, a daughter rises up against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law— a man's enemies are the members of his own household." Micah 7:5,6 Quoted by Jesus in Matthew 10

Christian families must watch and pray for their loved ones.

"But as for me, I keep watch for the Lord, I wait for God my Saviour; my God will hear me." Micah 7:7 NIV

Nahum and Habakkuk

NAHUM and HABAKKUK speak of the destruction of Nineveh and Babylon. In Scripture, these nations are representations of the world systems under the devil's control (1 John 5:19) which are against the Christ and his people. They are compared to seductive women – 'great prostitutes' (Rev. 17:1). Revelation 17 and 18 describe Babylon and its final defeat.

Nineveh seductively deceives and enslaves the nations.

"There is a multitude of slain ... because of the multitude of harlotries of the seductive harlot [Nineveh], the mistress of sorceries, who sells nations through her harlotries, and families through her sorceries ..." "... she went into captivity; her young children also were dashed to pieces at the head of every street ..." See Nahum 3: 1-10

Babylon's false ideas and images taught lies.

"What profit is an idol when its maker has shaped it, a metal image, a teacher of lies? For its maker trusts in his own creation when he makes speechless idols!" Hab. 2:18 ESV

In the UK, children are being exposed to idolatrous (man-centred), God-excluding teaching for most of their formative years. Jesus says, "Let the children come to me and do not hinder them." Education which does "not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God" *does* hinder them. It provokes God to give its recipients "a depraved mind to do what ought not to be done" (See Romans 1:18-32). The Friend

of Children's ears are open to our cry; he is able to help us.

The children of God's children need all the educational help they can get. How are they to learn without teachers? Pray that the Lord will raise up those who will teach children every day (not just for an hour on Sundays) according to the great commission, that ALL authority belongs to Christ, in all aspects of life in this world. "*Teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.*" (Mt. 28:18-20, Acts 17:24-31)

Zephaniah

The Lord calls his people 'daughter'. Let his daughters rejoice!

"Sing, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O Israel! Be glad and rejoice with all your heart, O daughter of Jerusalem! The Lord has taken away your judgments, He has cast out your enemy. The King of Israel, the Lord, is in your midst ... " Zephaniah 3:14,15

The Father comforts the daughter in whom he delights.

"In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem: "Do not fear; Zion, let not your hands be weak. The Lord your God in your midst, the Mighty One, will save; He will rejoice over you with gladness, He will quiet you with His love, He will rejoice over you with singing." Zephaniah 3:16,17

Our Father will bring us to our family home.

"At that time I will gather you; at that time I will bring you home. I will give you honour and praise among all the peoples of the earth when I restore your fortunes before your very eyes," says the Lord.' Zephaniah 3:20 NIV

Context: Zephaniah 3:9-20 Israel's restoration – foreshadowing the Last Days.

Haggai

Family concerns are not to push out our concern for the Church.

"Is it a time for you yourselves to dwell in your panelled houses, while this house lies in ruins? Now, therefore, thus says the Lord of hosts: Consider your ways ...

"You looked for much, and behold, it came to little. And when you brought it home, I blew it away. Why? declares the Lord of hosts. Because of my house that lies in ruins, while each of you busies himself with his own house." Hag. 1:4,9 ESV Context: Hag. 1

Zechariah

The Lord wants us to care practically for the widow, fatherless, immigrant and poor.

Thus says the Lord of hosts: 'Execute true justice, show mercy and compassion everyone to his brother. Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the alien or the poor.

Let none of you plan evil in his heart against his brother.’ Zechariah 7:9,10

More rejoicing for daughters

“Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion! For behold, I am coming and I will dwell in your midst,” says the Lord.’ Zechariah 2:10

“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, lowly and riding on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey.” Zechariah 9:9 Fulfilled in Matthew 21

Notice, the Lord includes the children. Children (even ours) are close to his heart.

“Those of Ephraim shall be like a mighty man, and their heart shall rejoice as if with wine. Yes, their children shall see it and be glad; their heart shall rejoice in the Lord ... I will sow them among the peoples, and they shall remember Me in far countries; they shall live, together with their children, and they shall return.” Zechariah 10:7-9

Context: the Lord’s promised help for his people in Zechariah 10

It looked as if the children were lost but actually, the Lord was saving them.

“Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, against the Man who is My Companion,” says the Lord of hosts. “Strike the Shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered; then I will turn My hand against the little ones.” Zechariah 13:7 Fulfilled in Matthew 26:31 ff.

The Shepherd kept all his little ones (John 13:33) safe; see John 17:6 ff. “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.” John 10:27

Malachi

Earthly parents are to be honoured. How much more our heavenly Father!

“A son honours his father, and a servant his master. If then I am a father, where is my honour? And if I am a master, where is my fear? says the Lord of hosts to you, O priests, who despise my name.” Malachi 1:6

Context: Israel’s careless, dishonouring attitude to the Lord (Malachi 1-3)

Idolatry is adultery against the Lord and brings wrath.

“Have we not all one Father? Did not one God create us? Why do we profane the covenant of our fathers by breaking faith with one another? Judah has broken faith.

A detestable thing has been committed in Israel and in Jerusalem: Judah has desecrated the sanctuary the LORD loves, by marrying the daughter of a foreign god. As for the man who does this, whoever he may be, may the LORD cut him off from the tents of Jacob - even though he brings offerings to the LORD Almighty.” Malachi 2:10-12 NIV

Unfaithfulness to a wife is unfaithfulness to the Lord.

“Another thing you do: You flood the LORD’s altar with tears. You weep and wail because

he no longer pays attention to your offerings or accepts them with pleasure from your hands. You ask, "Why?" It is because the LORD is acting as the witness between you and the wife of your youth, because you have broken faith with her, though she is your partner, the wife of your marriage covenant." Malachi 2:13,14 NIV

Fathers, guard your thoughts – the Lord wants your children to be godly.

"Has not the LORD made them one? In flesh and spirit they are his. And why one? Because he was seeking godly offspring. So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith with the wife of your youth." Malachi 2:15 NIV

Adultery works against the salvation of your children (Matthew 5:27-29).

Husbands, fathers, guard your spirit and your family.

"I hate divorce," says the LORD God of Israel, "and I hate a man's covering himself with violence as well as with his garment," says the LORD Almighty. So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith.' Malachi 2:16 NIV

Those who commit adultery falsify their marriage oath.

"Then I will draw near to you for judgement. I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, against the adulterers, against those who swear falsely ..." Malachi 3:5 ESV

The Lord reaffirms his concern for friendless vulnerable people.

"I will be a swift witness ... against those who oppress the hired worker in his wages, the widow and the fatherless, against those who thrust aside the sojourner, and do not fear me," says the Lord of hosts.' Malachi 3:5 ESV

Context: The Day of Judgement, Malachi 2:17-3:5

If we suffer harsh treatment, the Lord is eager to hear our appeal to him and will he leave us in trouble? (Luke 18:1-8)

To prepare for the Lord's coming we must turn our hearts to love our children and our children must be trained to honour their parents.

"Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the earth with a curse." Malachi 4:6 (See Luke 1:17)

ONLY THE HOLY SPIRIT can turn the heart of a man, woman or child but we invite Him to do so by obeying his countless instructions, encouragements and promises.

**'He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming quickly."
Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!' Revelation 22:20**

Matthew

Notice those in this genealogy whom the word of God records as having faith. No doubt there were more.

"The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, and Judah the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, and Perez the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Ram, and Ram the father of Amminadab, and Amminadab the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon the father of Salmon, and Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab, and Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of David the king.

And David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah, and Solomon the father of Rehoboam, and Rehoboam the father of Abijah, and Abijah the father of Asaph [Asa], and Asaph the father of Jehoshaphat, and Jehoshaphat the father of Joram, and Joram the father of Uzziah, and Uzziah the father of Jotham, and Jotham the father of Ahaz, and Ahaz the father of Hezekiah, and Hezekiah the father of Manasseh, and Manasseh the father of Amos [Amon], and Amos the father of Josiah, and Josiah the father of Jechoniah and his brothers, at the time of the deportation to Babylon.

And after the deportation to Babylon: Jechoniah was the father of Shealtiel, and Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel, and Zerubbabel the father of Abiud, and Abiud the father of Eliakim, and Eliakim the father of Azor, and Azor the father of Zadok, and Zadok the father of Achim, and Achim the father of Eliud, and Eliud the father of Eleazar, and Eleazar the father of Matthan, and Matthan the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ."

Matthew 1:1-16 ESV

Who gave them that faith? He is also interested in each of his children's families. He can give faith to our children and their children too. Dare we ask him for this or is it not worth asking? Will the Lord consider it a foolish request? Are we not children of Abraham (Galatians 3:7)?

A considerate, gentle husband

"And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly." Matthew 1:19 ESV Context: Matthew 1:18-2:23

A father who was obedient to God

"Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took to him his wife, and did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn Son. And he called His name Jesus." Matthew 1:24,25.

"... behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, 'Rise, take the

child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you ...' And he rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed to Egypt ..." Matt. 2:13-15 ESV
See also verses 19-23

A unique birth for the Unique Son, the Saviour of all other sons and daughters.

"Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins."

'So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: "Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which is translated, "God with us."' Matthew 1:20-23

IN MATTHEW 2 we have a record of the Dragon's attack on the infant Son of God (Rev. 12:1-17). Revelation 12:13-17 describes the enmity that Satan has to all God's children, old and young.

The devil is no gentleman; he murders weak, defenceless little children.

'Then was fulfilled what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying:

"A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, refusing to be comforted, because they are no more."

Matthew 2:17,18

No hope for these children? Read Jeremiah 31:15-17. (See the note on those verses.)

The Father commends the Son.

"And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.' " Matthew 3:17 Context: Jesus' baptism

The Lord's gracious kindness: he calls 'same-family' members to follow him.

"And Jesus, walking by the Sea of Galilee, saw two brothers, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother ... And going on from there he saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee and John his brother ..." Matthew 4:18-22

Jesus loved Peter's loved-one. He is always just as concerned for our loved-ones.

"Now when Jesus had come into Peter's house, He saw his wife's mother lying sick with a fever. So He touched her hand, and the fever left her. And she arose and served them." Matthew 8:16

Many families were rejoicing that day because they had dared to bring a family member to Jesus.

"When evening had come, they brought to Him many who were demon-possessed. And He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were sick." Matthew 8:16

They brought their loved-ones physically to Jesus. We can bring them to him just as boldly in prayer and ask him for *spiritual* healing.

The Sermon on the Mount

Matthew 5-7

SIXTEEN TIMES in this discourse Jesus indicates that his Father is also our Father. God is the author of all fatherhood. Like any father, he loves it when his little children come and confide in him. It especially warms his heart when his children pay attention to what he says and do as he tells them (3 John 4).

Family relationships show our need of a Saviour.

"... I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, 'Raca!' shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be in danger of hell fire." Matthew 5:21,22

This principle can be applied in Christian family instruction and training.

"Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift." Matthew 5:23,24

Marriage under attack

"You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart." Matthew 5:27,28

Avoiding the first step to adultery. Notice the danger of hell.

"If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell." Mt. 5:29 ESV

Men and boys are often subject to the temptation to lust. 'Tearing the eye out' means taking steps to minimise the temptation by **removing** all unnecessary exposure. Some exposure is unavoidable (we would have to leave the world to entirely get rid of it). 'Removing the eye' removes the temptation, as does 'removing your way far from her' (see Prov. 5:8). Similar 'eye-removal' actions could be:

- choosing never to watch entertainment featuring 'suggestively-dressed' women.
- getting rid of recreational books/ magazines containing sexually immoral material.

(In Acts 19:17-20, for similar reason, believers burned many very 'valuable' books.) Computers and phones are essential tools but we must devise 'tearing-out' strategies for their non-essential use. *"Flee youthful lusts"* – a command to pastors in 2 Tim. 2:22. If we are not obedient to the Lord in this, how can we teach and warn our children?

The Son of God continues to protect marriage.

"... it has been said, 'Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.' But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality

causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery." Matthew 5:31,32

We must imitate our heavenly Father. Human fathers should be worthy of imitation.

"But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven."

"You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." Matt. 5:44,45,48

We have a Father who loves to hear the family talking to him every day.

"Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

This, then, is how you should pray: 'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.'" Matthew 6:8-13 NIV

Will he refuse any of these requests? Beware of an unforgiving heart (v 14,15).

Tell this to young brothers and sisters (and older ones).

"And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me remove the speck from your eye'; and look, a plank is in your own eye?" Full quote: Matthew 7:1-5

We have a kind heavenly Father. Let us make sure we imitate him.

"What man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!" Matthew 7:9-11

If we ask good things for our family, will our Father be inclined to give us what we ask? What is the best 'good thing' that you can think of?

Follow God's loving example – look out for good things great or small to do for the children in your life.

A wise man builds his family on the Rock by practically applying God's Word.

"Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock." Matthew 7:24,25 NIV

A foolish man brings up his family without reference to the Word.

"But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash." 7:26,27 NIV

Family member or not, great encouragement for us to bring our family members
Then behold, they brought to Him a paralytic lying on a bed. When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, "Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you." Matt. 8:2

Does the Lord see our faith? How do we show our faith (James 2:18)? Faith expecting God's saving family blessing is careful to follow God's family instructions.

We must submit our family priorities to the Lord.

*Then another of His disciples said to Him, "Lord, let me first go and bury my father."
But Jesus said to him, "Follow Me, and let the dead bury their own dead."* Matt. 8:21,22

Another reminder that the Lord delights to save siblings

'Jesus saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, "Follow Me." So he arose and followed Him.' Matthew 9:9

*'As He passed by, He saw Levi **the son of Alphaeus** sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, "Follow Me." So he arose and followed Him.* Mark 2:14

*'... Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James **the son of Alphaeus**...' Matt.10:3*

This desperate father prayed for his daughter to the infinitely powerful Son of God.
While Jesus was saying these things to them, behold, a ruler came in and knelt before him, saying, "My daughter has just died, but come and lay your hand on her, and she will live." Matthew 9:18 ESV

Those who trust God's word may face scepticism. Parents, trust and obey!

'He said, "Go away, for the girl is not dead but sleeping." And they laughed at him. But when the crowd had been put outside, he went in and took her by the hand, and the girl arose.' Matthew 9:24 Whole story: Matthew 9:18-26

Family strife should not surprise us if it comes, but we can ask the Lord to deliver us from such trials (Matthew 6:13).

"Now brother will deliver up brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death. And you will be hated by all for My name's sake." Matthew 10:21,22

"Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. For I have come to 'set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law'; and 'a man's enemies will be those of his own household.'" Matthew 10:34-36 (Cited from Micah 7:5,6)

We must not idolise our family – that is a real danger.

"He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it." Matthew 10:37-39

However, we must not use devotion to the Lord as an excuse for neglecting our family responsibility (see Matthew 15:3-6).

All knowledge is given or withheld by God. Great education can only benefit if, by God's grace, we receive it with a childlike attitude of faith.

'At that time Jesus declared, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will."' Matthew 11:25,26 ESV

Our children will gain true understanding only by Christ's decision.

"All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him." Matthew 11:27 ESV

Don't be anxious; Jesus invites you and your children to receive his education.

"Come to me, all who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." Matthew 11:28-30 ESV

What is more wonderful than being a member of a natural family?

"While he was still speaking to the people, behold, his mother and his brothers stood outside, asking to speak to him. But he replied to the man who told him, "Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?" And stretching out his hand towards his disciples, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother." Matthew 12:46-50

Does our Saviour want our children to be 'sons of the evil one'?

"The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world, and the good seed is the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one, and the enemy who sowed them is the devil ..." Matthew 13:37 ESV

Whole parable: Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43

The Lord Jesus showed that he has power over the devil to rescue children from him. He answered the mother in Matt. 15 and the father in Matt. 17, so why not me? Probably not me because I've been such a failure as a parent. It's my own fault. Yes, but He never answers prayer because of our merit or success. He came to save sinners, not those who got it all right. 'God be merciful to me a sinner' – and to my sinful children.

Jesus had at least six brothers and sisters.

"Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother Mary? And his brothers James, Joses, Simon and Judas? And his sisters, are they not all with us?" Matthew 13:55,56

It is possible to 'serve the Lord' instead of fulfilling family responsibility.

'Jesus replied, "And why do you break the command of God for the sake of your tradition? For God said, 'Honour your father and mother' and 'Anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death.' But you say that if a man says to his father or mother, 'Whatever help you might otherwise have received from me is a gift devoted to God,' he is not to 'honour his father' with it. Thus you nullify the word of God for the sake of your tradition. You hypocrites!'" Matthew 15:3-7 NIV Context: Matthew 15:1-20

Parents, are we 'serving the Lord' by society's or church's tradition and unwittingly depriving our children of what the Lord requires us to provide for them?

The Canaanite - a woman who would not give up

Matthew. 15:21-28 NIV

What hope for this mother and daughter?

v 22 *'Leaving that place, Jesus withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon. A Canaanite woman from that vicinity came to him, crying out, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is suffering terribly from demon-possession."*

Discouragement:

She is a Gentile of notorious ancestry, a 'Canaanite'. The Canaanites should have been exterminated in Joshua's time! But that doesn't stop her: *"Lord, Son of David have mercy on me!"*

Discouragement:

v 22 *"My daughter is suffering terribly from demon-possession."*

Not an ordinary illness but an extreme spiritual condition.

Discouragement:

v 23 *'Jesus did not answer a word.'*

No answer to her prayer. Not put off, she goes to the disciples...

Discouragement:

v 23 *'So his disciples came to him and urged him, "Send her away, for she keeps crying out after us."*

The disciples ask the Lord to send her away.

Discouragement:

v 24 *'He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel."*

Jesus himself points to the apparent fact that she is not one of the elect, the chosen nation.

Question: What's the point if you and your loved one are not 'chosen'?

Here we see the wonderful faith that God had given her. Faith does *not* go to Jesus on the basis of election; it goes because He is the Son of David, the only Saviour of the world, who 'delights to have mercy' on all who come. "*Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.*" (Matt. 11:28)

Dare we say, "What you really mean, Lord, is: 'Come to me all who are **elect** and I will give you rest.'"? NO! We pray for our loved one not because she is elect but because Jesus **tells** us to come to him with all our burdens. It's not our idea; it's HIS idea.

v 25 *'The woman came and knelt before him. "Lord, help me!" she said.'*

She throws herself at his feet. "Lord help me!" Surely he will help her?

Yet another discouragement!

v 26 *'He replied, "It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to their dogs."*

Jesus continues on the election theme! – emphasising that she is utterly undeserving of any blessing - a 'dog'. "It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to their dogs." Here her faith overcomes; she agrees with the diagnosis; and a woman wins the wrestling match with the Lord!:

v 27 *"Yes, Lord," she said, "but even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table."*

She wins the argument! How the Lord's heart must have rejoiced!

v 28 *'Then Jesus answered, "Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted." And her daughter was healed from that very hour.'*

He answered her prayer and her daughter was saved from the power of Satan.

See also Mark 7:24-30. Compare this mother with the woman in 2 Kings 4:8-37 and the father in Genesis 32

What is the Lord saying to us about our 'hopeless' loved one who seems in the devil's grip, not able or willing to pray for herself? Was He pleased with the woman's tenacity and her request? What will we do? Have his understanding and patient, loving kindness diminished?

Jesus, the model for all sonship

'... suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!" Matthew 17:5 Context: Jesus' transfiguration

The Lord answered this father's prayer in spite of general lack of faith.

'... a man came up to him and, kneeling before him, said, "Lord, have mercy on my son... And I brought him to your disciples, and they could not heal him." And Jesus answered, *"O faithless and twisted generation, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to*

bear with you? Bring him here to me.” And Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of him, and the boy was healed instantly.’ Matthew 17:14-18 ESV

Notice how grieved Jesus is when he finds unbelief. Nevertheless, in his patience and kindness, he still blesses the father who has enough faith to come to him.

This incident shows that all disciples including parents, grandparents, brothers, sisters, uncles, aunts etc. must reject unbelief.

‘Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, “Why could we not cast it out?” He said to them, “Because of your little faith. For truly, I say to you, if you have faith like a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there’, and it will move, and nothing will be impossible for you.” Matthew 17:19,20 ESV

IT IS NOT HOW BIG our faith is; it is who we put our faith in that counts. The massive size of the problem seemed to challenge even God’s power. This in turn probably led to doubt whether it was ‘God’s will’ to save this boy.

Faith does not doubt either God’s ability or his willingness:

“With God, all things are possible,” says Jesus, (e.g. Matt. 19:26).

The Lord is always willing to save the most unlikely, hardest, confirmed sinner.

In the whole Bible find one person who came and humbly asked God to help him or his loved one, to whom God said, “Sorry, it’s not my sovereign will to help you. You’ll have to go away disappointed.” The Bible is full of assurances that the Lord is *willing* and *able* to answer *whoever* calls to him about any burden he or she has.

“WHOEVER BELIEVES in Him [i.e. in what he tells us] will not be put to shame.” Romans 10:11. Are we going to be like the ‘faithless and twisted generation’ or take him at his word which assures us of his answer? Will it grieve him if we expect him to save our loved family member? Or will it please him? Keep your eyes up to Jesus [‘the Lord saves’] – that pleases him.

We need a childlike attitude to our Father.

‘At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, “Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” Then Jesus called a little child to Him, set him in the midst of them, and said, “Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever receives one little child like this in My name receives Me.”’ Matthew 18:1-5

We must be careful in how we influence our children and likewise in the influences we allow them to receive – one of Jesus’ starkest warnings.

“Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great mill-

stone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea. Woe to the world for temptations to sin! For it is necessary that temptations come, but woe to the one by whom the temptation comes!" Matthew 18:5-7 ESV Full quote: Matt. 18:5-9

In the context of the above warning, Jesus prescribes drastic measures.

"And if your hand or your foot causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life crippled or lame than with two hands or two feet to be thrown into the eternal fire." Matthew 18:8 ESV Full quote Matt. 18:8,9 (Mark 9:43-48)

If an activity will "cause our child to sin", it leads towards "the eternal fire". Better do without even a legitimate activity (hands and feet are very good in themselves) and limp into Life than adopt on-going cause to sin. This is not our idea; it is the Son of God's warning. When a child is young, parents will have to make decisions and explain their actions from God's Word. A child trained and taught by wise parents will be equipped to make his own decisions when older.

This parallels 'how to avoid the temptation to adultery' (Matt. 5:27-30). Temptation to sin is so appealing and desirable (and so dangerous) that, where possible, we must remove the means it uses. Thus we cut off opportunity for the temptation.

Our children are very important to God.

"Take heed that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that in heaven their angels always see the face of My Father who is in heaven." Matt. 18:10

A father does not want his children to perish.

"Even so it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish." Full quote: Matthew 18:12-14

Neither does our Father want his children's children to perish; so let us pray for them with confidence and bring them up according to his instructions.

A principle for family living in church and home

"Then Peter came to Him and said, 'Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?' Jesus said to him, 'I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.'" Matthew 18:21,22.

Full quote: Matt. 18:21-35

The Son of God reaffirms the marriage relationship (Matthew 19:1-12)

'And He answered and said to them, "Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning 'made them male and female,' and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.'" Matthew 19:4-6. See Genesis 1:27, 2:24

God's view of divorce reaffirmed

'He said to them, "Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery."' Matthew 19:8,9.

Also in Mark 10:1-12

Marriage is good; remaining unmarried is good. Either way must be in trusting obedience to the Lord.

'His disciples said to Him, "If such is the case of the man with his wife, it is better not to marry." But He said to them, "All cannot accept this saying, but only those to whom it has been given: For there are eunuchs who were born thus from their mother's womb, and there are eunuchs who were made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He who is able to accept it, let him accept it."' Matthew 19:11,12

Family blessings are great but there is something even greater.

"Everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life." Matthew 19:29 Context: the difficulty of entering the kingdom of God (Mt. 19:23-30)

Good parenting can be misunderstood.

"Then little children were brought to Jesus for him to place his hands on them and pray for them. But the disciples rebuked those who brought them." Matthew 19:13 NIV

Child-care – positive and negative

'Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these."' Matthew 19:14 NIV (Mk. 10:13-16, Lk. 18:15-17)

Jesus rewarded parents' faith.

"And He laid His hands on them ..." Matthew 19:15

This mother brought her family ambitions to the Lord.

'Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came to Him with her sons, kneeling down and asking something from Him. And He said to her, "What do you wish?" She said to Him, "Grant that these two sons of mine may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on the left, in Your kingdom." But Jesus answered and said, "You do not know what you ask..."' Matthew 20:20-22. Full quote: Matthew 20:20-28

Jesus accepts the praise of children.

'But when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that He did, and the children crying out in the temple and saying, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" they were

indignant and said to Him, "Do You hear what these are saying?" And Jesus said to them, "Yes. Have you never read, 'Out of the mouth of babes and nursing infants You have perfected praise?'" ' Matthew 21:15,16

No doubt, the children's understanding was limited but the Lord still accepted their praises.

Family concerns can be mountainous.

'And Jesus answered them, "Truly, I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what has been done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, 'Be taken up and thrown into the sea', it will happen. And whatever you ask in prayer, you will receive, if you have faith.'" Matthew 21:21,22 ESV Context: Matt. 21:18-22

Think of the biggest mountain facing our family member. Isn't it the difficulty of entering the kingdom of God? "With men this is impossible but with God all things are possible." Our heavenly Father has almighty power to remove that mountain. Is he willing to do this? If we doubt his willingness to save our sinful family member, does that please him?

Every parent knows: respect from children is measured by action, not talk.

"But what do you think? A man had two sons, and he came to the first and said, 'Son, go, work today in my vineyard.' He answered and said, 'I will not,' but afterward he regretted it and went. Then he came to the second and said likewise. And he answered and said, 'I go, sir,' but he did not go. Which of the two did the will of his father?" Matthew 21:28-31 Context: priests' and elders' disobedience to God the Father.

Ask children, "How can we honour God if we don't obey our parents?" (Colos. 3:20)

The Lord Jesus warns of great family suffering. How does our faith respond?

"And alas for women who are pregnant and for those who are nursing infants in those days!" Matthew 24:19 ESV Context: the whole chapter

Does our family have a forward, watchful look?

*"Therefore **keep watch**, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come ... So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him." Matthew 24:42-44 NIV*

A woman's service despised by the men but honoured eternally by the Lord Jesus

"Now when Jesus was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, a woman came up to him with an alabaster flask of very expensive ointment, and she poured it on his head as he reclined at table. And when the disciples saw it, they were indignant, saying, "Why this waste? For this could have been sold for a large sum and given to the poor." But Jesus, aware of this, said to them, "Why do you trouble the woman? For she has done a beautiful thing to me. For you always have the poor with you, but you will not

always have me. In pouring this ointment on my body, she has done it to prepare me for burial. Truly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will also be told in memory of her.” Matthew 26:6-13 ESV

The greatest ever example of a son’s obedience to his father.

‘And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, saying, “My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will.” ...

Again, for the second time, he went away and prayed, “My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done.”” Matthew 26:39,42 ESV

A wife who loved her husband enough to pass on God’s warning to him.

‘While [Pilate] was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent to him, saying, “Have nothing to do with that just Man, for I have suffered many things today in a dream because of Him.”” Matthew 27:19

The most terrible father-son rift imaginable. But Jesus hangs on in faith.

*‘Now from the sixth hour until the ninth hour there was darkness over all the land. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, “Eli, Eli, lama sabach-thani?” that is, “**My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?**”” Matthew 27:45,46*

God chose women to announce the greatest miracle of all time.

‘But the angel answered and said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead ...”” Matthew 28:5-7

Christian parents are commissioned to teach the Lord’s curriculum to their children. They need help from Christ-centred teachers who base their lives on the Word.

*“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and **teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.** And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” Matthew 28:18-20*

THIS IS NOT OPTIONAL; it is commanded by the King of kings. Who are God’s appointed teachers of children – the state, the church or parents?

Parents are commissioned by the Lord to bring up their children on his behalf (Deut. 6:4-8, Ephesians 6:4). Governments and church members can give valuable aid to parents in their task – the Lord wants all kinds of people to use their gifts and expertise to help parents and children. However, parents bear overall responsibility for the teaching they give and/or choose for their children to receive.

The Great Commission for parents is a teaching commission: teaching children *"to obey everything I have commanded you"*. The whole of the Word of God is to be obeyed, i.e. worked out and applied practically, in every aspect of everyday life. Daily Bible reading and explanation is an essential family activity. Family prayer should naturally flow from this and is appropriate at any time (1 Thess. 5:17). We can't change a child's heart but trying to do what **we** can, invites our heavenly Father to do what only **He** can. He does this by grace – his undeserved loving kindness.

Mark

Jesus is the one and only Son of His Father – God the Son from eternity.

"The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." Mark 1:1

'And a voice came from heaven, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased."
Mark 1:11 Context: Jesus' baptism.

We are God's created sons and daughters. Let us aim to please our heavenly Father and be an example of obedience in our own family.

When a family member is sick, tell Jesus about it. He is infinitely kind.

"And immediately he left the synagogue and entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. Now Simon's mother-in-law lay ill with a fever, and immediately they told him about her. And he came and took her by the hand and lifted her up, and the fever left her, and she began to serve them." Mark 1:29-31 ESV

The same day the Lord demonstrated his concern for every family who came to him with their distress. They were not disappointed – see Mark 1:32-34.

Relationship to Christ transcends natural family relationships.

'But He answered them, saying, "Who is My mother, or My brothers?" And He looked around in a circle at those who sat about Him, and said, "Here are My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of God is My brother and My sister and mother."
Mark 3:33-35. Full quote: Mark 3:31-35

The Lord always hears and responds when we pray for our children.

'... And when he saw Him, he fell at His feet and begged Him earnestly, saying, "My little daughter lies at the point of death. Come and lay Your hands on her, that she may be healed, and she will live." So Jesus went with him ...' Mark 5:22,23.

Full quote: Mark 5:21-43

Jesus notices his daughter's faith. (A woman with faith is 'a daughter of Abraham'.)

And He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace, and be healed of your affliction." Mark 5:34 Full story Mk 5:25-34 . See Lk. 13:16, Gal. 3:7.

Parents, even if it seems hopeless, the Lord wants you to hang on to his word.

'While He was still speaking, some came from the ruler of the synagogue's house who said, "Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the Teacher any further?"

As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, He said to the ruler of the synagogue, "Do not be afraid; only believe."' Mark 5:35,36

Sadly, sin makes this a feature of family life. Jesus' family was no exception.

'Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? And are not his sisters here with us?' And they took offence at him. And Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honour, except in his home town and among his relatives and in his own household."' Mark 6:3,4 ESV

Father, mother, lack of faith diminishes the Lord's work in our family.

"Now He could do no mighty work there, except that He laid his hands on a few sick people and healed them. And He marvelled because of their unbelief." Mark 6:5

True devotion to God is seen in fulfilling practical family responsibilities.

'[Jesus] said to them, "All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition. For Moses said, 'Honour your father and mother'; and, 'He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.' But you say, 'If a man says to his father or mother, "Whatever profit you might have received from me is Corban"—(that is, a gift to God), then you no longer let him do anything for his father or his mother, making the word of God of no effect through your tradition which you have handed down ..."' Mark 7:9-13 ESV Context: Mark 7: 5-13 (Also in Matthew 15:1-9)

What is our greatest ambition for our child?

"For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?" Mark 8:36 Context: Mark 8:34-38

The Lord Jesus describes the human heart i.e. our own heart and our child's heart.

Only Jesus is strong enough to save us and our child from hell.

"For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness." Mark 7:21,22

The mother who wouldn't give up (revisited)

Mark 7:24-30 ESV

The first obstacle

v 24 *"And from there Jesus arose and went away to the region of Tyre and Sidon. And he entered a house and did not want anyone to know ..."*

In spite of this, God the Father ensures that a woman with faith can find Jesus.
v 24 "... yet he could not be hidden."

She hears where Jesus is and unceremoniously begs him to save her daughter.
v 25,26 *"But immediately a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit heard of him and came and fell down at his feet. Now the woman was a Gentile, a Syrophenician by birth [an outsider, not a child of Abraham]. And she begged him to cast the demon out of her daughter."*

An apparently insulting reply from the Lord. But he always speaks the truth.
v 27,28 *"And he said to her, "Let the children be fed first, for it is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs." But she answered him, "Yes, Lord; yet even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs."*

She acknowledges his word, reasons from that and holds Jesus to his word.
Will the 'Son of David' refuse to have mercy on a dog? – see Matthew 15:22.

The merciful, kind Son of God is delighted to answer his daughter's request.
v 29 *"And he said to her, "For this statement you may go your way; the demon has left your daughter."*

She takes Jesus at his word. Her loved one is saved in accordance with her faith.
v 30 *"And she went home and found the child lying in bed and the demon gone."*

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and for ever. What does he want to see in us when we are concerned for the salvation of our nearest and dearest? **Faith!**
Unbelief *looks away* from Jesus to ourselves and our sinfulness, or at other people and their failings. Follow the woman's example: she steadfastly fixed her eyes on Jesus and wouldn't look anywhere else.

The original Father-Son relationship

'Then a cloud appeared and covered them, and a voice came from the cloud: "This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!"' Mark 9:7 NIV Context: Jesus' transfiguration.

A child blessed by his parent's weak faith

'"... if you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us." And Jesus said to him, "If you can! All things are possible for one who believes." Immediately the father of the child cried out and said, "I believe; help my unbelief!"' Mark 9:22-24 ESV.

Full quote: Mark 9:14-29

The father was doubting Jesus' *ability* to deal with such a mountainous problem. Unbelief also doubts God's *willingness* to save from the devil's power. How can we think that the Lord Jesus is unwilling to save any person from the evil one! He says,

"The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil." 1 John 3:8 ESV. So we can bring our child to the Lord in prayer confident in his ability to save. Let us not insult him by thinking he is a reluctant Saviour.

Accepting our children in Christ's name needs humility.

"... if anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all." And he took a child and put him in the midst of them, and taking him in his arms, he said to them, "Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me, receives not me but him who sent me." " Mark 9:35-37 ESV.

Context: Mark 9:33-37. Also in Luke 9:46,47

It is easy to think that we are superior to our children. No, we are sinners as are they.

Protecting our children may need serious measures.

"Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him if a great millstone were hung round his neck and he were thrown into the sea. And if your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than with two hands to go to hell, to unquenchable fire ... " Mark 9:42,43 ESV.

Full quote: Mark 9:42-50 (also in Matt. 18:5-9 and Luke 17:1-3) See also 1 Cor. 8:13

As the Lord's appointed guardians of children, parents are responsible to minimise "causes of sin" in children's lives. The world is full of these but we can keep our family environment as free as possible from temptations and as full as possible of whatever is true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent or praiseworthy (Philip. 4:8).

Notice how the Son of God quotes Genesis to remind us that marriage is a 'creation institution' from the beginning of the world.

And Jesus answered and said to them, "Because of the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept. But from the beginning of the creation, God 'made them male and female.' 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'; so then they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate." Mark 10:5-9

God has joined male and female together in marriage. We live in a society which rejects God. Man 'separates' what God has joined and 'joins together' what should not be joined. "God created man in his own image ... **male and female** he created them." (Genesis 1:27). Those who change God's order, assault God himself and will receive "in themselves the due penalty for their perversion." (Romans 1:26,27 NIV). However, if they repent, there is rich forgiveness! (1 Corinthians 6:9-11)

The Lord hates divorce. It ruins families.

'In the house His disciples also asked Him again about the same matter. So He said to them, "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her.

And if a woman divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery.”
Mark 10:11,12. Full account: Mark 10:2-12; also in Matthew 19:1-9

Hindering children from coming to Christ angers him.

‘And they were bringing children to him that he might touch them, and the disciples rebuked them. But when Jesus saw it, he was indignant and said to them, “Let the children come to me; do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God.”’
Mark 10:13,14 ESV

The absolute necessity of child-like faith in what God says

“Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.” And he took them in his arms and blessed them, laying his hands on them.’
Mark 10:15,16 ESV

Notice the Lord’s pleasure in blessing little children. All people with faith are his little children – what blessing is ours! See John 13:33, 1 John 3:1.

A few verses later, notice Jesus’ terminology.

‘And the disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said to them again, “Children, how difficult it is to enter the kingdom of God!”’ Mark 10:24 ESV

The Lord who gives us earthly family blessings sometimes calls us to forgo them for the sake of his kingdom. We gain much greater blessings and privileges.

‘Jesus said, “Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life.’
Mark 10:29,30 ESV One of three such passages in the gospels.

Child-like faith receives what it asks for. Notice the essential attitude of heart (v 25).

‘And Jesus answered them, “Have faith in God. Truly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, ‘Be taken up and thrown into the sea’, and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says will come to pass, it will be done for him. Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours. And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.”’ Mark 11:22-25
Context: Mark 11:12-25

GOD WANTS US to pray for our family members (1 Tim. 5:8). What does he desire most for them? *“God our Saviour desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.”* (1 Tim. 2:4 ESV). Child-like faith accepts God at his word. ‘Sophisticated faith’ will argue against the plain statement of God. Our Saviour ‘desires all people to be saved’. Human scepticism cannot

negate the words of the living God. So what does our Father want us to pray for? – that he may save our family member. We know he is willing; he's just told us!

What answer does he want us to expect?

"Whoever believes that what he says will come to pass, it will be done for him."

But that is impossible! Yes it is; it's like a mountain being thrown into the sea. That is the point; with men this is impossible but with God all things are possible, especially when God has said that he desires it.

*"...if you can [save my loved one], have compassion on us and help us." And Jesus said to him, "'If you can!' **All things are possible for one who believes.**" Immediately the father of the child cried out and said, "I believe; help my unbelief!" See Mark 9:22-24.*

What happened next? The boy was saved from Satan's power. A tiny weak bit of faith, like a mustard seed, removed the mountain.

No human marriage in heaven

"For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven." Mark 12:25 Context Mark 12:18-27

We'll be married to the heavenly Bridegroom which is better by far! (Revelation 21)

The Lord will condemn those who exploit widows and the vulnerable.

"[The scribes] ... devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers. These will receive greater condemnation." Mark 12:40 Context: Mark 12:38-40

'The Lord watches over the widow' Ps. 146:9. No husband – but outstanding service

"Now Jesus sat opposite the treasury and saw how the people put money into the treasury. And many who were rich put in much. Then one poor widow came and threw in two mites, which make a quadrans. So He called His disciples to Himself and said to them, "Assuredly, I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all those who have given to the treasury; for they all put in out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all that she had, her whole livelihood." Mark 12:41-44

The Lord knows that his children will suffer – even in families.

"Now brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death. And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But he who endures to the end shall be saved." Mark 13:12,13

Is Jesus' prophecy meant to cause us fatalistically to say, 'There's nothing we can do; whatever will happen will happen.' No! The Lord is looking for *faith* not resignation. How does faith view the Lord's words?

We *do not* deserve to have our family members saved but we have responsibility to

ask the Lord to save them. Has he not given many encouragements to expect him to answer our request? (See elsewhere in this book.) What does his name 'Jesus' mean? Let us ask the Lord to save our loved ones 'for his Name's sake'.

An essential instruction for a Christian family

*"Therefore **keep watch** because you do not know when the owner of the house will come back – whether in the evening, or at midnight, or when the cock crows, or at dawn. If he comes suddenly, do not let him find you sleeping. What I say to you, I say to everyone: '**Watch!**'"* Mark 13:35-37 NIV. Full quote: Mark 13:5-37

A woman who 'did what she could' to serve the Lord was criticised for it.

The Lord rebuked the critics and commended her service.

'Some of those present were saying indignantly to one another, "Why this waste of perfume? It could have been sold for more than a year's wages and the money given to the poor." And they rebuked her harshly.

"Leave her alone," said Jesus. "Why are you bothering her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. The poor you will always have with you, and you can help them any time you want. But you will not always have me. She did what she could. She poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare for my burial. I tell you the truth, wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her." NIV Full quote: Mark 14:3-9

Jesus' childlike praying to his Father as he obeys him in deep distress

'He went a little farther, and fell on the ground, and prayed that if it were possible, the hour might pass from Him. And He said, "Abba, Father, all things are possible for You. Take this cup away from Me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will."

Mark 14: 35,36

The Son could no longer call God his Father. He was under God's curse (Gal. 3:13).

'And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabach-thani?" which is translated, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"' Mk. 15:34

Having paid the price of sin, the Son is reconciled to his Father.

'And when Jesus had cried out with a loud voice, He said, "Father, 'into Your hands I commit My spirit." Having said this, He breathed His last.' Luke 23:27

Not only this Son but all the other members of God's family were reconciled.

"... in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them ... For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." 2 Corinthians 5:19-21 ESV

We too can now call God our Father! (Matthew 6:8, John 20:17)

Luke

JOHN'S parents

Luke 1:5-80

The Lord did not forget this couple's prayers. He gave them great family joy.

'But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your prayer is heard; and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth." Lk. 1:13 Context: Lk. 1:11-25

The Lord wants us to be deeply committed to our children.

"And he [John] will go on before the Lord in the Spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous – to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." Lk. 1:17. (See note on Mal. 4:6)

If we turn our hearts to our children and, by God's grace, our children's hearts turn to us (as in Malachi 4:6), we will be ready for the Lord's return.

This parent's faith had become jaded over time. The result: unbelief.

'And Zechariah said to the angel, "How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is advanced in years." And the angel answered him, "I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I was sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news. And behold, you will be silent and unable to speak until the day that these things take place, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their time.'" Lk 1:19 ESV

By contrast, this woman didn't fully understand but humbly trusted God's Word.

'Then Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I do not know a man?" And the angel answered and said to her, "... Now indeed, Elizabeth your relative has also conceived a son in her old age; and this is now the sixth month for her who was called barren. For with God nothing will be impossible." Then Mary said, "Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her.' Luke 1:34-38

HUSBAND, WIFE, it is easy to become jaded. Pray for submissive faith like Mary's. Make sure that neither of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from God. But encourage one another daily, so that you will not be hardened by sin's deceitfulness. See Hebrews 3:3:12,13

A child was 'born again' even before he was born!

"He [John] will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb." Luke 1:15

The Lord answers Elizabeth's prayer of many years and she is thankful.

'So it was, as soon as the days of his service were completed, that he departed to his

own house. Now after those days his wife Elizabeth conceived; and she hid herself five months, saying, "Thus the Lord has dealt with me, in the days when He looked on me, to take away my reproach among people." Luke 1:23-25

The mother's joy increases – notice her focus.

'And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, and she exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! And why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me?"' Luke 1:41 ESV

Context: Luke 1:39-56

Evidence of faith in an unborn child

"For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy." Luke 1:44 ESV.

A mother's faith confirmed and strengthened

"And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfilment of what was spoken to her from the Lord." Luke 1:45 ESV.

Father, mother, make sure you know what God has said and keep holding on to it.

The parents were determined to follow God's instructions, not tradition.

'... they [the neighbours and relatives] would have called him by the name of his father, Zacharias. His mother answered and said, "No; he shall be called John." ... So they made signs to his father—what he would have him called. And he asked for a writing tablet, and wrote, saying, "His name is John." So they all marvelled.' Luke 1:59-63

We must check God's Word before we adopt our friends' or relatives' tradition.

A worthy question for any parent

'[Those who heard asked, concerning John,] "What kind of child will this be?" And the hand of the Lord was with him.' Luke 1:66

This is the father whose faith had almost given up. Look at him now!

Weak faith has resulted in great blessing because of 'God's tender mercy'.

'Now his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying:

"Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, for He has visited and redeemed His people, and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of His servant David ...'

Whole quote: Luke 1:67-79

The father is thrilled to be given such a child.

"And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Highest; for you will go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways, to give knowledge of salvation to His people by the remission of their sins, through the tender mercy of our God ..." Luke 1:76-78

Notice the father's focus: 2 verses on baby John and 10 verses on the Messiah.

"Delight yourself in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart."
Psalm 37:4 ESV. "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you." John 15:7

OUR HEAVENLY FATHER knows what we desire for our children and grand-children. How reluctant is he to give us our heart's desire?

What He has done in one child He can do in another.

"... the child [John] grew and became strong in spirit ..." Luke 1:80

JESUS in Joseph's and Mary's family

Luke 1:26-38, 2:1-52

Genesis 3:15 is being fulfilled – Woman's special role in God's salvation plan.

"Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High ..." Luke 1:30-32 ESV Context: Lk. 1:26-33

The honour of bringing the Messiah into the world is given to Woman, the female image-bearer of God. See Genesis 1:27, 3:15, 1 Cor. 11:12b, Gal. 4:4, Rev. 12

Parents' faith tested by hardship

"And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn." Lk. 2:7. See Lk. 2:4-7

Who can fathom the importance of a baby?

"For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." Luke 2:11,12 ESV

God placed his own Son in an ordinary family.

"And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger." Luke 2:16 ESV

To bring up his Son, God chose parents who were obedient to his instructions.

'And when eight days were completed for the circumcision of the Child, His name was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb. Now when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were completed, they brought Him to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord (as it is written in the law of the Lord, "Every male who opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord"), and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the law of the Lord, "A pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons."' Luke 2:21-24

Great privilege to be parents of God's Servant (Isaiah 52, 53) but great pain also
'And Joseph and His mother marvelled at those things which were spoken of Him. Then Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary His mother, "Behold, this Child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign which will be spoken against (yes, a sword will pierce through your own soul also), that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed." Luke 2:33-35

Bringing up children for the Lord gives great joy but we can expect suffering as well.

A woman who exemplified 1 Tim. 5:5. The Lord gave her special blessing.

"... and this woman was a widow of about eighty-four years, who did not depart from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day. And coming in that instant she gave thanks to the Lord, and spoke of Him to all those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem." Luke 2:36-38

May the Lord make our children strong and wise and protect them by his grace.

"When Joseph and Mary had done everything required by the Law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee to their own town of Nazareth. And the child grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him." Lk 2:39,40 NIV

Twelve years on and 'father' and mother are still following God's word.

"His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover. And when He was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem according to the custom of the feast." Luke 2:41,42

The parents are not over-protective, knowing their son to be absolutely reliable.

"And when the feast was ended, as they were returning, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. His parents did not know it, but supposing him to be in the group they went a day's journey, but then they began to search for him among their relatives and acquaintances ..." Luke 2:43,44 ESV Whole story: Luke 2:41-51

Parents need wisdom to give the right combination of protection and freedom.

The Son of God is in authority over his earthly parents – a lesson for them to learn.

'And his mother said to him, "Son, why have you treated us so? Behold, your father and I have been searching for you in great distress." And he said to them, "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?"' Luke 2:48,49

We often can't understand why God takes us through times of family anxiety but he always has good reason – for our good.

In spite of misunderstanding, the mother continues to trust.

"And they did not understand the saying that he spoke to them ... And his mother treasured up all these things in her heart." Luke 2:50,51 ESV

Twelve-year-old Jesus – the example for all children.

"Then he went down to Nazareth with [his parents] and was obedient to them."

Luke 2:51 NIV

Aim for our child's all-round development – mental, physical, spiritual, social.

"And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and men." Lk. 2:52

Jesus is the Son of God and also son of man.

'... the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form, like a dove; and a voice came from heaven, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased."

Jesus, when he began his ministry, was about thirty years of age, being the son (as was supposed) of Joseph, the son of Heli, the son of Matthat, the son of Levi ...'

Luke 3:21-24 Whole genealogy: Luke 3:23-38

We are created sons of God (small 's').

*"... the son of Arphaxad, the son of Shem, the son of Noah, the son of Lamech, the son of Methuselah, the son of Enoch, the son of Jared, the son of Mahalaleel, the son of Cainan, the son of Enos, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, **the son of God.**"* Lk. 3:36-38

Many afflicted families came to Jesus. Every single loved-one was healed.

"Simon's wife's mother was sick with a high fever, and they made request of Him concerning her. So He stood over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her. And immediately she arose and served them. When the sun was setting, all those who had any that were sick with various diseases brought them to Him; and He laid His hands on every one of them and healed them ..." Luke 4:38-41

Jesus welcomed them; he was not reluctant to heal. What confidence we have in making request for our family loved-ones! Our big prayer is for their eternal healing, not a temporary one. Is he reluctant to listen to our request? No, he welcomes our request. Not one family went away disappointed. (Matt. 15:21-28)

All families show 'family resemblance'. This is seen in God's family.

"But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil. Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful."

Luke 6:35,35 Context Luke 6:27-38

Let us take care whom we appoint to teach our children.

'He also told them this parable: "Can the blind lead the blind? Will they not both fall into a pit? A student is not above his teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher."' Luke 6:39,40 NIV

Q. Wasn't Jesus referring to 'spiritual' teachers not school teachers? Aren't humanistic, atheistic teachers relatively safe for teaching our children and young people?

A. What would the Lord Jesus say to that?

This principle should inform family behaviour.

"Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, 'Brother, let me take the speck out of your eye,' when you yourself fail to see the plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye." Luke 6:41,42 NIV

Is Jesus the Lord of our family? How do we know?

"Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say? I will show you what he is like who comes to me and hears my words and puts them into practice. He is like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock. When a flood came, the torrent struck that house but could not shake it, because it was well built." Luke 6:46-48 NIV

If we fail to apply God's word to our family life we invite its ruin.

"But the one who hears my words and does not put them into practice is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. The moment the torrent struck that house, it collapsed and its destruction was complete." Luke 6:49 NIV

May we be wise and our children be children of wisdom.

"Wisdom is proved right by all her children." Luke 7:35 NIV

Context: Jesus' teaching about John the Baptist, Luke 7:18-35

Single parents, listen! The Defender of widows has compassion on the needy.

And when He came near the gate of the city, behold, a dead man was being carried out, the only son of his mother; and she was a widow. And a large crowd from the city was with her. When the Lord saw her, He had compassion on her and said to her, "Do not weep." Luke 7:12,13 Whole incident: Luke 7:11-17

Has he changed? He sees our trouble; he welcomes distressed parents. "Do not weep!" – Go to him.

If the Lord takes notice of us and our child, we will not be disappointed!

Then He came and touched the open coffin, and those who carried him stood still. And He said, "Young man, I say to you, arise." So he who was dead sat up and began to speak. And He presented him to his mother. Luke 7:14,15

Compare this with Elijah in 1 Kings 18:23 and Elisha in 2 Kings 4:36,37

The Lord treasured the women's service as much as that of his apostles.

"And the twelve were with Jesus, and also some women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, and Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's household manager, and Susanna, and many others, who provided for them out of their means." Luke 8:1-3 ESV

Jesus re-emphasises the importance of listening to his Word and applying it.

"Then his mother and his brothers came to him, but they could not reach him because of the crowd. And he was told, "Your mother and your brothers are standing outside, desiring to see you." But he answered them, "My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it."'" Luke 8:19-21 ESV

The Lord wants us always to pray to him for our loved ones.

"And behold, there came a man named Jairus, and he was a ruler of the synagogue. And he fell down at Jesus' feet and begged Him to come to his house, for he had an only daughter about twelve years of age, and she was dying." Luke 8:41,42

Context: Luke 8:41-56

No matter how bleak the condition, we should not fear. He does all things well.

"While He was still speaking, someone came from the ruler of the synagogue's house, saying to him, "Your daughter is dead. Do not trouble the Teacher." But when Jesus heard it, He answered him, saying, "Do not be afraid; only believe, and she will be made well."'" Luke 8:49,50

Does our child seem spiritually dead? The Lord does not want us to give up. He is the same today as yesterday. He *delights to show mercy* (Micah 7:18). He delights to show mercy to you. Do you deserve it? Does your child deserve it? If you go and ask Him to lay his hand on your dead child will you be the loser? Will he rebuke you for coming to him with your burden? Don't look elsewhere!

A word from Jesus can bring a child from death to life.

"He ... took her by the hand and called, saying, 'Little girl arise.' Then her spirit returned, and she arose immediately ... And her parents were astonished." Luke 8:54-56.

Jesus listened to this desperate father's cry.

'And behold, a man from the crowd cried out, "Teacher, I beg you to look at my son ..."' Luke 9:39 ESV. Full quote: Luke 9:37-43

In spite of being displeased with their unbelief, Jesus answers the father's prayer.

"... I begged your disciples to cast it out, but they could not." Jesus answered, "O faithless and twisted generation, how long am I to be with you and bear with you? Bring your son here."... Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit and healed the boy, and gave him

back to his father. And all were astonished at the majesty of God.’ Luke 9:40-43 ESV

The father’s faith was little better than the disciples’ but in his desperation, he again weakly cried for help (Mark 9:22-24). The Lord hears our faintest cry.

Observe and imitate child-like trust.

"In that same hour he rejoiced in the Holy Spirit and said, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will." Luke 10:21 ESV. Also in Matthew 11:25,26

A woman who loved the Lord and was serving him

And a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching. But Martha was distracted with much serving. And she went up to him and said, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me." But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her." Luke 10:38-42

Sisters can be infuriating! (especially when we are serving with the wrong attitude). But the Lord sensitively corrects our focus.

Can we be sure of God's answers to our family requests?

Luke 11:1-13

An ideal prayer for families. Notice the attitude of heart.

"When you pray, say: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us day by day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one." Luke 11:2-4

The one who couldn't be bothered still answered the man's request.

'And Jesus said to them, "Which of you who has a friend will go to him at midnight and say to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves, for a friend of mine has arrived on a journey, and I have nothing to set before him'; and he will answer from within, 'Do not bother me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed. I cannot get up and give you anything'? I tell you, though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his impudence he will rise and give him whatever he needs.'" Luke 11:5-8 ESV

Is our heavenly Father not bothered about our family?

Six assurances that our Father will grant our desire. What more do we need?

"And I tell you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened." Luke 11:9,10 ESV

Our heavenly Father wants to bless our family! He is listening for our requests.

Our parenthood dimly reflects God's fatherhood. A Father knows what is best.

"What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!" Luke 11:11-13. ESV See also Matthew 7:9-11

It is more necessary to have the Holy Spirit than our daily bread. Our family cannot prosper without him. He will be grieved if we don't ask! "Give us this day ..."

Obedience to God is more valuable than motherhood.

'As he said these things, a woman in the crowd raised her voice and said to him, "Blessed is the womb that bore you, and the breasts at which you nursed!" But he said, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!"' Luke 11:27,28 ESV

God's saving power can prevent this. Lord, have mercy on our family!

"For from now on five in one house will be divided: three against two, and two against three. Father will be divided against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law." Luke 12:52,53.

Full quote: Luke 12:51-53. Also Matthew 10:34-39 (Micah 7:5,6)

Where there is division, follow the Lord, not family.

This woman of faith had great affliction. Jesus knew all about it and cared deeply.

'And behold, there was a woman who had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bent over and could in no way raise herself up. But when Jesus saw her, He called her to Him and said to her, "Woman, you are loosed from your infirmity." And He laid His hands on her, and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God ...'

"... ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has bound—think of it—for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath?"

Read the whole story in Luke 13:10-17 – Jesus cared but the man was too intent on 'keeping God's law' to notice the woman's distress.

Parental protective instinct is a precious gift from God.

"How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings ..." Luke 13:34. Context: Luke 13:34,35

Devotion to family must be in subjection to Christ.

"If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple."

Luke 14:26. Context: Luke 14:25-33

Sin promotes ungratefulness to parents.

'Then He said: "A certain man had two sons. And the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the portion of goods that falls to me.' So he divided to them his livelihood.'" Luke 15:11,12 Whole parable: Luke 15:11-31

God's grace can give humility to our children.

"But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants."'"

Luke 15:17-19

A godly father yearns for his wayward son to be reconciled.

"And he arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him. And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to be called your son.'" Luke 15:20,21

God's bountiful Fatherly compassion

"But the father said to his servants, 'Bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet. And bring the fatted calf here and kill it, and let us eat and be merry; for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.'" Luke 15:22-24

The third time that this warning of Jesus is included in the gospel accounts

'And he said to his disciples, "Temptations to sin are sure to come, but woe to the one through whom they come! It would be better for him if a millstone were hung round his neck and he were cast into the sea than that he should cause one of these little ones to sin. Pay attention to yourselves!" Luke 17:1-3 ESV (Matt. 18:1-9, Mark 9:42-49)

Jesus is very concerned that children and young people are not misled.

Q. Doesn't 'little ones' refer to believers, not literal children?

A. Primarily yes, but isn't Jesus just as concerned for the 'literal' children he has created? (Mark 10:13-16). Or is he only a little concerned?

The wife who warns us not to love the world. (Genesis 19)

"Remember Lot's wife!" Lk. 17:32 Context: Be ready for the Son of Man's return.

The Lord himself says, "Keep on praying for your family, never give up!"

'And Jesus told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart. He said, "In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor respected man. And there was a widow in that city who kept coming to him and saying, 'Give me justice ...' And the Lord said, "... will not God give justice to his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them? I tell you, he will give justice to them speedily.'" ESV Full teaching: Luke 18:1-8

If we are praying for the salvation of our loved-ones, it is 'justice' they need, the saving justice of the Lord Jesus Christ who paid the price of their sin.

"Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?" Luke 18:8

What is the Son of Man looking for? Will he find it in us? How does faith answer his question?

Are babies too young to bring to Jesus?

"People were also bringing babies to Jesus to have him touch them. When the disciples saw this, they rebuked them." Luke 18:15 NIV

Why does Jesus want our children to come to him? Does he want to save them?

'But Jesus called the children to him and said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.'" Luke 18:16 NIV

Learn from a little child's simplicity – we must be child-like in receiving the Word.

"I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." Luke 18:17 NIV

God's priority is essential but not for negating his commands (see Mark 7:9-13).

'Then Peter said, "See, we have left all and followed You."

So He said to them, "Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or parents or brothers or wife or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, who shall not receive many times more in this present time, and in the age to come eternal life.'"

Luke 18:28,29 Context: Luke 18:15-30

Those who have given up earthly family blessings in following the Lord will not be disappointed.

Present marriage is temporary but our sonship and daughterhood is eternal.

'Jesus answered and said to them, "The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage. But those who are counted worthy to attain that age, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage; nor can they die anymore, for they are equal to the angels and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection.'" Lk. 20:34-36

This wife's husband had died but her continuing faith pleased the Lord of glory.

Jesus looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the offering box, and he saw a poor widow put in two small copper coins. And he said, "Truly, I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all of them. For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on." Luke 21:1-4 ESV

The third time the Lord has recorded this warning for families

"You will be delivered up even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends, and some of you they will put to death. You will be hated by all for my name's sake. But not a hair of your head will perish. By your endurance you will gain your lives."

Luke 21:16-18 Context: Luke 21:6-36.

The Lord wants us to "escape all these things".

*"But **watch yourselves** lest your hearts be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and cares of this life, and that day come upon you suddenly like a trap. For it will come upon all who dwell on the face of the whole earth. But **stay awake** at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are going to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man."* Luke 21:34-36

We can teach our children to beware of dissipation etc. and to stay awake at all times. We can pray that we and they will "have strength to escape". The Lord **tells** us to pray. Does he want us to doubt that he'll answer? What do the Scriptures say?

The Son submitted to his Father's will revealed in Scripture (Matt. 26:54).

'He knelt down and prayed, saying, "Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done."' Luke 22:41,42

Jesus, in his own suffering, again lovingly warns of great family suffering.

'But Jesus, turning to them, said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For indeed the days are coming in which they will say, 'Blessed are the barren, wombs that never bore, and breasts which never nursed!'" Luke 23:28 Context: Luke 26:26-30

How should the mothers respond to Jesus' warning? What does faith do when God warns us of wrath to come? How does faith affect parents and the way they bring up their children in 21st century UK?

The Son is restored to his Father after bearing full rejection by God on account of his sins. He took ownership of his brothers' sins (Hebrews 2:9-18).

'Then the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was torn in two. And when Jesus had cried out with a loud voice, ["It is finished!" John 15:30] He said, "Father, 'into Your hands I commit My spirit.'" "Having said this, He breathed His last.' Luke 23:45,46

John

Faith brings us into the greatest Family of all.

"But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." John 1:12,13

Brotherly love

"[Andrew] first found his own brother Simon, and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which is translated, the Christ). And he brought him to Jesus.' John 1:41,42

How to have a God-blessed marriage.

"Whatever He says to you, do it." John 2:5. Context: John 2:1-11

Earthly family life is 'created in the image' of life in God's heavenly family.

God's word often draws the parallel between the natural and the spiritual.

'Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."' John 3:3

Nicodemus fails to see the parallel – he thinks Jesus is referring to natural birth.

'Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?"' John 3:4

The focus of God-pleasing schooling.

"God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved."

John 3:16,17

When this central purpose and act of God on behalf of the whole human race is marginalised, excluded or denied by a school or child-care system, it displeases God.

Child-education not acknowledging the Son of God is not commended by God.

"He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." John 3:18,19

Marriage speaks of Christ and his church: natural – spiritual parallel again.

"He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice."

John 3:28 Context: John 3:22-30, John the Baptist's testimony

This woman had flouted God's marriage covenant for years.

'The woman answered him, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband'; for you have had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband. What you have said is true.'" John 4:17,18 ESV

Whole story: John 4:4-42

She had rejected her family responsibilities but Jesus offers her eternal life.

'Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink', you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.'" John 4:10 ESV

How this son wanted to please his father!

'Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work.'" John 4:34

A father who showed faith

John 4:46-54.

We can ask the Lord to save our child from death (sin). Will He refuse us?

He didn't refuse this father:

"And there was a certain nobleman whose son was sick at Capernaum. When he heard that Jesus had come out of Judea into Galilee, he went to Him and implored Him to come down and heal his son, for he was at the point of death." John 4:46, 47.

A 'discouraging' reply from the Lord but the father is not put off.

v 48, 49 'Then Jesus said to him, "Unless you people see signs and wonders, you will by no means believe." The nobleman said to Him, "Sir, come down before my child dies!"

The Lord tests the father's faith – the answer is not exactly what the man asked.

The father has no outward sign but he believes the bare word of Christ.

v 50 'Jesus said to him, "Go your way; your son lives." So the man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him, and he went his way.'

He believes God's word and obeys his instruction. This is what rejoices God's heart. What does he see in us? Are we content to hear God's words about families but not put them into practice? That is not faith (Luke 6:46-49, James 2:20-26).

A day later, God shows the father that his faith was not in vain.

v 51-53 'And as he was now going down, his servants met him and told him, saying, "Your son lives!" Then he inquired of them the hour when he got better. And they said to him, "Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him." So the father knew that it was at the same hour in which Jesus said to him, "Your son lives.'"

The parent's faith is rewarded 'immeasurably more than he asked or imagined'.
v 53 *"And he himself believed, and his whole household."*

He trusted Christ for his son's temporary, physical healing. But in keeping with His liberal, rich, amazing grace and kindness, the Lord heals his son physically plus eternally plus giving eternal life to the whole family! *Will He refuse us?*

A child's faith turns poor resources into profusion.

"Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?" John 6:9 NIV Context: John 6:1-15

Family relationship does not make a believer.

"For even His brothers did not believe in Him." John 7:5. Context: John 7:1-10

Jesus experienced rejection from his own family.

Jesus saves from adultery.

"When Jesus had raised Himself up and saw no one but the woman, He said to her, "Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?" She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said to her, "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more." '
John 8:10,11. Context: John 8:1-11

God's Son demonstrates the attitude we should all have to our heavenly Father.

"I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father taught Me, I speak these things. And He who sent Me is with Me. The Father has not left Me alone, for I always do those things that please Him." John 8:28,29 Context: John 8:12-30

Family resemblance

John 8:31-47 NIV

Family resemblance is important – it identifies us.

v 31-35 *'To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." They answered him, "We are Abraham's descendants and have never been slaves of anyone. How can you say that we shall be set free?" Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever.'*

Is our family being led to 'hold to Christ's teaching' and being 'set free' by it?

God's children are free for ever. Natural family is not sufficient to produce faith.

v 36,37 *'So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. I know you are Abraham's*

descendants. Yet you are ready to kill me, because you have no room for my word.'
Father, mother does your family have room for God's word?

They claimed relation to Abraham, the man of faith, but their practice denied it.

v 38-40 *"I am telling you what I have seen in the Father's presence, and you do what you have heard from your father." "Abraham is our father," they answered.*

"If you were Abraham's children," said Jesus, "then you would do the things Abraham did. As it is, you are determined to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. Abraham did not do such things."

They claimed to believe in God but did not show family resemblance to him.

v 41 *"You are doing the things your own father does." "We are not illegitimate children," they protested. "The only Father we have is God himself."*

Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and now am here. I have not come on my own; but he sent me."

Their family resemblance gave them away.

v 43, 44 *"Why is my language not clear to you? Because you are unable to hear what I say. You belong to your father, the devil ..."*

v 47 *"He who belongs to God hears what God says. The reason you do not hear is that you do not belong to God."*

'Our Father in heaven, deliver our family from the evil one.' May we hear your Word and do what it says.

Let us not blame parents for our present disability.

Our disability is so that we can glorify God and live for him.

'Now as Jesus passed by, He saw a man who was blind from birth. And His disciples asked Him, saying, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"

Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him."' John 9:1-3 Context: whole chapter.

Parents glad for the Lord's blessing on their son but timid in acknowledging it

"We know that this is our son and that he was born blind. But how he now sees we do not know, nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him; he is of age. He will speak for himself." (His parents said these things because they feared the Jews ...)'

John 9:20-22 ESV

The Good Shepherd, the model for all parents

John 10:1-30 NIV

A SHEPHERD is responsible to lead his sheep, feed them and protect them. That is what parents are to do with the lambs committed to their care by the chief Shepherd. In common with all mankind, our children belong to the Lord. We take care of and nurture them on his behalf for a few years until they become men and women directly responsible to the heavenly Father himself.

Let us be watchmen for our family flock, teaching them to listen to the Shepherd.
v 2, 3 *"The man who enters by the gate is the shepherd of his sheep. The watchman opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out."* Compare Ezekiel 3:17.

By grace, through faith, a well-instructed family will learn to know the Shepherd's voice and run away from voices not speaking according to his Word.
v 4, 5 *"When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger's voice."*

We are to 'lay down our lives' for our children (Compare 1 John 3:16).
v 11 *"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep."*
This means costly consideration, time and labour.

Let us not be like a hired child-minder. Our precious lambs need courageous, determined protection from their strong enemy.
v 12, 13 *"The hired hand is not the shepherd who owns the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep."*

We must take care to know and understand our children.
v 14, 15 *"I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me –just as the Father knows me and I know the Father– and I lay down my life for the sheep."*

If we prayerfully train our children to listen to the Shepherd's voice, will he not bring them into his eternal flock?
v 27-30 *"My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. I and the Father are one."*

Prayer – a Christian family privilege

'Now a certain man was sick, Lazarus of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha ... Therefore the sisters sent to Him, saying, "Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick."' John 11:1,3. Context: John 11:1-44

Experiencing the love of Jesus includes trusting him through family trial.

"Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. So, when He heard that he was sick, He stayed two more days in the place where He was." John 11:5,6.

The Lord feels our family grief. He is full of sympathy.

"Therefore, when Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her weeping, He groaned in the spirit and was troubled. And He said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to Him, "Lord, come and see." Jesus wept. Then the Jews said, "See how He loved him!" John 11:33-36

The Lord rewarded this family's faith and brought abundant blessing through it.

'Jesus said to her, "Did I not say to you that if you would believe you would see the glory of God?"' John 11:40.

"Then many of the Jews who had come to Mary, and had seen the things Jesus did, believed in Him." John 11:45

Each sister served the Lord according to her ability. The Lord noticed.

"There they made Him a supper; and Martha served ... Then Mary took a pound of very costly oil of spikenard, anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the oil ..." Full quote: John 12:1-8

Ask and you will receive

Praying for our family members (John 14-16)

OF ALL the people we know, who are the most precious to us? Our own family. This natural affection comes from God our creator. It gives us extra 'natural' motivation to pray for our loved ones. I cannot pray for your family as you can; neither can you pray for mine as I can. The Lord has given members of each family special responsibility for mutual care (e.g. Exodus 20:12, Ephesians 5:33- 6:4, 1 Timothy 5:1-16).

What an invitation to ask the Lord to save our family members!

"Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask me for anything in my name, I will do it. If you love me, you will keep my commandments. John 14:14,15 ESV

As well as promising to answer our prayers, the Lord reminds us of his great desire to receive our love – by us keeping his commands. In his Word he has given many commands and instructions about how to order our families. We mustn't be ignorant of these. It moves his heart when he sees our child-like eagerness to find out his directives and put them into practice.

The context of the certain answer to our prayer: 'remaining in him'.

"If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples. As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love." John 15:7,8 NIV [In other versions: 'remain in me' = 'abide in me']

Jesus tells us clearly and simply how to remain in him.

"If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love." John 15:10 NIV

Sure answer to prayer is linked with obedience to Christ's command.

"You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit – fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. This is my command: Love each other." John 15:16,17 NIV

What God has joined together, we cannot separate. Parents, because we love our children we'll expectantly pray for them *and* follow Christ's command in the way we love them i.e. bring them up. **This is not** 'answer by works'; this shows the determined attitude our Father loves to see in his children. If we have an unloving, disobedient attitude, it grieves him and he can't bless us as he would wish until we change our behaviour. Our heavenly Father doesn't spoil his children!

Another cast-iron assurance from the Son of God himself

"... no one will take away your joy. In that day you will no longer ask me anything. I tell you the truth, my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete." John 16:22-24 NIV

The Lord wants us to pray for our loved ones. Father, mother, grandparent, brother, sister, aunt, uncle ... what does the Lord want you to ask for?

What we ask our heavenly Father is down to us – between us and him. Only you can obey his loving invitation to ask. No-one can do it for you. What answer does he want you to expect? Focus on Him; not on your own sins or various other drawbacks, disabilities and impossibilities. ***"Don't be afraid, only believe."*** Mark 5:36

God the Father loves to answer his children.

"In that day you will ask in my name. I am not saying that I will ask the Father on your

behalf. No, the Father himself loves you because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God.” John 16:26,27 NIV

God’s fatherly heart is moved when he sees his children loving the One he has sent. How does he know we love Jesus? “Whoever has my commands and keeps them, he it is who loves me,” said Jesus (John 14:21).

The Lord Jesus understands childbirth.

“A woman, when she is in labour, has sorrow because her hour has come; but as soon as she has given birth to the child, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a human being has been born into the world.” John 16:21.

Having asked him to remove the cup, the Son willingly submits to his Father.

‘So Jesus said to Peter, “Put your sword into the sheath. Shall I not drink the cup which My Father has given Me?” John 18:11 Context: Jesus’ arrest (See Mark 14:35,36)

Jesus was dying for the sin of the world but at the same time he made practical arrangements for his mother’s care.

‘Now there stood by the cross of Jesus His mother, and His mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing by, He said to His mother, “Woman, behold your son!” Then He said to the disciple, “Behold your mother!” And from that hour that disciple took her to his own home.’ John 19:25-27

Jesus chose this woman to announce the Resurrection to the men.

*‘Jesus said to her, “Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brothers and say to them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and **your Father**, to my God and **your God**.’” Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord”—and that he had said these things to her.’ John 20:17,18 ESV*

Focus on the Lord: not on other people, other parents, families etc

Jesus commanded Peter, “Follow Me.” ‘... Peter seeing [John], said to Jesus, “But Lord, what about this man?” Jesus said to him, [If I have my own plans for him], what is that to you? **You follow Me.**” John 21:19-22.

Beware of a wrong focus. Focus on the Lord, his commands and promises. We mustn’t try to deduce God’s will for ourselves by looking at fellow sinners.

Acts

Warrant to ask and expect the Lord to save our children

"For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call." Acts 2:39. Context: Acts 2:1-41

Some widows were suffering discrimination even in the early Spirit-filled church.

"Now in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists, because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution." Acts 6:1 Full story: Acts 6:1-7

As church family members we should always be on the lookout for the needs of our brothers and sisters, especially those tending to be overlooked. See James 2:1-12.

Outwardly generous – but husband and wife were wanting to impress others.

'But a man named Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property, and with his wife's knowledge he kept back for himself some of the proceeds and brought only a part of it and laid it at the apostles' feet. But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit ...'" Acts 5:1-3 ESV Full account: Acts 5:1-11

Husband, wife, the temptation to show others what a 'spiritual couple' we are is real.

This woman used her gifts to serve poor, underprivileged believers.

'In Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha (which, when translated, is Dorcas); she was always doing good and helping the poor. About that time she became sick and died, and her body was washed and placed in an upstairs room ...

'... Peter went with them, and when he arrived he was taken upstairs to the room. All the widows stood around him, crying and showing him the robes and other clothing that Dorcas had made while she was still with them.' Acts 9:36-39 NIV

Compare with 1 Tim. 2:9,10 and 1 Tim. 5:10.

The Lord raised her again to continue this work which is close to God's heart.

'Peter sent them all out of the room; then he got down on his knees and prayed. Turning toward the dead woman, he said, "Tabitha, get up." She opened her eyes, and seeing Peter she sat up. He took her by the hand and helped her to her feet. Then he called for the believers, and the widows, and presented her to them alive.'

Acts 9:40-41 NIV Context: Acts 9:32-43

Four examples of those whose family was saved.

"Now Cornelius ... had called together his relatives and close friends ...

While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word." Full account: Acts 10:24-43

"The Lord opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul. And when she and her household were baptized ..." Acts 16:13-15

'So they said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household." ... and he rejoiced, having believed in God with all his household.'

Full quote: Acts 16:31-34

"Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed in the Lord, together with his entire household. And many of the Corinthians hearing Paul believed and were baptized."

Acts 18:8 ESV Context: Paul in Corinth Acts 18:1-17

The Holy Spirit has made us shepherds of our family 'flock'.

"Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers ..." Acts 20:28 ESV

Context: Acts 20:17-38 speaking to Ephesian elders. Compare Ezekiel 33:7-9.

Let us follow Paul's shepherding example.

"I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God." Acts 20:27

"Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish everyone with tears." Acts 20:31 ESV

Why? - Because the devil is cruel enough to devour defenceless children.

"... fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock ..." Acts 20:29

Romans

Family life devastated by gender confusion and sexual perversion.

"Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonour their bodies among themselves, who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due."

Romans 1:24-27

Our God-rejecting society educates even young children to accept its lifestyles as normal. Does it please the Lord that his children's children are submitted to such schooling? Has he no power to provide us with alternatives? Ask him! (John 14:14,15)

Christian educators have the privilege of teaching the truth of God instead of 'the lie' and of serving the Creator rather than the creature.

Excluding God promotes every evil, including family sin. Parents, take note.

*"And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, **disobedient to parents**, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. Though they know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them."*

Romans 1:28-32 ESV See 1 Samuel 3:13, and 1 Timothy 3:4.

Abraham's faith in God brought blessing for his children. Will ours not?

*"In hope he believed against hope, that he should become the father of many nations, as he had been told, "So shall your offspring be." Romans 4:18 ESV
See Romans 4:11-25 for fuller picture.*

Marriage is life-long.

"For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives. But if the husband dies, she is released from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband lives, she marries another man, she will be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from that law, so that she is no adulteress, though she has married another man." Romans 7:2,3 Context: Romans 7:1-6

The heavenly Father leads his children. We must lead ours to Him.

"... those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God." Romans 8:14 NIV

The Holy Spirit creates the secure, warm bond with our Father.

'For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.' Romans 8:15,16 NIV

Family likeness and inheritance: trials and privileges

"Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory." Romans 8:17 NIV

Notice how Gospel blessings are described in family terms.

*For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the **sons of God**. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the **children of God**. For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of **childbirth** until now. And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait*

eagerly for **adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.**" Romans 8:19-23 ESV

Bearing children and adopting children reflect God's character and activity.

The Son of God is not the only son of God.

"For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers." Romans 8:29 ESV

Great brotherly love

"I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh." Romans 9:2,3 ESV

The people of Israel were outwardly God's children.

"They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises. To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ, who is God over all blessed forever. Amen." Romans 9:4,5 ESV

Physical parentage does not make someone a true child of God.

'... not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel, and not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring, but "Through Isaac shall your offspring be named." This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as offspring.' Romans 9:6-8 ESV

Faith in God's promise receives the promised family blessing.

'For this is what the promise said: "About this time next year I will return, and Sarah shall have a son.'" Romans 9:9 ESV

God's glorious, gracious election – a recipe for parental fatalism? NO!

'And not only so, but also when Rebekah had conceived children by one man, our forefather Isaac, though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad—in order that God's purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of him who calls— she was told, "The older will serve the younger." As it is written, "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated."' Romans 9:10-13 ESV

God's election never negates his delight to answer parents' prayers positively.

'... she came and knelt before him, saying, "Lord, help me." And he answered, "It is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs." She said, "Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table." Then Jesus answered her, "O woman, great is your faith! Be it done for you as you desire." And her daughter was healed instantly.' Matthew 15:25-28 ESV

"How can the Lord answer our requests positively and at the same time be absolutely sovereign? It's a logical impossibility!"

'But who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Will what is moulded say to its moulder, "Why have you made me like this?"' Romans 9:20 ESV

"Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!

How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!" Romans 11:33

God and his people have a marriage relationship and a father-son relationship, **now!**

"I will call them My people, who were not My people, and her beloved, who was not beloved. And it shall come to pass in the place where it was said to them, 'You are not My people,' There they shall be called sons of the living God." Romans 9:25,26

Context: Romans 9:14-33 Cited from Hosea 2 and 1

How can we know what is best for our family?

"Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect." Romans 12:2 ESV Context: Romans 12:1,2

Family life to be aimed at

"Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honour one another above yourselves."

Romans 12:10 Context: Romans 12:3-21

Another aim for the family

"Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality." Romans 12:13 ESV

How do you think of your brothers and sisters?

"You, then, why do you judge your brother? Or why do you look down on your brother? For we will all stand before God's judgment seat ..."

"Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother's way." Romans 14:10,13 NIV

Full teaching: Romans 14:1-23

Brothers and sisters, what effect will your example have on the younger ones?

"If your brother is distressed because of what you eat, you are no longer acting in love. Do not by your eating destroy your brother for whom Christ died ..."

"It is better not to eat meat or drink wine or to do anything else that will cause your brother to fall." Romans 14:15,21 NIV See 1 Corinthians 8:13 and Mark 9:42-50

Do you pray for your siblings?

"I appeal to you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God on my behalf." Romans 15:30 ESV

God's delight to save 'same-family' members was demonstrated in Rome.

"Greet Priscilla and Aquila ... Greet those who belong to the family of Aristobulus. Greet Andronicus and Junia my kinsmen ... Greet my kinsman Herodion. Greet those in the Lord who belong to the family of Narcissus. Greet those workers in the Lord, Tryphæna and Tryphosa ... Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord; also his mother, who has been a mother to me as well ... Nereus and his sister ..."

"... Lucius, Jason and Sosipater, my kinsmen ..." Romans 16:10-15, 21 ESV

Women serving the Lord in the church

"I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant of the church in Cenchrea. I ask you to receive her in the Lord in a way worthy of the saints and to give her any help she may need from you, for she has been a great help to many people, including me ..."

"Greet Mary, who worked very hard for you..."

Greet Tryphena and Tryphosa, those women who work hard in the Lord.

Greet my dear friend Persis, another woman who has worked very hard in the Lord."

NIV See Romans 16:1-16.

1 Corinthians

In Corinth, more 'same-family' Christians.

"My brothers and sisters, some from Chloe's household have informed me ..."

"Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas ..." 1 Corinthians 1:11, 18 NIV

See also Acts 18:8.

Is our children's education based on wisdom or foolishness?

'For it is written: "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent." Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.'

1 Corinthians 1:19-21. Context: 1 Corinthians 1:18-31

A good father warns his children by word and example.

"I am not writing this to shame you, but to warn you, as my dear children. Even though you have ten thousand guardians in Christ, you do not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel. Therefore I urge you to imitate me."

1 Corinthians 4:14-16 NIV Context: teaching about apostles in 1 Cor. 4

A good father takes practical steps to ensure his children are well-taught.

"That is why I sent you Timothy, my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, to remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach them everywhere in every church." 1 Cor. 4:17 ESV

A good father is ready to follow up warning with action.

"Some are arrogant, as though I were not coming to you. But I will come to you soon, if the Lord wills, and I will find out not the talk of these arrogant people but their power. For the kingdom of God does not consist in talk but in power. What do you wish? Shall I come to you with a rod, or with love in a spirit of gentleness?" 1 Cor. 4:18-21 ESV

We Christians are capable of the worst of family sins.

"It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and such sexual immorality as is not even named among the Gentiles—that a man has his father's wife!" 1 Corinthians 5:1

God's 'church family' discipline seems harsh to modern ears but note the aim.

"And you are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he who has done this deed might be taken away from among you ... In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together, along with my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." 1 Corinthians 5:2,4,5

God's fatherly discipline is not harsh; it is loving.

"My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; for whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives." Hebrews 12:5,6

God wants us to imitate his fatherly discipline.

"Whoever spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is diligent to discipline him." Proverbs 13:24 ESV

The Lord's discipline aims for repentance and restoration.

2 Corinthians 2 shows that in this case the aim was fulfilled.

"Now if anyone has caused pain, he has caused it not to me, but in some measure—not to put it too severely—to all of you. For such a one, this punishment by the majority is enough, so you should rather turn to forgive and comfort him, or he may be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. So I beg you to reaffirm your love for him. For this is why I wrote, that I might test you and know whether you are obedient in everything. Anyone whom you forgive, I also forgive. Indeed, what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, has been for your sake in the presence of Christ, so that we would not be outwitted by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his designs." 2 Cor. 2:5-11 ESV

Sexual immorality is a sure way to ruin families. "Flee from sexual immorality"!

"The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. And God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power. Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and

make them members of a prostitute? Never! Or do you not know that he who is joined to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For, as it is written, "The two will become one flesh." But he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body."

1 Corinthians 6:13b-20 Full teaching: 1 Corinthians 6:12-20

Marriage

1 Corinthians 7

Marriage – a gift of God which restrains immorality

"... since there is so much immorality, each man should have his own wife, and each woman her own husband." 1 Corinthians 7:1,2 NIV

Privileges of married life

"The husband should fulfil his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband. The wife's body does not belong to her alone but also to her husband. In the same way, the husband's body does not belong to him alone but also to his wife. Do not deprive each other except by mutual consent and for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control." 1 Corinthians 7:3-5 NIV

Marriage is not obligatory; it is a gift from a gracious God.

"I say this as a concession, not as a command. I wish that all men were as I am. But each man has his own gift from God; one has this gift, another has that."

1 Corinthians 7:6,7 NIV

To be unmarried is good –true or false?

"Now to the unmarried and the widows I say: It is good for them to stay unmarried, as I am." 1 Corinthians 7:8 NIV

"The Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him." Gen. 2:18 NIV.

How is it good to be unmarried? Now we live in a fallen world, not in a sinless garden. *"Sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned."* Rom. 5:12 ESV.

In his great love in Christ, our heavenly Father makes even painful, non-ideal things work for our infinite good (Rom. 8:35-39).

By the Lord's provision, marriage is good.

"But if they cannot control themselves, they should marry, for it is better to marry than to burn with passion." 1 Corinthians 7:9 NIV

Separation is not divorce.

"To the married I give this command (not I, but the Lord): A wife must not separate from her husband. But if she does, she must remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband. And a husband must not divorce his wife." 1 Corinthians 7:10,11 NIV

Love to an unbelieving spouse

"To the rest I say this (I, not the Lord): If any brother has a wife who is not a believer and she is willing to live with him, he must not divorce her. And if a woman has a husband who is not a believer and he is willing to live with her, she must not divorce him." 1 Corinthians 7: 12,13 NIV

Special blessing for an unbelieving spouse and for the children

"For the unbelieving husband has been sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife has been sanctified through her believing husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy." 1 Corinthians 7:14 NIV

Better to separate than to be constantly at war.

"But if the unbeliever leaves, let him do so. A believing man or woman is not bound in such circumstances; God has called us to live in peace. How do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband? Or, how do you know, husband, whether you will save your wife?" 1 Corinthians 7: 15,16 NIV

Freedom to remain unmarried and freedom to marry.

"Now about virgins: I have no command from the Lord, but I give a judgment as one who by the Lord's mercy is trustworthy. Because of the present crisis, I think that it is good for you to remain as you are. Are you married? Do not seek a divorce. Are you unmarried? Do not look for a wife. But if you do marry, you have not sinned; and if a virgin marries, she has not sinned." 1 Corinthians 7: 25-28a NIV

Marriage is difficult – part of our fleeting life in this world.

"But those who marry will face many troubles in this life, and I want to spare you this. What I mean, brothers, is that the time is short. From now on those who have wives should live as if they had none; those who mourn, as if they did not; those who are happy, as if they were not; those who buy something, as if it were not theirs to keep; those who use the things of the world, as if not engrossed in them. For this world in its present form is passing away." 1 Corinthians 7: 28b-31 NIV

A married couple serving the Lord are rightly to serve one another.

"I would like you to be free from concern. An unmarried man is concerned about the Lord's affairs—how he can please the Lord. But a married man is concerned about the affairs of this world—how he can please his wife— and his interests are divided. An unmarried woman or virgin is concerned about the Lord's affairs: Her aim is to be devoted to the Lord in both body and spirit. But a married woman is concerned about the affairs of this world—how she can please her husband. I am saying this for your own good, not to restrict you, but that you may live in a right way in undivided devotion to the Lord." 1 Corinthians 7: 32-35 NIV

The privilege of being unmarried

Privilege? "Does God really say that?" Who first asked that question? See Gen. 3:1. *"An unmarried man is concerned about the Lord's affairs—how he can please the Lord ... An unmarried woman or virgin is concerned about the Lord's affairs: Her aim is to be devoted to the Lord in both body and spirit ... I am saying this for your own good, not to restrict you, but that you may live in a right way in undivided devotion to the Lord."* 1 Corinthians 7:32,34,35 NIV

NOTE: Womanhood (or manhood) does not start when a person gets married. The Lord created each and every woman. "... female he created them." The word of God nowhere implies that a woman is just a female-shaped man. The glory of being a woman is not dependent on her marital status. An unmarried woman serves Christ in a more direct way than if she were married.

Remaining unmarried is to be achieved by faith – as is deciding to marry.

"If anyone thinks he is acting improperly toward the virgin he is engaged to, and if she is getting along in years and he feels he ought to marry, he should do as he wants. He is not sinning. They should get married. But the man who has settled the matter in his own mind, who is under no compulsion but has control over his own will, and who has made up his mind not to marry the virgin—this man also does the right thing. So then, he who marries the virgin does right, but he who does not marry her does even better." 1 Corinthians 7: 36-38 NIV

Marriage is permanent.

"A woman is bound to her husband as long as he lives." 1 Corinthians 7: 39a NIV

A widowed Christian is free to marry – but only in the Lord.

"But if her husband dies, she is free to marry anyone she wishes, but he must belong to the Lord." 1 Corinthians 7: 39b NIV

The judgement of a wise spiritual counsellor.

"In my judgment, she is happier if she stays as she is—and I think that I too have the Spirit of God." 1 Corinthians 7: 40 NIV

Family members should be considerate of each other's weaknesses.

"When you sin against your brothers in this way and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ. Therefore, if what I eat causes my brother to fall into sin, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause him to fall." 1 Corinthians 8:13 NIV

Context: 1 Cor. 8:1-13

Compare Paul's determination with Jesus's warnings about causing a child to fall into sin. This is an example of 'cutting off a hand or foot'. (Matt. 18:6-9)

See also Romans 14:15,21

Many servants of God received his gracious provision of a wife.

"Do we have no right to take along a believing wife, as do also the other apostles, the brothers of the Lord, and Cephas?" 1 Corinthians 9:5

God appoints the husband to be the head of the family.

"But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God." 1 Corinthians 11:3

God's statement about the relationship of men and women in subjection to Christ.

"But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God." 1 Corinthians 11:3

The head of man is Christ (God created this relationship).

The head of Christ is God (Eternal relationship).

The head of woman is man (God created this relationship).

Does this relationship only begin or exist when a woman is married?

God's created relationships apply by creation, not marital state.

Q. How does this differ from UK 21st century society's view?

The glory of manhood and womanhood – equal worth, different roles

"... [man] is the image and glory of God; but woman is the glory of man. For man is not from woman, but woman from man. Nor was man created for the woman, but woman for the man." 1 Corinthians 11:7b-9 Context: 1 Corinthians 11:3-16

The glory of God's Fatherhood and Sonship – equal worth, different roles

'For he "has put everything under his feet." Now when it says that "everything" has been put under him, it is clear that this does not include God himself, who put everything under Christ. When he has done this, then the Son himself will be made subject to him who put everything under him, so that God may be all in all.'

1 Corinthians 15:27,28 NIV Context: 1 Corinthians 15:12-33

A submissive attitude is noticed in high places.

"For this reason the woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels." 1 Corinthians 11:10 Context: 1 Corinthians 11:3-16

God's perfect order: glorious interdependence

"Nevertheless, neither is man independent of woman, nor woman independent of man, in the Lord. For as woman came from man, even so man also comes through woman; but all things are from God." 1 Corinthians 11:11,12

There should be distinction in men's and women's hair.

"Does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonour to him?" 1 Corinthians 11:14 (Compare Revelation 9:8)

A gift of God

"But if a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her; for her hair is given to her for a covering." 1 Corinthians 11:15

The Lord's discipline is "not pleasant but painful" but has saving results.

"For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world." 1 Corinthians 11:29-32 Context: Abuse of the Lord's Supper

A gentle and quiet spirit is valued by the Head of the church.

"As in all the congregations of the saints, women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the Law says. If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church." 1 Corinthians 14:33-35 NIV
See 1 Peter 3:1-6. Context: 1 Corinthians 14:26-39 (congregational worship)

Since unmarried women do not have husbands to discuss with at home, they should be welcomed to discuss and ask questions by elders and other male and female church members in informal fellowship.

Christ's Resurrection undergirds all sound education.

The world's education systems contradict this.

'And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins ... If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied ... If the dead are not raised, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die." Do not be deceived: "Bad company ruins good morals."' 1 Corinthians 15:17,19,32,33 ESV
Context: The whole chapter.

Notice how education which ignores the resurrection teaches children to behave as atheistic humanists living without reference to God. If there is no resurrection, there is no Judgement Day. No Judge, no Law, no Saviour.

Please heavenly Father, "Rescue me and deliver me" and *my children* from those

"whose mouth speak lying words, and whose right hand is a right hand of falsehood" (Psalm 144:11,12). Show me what I can do to keep my family safe.

Stephanas, no doubt, had great joy because of his family's choice.

"... brothers—you know that the household of Stephanas were the first converts in Achaia, and that they have devoted themselves to the service of the saints."

1 Corinthians 16:15 ESV Context: 1 Corinthians 16:12-18 See 3 John 4.

2 Corinthians

A marriage partner must be chosen prayerfully.

"Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God ..." 2 Corinthians 6:14-16 Full quote: 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1

We are God's children — male and female

"I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty." 2 Corinthians 6:18

The church that heeded the Lord's discipline and rebuke was blessed.

"But God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus, and not only by his coming but also by the comfort with which he was comforted by you, as he told us of your longing, your mourning, your zeal for me, so that I rejoiced still more. For even if I made you grieve with my letter, I do not regret it—though I did regret it, for I see that that letter grieved you, though only for a while. As it is, I rejoice, not because you were grieved, but because you were grieved into repenting. For you felt a godly grief, so that you suffered no loss through us." 2 Corinthians 7:6-9 ESV

Responding to firm fatherly words produced joy in the Lord.

"For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death. For see what earnestness this godly grief has produced in you, but also what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, what punishment! At every point you have proved yourselves innocent in the matter. So although I wrote to you, it was not for the sake of the one who did the wrong, nor for the sake of the one who suffered the wrong, but in order that your earnestness for us might be revealed to you in the sight of God. Therefore we are comforted." 2 Corinthians 7:10-13 ESV

Remember, Paul was the 'father' of the Corinthian church (1 Corinthians 4:14,15).

A reminder of our marriage relationship to Christ

"... I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ." 2 Corinthians 11:2b Context: 2 Corinthians 11:1-13

Our fatherhood derives from God's Fatherhood.

"The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is blessed for ever ..."
2 Corinthians 11:31 Context: 2 Corinthians 11:16-33

A family principle and a role model for parents

"After all, children should not have to save up for their parents, but parents for their children. So I will very gladly spend for you everything I have and expend myself as well." 2 Corinthians 12:14,15 NIV Context: 2 Corinthians 12:11-21

Being a parent requires great devotion and effort. It is no surprise.

Galatians

Our relationship with God is a father-son relationship.

"For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus."
Galatians 3:26 Context: Galatians 3:21-29

Woman's unique, glorious role in God's saving activity.

"But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons." Galatians 4:4,5 ESV Prophesied in Genesis 3:15

"So that we might receive adoption as sons"

Those who adopt a child into their own family are acting out what God has done for his children. 'Showing the kindness of God' (2 Samuel 9:3).

The human father-son bond reflects the bond with our heavenly Father.

'And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!"' Galatians 4:6 ESV Context: Galatians 3:26-4:7

We are permanent members of God's family!

"Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ." Galatians 4:7

Paul's deep practical concern for his 'children' – an example to us

"My little children, for whom I labour in birth again until Christ is formed in you, I would

like to be present with you now and to change my tone; for I have doubts about you."
Galatians 4:19,20 Context: Galatians 4:8-20

True Christians are children of promise.

"Now you, brothers and sisters, like Isaac, are children of promise."
Galatians 4:28 ESV Context: Galatians 4:21-31 (Sarah and Hagar)

What about Christians' children? No promise for them? Think about many passages quoted in this book.

We are now members of the glorious, eternal family.

"Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers." Galatians 6:10 NIV Context: Galatians 6:7-10

Ephesians

The Father's glorious plan and purpose – adopting children into his family

"In love he [the Father] predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved." Ephesians 1:4-6 ESV Context Ephesians 1:3-14

Parents who prayerfully adopt children are reflecting God's glory.

God is the glorious Father – parenthood is a great honour.

"I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better." Eph. 1:17 NIV

The Family comes from God's very being. He knows each one including ours.

"For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being ..." Ephesians 3:14,15
Context: Ephesians 3:1-21

We cannot ask too much for our family and succeeding generations.

"Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen." Ephesians 3:20,21
See Deuteronomy 7:9, 1 Chronicles 16:15, Psalm 105:8

Christian family life will be out-of-step with God-rejecting society.

"So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. They are darkened in their understanding

and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts.” Ephesians 4:17,18 NIV Compare Romans 1:21,22

We must keep our marriage and home free from subtle invitations to sin.

"But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people." Eph. 5:3 NIV
Full quote: Ephesians 5:1-21

"Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient. Therefore do not be partners with them."
Ephesians 5:6,7 NIV

If we are deceived what will happen to our children?

Active effort required from every family member

"For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) and find out what pleases the Lord." Ephesians 5: 8-10 NIV

The key to family harmony – not impossible!

"... be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ." Ephesians 5:18-21 NIV Full quote: Ephesians 5:1-21

Husbands, wives and children

The Lord's requirement for a wife's attitude and actions

"Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Saviour. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands." Ephesians 5:22-24 ESV

GOD CREATED US male and female so that we can display the relationship of the Lord Jesus Christ with his redeemed Church. Man is to model Christ's eternal love to his Bride. Woman is to model the response of the Church to her Redeemer. God deliberately created woman as the 'weaker vessel' (1 Peter 3:7). Unless she had been created that way, she could not fulfil her unique, infinitely glorious purpose.

The Lord's requirement for a husband's attitude and actions

"Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word,

so that he might present the church to himself in splendour, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.” Ephesians 5:25-27 ESV

A husband is to love and care for his wife as Christ does the church.

“In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body.”

Ephesians 5:28-30 ESV

Marriage is of great importance, expressing our eternal relationship with Christ.

“Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.’ Ephesians 5:31,32 ESV

The Bible is full of men’s names and is mainly written about the exploits of men. The accounts of women although equally important are relatively few. The God who created women decided this emphasis not by chance or because he was ‘captive’ to prevailing culture. It is in harmony with his purpose for Woman.

A wife’s purpose is to help, serve and promote her husband’s interests, as the church does for Christ.

An unmarried person’s purpose is to promote Christ’s interests directly – a man in his created male glory and a woman in her glorious female image-bearing role. (See Genesis 1:27, 1 Corinthians 7: 32-35, 11:3)

Marital love summarised

“However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.” Ephesians 5:33 ESV

A child’s obedience to God brings God’s sure blessing.

“Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ‘Honour your father and mother’ (this is the first commandment with a promise), ‘that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.’ ” Ephesians 6:1-3 ESV

The Lord’s three-fold childcare directive - incalculably important!

“Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.” Ephesians 6:4 ESV

Eph. 4:17-6:4 is **Christ’s commission for daily family life**. We must lovingly discipline and instruct our children according to the Lord’s wise childcare principles. This includes reading and explaining the Bible to our family, teaching them to apply its teaching to 21st century living. We are the Master’s stewards in this vital task. See 1 Cor. 4:2, Matt. 25:21.

Philippians

Paul never tires of reminding us that God is **our Father**.

"Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." Phil. 1:2

"Only let your (family) conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ." Phil. 1:27

"Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others." Philippians 2:3,4 ESV

"Do everything without complaining or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, 'children of God'..." Philippians 2:14,15 NIV

Two women who were Paul's fellow workers in the church family

"I implore Euodia and I implore Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. And I urge you also, true companion, help these women who laboured with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the Book of Life." Philippians 4:2,3

Satan tried to stop their effectiveness but couldn't change their family membership.

Lead your family to choose recreational activities worthy of the gospel of Christ.

"... brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practise these things, and the God of peace will be with you." Philippians 4:8,9 ESV

'Same-family' Christians again.

"All the saints greet you, but especially those who are of Caesar's household." Ph. 4:22

Colossians

The basis of God's universe – of all physical things, spiritual things, governments, families, nations and the Family of God.

"[Christ] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be pre-eminent. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell,

and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.” Colossians 1:15-20 ESV

Failure to acknowledge this and incorporate it in our education deceives us. This mindset leads to the conclusion that ultimately all learning is meaningless (Ecclesiastes). No Creator. No Judgement. No Saviour.

The world’s education is not based on Christ; it is based on the principles of the world.
“Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ.” Colossians 2:8 Context: Colossians 2:1-10

The active lifestyle essential for promoting Christ-centred family life
“Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things ... And whatever you do, in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.” Colossians 3:1,2 NIV
Full quote: Colossians 3:1-17

Another summary of family life in this context
*“Wives, submit to your own husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.
Husbands, love your wives and do not be bitter toward them.
Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord.
Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.” Colos. 3:18-21*

The command to children implies that parents humbly consult the Lord, asking him for his wisdom in how to bring them up. Arbitrary, inconsistent parental policies render our children liable to discouragement and exasperation.

1 Thessalonians

Unmarried men behaved like mothers.
“But we were gentle among you, just as a nursing mother cherishes her own children. So, affectionately longing for you, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives, because you had become dear to us.”
1 Thessalonians 2:7,8 Context: Paul’s use of his ‘parental’ apostolic authority, described in 1 Thessalonians 2

If unmarried men can show motherly care, surely unmarried women can!

A good father always has God’s kingdom in view.
“You are witnesses, and God also, how devoutly and justly and blamelessly we behaved ourselves among you who believe; as you know how we exhorted, and comforted, and

charged every one of you, as a father does his own children, that you would walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.” 1 Thess. 2:10-12

Christian marriage is holy and to be kept so.

"For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel [or how to take a wife for himself - ESV margin] in sanctification and honour, not in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God; that no one should take advantage of and defraud his brother in this matter, because the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also forewarned you and testified. For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness. Therefore he who rejects this does not reject man, but God, who has also given us His Holy Spirit.” 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8

Family life must be characterised by continual spiritual alertness.

"... the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, "Peace and safety," destruction will come on them suddenly, as labour pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. But you, brothers, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. You are all sons of the light and sons of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled.” 1 Thess. 5:2-6 NIV
Full quote: 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

2 Thessalonians

Education and training must be Christ-centred: to enable our children to escape deception from the lawless one and his forerunners.

"For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming. The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.” 2 Thessalonians 2:7-12 Full quote: 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12

1 Timothy

Is it God's will to save my family member?

How do we know God's will? He writes it in Scripture for us to read.

"God our Saviour ... desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all ..." ESV See 1 Timothy 2:3-6

Similar passages: Ezekiel 33:11, 2 Peter 3:9, John 3:16

According to his plain statement, God wants all people to be saved (does that include my loved-one?). Is his desire genuine or not? Dare we say, "I know you say you want all to be saved but that's your 'revealed will'. What matters is your 'secret will' and according to that you may not want to save him. So that's why I leave room in my prayers for uncertainty – we just can't be sure."

Dare we judge God's will?! That is not the language of a little child confiding in his all-powerful, infinitely gracious Father. It is not taking the Father's word for it. It must hurt our Father when we think we can't really commit our deepest desires to him in case he doesn't want to give us what we ask for. We know it is a **good** request – it is a request for our loved-one's salvation. The whole of Scripture teaches that it is a good request. It is central to God's purpose for sending *"Christ Jesus who gave himself as a ransom for all"*.

The Lord says what he means. *"Who are you, O man, to answer back to God?"* Rom. 9:20

*"The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but those things which are **revealed** belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law."* Deut. 29:29. Notice the emphasis on our children and on our obedience.

Men and women in the church family

NOTICE THE BASIS of Paul's statements in the following passages.
What is cultural and subject to change? What is fundamental and unchanging?

Men's church role: prayer flowing from godly living and speech.

"I want men everywhere to lift up holy hands in prayer, without anger or disputing."
1 Timothy 2:8 Context: 1 Timothy 2:1-15, Church life

Women's church role: serving the Lord in appearance and actions.

"I also want women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or expensive clothes, but with good deeds, appropriate for women who

profess to worship God.” 1 Timothy 2:9,10 Context: 1 Tim. 2:1-15, Church life

It is precious in God’s sight for his daughters to model humble acknowledgement of their contribution to the Fall.

“A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner.” 1 Tim. 2:11-14 NIV Context: Church worship. See 1 Pet. 3: 1-7.

Our Father wants us to bear in mind our created strengths and weaknesses.

Woman’s glorious, vital role in God’s plan of salvation

“Nevertheless they will be saved [eternally] if they continue in faith and love and holiness with self-control, [saved indeed] through the Childbearing or by the birth of the divine Child.” 1 Timothy 2:15 see Amplified Version.

Comment: I would suggest that the Amplified Version brings out one aspect of Paul’s argument. In the previous verses (v13,14) Paul refers to Gen. 2:21-23 and Gen. 3:13. It is natural for him to think of the Gospel Promise in Gen. 3:15: *“I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.”* ESV This verse foretells the Childbearing and the role of the Child.

*“But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, **born of woman...**” Galatians 4:4 ESV*

Further comment on 1 Tim. 2:15: The ESV brings out another aspect – the on-going role of mothers as follows:

The key responsibility of bearing and rearing children (in ‘the discipline and instruction of the Lord’)

“Yet she will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith and love and holiness, with self-control.” 1 Tim. 2:15 ESV (cf. ‘bringing up children’ 1 Tim. 5:10a)

Husband, be thoughtful and kind to your wife and, with her help, hospitable.

“Now the overseer is to be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable ...” 1 Timothy 3:2 NIV Context: 1 Tim. 3:1-13

An aim for all fathers

“He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him, with proper respect.” 1 Timothy 3:4 NIV Context: 1 Timothy 3:1-7, Eldership

This is achievable for Christian fathers, otherwise God would not have listed it in his qualities for elders. The father has the overall leadership responsibility. He should be the mainstay of family discipline, his wife supporting him in it.

A question for elders – God's church is God's family.

"If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?" 1 Timothy 3:5 NIV Context: 1 Timothy 3:1-7

Each father is the 'pastor/elder' of his little family flock. In dangerous surroundings, a flock needs firm, safe handling. A 'hired' shepherd does not love the sheep; rather than standing firm against evil, he runs away. This opens the way for the Wolf to gain influence and he will seek to devour the flock. See John 10.

The Lord's will for women

"In the same way, their wives are to be women worthy of respect, not malicious talkers but temperate and trustworthy in everything." 1 Timothy 3:11 NIV Context: Deacons' and elders' wives.

Church service includes family service.

"A deacon must be the husband of but one wife and must manage his children and his household well." 1 Timothy 3:12 NIV Context: 1 Timothy 3:8-13

The Church is God's family and we are permanent members of it.

"... you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth."

1 Timothy 3:15 NIV Context: 1 Timothy 2 & 3

Marriage, prayerfully based on God's word and thankfully received is good.

*"Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared, who **forbid marriage** ... For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, for it is made holy by the word of God and prayer." 1 Timothy 4:1-5 ESV*

More on Woman's vital family and church role

1 Timothy 5:1-16

Church-family love parallels that of the natural family.

"Do not rebuke an older man harshly, but exhort him as if he were your father. Treat younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, and younger women as sisters, with absolute purity." 1 Timothy 5:1,2 NIV

God wants us to care for our parents and grandparents.

"... if a widow has children or grandchildren, these should learn first of all to put their religion into practice by caring for their own family and so repaying their parents and grandparents, for this is pleasing to God." 1 Timothy 5:4 NIV

Care of our family is very important.

"Anyone who does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever." 1 Timothy 5:8 NIV

A caring role the Lord specifically commits to women

"If any woman who is a believer has widows in her family, she should continue to help them and not let the church be burdened with them, so that the church can help those widows who are really in need." 1 Timothy 5:16 NIV

IT IS EASY to persuade ourselves that care of our family is an irksome, unspiritual task. The Lord is eager to see us involved with his priorities. "I desire mercy, not sacrifice." See also Mark 7:9-13.

Some people have no family to care for them

"Give proper [church] recognition to those widows who are really in need ..."
1 Timothy 5:3 NIV

The church is to provide for those with no family.

"No widow may be put on the list of widows unless she is over sixty, has been faithful to her husband ... " 1 Timothy 5:9 NIV

The Lord provides for those who trust him, especially widows.

"The widow who is really in need and left all alone puts her hope in God and continues night and day to pray and to ask God for help. But the widow who lives for pleasure is dead even while she lives." 1 Timothy 5:5,6 NIV See Psalm 146:9

A noble calling from the Lord – but despised by the world

Faithful servants gain the Master's 'Well done!'.

*"[This woman] has been faithful to her husband and is well known for her good deeds, such as
bringing up children,
showing hospitality,
washing the feet of the saints, [doing distasteful but necessary tasks]
helping those in trouble
and devoting herself to all kinds of good deeds."* 1 Timothy 5:9,10 NIV

See Matt, 25:19-23. Compare with 1 Tim. 2:10, Acts 9:36-41.

The ability to serve in this way is not confined to married women. Unmarried women can bless the fellowship of believers by helping in all the areas listed above and in 'all kinds of good deeds'. However, unmarried women will need support in their daily needs through the church and/or earning their own living. The more onerous the latter, the less time and energy they will have for 'good deeds' in the fellowship.

There are careers which unmarried women can pursue which involve 'washing feet', 'helping those in trouble' etc. These would include being a doctor or nurse. There is a great need of Bible-based teachers who can help parents in their task of bringing up and educating children.

To commit oneself to remaining unmarried is not always wise.

"As for younger widows, do not put them on such a list. For when their sensual desires overcome their dedication to Christ, they want to marry. Thus they bring judgment on themselves, because they have broken their first pledge." 1 Timothy 5:11,12 NIV

Danger for women who misuse their God-given time

"Besides that, they learn to be idlers, going about from house to house, and not only idlers, but also gossips and busybodies, saying what they should not." 1 Tim. 5:13 ESV

The devil hates stable, Christ-centred homes and families.

"So I would have younger widows

marry,

bear children,

manage their households,

and give the adversary no occasion for slander.

For some have already strayed after Satan." 1 Timothy 5:14,15 ESV

"Marrying, bearing children and managing one's household"

– a responsibility of incalculable, eternal importance

This includes being a husband's companion and helper in his God-given role (Gen. 2:18, Gen. 1:27,28). It involves bringing up children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord (Ephesians 6:1-4, Matthew 28:20, Deut. 6:4-8). As well as these, other helping roles mentioned in Timothy and Titus are always needed. However, time and energy must be wisely conserved. The Lord doesn't want us to overwork. Let us gladly submit our priorities to him.

Society says the above lifestyle is primitive drudgery. The world will never understand. But the Lord Jesus does!

"Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ." Colossians 3:23,24 ESV

'But Jesus called them to Himself and said to them, "You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." Mark 10:42-45

2 Timothy

God loves to bless our children and grandchildren.

"... I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also."

2 Timothy 1:5 Compare Psalm 103:17,18.

Paul prays for blessings on the whole family of a zealous father.

"May the Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains, but when he arrived in Rome he searched for me earnestly and found me— may the Lord grant him to find mercy from the Lord on that Day!—and you well know all the service he rendered at Ephesus." 2 Tim. 1:16-18 ESV

A father's great desire for his child

"You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus."

2 Timothy 2:1 Context: 2 Timothy 2:1-13

Essential negative/positive fatherly instruction for growing children

"Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart." 2 Timothy 2:22

Context: 2 Timothy 2:13-26 – instruction to a pastor

In the last days, the Lord gives us children to lead and train in the opposite direction to society. Our faith overcomes the world (1 John 5:4)

*"But mark this: there will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, **disobedient to their parents**, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God – having a form of godliness but denying its power."*

2 Timothy 3:1-5 NIV Compare 1 Timothy 3:4

Today, as then, deceitful influences can creep into our homes.

"Have nothing to do with such people. They are the kind who worm their way into homes and gain control ..." 2 Timothy 3:5,6 NIV Full quote: 2 Timothy 3:5-9

The Lord brought fruit from childhood training in the Word of God.

"But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." 2 Timothy 3:14,15

God gives parents his perfect equipment for family life.

"All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work." 2 Timothy 3:16,17 NIV Including the vital work of raising a family.

Practical notes on family Bible policy:*

* These are included because there is so much material geared to the entertainment of children in books, visual/electronic media, social networks etc. God's Word should feature realistically in children's day-to-day lives but pressure to exclude or drown it out with other things (Mark 4:19) has never been greater. The notes are not prescriptive but are an attempt to follow the Bible's guidelines.

Essential Education

The place given to the Word of God in the education of our children is very important. The Lord is interested in the quantity and quality of our child's intake of his word. If our children are to be educated for the real world and be ready for when the Lord returns, their knowledge of Scripture must be good.

The following words from Psalm 78 speak for themselves:

"Give ear, O my people, to my law; incline your ears to the words of my mouth. v1

We will not hide them from their children, telling to the generation to come the praises of the Lord and His strength and His wonderful works that He has done. v4

For He established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which He commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children; v5

That they may set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments; v6

And may not be like their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation, a generation that did not set its heart aright, and whose spirit was not faithful to God." v7

There is no collection of books to rival the Scriptures. Each work in this library is written and compiled by a Genius and designed as the perfect basis for sound, prosperous living in the 21st century and beyond. The Bible is in its final edition, needing no upgrades.

Many stories and much teaching

Even for children of primary age and under, there is much material.

The Old Testament has over 500 narrated events which are suitable as the basis of short stories. The majority of these can be used as instalments of serials.

In *the New Testament* we have:

- 34 or so miracles of Jesus, 41 or so parables of Jesus
- Nearly 100 other incidents in the life and ministry of Jesus
- About 70 stories of the early church, about 30 graphic events from Revelation

This makes a total of over 700 stories. There are also many direct teaching passages which parents can profitably explain to their children (e.g. in the Book of Proverbs and the New Testament).

Prescribed reading

All 66 books are *prescribed reading* for every person who has been given the gift of literacy. Our Course Director chose these specifically as the best of all literature to study. In the gracious forthcoming Examination, he will be looking for those with a good record in applied knowledge of his great library (e.g. Luke 6:46-51). He has said, "*Heaven and earth will pass away: but my words will by no means pass away.*" (Mark 13:31)

Parents cannot just expect a child automatically to become acquainted with the Scriptures. We need to efficiently use the few short years of childhood and teens.

A parent's privilege

It is a father's (in normal circumstances) wonderful privilege to aim for his child to be familiar with every story in Scripture. That is a considerable task, involving years of prayerful input from infancy to teens. In doing this we look in faith to the Lord to plant faith in the child during this time: '*Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*' Romans 10:17.

General knowledge is important

It will help our children understand our oral story telling and intelligently read the Bible for themselves, if they have an input of general knowledge that will equip them. From the day of birth, a child is taking in general knowledge. We can always be pointing out God's world and fostering the child's interest in his/her environment.

As children get older and able to read, there is much material which enhances their ability to understand the Scriptures. This is common sense. For example, Exodus chapters 1-15 will be better appreciated as a child grasps various scientific, geographical and historical concepts. Children's general learning and reading should benefit their grasp of the written Word and vice versa. The Scriptures are the fundamental commentary on the whole of life. Children who increasingly know and obey them will, by God's grace, learn how to bring *true wisdom* to the study of literature, other media and every subject under (and beyond) the sun. See Psalm 119:99,100.

Teenage reading

By mid to late teens a child should be well established as a Bible reader. Many children from Christian families profess faith by this stage and, by God's mercy, have a genuine appetite for his word. Ideally, teenagers should be encouraged

to read the whole of Scripture several times before they reach their twenties. In view of the Author's expectations this is entirely reasonable.

The older children are, the more responsible for their own reading they become. Our prayer will always be for the Lord to give new birth. Then they will have living hearts and real spiritual hunger like the Christians Peter wrote to: *"as new-born babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby."*
1 Peter 2:2.

A child with low appetite cannot be force-fed on God's word but a loving and trusting family environment can guide into good reading habits.

Titus

God wants fathers to teach and discipline effectively.

"An elder must be blameless, the husband of but one wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient."

Titus 1:6 NIV Context: Titus 1:5-9

The Lord gives elders to oversee churches (and fathers to oversee families).

"Since an overseer is entrusted with God's work, he must be blameless – not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain. Rather he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined. He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it." Titus 1:7-9 NIV

We must protect our family from teaching that would ruin it.

"For there are many rebellious people, mere talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision group. They must be silenced, because they are ruining whole households by teaching things they ought not to teach—and that for the sake of dishonest gain." Titus 1:10,11 NIV

A reminder to grandfathers

*"Older men are to be
sober-minded,
dignified,
self-controlled,
sound in faith,
in love,
and in steadfastness."* Titus 2:2 ESV Context: Titus 2:1-15

Older women have an important church role.

*"Older women likewise are to be
reverent in behaviour,
not slanderers
or slaves to much wine.
They are to teach what is good,
and so train the young women ..." Titus 2:3,4 ESV*

Note: This role is for 'older women', not exclusively older married women. It is to be carried out under Titus' (male leadership) authority.

God places a woman at the heart of society's most influential institution.

Her career is immeasurably important.

*"... and so train the young women:
to love their husbands
and children,
to be self-controlled,
pure,
working at home,
kind,
and submissive to their own husbands,
that the word of God may not be reviled." Titus 2:4,5 ESV*

To fulfil his will, the Lord gives each woman unique abilities and talents. Let her have the attitude of the 5-talent and 2-talent servant. "Her master said to her, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master!'" (See Mat. 25:14-30, Prov. 31:30,31.)

WHO IS our Master? Whose word will we follow, the Word of God
or the word of the World?

Father, teach your children and be a role-model for them.

*"Likewise, urge the younger men to be
self-controlled.
Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works,
and in your teaching show
Integrity,
Dignity,
and sound speech that cannot be condemned ..." Titus 2:6-8 ESV*

A note from Elisabeth Elliot (extract from 'A Woman's Mandate')

Evangelical Times, June 1996 by kind permission

WHEN SPEAKING to a group of pastors' wives I learned that eighty percent of them were working full time outside of the home. I was shocked.

Is it wrong for a pastor's wife – or any other wife – to have a job? First, there is another question that should be asked: Has God said anything about women's work?

The consensus among Christians seems to be that careers for women are not only permissible but to be encouraged. If we take a careful look at the scriptural lists of womanly responsibilities (1 Timothy 5:9,10 and Titus 2:3-5), we may ask whether there is time to do those things which are clearly the will of God when we have set for ourselves so ambitious an agenda. Paul's letter to Timothy spells out which women qualify for the widows' list. First on the list of 'good deeds' is bringing up children ...

It is doubtful that the apostle Paul had in mind Bible classes or seminars or books when he spoke of teaching younger women, he meant the simple things, the everyday example, the willingness to take time from one's own concerns to pray with the anxious mother, to walk with her the way of the cross with its tremendous demands of patience, selflessness, lovingkindness – and to show her, in the ordinariness of Monday through Saturday, how to keep a quiet heart.

These lessons will come perhaps most convincingly through rocking a baby, doing some mending, cooking a supper, or cleaning a refrigerator. Through such an example, one young woman – single or married, Christian or not – may catch a glimpse of the mystery of charity and the glory of womanhood, so perfectly exemplified in the response of a humble village girl of long ago when she said, 'Behold the handmaiden of the Lord. Let it happen as you say.'

Philemon

This man, his wife and son opened their home for the local church.

"To Philemon our dear friend and fellow worker, to Apphia our sister, to Archippus our fellow soldier and to the church that meets in your home: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." Philemon 1-3 NIV

As an old man, Paul was still fathering children.

"I, Paul, an old man and now a prisoner also for Christ Jesus—I appeal to you for my child, Onesimus, whose father I became in my imprisonment." Philemon 9.10 ESV

Brotherhood in Christ transcends other relationships.

"For perhaps he departed for a while for this purpose, that you might receive him forever, no longer as a slave but more than a slave—a beloved brother, especially to me but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord." Philemon 15,16

Hebrews

The parent-child relationship is rooted in the Godhead.

"God ... has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things ... [He said] 'You are My Son, today I have begotten You.' And again: 'I will be to Him a Father, and He shall be to Me a Son'" See Hebrews 1:1-9

God the Father, at great cost, has gained a family of many children.

"For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering." Hebrews 2:10 ESV Context: Hebrews 2:5-18

The children in this family have an elder brother.

'For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one source. That is why he is not ashamed to call them brothers, saying, "I will tell of your name to my brothers; in the midst of the congregation I will sing your praise."'" Heb. 2:11,12 Context: Hb. 2:5-18

Children given to their Brother by their Father!

"Behold, I and the children God has given me." Hebrews 2:13
Context: Hebrews 2:5-18 (See Isaiah 8:18.)

Brotherly devotion like no other

"Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil ... Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest ... " Full quote: Heb. 2:14-17

Learning obedience – essential for earthly sons and daughters and voluntarily accepted by the Son of God

"... though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered." Hebrews 5:8 Context: Hebrews 5:1-10

Noah believed God's warning and followed His instructions. God saved his family.

"By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, in reverent fear constructed an ark for the saving of his household. By this he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith." Hebrews 11:7 ESV

What about us? Are we listening to the Lord's warnings and actively following his instructions? If the Lord saved Noah's family by 'Old Testament' grace, will he not save ours by the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ?

Again, a father's obedient faith brought God's blessing to his children.

"By faith he [Abraham] went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God."

Hebrews 11:9,10 ESV Full quote: Hebrews 11:8-10

Both parents believed God and received immeasurable blessing.

"By faith Sarah herself received power to conceive, even when she was past the age, since she considered him faithful who had promised. Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born descendants as many as the stars of heaven and as many as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore." Hebrews 11:11,12 ESV

Abraham's obedience also involved his son's submissive faith.

"By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was in the act of offering up his only son, of whom it was said, 'Through Isaac shall your offspring be named.' He considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead, from which, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back."

Hebrews 11:17-19 ESV Notice how faith **reasons** from God's word.

Old Covenant family blessings – do we expect less in the New Covenant?

"By faith Isaac invoked future blessings on Jacob and Esau. By faith Jacob, when dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, bowing in worship over the head of his staff."

Hebrews 11:20,21 ESV

Parents' faith bore fruit in their child(ren).

"By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents, because they saw that the child was beautiful, and they were not afraid of the king's edict. By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin." Hebrews 11:23-24 ESV Full quote: Hebrews 11:23-29

The Lord gave faith to Aaron and Miriam as well as Moses. Who taught Moses to recognise the people of God and to fear Him? See Exodus 2:9,10.

Father, remember the Lord's loving fatherly example and follow it.

"And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons: 'My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son.'" Hebrews 12:5,6 NIV Context: Hebrews 12:1-13

Fatherly discipline is normal – a mark of true sonship.

"Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons. Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live!" Heb. 12:7-9 NIV Context: Heb. 12:1-13

In our discipline let us follow God's pattern, not man's.

"Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness." Hebrews 12:10 NIV

Discipline is distasteful but bears good fruit in a child's life.

"No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it." Hebrews 12:11 NIV

A useful church (and family) motto/reminder

"Keep on loving one another as brothers [and sisters]." Hebrews 13:1 NIV
Full quote: Hebrews 13:1-3

A reminder to families

"Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares." Hebrews 13:2 ESV Full quote: Hebrews 13:1-3

God guards this great blessing with his clear warning.

"Let marriage be held in honour among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous." Hebrews 13:4 ESV

James

Parents, be careful how you behave towards your children, especially when you think they have disobeyed you.

"... let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God." James 1:19 ESV Context: James 1:19-27

If we are quick to speak and hasty in 'dealing' with our children, we may wrongly assess the situation and wrongly punish them. That is not righteous in God's sight.

God's concern that we should be concerned for disadvantaged families

"Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world." James 1:27 ESV

We can easily look down on and ignore our brothers and sisters.

'My brothers, show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory. For if a man wearing a gold ring and fine clothing comes into your assembly, and a poor man in shabby clothing also comes in, and if you pay attention to the one who wears the fine clothing and say, "You sit here in a good place", while you say to the poor man, "You stand over there", or, "Sit down at my feet", have you not then made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?' Jas. 2:1-4 ESV

The church is a family. We must guard against unconscious favouritism.

Parents' faith must result in obeying God's family directives.

"Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless? Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar? You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works ..." James 2:20-22 ESV Context: James 2:14-26

Friendship with the world is spiritual adultery. It undermines families and our relationship with God.

"Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God." James 4:4 Context: James 4:1-6

Father, mother, brother, sister, pay attention.

"... no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God." James 3:8 ESV Full quote: James 3:1-18

Without this wisdom we provoke our wife and children to anger (Eph. 6:4, Col: 3:21)

"The wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere." James 3:17 ESV

1 Peter

Our children are to obey us, as we are to obey our Father.

We parents are to honour Him carefully in the sight of our children.

*"As **obedient children**, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy." And if you call on him as **Father** who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile ..." 1 Peter 1:14-17 ESV Context: 1 Peter 1:13-25*

Notice the family terminology used above and in the following verses.

*"Having purified your souls by your **obedience** to the truth for a sincere **brotherly love**, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, since you have been **born** again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God ..."*

1 Peter 1:22,23 ESV

Follow the example of a baby.

*"... as **newborn babes**, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby ..."*

1 Peter 2:2 Context: 1 Peter 2:1-3

How wives should love their husbands

"Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives, when they see your respectful and pure conduct." 1 Peter 3:1,2 ESV Context: 1 Peter 2:13 - 3:7

True feminine beauty – of great worth

"Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewellery and fine clothes. Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight. For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to make themselves beautiful. They were submissive to their own husbands, like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her master. You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear." 1 Peter 3:3-6 NIV Context: 1 Peter 2:13 - 3:7

How husbands should love their wives and encourage prayer

"Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honour to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered." 1 Peter 3:7 Context: 1 Peter 2:13 - 3:7

Notice that the Lord wants men to understand and give women their due honour. Misunderstanding God's creation of Man in his own image, 'male and female', has resulted in massive harm and poisoning of minds over the millennia. Unsurprisingly, in the 21st century, the devil is promoting dissatisfaction and resentment against God's gender order in a vicious attack against the Creator himself.

God made Man and Woman equally glorious but **different**. For Woman to fulfil her purpose, the Lord deliberately gave her a glory, beauty and honour which was 'weaker' – softer and more delicate – than her male counterpart. Without her being 'the weaker vessel' she could not display the Church's relationship to Christ, her mighty Redeemer and Lord.

God's purpose in the gospel is *"to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things, so that **through the church** the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the*

heavenly places. This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord ..." Ephesians 3:9-11 ESV

Angels in the heavenly places are observing the attitude of God's daughters.
(1 Corinthians 11:10)

Elders – God's church shepherds. (Fathers – God's family shepherds)

"Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, watching over them—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away." 1 Peter 5:2-4 NIV (2011) Context: 1 Peter 5:1-7

Elders should be exemplary in treating the women of the fellowship with proper honour and respect. This is important for unmarried women. Women do not cease to be 'the weaker vessel' just because they are not married. In fact, because they are not under a husband's authority and care, they need extra care and support from the church. Women's work must be done under male eldership. Their Father didn't create his daughters to be freelance; they are to work in harmony with men, under their care and loving authority (1 Cor. 11:11,12). Women workers in the church are vitally important. Their role cannot be fulfilled by men. Because some men are rightly in 'up-front' roles, their value can be overemphasised in church policy. Unmarried female workers can be overlooked and left to fend for themselves without support and encouragement.

"I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant of the church in Cenchrea. I ask you to receive her in the Lord in a way worthy of the saints and to give her any help she may need from you, for she has been a great help to many people, including me."
Romans 16:1,2 NIV

"Greet Mary, who worked very hard for you." Romans 16:6 NIV

"Greet Tryphena and Tryphosa, those women who work hard in the Lord. Greet my dear friend Persis, another woman who has worked very hard in the Lord."
Romans 16:12 NIV

2 Peter and Jude

2 PETER and JUDE draw attention to the great danger of 'wolves in sheep's clothing': people who claim to be Christian teachers but are not. As parents it is our duty to ensure that our children are well-instructed and not naïve about the devil's deceitful servants and agencies.

"But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies ..." 2 Peter 2:1 NIV

"For certain men whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you. They are godless men, who change the grace of our God into a license for immorality ..." Jude 4 NIV

1, 2, and 3 John

JOHN'S LETTERS are filled with family terminology: speaking of God the Father and his Son and of God's children born in his likeness.

E.g. "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure." 1 John 2:28-3:3

An essential strand to our family teaching

"Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride in possessions—is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides for ever." 1 John 2:15-17 ESV

The antichrist is coming; his forerunners are already here in the 21st century.

"Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour." 1 John 2:18 This is the world in which we are preparing our children to serve.

Praying for our family

Compare with John 14-16 – very similar

How can we have assurance in praying to God for our family?

*"Little children, let us not love in word or talk but **in deed and in truth**. By this we shall know that we are of the truth and reassure our heart before him; for whenever our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and he knows everything. 1 John 3:18-20 ESV*

Being confident of receiving what we ask is from a heart that doesn't condemn us.
"Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God; and whatever we ask we receive from him, because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him." 1 John 3:21,22 ESV

Why does our heart not condemn us? "Because we keep his commandments" v 22. Uncertainty in our heart (i.e. a bad conscience) about keeping God's commands means we lack confidence when speaking to our dear Father. Our Father who knows our heart wants us to have childlike confidence when we ask. He wants us to eagerly and naturally confide in him with complete certainty.

*"Therefore, brothers, since **we have confidence** to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus ... let us draw near with **a true heart** in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from **an evil conscience** ... "* Hebrews 10:19-22 ESV

When we draw near to our kind, gentle Father, he loves to see that we love him also. How does he know that we do love him? Because we have an obedient attitude. He sees that *'we keep his commandments and do what pleases him'*. So he delights to give us *'whatever we ask'*.

Q. Is this 'answer by works' – we earn God's blessing by being good?

A. Certainly not! We could never merit any blessing from God and we never will. Meriting blessing by obedience is based on fulfilling legal demands. God's law shows that we have no righteousness (merit) of our own (Romans 3:20) We used to be under a legal obligation in our relationship to God – "under the law". But now we are not under the law but under **grace** (Rom. 6:14). We are not in a legal, merit-based relationship; we are in a **family, Father-child relationship**.

Christ has given us **His merit**. On that basis we are permanent members of the loving heavenly Father's family. Like any father, he is delighted to see eager obedience in his children. That moves his fatherly heart to give his blessings.

If I am a disobedient child, it grieves him. A wise Father will not shower his disobedient child with special favours. He will show his child the right way to go by rebuke and discipline and will make sure I learn to love him (Hebrews 12 5-11, Rev. 3:19).

Keeping our Father's command

"And this is his commandment, that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us." 1 John 3:23 ESV

Compare the following with 'how to remain in Christ' in John 15:10:

"Whoever keeps his commandments abides in God, and God in him. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us." 1 John 3:24 ESV

How do we know we are loving our family in Christ's way?

"By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome." 1 John 5:2,3

JESUS'S command for us to love one another is not nebulous or intangible. It is down-to-earth and outworked by detailed obedience to his instructions – his commands for our daily living (i.e. loving "in deed and in truth" 1 John 3:18). In God's word we have many instructions and promises for practical family life. Ignoring these produces uncertainty (compare James 1:6,7).

Certainty of eternal life and certainty of answered requests

"I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life. And this is the confidence that we have towards him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us. And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of him." 1 John 5:13-15 ESV. (Compare with Matthew 21:21,22 and Mark 11:22-25.)

WE USED TO BE "sons of disobedience" (Ephesians 2:2) but now, by grace alone, we are God's children, sons of obedience (Romans 6 - 8). When we conscientiously obey his word, it delights him. Even an earthly father is pleased and touched when his little child freely and sincerely does what her daddy tells her. This is a loving father-child relationship, not a legal 'If-you-merit-my-favour-by-doing-as-I-say, -I'll-give-a-reward' scenario.

When God he sees his little children sincerely doing his will, his Fatherly heart is moved with compassion and he delights to answer our requests. What better and more important request is there than for the salvation of the very children which he lovingly chose to give us?

Testing the world's influence on our families

1 John 4 & 1 John 5:19-21

Test the world's influence to see if it comes from God or the antichrist.

We must teach our children to apply the same tests.

"Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world." 1 John 4:1-3 NIV

We must test the spirits behind UK society's powerful influences (e.g. education and the media) and the values and fashions they popularise. This will affect the choices we make for our children as we guide them to make their own choices.

Whose viewpoint does UK popular opinion follow?

"You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world. They are from the world and therefore speak from the viewpoint of the world, and the world listens to them." 1 Jn. 4:4,5 NIV

How do we distinguish truth from falsehood as we and our children read, watch, listen and go online?

"We are from God, and whoever knows God listens to us; but whoever is not from God does not listen to us. This is how we recognize the Spirit of truth and the spirit of falsehood." 1 John 4:6 NIV

A Christian parent must follow the Spirit of truth (i.e. the apostles' teaching).

A Christian parent must reject the Spirit of falsehood (i.e. the devil's teaching).

"When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers." John 10:5,6

The whole world including UK society is under the control of Satan.

We have responsibility to keep ourselves and the children who look up to us from its idolatry.

"We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one. We know also that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true. And we are in him who is true – even in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life. Dear children, keep yourselves from idols." 1 John 5:19-21 NIV

A vivid reminder for family members

"This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God; nor is anyone who does not love his brother." 1 John 3:10 NIV Full quote: 1 John 3:7-10

Love must characterise every church and every family.

*"For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. We should not be like Cain, who was of the evil one and murdered his **brother**. And why did he murder him? Because his own deeds were evil and his **brother's** righteous. Do not be surprised, **brothers**, that the world hates you. We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the **brothers**. Whoever does not love abides in death. Everyone who hates his **brother** is a murderer, and you know*

that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.

By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the **brothers** [including our natural siblings and our children]. But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his **brother** in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? **Little children**, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth. 1 John 3:11-18 ESV

Another plain message for family members, young and old

"If anyone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother."

1 John 4:20,21 ESV Context: 1 John 4:7-21

Children who bring joy to God

"It has given me great joy to find some of your children walking in the truth, just as the Father commanded us." 2 John 4 NIV

John again shows what love for God is – the context for family prayer (1 Jn. 3:21,22)

"And now, dear lady, I am not writing you a new command but one we have had from the beginning. I ask that we love one another. And this is love: that we walk in obedience to his commands. As you have heard from the beginning, his command is that you walk in love." 2 John 5,6 NIV

We must take the Lord's warnings seriously and pass them on to our children.

"For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh. Such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist. Watch yourselves, so that you may not lose what we have worked for, but may win a full reward." 2 John 7,8 ESV

A limit to hospitality (in family and church) – don't entertain false teachers.

"If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not take him into your house or welcome him. Anyone who welcomes them shares in his wicked work."

2 John 10,11 NIV

We now live in a digital world and 'taking teachers into our house' has new virtual meaning. Each father is a guardian of the family which the Lord has committed to his charge.

"Be on guard, **keep awake**. For you do not know when the time will come. It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts **his servants in charge**, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to stay awake. Therefore **stay awake**—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or when the cock crows, or in the morning—lest he come suddenly and find you asleep. And what I say to you I say to all: **Stay awake**." Mark 13:33-37 ESV

Great joy for fathers and mothers – we share God's joy when we experience this.

"I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth."

3 John 4 ESV Context: 3 John 2-4

Revelation

The Lord Jesus Christ is like his Father; he rebukes and disciplines us.

"Those whom I love, I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest and repent."

Revelation 3:19 NIV Context: the letter to the Laodicean church

He wants us to follow his example: "Discipline your son, and he will give you rest; he will give delight to your heart." Proverbs 29:17 ESV.

Take note of Satan's attitude to God's Son and the children of God's people.

"And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she bore her child he might devour it." Revelation 12:4

"Then the dragon became furious with the woman and went off to make war on the rest of her offspring, on those who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus." Revelation 12:17 Context: Revelation 12:1-17

"He [the devil] was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies." John 8:44 NIV

The devil wants to murder our children. He is a lion seeking to devour the weak and helpless (1 Peter 5:8).

Satan's deception - Christ's warning for his loved ones

Revelation 12-20

The education of children must equip them to avoid the devil's deception.

*"So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who **deceives the whole world**; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him."* Revelation 12:9

The first beast is a forerunner/servant of the devil (the dragon).

And I saw a beast rising out of the sea ... And to it the dragon gave his power and his throne and great authority. One of its heads seemed to have a mortal wound, but its mortal wound was healed, and the whole earth marvelled as they followed the beast. And they worshipped the dragon, for he had given his authority to the beast, and they

worshipped the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast, and who can fight against it?"
Revelation 13:1-4 ESV Context: whole chapter.

The second beast is another servant of the devil closely allied with the first beast.
*"Then I saw another beast, coming out of the earth. He had two horns like a lamb, but he spoke like a dragon ... Because of the signs he was given power to do on behalf of the first beast, he **deceived** the inhabitants of the earth ... He also forced everyone, small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a **mark** on his right hand or on his forehead, so that no one could buy or sell unless he had the **mark**, which is the name of the beast or the number of his name. This calls for wisdom ..."* Revelation 13:11-18 NIV Full Quote: Revelation 13:1-18

This is referred to in Matthew 24:24. See further references to the mark of the beast in Revelation 14, 15, 16, 19, 20.

Do we want to find ourselves with the mark of the beast?

Do we want our children to receive it?

We don't have to understand the details – we shall understand when the beasts appear. Exposing ourselves unnecessarily to falsehood and the deceiving ideas of the predecessors of the beasts is dangerous for us and our children.

"He who has an ear, let him hear ..." Revelation chapters 2,3 and 13

Who is speaking to us?

Jesus warns us and our children about 'Babylon' – the World in its seductive power.

'Then I heard another voice from heaven saying, "Come out of her, my people, lest you take part in her sins, lest you share in her plagues ..."' Revelation 18:4 ESV

Context: the whole chapter

Jesus is praying for us to be kept safe from the evil one.

'Coming out of the world' is not by leaving the world but by being set apart ('sanctified') from it. As we obey the word of God, the Lord Jesus sets us apart from the world and keeps us from the evil one.

*"I have given them **Your word**; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them by **Your truth. Your word is truth.** As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by **the truth.**"* John 17:14-19

Rejoicing at the final judgement of Babylon, the personification of adultery

'After this I heard what sounded like the roar of a great multitude in heaven shouting: "Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, for true and just are his judgments. He has condemned the great prostitute who corrupted the earth by her

adulteries. He has avenged on her the blood of his servants." And again they shouted: "Hallelujah! The smoke from her goes up for ever and ever." ' Revelation 19:1-3 NIV
Context: Revelation 19:1-10

The defeat of the beast and the second beast (false prophet)

Those who received the mark of the beast were deceived:

*"And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth with their armies gathered to make war against him who was sitting on the horse and against his army. And the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet who in its presence had done the signs by which he **deceived** those who had received **the mark of the beast** and those who worshipped its image. These two were thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulphur. And the rest were slain by the sword that came from the mouth of him who was sitting on the horse, and all the birds were gorged with their flesh." Revelation 19:19-21 ESV*

The blessedness of those who are not deceived.

*"... Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and those who had not worshipped the beast or its image and had **not received its mark** on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years." Revelation 20:4 ESV*

The defeat of Satan. His deception of world society continues to his dreadful end.

*"... Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to **deceive** the nations in the four corners of the earth ... They marched across the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of God's people, the city he loves. But fire came down from heaven and devoured them. And the devil, who **deceived** them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulphur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown ..."*

Revelation 20:7-10 NIV Context: Revelation 20:1-15

The final glorious outcome: God's family at home with the Lord, for ever

CHRIST is the very reason for the Church's creation. This is illustrated by the creation of woman for man at the beginning. "... [man] is the image and glory of God; but woman is the glory of man. For man is not from woman, but woman from man. Nor was man created for the woman, but woman for the man." 1 Corinthians 11:7b-9 Context: 1 Corinthians 11:3-16

Christ is the image and glory of God. God chose the Church as Christ's bride before the foundation of the world. He did not create her to have self-focused beauty. Her glory was the glory of the Man, Christ Jesus.

Throughout the word of God womanhood is exalted to witness to the great ultimate goal of the salvation proclaimed in the gospel. This is the certain hope for which we are eagerly waiting: the coming of the Son of Man and the wedding supper of the Lamb. The life, bearing and attitude of Woman is to reflect these infinitely glorious things. God had this in mind when he created Eve. The Bride for his one and only Son was not an afterthought.

The marriage supper of the Lamb

'Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting: "Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear." (Fine linen stands for the righteous deeds of the saints.) Then the angel said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!' " And he added, "These are the true words of God.'" Rev. 19:6-9 NIV Context: Rev. 19:1-10

The Bride of the Lamb – what a privilege!

'I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God ..."'
Revelation: 21:2-3 NIV The whole picture: Revelation 21:1-27

The sons of God – it will be worth it!

'He said to me: "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life. He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son.'"
Revelation: 21:6,7 NIV

Final invitation

'The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come." Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes let him take the free gift of the water of life.'
Revelation: 22:17 NIV

'He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming soon."

Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with God's people.'

Revelation 22:20,21 NIV

Family Bible Quotes

- rich treasure for families

*"He who fears the Lord has a secure fortress,
and for his children it will be a refuge."*

Proverbs 14:26 NIV



**A selection of Bible passages showing God's instructions
and promised blessings for family living**

Selection and comments by Steve Sherwood

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