

Passing the Faith Along

“For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.”

Acts 2:39

“...And there arose another generation after them, which knew not the Lord...”

Judges 2:10

**Children are like an empty book -
What are you writing on their hearts?**

“**Passing the faith along**” to our children is so important that it is specifically mentioned in the first sermon ever preached to the New Testament Church. As Peter exposes the plan of salvation and opens the door to the kingdom, he also adds that it is for “**...unto you, and to your children...**” (Acts 2:39)

Many times in the church, the children are neglected and priority is given to reaching adults. One day the disciples of Jesus wanted to neglect the children (infants), and rebuked the parents for bringing them to Jesus. Jesus had a different mind.

“Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God.” (Luke 18:16)

Children are our interns or apprentices. In the Bible, male children were trained by their fathers and usually followed the occupation of their father. If Father was a carpenter then the son also became a carpenter. In the spiritual sense, our children are also apprentices. They learn by the “**caught it**” method rather than the “**taught it**” method. They learn by watching us. What are you teaching your children about living for God and serving Him?

“You may not be able to do anything about your ANCESTORS but you can do something about your DESCENDANTS.”

Author Unknown

John Maxwell says that we “**teach what we know but reproduce what we are.**” It is a scriptural principle that “**everything reproduces after its own kind.**” Don’t allow anything to be in your life that you don’t want reproduced in your children’s lives.

Passing the Faith Along; A Success Story

We have already been introduced to Paul’s adopted son, Timothy. We have learned that his mother was a believer but his father was an unbeliever. In the absence of a believing father this mother raised Timothy in the truth of God’s Word.

Paul illustrated the principle of passing the faith along when he wrote, “**When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also.**” (2 Timothy 1:5)

How can we be so sure that they passed the faith along? “**But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned...And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.**” (2 Timothy 3:14-15)

Passing the Wrong Thing Along

One proverb says, “**The fruit never falls very far from the tree.**” It could also be restated, “**Like father; like son.**”

Mothers are not left out from passing the faith along either.

“Behold, every one that useth proverbs shall use this proverb against thee, saying, As is the mother, so is her daughter.” (Ezekiel 16:44)

- In **Genesis 12** Abraham was deceitful when communicating with the men of Egypt. He told them, “**She is my sister.**” He also had instructed Sarai to be deceitful and tell them that she was Abraham’s sister.

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- In **Genesis 26** Abraham’s promised son, Isaac says to the people concerning his wife, **“She is my sister.”**
- In **Genesis 27** Isaac’s son, Jacob deceived him on his deathbed.
- In **Genesis 37** Jacob’s sons, after selling Joseph into slavery reported to their father, **“...This have we found; know whether it by thy son’s coat or no.” (Genesis 37:32)**

⇒ Jacob’s Sons	Sons
⇒ Jacob	Father
⇒ Isaac	Grandfather
⇒ Abraham	Great Grandfather

Abraham’s deceit reproduced itself through **four** generations. This story is repeated many times in Scripture. Consider Eli, the man of God and his failure to train his sons but success in training Samuel. What was the problem that David had? What problem did his son, Solomon have? It is possible for Christianity to be wiped out of a family within one generation. How? Just fail to teach the truth to your children.

Paul told Timothy **“But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience.” (2 Timothy 3:10)**

Basically Paul was saying, **“You have observed me. You have watched me.”** Children carefully observe you. What do they see?

When God wanted to destroy the sinful cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, He said, **“Shall I hide from Abraham what I’m going to do? I will tell him my secret.”** Why?

“For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord...” (Genesis 18:19)

Father Failures

This is quite a contrast with Abraham’s nephew Lot. When visited by two angels, Lot couldn’t get his wife to cook them a meal, and

was willing to give his daughters to a group of homosexuals pounding on his door. Lot’s wife looked back in their escape (longing for the worldly things of the city.) The girls had such a low moral lifestyle that they got their father drunk and then slept with him. **“Lot remains an example of a believing father whose faith and commitment to God were enough to save himself, but not enough to save his family.” (Full Life Study Bible, Page 36)**

Be Careful How You Pass the Baton

A father’s most important job is to pass his faith to his children. James Dobson likens this mission to a three-man relay race. The father runs a lap around the track. He is carrying the baton, which is the gospel. At the right moment he gives the baton to his son, who begins the journey around the track. Then the son will eventually have to place the baton into the hands of his own children. **“Relay races are won or lost in the transfer of the baton.” Passing the baton has lost many a race because it was never done; or never done right.** We must place the baton (gospel, what we believe) safely into the hands and hearts of our children.

Fathers and Snakes

As fathers we should not be like the (rattle) snake. After involving in the mating act the male takes off, and is never seen again. The impregnated female finally gives birth to the baby snakes and takes off; never to be seen again. The babies are on their own from that moment forward.

Teachings From An Orange Tree

Kofi climbed up into an orange tree to steal an orange. The owner of the tree rushed out and caught the boy, and yelled, **“I’m going to tell your father.”**

The boy answered back, **“Go ahead. He’s in the other tree.”**

Another story is told of a father that was stealing an orange out of a tree and his son was watching. The boy cautioned his father,

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“Daddy. You shouldn’t do that. It is stealing.”

The father consoled the boy saying, “It’s alright. No one is watching.”

To which the boy answered, “But Daddy, God is watching you.”

“It is a wonderful heritage to have an honest father.” (Proverbs 20:7 TLB)

In both of these cases the family leader the Father, was setting a very poor example. Examples like these, and neglect of leadership responsibilities in the home, provide an explanation of why crime and corruption is at an all time high in many countries.

“Children are more likely to follow your feet than your lips.”

We lead by example. We are to be a reflection of Jesus Christ. Paul said, “Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.” (1 Corinthians 11:1)

‘Twas the Sheep, Not a Lamb

‘Twas the SHEEP, not a lamb, that strayed away
In the parable Jesus told
A GROWN-UP SHEEP that had gone astray
From the ninety and nine in the fold.

Out on the hillside, out in the cold,
‘Twas a SHEEP the Good Shepherd sought:
And back to the flock, safe into the fold,
“‘Twas the sheep the Good Shepherd brought.

And why for the SHEEP, should we earnestly
long,
And earnestly hope and pray?
Because there is danger...if the sheep go wrong,
They may lead the lambs astray.

For the lambs will follow the SHEEP, you know,
Wherever the SHEEP may stray
When the SHEEP go wrong, it will not be long,
Till the lambs are as wrong as they.

And so with the sheep we earnestly plead
For the sake of the Lambs today
If the lambs are lost...what a terrible cost..
Some SHEEP will have to pay!
(Minnie Lee Bovender)

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. According to the Book of Acts how do we know that “passing the faith” along to our children is important? _____

2. Write out the verse that mentions “...and to your children...” _____

3. What did Jesus say to his disciples in Luke 18:16? _____

4. What method do children usually learn by? _____
5. What did John Maxwell say about what we teach and reproduce? _____

6. What is the Scriptural principle concerning reproduction? _____

7. Using 2 Timothy 1:5 illustrate the point of “passing the faith along.” _____

8. How can we be sure that they “passed the faith along” to Timothy? _____

9. What is a proverb given in the lesson that indicates “Like father, like son.”? _____

10. Can you think of one cultural proverb in your society that talks about passing what we know on to the next generation? What is it? _____

11. Quote a Scripture that would indicate "Like mother, like daughter." _____

12. Explain the story from Genesis of how the bad character of a father was passed on to the next generation(s). _____

13. What problem did David have that his son, Solomon, also had? _____

14. According to the Full Life Study Bible, Lot is an example of what? _____

15. Explain how the father's mission is likened to a three-man relay race: _____

16. How are relay races won or lost? _____

17. According to Proverbs 20:7 what is a wonderful heritage? _____

It's Time To Think

1. What are some of the bad characteristics in your life that you don't want passed on to your children?
2. What are some creative ways that you can teach your children concerning the Word of God?