

SINCE THE FATHERS FELL ASLEEP

The Vital Role of Leadership and
Fathering in Reaching This Generation

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2 Peter 3:4 (KJV) “And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.”

Proverbs 22:28, 23:10 (KJV) “Remove not the ancient landmarks, which thy fathers have set...Remove not the old landmarks; and enter not into the fields of the fatherless.”

Lamentations 5:3 (KJV) “We are orphans and fatherless, our mothers are as widows.”

Malachi 4:6 (KJV) “And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.”

Matthew 4:19 (KJV) “And he saith unto them, ‘Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men’.”

Matthew 9:36-38 (KJV) “But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd. Then saith he unto his disciples, ‘The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest’.”

I have a dream... the dream to win, build and send leaders into all the earth. This dream is fundamental to the future of our nation and the church. It's a dream that as a reality will transform the face of our culture and the Kingdom of God. As a young man I was told, “God given dreams and godly men will make a God blessed world”. That

means, regardless of the state of the union around us, a man of character with God's vision can change the world. "Human history gives lengthy endorsement to the fact that no generation can rise above the level of its leadership...It is imperative therefore, that men and women, young and old, dare to respond to the call of God and choose to become strong and reliable Christian leaders of integrity."(5) Our greatest need in this hour is true leadership.

The church, our nation, and the world are at a crisis. We are in desperate need of leadership. Without quality leadership, we exist as orphaned children, a ship without a captain, an army without a general, sheep without a shepherd...fish caught in the nets of life, unable to reach the vast ocean of possibilities God desires for us. "Everything rises and falls on leadership." Like the Titanic of 1912, the "unsinkable ships" of our time – government, education, western culture, medical science, national economies and religious institutions are helpless before the icebergs of our present leadership crises.

Our society is sinking. The sixties generation's failed promises and flawed philosophies has produced national and cultural leaders of little substance and great delusion. Most of our pop icons and athletic heroes deny and refuse the reality and responsibility of their role model status. The result of this proud, unprincipled, and self-absorbed leadership is a generation drowning in ignorance, deception, perversion, and rejection-based nihilism. Unlike the effective leadership of former generations that would "speak softly and carry a big stick", this generation is inundated with influencers who shout, scream, and carry no stick at all. From the White House to your house, this generation is becoming deaf to reality and truth because of the bombastic and destructive volume of parental infidelity, substance abuse, presidential immorality, educational ignorance, and religious silence. It's time to wake up and smell the gunpowder!

Many would say this is but a crisis at a generational crossroads, but I disagree. Evangelist, Billy Graham, observes that “America is not at a crossroads, but rather a long way down the wrong road”. We desperately need to turn around (repent), get back to the crossroads, and take the right road. But we must hurry! The erosion of our nation’s families and morals is rapidly removing the road signs that can direct us to our wrong turn. What Thomas Jefferson called “self evident truths”, Abraham Lincoln called “acknowledging and revering the Supreme Government of God”(11), and our Founding Fathers assumed was basic to “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness”(8) is quickly vanishing from our national landscape. Like the ink on the original Declaration of Independence, the principles and values once inscribed in our hearts is fading and there seems to be little anyone can do to stop it. Nevertheless, we press on.

Once reaching the crossroads, we discover a burning home. Behind the smoke and flames of the present inferno of moral standards lie the charred remains of a generation sacrificed on the altar of convenience, human wisdom, and personal freedom. When the smoke clears, empty rhetoric and staged speeches will no longer conceal the decimated landscape. After 16 million abortions, 15 million divorces and a universal blitzkrieg of the heart and mind; Generation X (~12-32 years of age) lies maimed and raped of identity, conscience, and hope. “When the evidence is weighed, the verdict is irrefutable: We have lived through the unfolding of a generation’s utter failure.”(18)

The problem is now a universal one. Like sexually transmitted diseases, the present leadership crisis has spawned a moral plague that is reaching nearly every family in the world. From the college freshman I met who has had twelve dads, to the

President's extra-marital fling with an intern his daughter's age; our nation's selfishness, disfunctionality and lust has produced a fatherless generation.

“Fathering is essential to success at every level of society. Sociologists are now confirming that fathers not only play an indispensable role in the home, but also in the nation. Many of the problems we face in America today – drugs, welfare, teenage pregnancy – are directly related to the absence of fathers throughout the past several decades.”(3) “Fathers are not optional like extra equipment in a car. They are needed, and when they are not present there is pain.”(10)

Since the Garden of Eden, the devil's enmity has been focused on the family (Gen. 3:15). “The family has always been the cornerstone of society. Our families nurture, preserve, and pass on to each succeeding generation the values that are the foundation for our freedoms...the strength of our families is vital to the strength of our nation.”(16) All the hoards of hell and the ways of the world have one object in view: the marring of the image of God through removing the Father's influence. The enemy's attack is like a spiritual AIDS epidemic. AIDS does not kill you; it breaks down your immune system by removing general/leader cells. By removing fathers from our lives, Satan desires to weaken the defense system of every home, church, and nation. With most social nightmares linked to the absence of fathers, “Fatherlessness has become the most destructive trend of our generation”.(3)

“Great generals (leaders) do not repeat what has failed before. They do not send troops directly into a battle for which the enemy is prepared and waiting.”(21) Although it may not be a great sin to make mistakes, “it is one enormous sin to perpetuate them by failing to acknowledge that wrong and harmful decisions were made based on a flawed

philosophy and falling into denial, refusing to make a course correction”.(18) Here at this crossroads called “fatherhood” (a prophetic place of convergence), the purposes of God and multitudes of people have collided with the cornerstone of carnal and infantile leadership. With the essence of leadership being influence, and the most profound and fundamental influence being paternal, the call to leadership necessitates a focused priority on fathers. The road to national recovery and spiritual renewal begins at home.

The family is a God-ordained leadership laboratory. Therefore, the single most effective way to produce quality leaders is through godly parenting and family relationships. Please understand, “If the family is falling into disrepair, it is not because our God is not powerful enough to maintain us in the midst of a corrupt society. Early Christians faced a society that in some ways was even more decadent than ours; yet history witnesses that the early Christians had outstandingly stable and holy home lives. If we can’t say the same, perhaps, it is because we walked away from what the New Testament Christians had.”(14)

The early Christians possessed a revelation of God’s plans from a personal encounter with Jesus Christ. They had met God face to face through preaching (hearing His voice), prayer (talking to Him), and discipleship (seeing and learning from someone “like” Him), and would never be the same. With their eyes opened to Kingdom reality, they embraced a central truth of the gospel: there is a God in heaven that is called “Abba, Father”...Daddy.

The gospel story is about a father and son expanding their family. The Father so loved us that he gave his son, Jesus, at the cross to pay the immeasurable price of adoption. As humans, we are all too familiar with the story of the prodigal Son; but we

often miss the focus of a loving and merciful Father running to embrace his lost child. “From the moment mankind’s fellowship with the Creator was broken, ‘Father’ has been in the business of restoring it.”(15) Motivated by love that surpasses knowledge and eternal wisdom, God sent His Son “to make reconciliation for the sins of the people...bringing many sons unto glory that He (Jesus) might be the first born among many brethren” (Heb. 2:17, 10 and Rom. 8:20).

Redemption, like everything God does, is according to a pattern. God is a chief architect, and the builder and maker of all things. As such, everything God does can be seen in His written plan (the Bible) and His tangible model (Jesus). “For the expressed purpose of showering His mercy on all families of earth”(15), God unfolded His plan...God called out a man named Abram, a nation named Israel, a King named David, and a teenager named Mary. Through their faith and obedience, God brought forth His covenant promise: a child was born...our redemptive model – Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ, the world’s greatest leader, came to show the Father to us. The child born in Bethlehem was alive to do his father’s business and reveal his father’s name. The message had become flesh and was living among us, and we were able to see God’s glory: the Father in a Son. “There are many ways of coming to God...other than by the Lord, but no man ever came to the Father, but by Jesus Christ.”(4) In Christ, is “hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col. 2:3). Therefore, to know and restore true fatherhood, we must look to Him who is called “Everlasting Father”.

As we look to Jesus, the Father of our faith matures and changes us. We are changed from glory to glory to be more like Him. “It is obvious that a father is significant to our well-being, for from them we receive the first pattern we can expect to

resemble in some way...”(10) The most significant role that Jesus and a father play is that of example. They are chosen role models to show us who God is and how we should live.

Actions speak louder than words; so never underestimate the colossal power of a consistent example. We are called to live as men, patterned after the perfect Man. Living our life in such a manner that people’s trust will grow deeper with each passing day. The law of reproduction says that each seed “bears fruit after their kind” (Gen. 1:12). Who we are essentially, and what we believe dictates how we live and what we do. This is called a “lifestyle”. Your lifestyle is the most influential power you possess. John Maxwell said, “people do what people see. They forgot my sermons but followed my footsteps”.(12) The “lifestyle” of the messenger is of paramount importance and usually the key to success (Rom. 10:15). It impresses itself into the wet cement of children’s lives and often hardens to become a permanent part of their being.

“God designed the family to reflect His kingdom. If Satan can undermine men and usurp their leadership role, he can discredit God.”(16) Recent studies have shown that most people see God as a reflection of their Dad.(19) By reflecting self rather than God, a generation has been produced that rejects God and the church. The only way to remove this false image of God is to replace it with the authentic one. We must become godly men and loving fathers, obedient to the call of God. “You see the plan: God is our perfect model, our heavenly parent, and the source of all parenting. We’re to follow Him around, watch Him, copy Him, love Him – just like happy kids around their daddy; and from Him we’ll get the pattern to repeat in parenting our own.”(13)

When Jesus called to a group of fishermen in Galilee nearly 2,000 years ago, he started a spiritual revolution. The voice that shook the Garden of Eden, cried, “where are you?”...the same voice still echoes in the wilderness of human hearts today. However, in Christ, the question has become a command that compels us to join his sovereign plan and serve the purposes of God in our own generation.

“Follow me...and I will make you fishers of men.” This is the call of God! This is the road to recovery, the path that produces godly men and loving fathers. This is the compelling command of Jesus Christ, the King of kings, Lord of lords and Leader of leaders. To make a difference in this life, we must follow the leader. Like the musketeers of “The Man in the Iron Mask”, we are all looking for a man worthy of serving, a cause worthy of our lives. Jesus Christ is worthy, and by following his example (words and ways), God will mold and mature us into leaders of men.

As we fix our eyes on Jesus, die to self and follow Him, there is a release of grace and power that transforms us within and elevates us to a place of influence and bold witness. Jesus’ leadership and God’s fathering unites us eternally with the multitudes of saints that were “witnesses of the resurrection”. At the core of the Christian experience is an empowered and changed life. We are possessors of a new nature, a new identity, a new Father, and a new life. “The gospel is the most elevating force on earth...it was not given in order to level us all to the lowest common denominator, but to create new creatures, and to give to all the dignity of the sons of God! Men who once were savages are reclaimed and walk as princes.”(2)

It has been called Lordship, Sonship, the new birth, and adoption; but regardless of the name, this supernatural experience initiates a process of surrender, following, and

maturity that produces strength, stability, and sacrificial love. This is what manhood is about; this is what fathering is. God's plan is for us to trust and obey Jesus that he could bless us to be a blessing...that in you all the nations and families of the earth would be blessed. "When irresponsibility gives way to godly men walking in their priesthood, it rekindles flames of love and replaces rejection with acceptance...such a man instills masculinity in his sons, confirms femininity in his daughters, provides security to his wife, and directs his family in the Lord's ways."(16)

Jesus said this gospel would be preached in all "the world" (Matthew 24:14). "By using the word oikoumene, the Lord might actually have been suggesting that "this gospel"...would be published in and throughout the whole globe; dwelling by dwelling, family by family, occupant by occupant."(7) With you and I as God's witnesses, He desires us to become godly men and loving fathers that bless our families. Through our families, God can reveal himself to the world and bring a much-needed restoration. "When enough homes are transformed through God's love, we will see a revolution in our society and culture...from this base you can change the world."(16) Let your family be a shining light in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, holding forth the word of life (Phil. 2:15-16).

The plague of fatherlessness has also reached into the Body of Christ. As a young minister, I searched for spiritual fathers and godly mentors. I found seemingly few worthy of emulation, and those were often too busy or "important" to spend time with a young guy like me. "Today, young leaders search desperately for models they can imitate and look up to. Today's leaders live when heroes have flaws and fail and when dreams have died. When religious systems are corrupt and modern ministry does not

offer a mentoring model, young leaders may end up following wrong models.”(6)

Without spiritual fathers bringing stability, strength, love, discipline, and guidance, the church will never achieve its ultimate destiny.

With many churches conducting leadership training to develop future minister’s gifts and callings, and seminaries dotting our landscape; we have a need for clarification. Regardless of sincerity or intention, very few seem equipped for reaching a bound and dying generation. With minimal emphasis on establishing character, marriage or devotional life; often precious little is given in times of “training” that matures internally or eternally. How alarming to realize the church is concerned with the outward trappings of ministry, training your awareness of “their” doctrinal emphasis while frequently powerless to produce inner transformation (healing, deliverance, and redemption).

We, like Paul the Apostle, must “declare the whole counsel of God”. We must live and preach “the whole gospel for the whole man”.(2) This is not a challenge to know and teach all things, but a plea for seeing the big picture, submitting to God’s priorities and esteeming “the weightier matters of the law”. In the words of Cal Thomas, it’s time to “focus on ‘the things that matter most”.

In a fatherless society depleted of leaders (20), it’s hard to know proper priorities. Our families and role models provide the material that produces our identity. From the foundation of our identity springs forth purpose. Without a purpose or vision, we cannot develop values, which ultimately dictate our priorities.

So what do we do? What can I do? “What shall this man do?” (Jn. 21:21). Jesus Christ, the pattern Son gave us the answer. With all of Jesus’ power, influence, resources and wisdom, even He could not fulfill the need and accomplish the insurmountable task

at hand (Mt. 9:36-10:1). From this ministry account of Jesus' life, we find God's way. We must recognize the harvest, prioritize leadership, engage in prayer, and give our lives as personal participants in the Great Commission.

When Jesus saw the immense need of the masses of people, He was moved. With great compassion and intense concern, He wrestled with the prominent leadership crisis (20). Then, almost instinctively, He turned and declared to His disciples, "It's harvest time!"

As disciples we must understand the principles of harvest (22), and discern the maturing of both tares and wheat (Mt. 13:30). With the tares of fatherlessness overtaking the wheat fields of Generation X, we desperately need a new generation of leaders to rise up and defeat the enemy on the field of harvest. Jim Laffoon, a prophetic voice to this generation says, "Like Israel in the book of Judges, the church is having much of their harvest stolen today...God's answer to Israel's dire need was a human vessel" (Jdg. 6:1-24).

Jesus knows the answer to every problem is related to the quantity and quality of leadership. With the greatest need of the hour being leadership, Jesus calls for 'laborers' - men of character, strength, and commitment willing to give their lives for the cause of Christ. As we have seen, this leadership is birthed, molded, and propagated from the home. As we follow Jesus, we mature relationally as sons, brothers, men husbands, and finally, fathers. From your relationship with God, and role in the family, you become a vital instrument for harvest, a laborer, and a fisher of men. If we as leaders will desire the harvest and be willing to pay the price (21), we "will doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing the sheaves with us" (Ps. 126:6).

Jesus final conclusion was simple: “Pray and Go!” Pray to the Lord of the Harvest, the God of Heaven, the Governor of Life and ask Him for leaders. Leaders, fathers, and laborers to meet the needs and shepherd the sheep. Pray, intercede, and war; ask, seek, and knock; and when the door opens, be willing to go through and become an answer to your own prayer. Join the enduring revolution of the Cross of Christ...get involved in the Great Commission.

We must follow Jesus, the pattern Son, and his example of revealing the Father. With 5.5 billion people in the world, the task at hand seems insurmountable. However, if we live a pattern life, raise godly children, make some disciples, and die in faith, we will “not abide alone, but bring forth much fruit” that will remain for the glory of God. Multiplication is the key; and leadership, parenting, and discipleship will always produce exponential increase.

“Look around at the millions of broken homes, crime, child abuse, drug abuse, and the feelings of hopelessness in American society, and you can see that we live in the midst of intense spiritual warfare with the devil. But when all is said and done, I want to be standing on the side of victory. I may not be able to single-handedly change the world, but when my life ends I want to be able to declare: “I fought the good fight. I didn’t grow weary and settle for less. I battled to the end.”(17)

You can do this. Your life may be the one that makes the difference. You matter...and the substance of your life and heavenly epitaph can change destiny’s balance and prophesy God’s restoration. Hear this Chinese proverb from the movie Mulan: “One grain of rice may tip the scales...maybe one solitary soul can change the entire outcome of this war”. “The journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step. The

redemption of a great nation can begin with a single and powerful decision by one “ordinary” person that influences others to make similar decisions.”(18)

Barbara Bush once gave a speech at a college graduation. She challenged the young people to not indulge in self but believe in something larger than themselves. Then she delivered this powerful punch, “At the end of your life, you will never regret not having passed one more test, winning one more verdict, or not closing one more deal. You will regret time not spent with a spouse, child, friend, or parent. Whatever the era, whatever the times, one thing will never change: fathers and mothers, if you have children, they must come first...your success as a family, our success as a society, depends not on what happens in the White House, but on what happens in your house.”(18)

As a young man, blessed of God with three generations of natural and spiritual heritage, I am committed to answer the call of leadership and fatherhood. It is the answer for Generation X, the church, and the world. Like John Wesley, may the cry of our hearts be, “To serve this present age, my calling to fulfill; Oh may it all my powers engage, do my Master’s will”.

May God richly bless you as we partner in prayer, life, sacrificial giving and voice to reach the youth and nations of the world. Remember the words of William Wallace, “All men die, but not all men truly live”. The dream to win, build, and send leaders into all the earth is becoming a reality!

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