

FOUR CHOICES EVERY GODLY DAD SHOULD MAKE

EPHESIANS 6:4

As we each experience Father's Day it is a time we either think of our fathers, or we think of our children.

If you are a father, then this is not only a holiday to enjoy their expressions of kindness to us as their dad, this is also a great time to do a spiritual assessment of how we are doing with what God has charged us to be as godly dads.

The Spirit-Filled Family of God

Please open with me to Ephesians 6. The greater context of these verses starts in Eph. 5:18, the passage about being filled with the Spirit. We are seeing, from Ephesians 5:18 onward, the results of surrendering to the Spirit-Filled Life.

In Ephesians 6:1-4 we find the fourth result of a list that start way back in 5:21. The Holy Spirit wants to transform every relationship in our lives.

First, every believer is to be transformed by a Spirit-prompted submissive heart v. 21; then in v. 22 wives are to be transformed by a Spirit-prompted submissive heart; then v. 25 husbands are to be transformed by a Spirit-prompted submissive heart; and then in 6:1-4 we find the fourth relationship the Spirit of God wants to transform: fathers and children.

Please stand with me as we hear God's desires for every dad and every child in Christ's Church:

Ephesians 6:1-4 (NKJV) Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.
2 "Honor your father and mother," which is the first commandment with promise:
3 "that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth." 4 And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.

The first truth we should notice as we look back over the verses we just read is that:

OUR PATTERN IS

GOD'S WORD

The Biblical Family is not subjective. It isn't up for discussion. God has given the pattern, He has clearly expressed His desires. We are left with the choice to respond and become instruments that carry out His plan.

Paul was teaching a modern, civilized, busy church that had all the activities of a very large Roman city. Ephesus was second only to Rome in its size and importance. So where would Paul go to explain this way that God wanted dad's and children to operate? v. 2-3 give us a clue: Paul cites the fifth command from Exodus 20:12, and from Deut. 5:16. Paul uses the Old Testament.

Remember the Old Testament is made up of two distinct parts: 1). some short clear **instructions** from God; and 2). many illustrations from people's lives of how they obeyed and honored God's **instructions**, or disobeyed and neglected His **instructions**.

In a real sense God's Word is like a training manual with pictures. The **instructions** are the manual and the stories of people's lives are the illustrations. Sometimes just reading the instructions isn't clear, you need to see how this or that is done.

This week I wanted to upgrade my iMac, but couldn't afford to have someone else do it. So I ordered the RAM, watched the You Tube clip and voila. The instructions were confusing, but the clip of someone doing the very same things made it easy!

So what should we look for? Good choices that show up in the great dads of God's Word! There are four I'd like to share, three positive and one negative:

- First, Praying like Job Prayed.
- Second, Obeying like Noah Obeyed.
- Third, Leading like Abraham Led.
- Fourth, Avoiding Eli's Example of Doing Nothing.

First, as we turn to the Book of Job, what is the key truth about Job, the godly dad? Job was a man of prayer.

CHOICE NUMBER ONE: PRAYING LIKE JOB PRAYED

From his life we need to grab and copy his habit of prayer. And by the power of God's Spirit start making it characteristic of your life!

The Book of Job is perhaps the oldest book in the world. It is also perhaps the clearest view into the spirit world, the spiritual side of parenting and the cosmic proportion of conflicts we face as we parent and lead as dads. Look at Job 1:5:

Job 1:5 So it was, when the days of feasting had run their course, that Job would send and sanctify 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 sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts." Thus Job did regularly. (NKJV)

Can we learn something about how to parent our families from Job's like? Yes, some powerful habits he had. There are five distinct elements of Job's parenting habits. You may want to even note these in your Bibles. First,

JOB TRACKED WITH HIS CHILDREN

Job prayerfully followed the daily life of his children. Note the words, "when the days of feasting".

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He knew what was going on in his children's lives.

He knew their cycle of house visits, parties, their gatherings, and so on.

He was in touch on a daily basis with where they were and where they were headed.

He followed his children around in his heart because he had a godly concern and love for them. ARE YOU FOLLOWING YOUR CHILDRENS LIVES?

You and I will never pray effectively for those who are not regularly on our hearts. Do you jot notes on areas to remember to pray for in their lives? Do you have a list of their challenges, that you ask them about, that you pray for, and that you check with them about?

Start praying for someone regularly, and then ask them about those areas, and the most frequent response from them is: amazement. Most people can't believe we remember and care. So, make the choice today to prayerfully track with the lives of those you love in consistent prayer. Secondly:

JOB SOUGHT THE CONSECRATION OF HIS FAMILY

Job prayerfully sought the personal consecration of each member of his family.

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Note the words, "Job would send and sanctify them". This speaks of his high priestly role at the head of his family. He went to God seeking their purity before the Lord.

In a practical way dads, it is you that needs to know well your boys and girls so that you can stand with them in prayer, seeking their sanctification. Sanctification is a big word for being useful to the Lord. As dads, we need to pray, seek, and ask the Lord to make our children instruments He can use. That is our constant prayer.

It is a godly dad, who prays constantly for his children, that needs to tell them when they are out of line, when they are immodest, when they are heading toward sin and so on!

And as dads we are also husbands. We are as Paul said in Ephesians 5, to seek our wife's sanctification through God's Word! A godly dad will know his children and wife's spiritual status and be prayerfully caring about their growth toward Christlikeness. DO YOU CARE FOR YOUR DAUGHTERS AND SONS AND WIFE'S CONSECRATION?

In the middle of v. 5 we see another truth about a godly dad's prayers:

JOB OFFERED HIMSELF TO GOD AS AN INTERCESSOR

Job prayerfully offered himself to God as an intercessor for his family, before God.

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It wasn't talk it was work! HAVE YOU OFFERED YOURSELF TO GOD AS AN INTERCESSOR? Prayer is much like holding something for someone you love. You just make sure that you guard it. Next:

JOB PRAYERFULLY LOOKED AT HIS FAMILY FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE

Note the words "in their hearts". He was so vitally concerned about their inner spiritual life that he cried out to God for them. HAVE YOU started doing this, DADS?

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send and sanctify 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 sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts."** Thus Job did regularly. (NKJV)

Job was so aware of the constant pressure of the world, the flesh and the devil. He wanted pure children, holy families and strong worshipers of God Almighty. So he was looking over the lives of his family members trying to see them from the inside out.

What a challenge, what an opportunity, what an encouragement this can be dads. Sometimes we just need to look at them, as they will be instead of only as they are.

Remember God says we are seated with Christ. That is our future glorified condition. And He relates to us on that basis. Never overlooking sin, but always seeing us, as we shall be by His grace. Finally:

JOB PRAYERFULLY PERSISTED

He was a great and godly dad because he kept on. It wasn't just when they were little. He prayed through their growing years and never stopped.

You know the key to success in any endeavor is to get started and not quit.

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"Continually" He started following their lives. He started to offer prayers for his family as their intercessor. and wouldn't stop. He was ready for the unexpected death of his children. He prepared them for it every day! HAVE YOU STARTED? KEEP ON! QUIT? GET STARTED!

Godly dads make the choice to pray for their children. Their example, their YouTube clip is right here, portraying Job as he prayed for his children. Job who interceded prayerfully for His family. Job 1:5 - WOW.

Do you see how serious this dad was? Job had five objectives for his grown children, probably because he had cultivated these same desires for them when they were younger:

- Job Followed their lives: Knew what was going on in his kids' lives "cycle" - knew daughters at home invited out to sons.
- Job Cared deeply and personally about their usefulness to God: Sought their

- personal lives to be consecrated “sent and consecrate”, examined and cleansed.
- Job Offered himself as an instrument in God’s Hands: Personally stood as priest of his family offering atoning sacrifices for sin in general.
- Job Looked at his kids from God’s perspective: He was not only concerned about externals, he was vitally concerned about the heart! “In hearts”
- Job just Persisted: Continually did so with spiritual persistence, “continually”.

A Godly father in tune with the Scriptures will: know his children deeply, personally and directly; get involved in making sure they keep pure; stands ready to seek their repentance and restoration; looks at heart attitudes; and won’t stop!

So, Fathers of the Word will be like Job who was involved prayerfully with his family.

CHOICE NUMBER TWO: OBEYING LIKE NOAH

So Job was a great dad because he PRAYED! Next we need to look at one element of another great dad's life. The dad was Noah, the element is the one word that sums up his life. NOAH OBEYED.

Fathers of the Word will be like Noah who warned his family. Turn with me to Heb. 11:7, where we find the inspired writer condenses all of the elements of Gen. 6-9 into one verse. Listen to this inspired biography of Noah's life in Hebrews 11.

Hebrews 11:7 By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith. (NKJV)

Noah had these incredible elements of obedience visible in his life:

1. Noah Believed God: “by faith”.
2. Noah Stayed in touch with God: “being warned of things”, he had spiritual perception.
3. Noah Obeyed God: “prepared an ark”.
4. Noah Had the respect of family: “saved house”.
5. Noah Called sin what it was and sinners who they were: “by which he condemned the world”.
6. Noah was Saved by faith: “and became heir of righteousness”.

There are several ways Noah expressed this godly attitude of obedience. Join me in v. 7 as we take apart the keys to a life of obedience. First:

Noah Believed God

To obey God we start by believing Him. Noah believed what God told him. That is so

simple, and so powerful.

Hebrews 11:7 **By faith Noah**, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith. (NKJV)

Second, the next element of Noah's obedience is seen in that next phrase: "being warned of things not yet seen".

Noah Stayed in Touch with God

Hebrews 11:7 By faith Noah, **being divinely warned of things not yet seen**, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith. (NKJV)

This means he was in spiritual contact with God (through God's Word and prayer as he listened to God). All this led to spiritual perception of God's will for Noah's family. I hope everyone of you hearing my voice will want to know for certainty God's will for your family so that you can obey it! Thirdly:

Noah Led His Family

Hebrews tells us next in this verse that he saved his house. In Genesis 6:9 God explains Noah's life:

This is the genealogy of Noah. Noah was a just man, perfect in his generations. Noah walked with God. (NKJV)

Noah's family went along with his project alone in the whole world! Why? Because he was living a life of integrity in world and at home

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So, Job prayed. Noah obediently warned.

CHOICE NUMBER THREE: LEADING LIKE ABRAHAM

ABRAHAM COMMANDED the direction of his family!

Genesis 18:19 "For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the LORD, to do righteousness and justice, that the LORD may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him." (NKJV)

Finally there is a final portrait of a bad dad. His habits led to God's curse upon his family. We could say, godly dads won't be like Eli.

CHOICE NUMBER FOUR: AVOIDING ELI'S EXAMPLE

He held in children in higher esteem than the Lord!

1 Samuel 2:29 Why do you scorn my sacrifice and offering that I prescribed for my dwelling? Why do you honor your sons more than me by fattening yourselves on the choice parts of every offering made by my people Israel?'

One last note is this: The best way to fail as a dad is to choose to just do nothing.

Just go through these most crucial years of having your children at home, and hope everything turns out.

Instead of praying for each member of your family daily, and seeking to have a meaningful, heart-to-heart talk with them each day as your friend: pour every ounce of your mental, emotional, and physical strength into working hard at your job.

To fail as a dad, just stay detached from your marriage and family: That habit always brings disaster long term, and confusion short-term.

Ask Eli, he will tell you now, he worked so hard at his job, and ignored his family so long that he ended up with the sad results of his choices.

ELI NEGLECTED DISCIPLINING HIS CHILDREN

Disciplining our children is vital to god. God said that Eli participated in sons' sins because he did not rebuke them

1 Samuel 2:29 Why do you scorn my sacrifice and offering that I prescribed for my dwelling? Why do you honor your sons more than me by fattening yourselves on the choice parts of every offering made by my people Israel?'

ELI NEGLECTED CONFRONTING

SIN IN HIS HOME

Confronting sin in our home is vital to god. God rebukes Eli because he continued to resist confronting sin in home.

1 Samuel 3:13 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.

How can we summarize the danger signs of a bad dad? Eli had:

- ✓ Preoccupation with an occupation to the exclusion of family needs.
- ✓ Refusal to face the severity of his children's actions
- ✓ Failure to respond quickly and thoroughly to the warnings of others.
- ✓ Rationalizing the wrong thereby becoming part of the problem.