

Faith Walk! - Sermon Discussion

Date : 16 June 2024

Sermon Title : The Faithful Father

Speaker : Rev Kenneth Huang

Text : Genesis 18:19, Joshua 24:14-15, 2 Tim 3:14-17

INTRODUCTION

No matter how old our kids are, fathers will always be trying to help watch out for their children's well-being and doing their best to help them make the best decisions for their lives. Even when they become adults, we need to keep asking which would we rather our children have – *competency or character?* Of course, we would rather them have both, but definitely character over competency! We can learn from three Scripture passages how we can help our children develop their character and to continue doing so.

1. Genesis 18:19

The context of this passage is:

- (1) Abraham had just been given a promise of God that he and Sarah would have a son despite their old age (vv.1-14), for God had reiterated in v.18 that "*Abraham shall become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him*", and
- (2) God was about to deal decisively with Sodom, a city of moral depravity.

From this context comes v.19 "that he (Abraham) may charge his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice." To help our kids develop their character and continue to do so even when they are adults, we need to do as Abraham was told to do. In other words, we are to teach them who God is and what He values! God is inherently right and just, He asks His children to also be right in their person and just in their ways. The challenge for Dads is not just that we teach or "charge" our kids to live as God wants them to, but that we should live and model it ourselves. Too sadly and too often, we teach and model wrongly rather than rightly. For example, when we tell our kids:

I don't care how you get it done, just get it done!

Just do as I say but don't do as I do!!

You can do anything; just don't get caught!!

Tell them that I am not home!!

Dads must lead their families rightly both in terms of word and deed.

For we walk by faith, not by sight. 2 Corinthians 5:7

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Let us remember what someone said a Faithful Father teaches:

Kindness by being thoughtful and gracious especially at home

Patience by being gentle and understanding over and over

Honesty by keeping his promises even when it costs

Courage by living unafraid with faith in all circumstances

Justice by being fair and dealing equally with everyone

Obedience to God's Word as he reads and prays daily with his family

Love of God as he takes his family regularly to the Worship Services

2. Joshua 24:14-15

The context of this passage is that after 40 years of wandering in the wilderness, the people of Israel were about to cross into and take possession of the land God had promised them. Joshua, the disciple of Moses, was reminding the people what they would have to do in order to live successfully in the Promised Land as God intended them to.

Joshua stated, not only as the leader of the people, but also as the leader/father of his own family, that as God's people, they had to:

- (1) revere the LORD
- (2) serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness
- (3) put away other "gods"
- (4) Make a decision: as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD."

Matthew Henry, the great commentator, explained that to "revere the Lord" means to keep in awe of His majesty; to fear to offend Him lest one forfeits receiving God's goodness. To "serve God in sincerity and in faithfulness" means that we live our life consistent with our fear of the Lord, where we serve Him both by the outward acts of religious worship, and every instance of obedience in all that we do. As for the "putting away of other gods", we have to discard any trace of former beliefs and ways that are not of God, lest we turn back to them, and dilute our faith in God, or even, forsake our God.

Joshua 24:14-15 remind us of what is stated in Colossians 3:1-10: *the setting our minds on things above, and not on things below, and the putting on the new self and putting to death the old self.* In other words, there must be the "doing of something" and the "doing away of other things", so that we will then be able to make a FIRM DECISION for God and to lead our families in that decision. Or to put in another way: *We Dads commit to living for God by God's ways, and we will do and be everything possible, by God's help, to lead and help our family to do and be likewise!*

But the problem is that Dads can sometimes be rather stubborn and even arrogant. We think we know better and do not want to listen to God's Word or just even good sense coming from our family members and, that leads us to have to face embarrassing moments and eat humble pie.

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While we really want to protect our kids from every difficulty they will face, we cannot and should not, but we will want to be present to support them. To help to do the latter, we need to learn:

The Lesson of Fundamental Relationships and Responsibilities (that can help remind us to live rightly):

- Thumb: I am a Child of God
- Fore Finger: I am a Child of my parents
- Middle Finger: If married, I am a Spouse of someone
- Fourth Finger: If so privileged, I am a Parent to my child(ren)
- Little Finger: Regarding my Work Life – whether an Employer or Employee, I do all for the Glory of God.

Dads have to get this Order of our Fundamental Relationships and Responsibilities correct without compromise to be the Faithful Fathers that we should be. I believe that there will be 4 crucial questions relating to our fundamental relationships and responsibilities that Christ will first ask us when He comes again:

“Have I been His obedient child?”

“Have I honoured my parents?”

“Have I been faithful to my spouse?”

“Have I loved my kids and raised them to know and love Him?”

He will also then ask of course *“Have I served Him well as His witness at my workplace, etc?”*, but this will only come after the first 4 questions.

If our only “yes” is for the 5th question, it only shows that we have not fully understood the utmost importance of the proper order of our fundamental relationships and responsibilities. Instead, we have inverted it so that our work/ambition comes first, then maybe we love our kids, then our spouse, then our parents and then lastly, God! To hear the words, *“Well done, good and faithful servant. Enter into the joy of your Master.”*, we must get the order of our fundamental relationships and responsibilities correct: my relationship with my God, and then with my family – *parent, spouse and kid* – are to take precedence over my work/ambition.

3. 2 Tim 3:14-17

These verses clearly state:

- (1) that the main textbook that Dads must follow in order to raise their kids in the Christian Faith is the Bible (which are inspired by God),
- (2) the methodology Dads are to use in order to do so.

The Bible is the main textbook for raising our kids as Christians to become faithful disciples of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Therefore, we must ourselves be students of the Bible so that we may live by it and teach it to our kids from as early as

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possible. The methodology of teaching our kids the Christian Faith is actually one of teaching, reproofing, correcting, and training:

- Teaching – explaining what is to be learnt.
- Reproofing – explaining what was not learnt correctly.
- Correcting – explaining what needs to be learnt properly.
- Training – explaining how what has now been properly learnt is to be really inculcated into our lives.

This is God's Pattern or Cycle of Education and it can only be done in love, for without love, one may only teach but not be bothered to take the time or effort to be there to reproof, correct and train our kids. And without love, we will definitely not do so with the correct attitude but will surely become impatient with our kids when they do not focus, etc.

Raising children to have the right values and to be "trained in righteousness" is definitely hard and patient work. But it will all be worth it when our kids declare their own faith in Jesus, and we will worry less later on in life about their faith, and whether they will continue in the faith, for we have put in the "hours and efforts" now! And because right values and training in righteousness is also caught as much as taught, it is utterly important that Dads are Godly Examples to their children. One area where this is most needed is in the caring for the less fortunate! Let them see us caring for those who need help so that they too will come to care for them, through the different programmes organised by our Outreach & Social Concerns Committee (OSC) – e.g. Adopt A Block, Adopt A Family, GOLD – God of Love Delivery (Reaching out to the Ghim Moh and Holland Close community through meals for needy persons), etc.

As a Faithful Father, remember to spend time and effort to raise our kids in the faith so that they will inculcate the right values and be "trained in righteousness"! We must do it with the same purpose that God has: "*so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work.*" (2 Tim 3:17) In other words, we will want our kids to first and foremost be successful in the eyes of God by living in accordance with the will, and ways, of God! Success in life materially is important but secondary – remember: Character over Competency!

The truth is that we need to also admit that the teaching of right values is not only one direction from a father to his kids. One of the wonderful things about being a father is that God uses our kids to teach us lessons that we need for ourselves, not just as Dads, but as persons.

CONCLUSION

A Faithful Father will do 3 most important things:

1. *He charges "his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice, teaching them that God is righteous and He acts justly!*

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2. *He seeks always to revere the LORD, serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness, put away other “gods”, and firmly decides that “as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD” and lives by it.*
3. *He follows the Bible in raising his kids to believe in Jesus and follows the methodology of lovingly teaching, reproofing, correcting, and training in righteousness, with the purpose that they may live in accordance with the will, and ways, of God!*

AND as we do so, it will help us be a Faithful Father who, as an Intentional Disciple, helps Make Disciples Intentionally of our children. And we must be, for our children are our responsibility and reaching out to them with the TRUTH and LOVE of GOD is really the most important thing we can and must do. For surely, we all want our children to know and love God and to be His disciples as well! And by God’s grace, Dads, we can be and do so, to the glory of God!

A. Review Sermon Application

Purpose: Reflect on how you have been embodying God’s truth.

- 1a. How successful have you been in fulfilling what you/your group had committed to do for the last FaithWalk!?
- 1b. What were some challenges you faced and what would you like to celebrate?

2. Appoint 3 persons to read the 3 passages Gen 18:19, Joshua 24:14-15 and 2 Timothy 3:14-17 slowly.
Reflect on your life as a member of the Christian community. How aligned are you to what Dads should be doing?

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B. Relate Sermon Content

Purpose: Relate with the Truth and Resolve for Transformation.

- 3a. How have you been teaching and modelling for your kids in the area of caring for the less fortunate? Share if there is any commitment you have made to be more intentional in bringing up your children in this area after the sermon.
- 3b. Compare 'the Order of Fundamental Relationships and Responsibilities' with what you have been practising before this sermon. Is your priority in the correct order? If not, what would you have to change to get the order right?

- 4a. How have you been teaching, reproofing, correcting and training your children with the Bible as the main textbook? What is your attitude when doing so?
- 4b. What are some challenges you face in bringing your children up to be right in their person and just in their ways?
- 4c. In what ways can your Life Group help you in your transformation to be better students of the Bible so that you may live by it and teach it to your kids from as early as possible?

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C. Testimonies, Prayers and Action

Purpose: Give glory to God, seek Him and embody His Word.

5. Share your personal testimony and challenges faced in your transformation journey to be a Godly Example to your children and to train them in the correct attitude.

OR

Give thanks to our righteous and just God who has given us the Bible to teach, reproof, correct, and train our children in righteousness, so that they may live in accordance with the will and ways of God.

6. As a group, seek the Holy Spirit's leading to guide your group to journey together in this transformation journey, so that together and collectively as Faith Methodist Church, we may better relate with our family, especially our children and reach out to them with the truth and love of God.

Optional items:

Suggested worship songs:

1. Great Is Thy Faithfulness – Maranatha! Music
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ErwiBz1QA4o&ab_channel=Maranatha%21Music
2. Good Good Father – Chris Tomlin
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iBmwwwiHrOk&ab_channel=ChrisTomlinVEVO
3. Find Us Faithful – Steve Green
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MKT5BCmvmq0&ab_channel=BrianBontes

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