

Foundations of the Family

Exercise- Taking Inventory

Before beginning this devotion, take a moment to reflect on how your family life is managed. Create an inventory of how much time you spend together as a family without electronic devices, how many times you gather together at the dinner table, and how much time you spend in prayer, worship, and devotion with your family. You must be extremely open and honest throughout this process. The goal of this devotion is to become aware of the habits, trends, and activities within your home, especially as they relate to spiritual development and strength. It is recommended that this be done as a family and that it be visited daily. While habits take much longer than a month to develop, a vital foundation can be established upon which your family can frame a prosperous spiritual future.

Week One: Preserving a Distinct Identity

Take a Look: Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Joshua 1:8

The *Shema*, considered the essence of the entire collective of God's covenantal responsibilities, lays a foundation for how the word of God would successfully be transmitted to each generation. Echoing the words of Joshua 1:8, the *Shema* underscored the importance that God placed on preserving the distinct, called-out nature of the people of God. The success of preserving the distinct identity of God's people could only be made possible by **teaching**, a Hebrew word that signifies an engraver who

etches words into stone or granite. This would happen through several various means, but the most important would occur within the home by parents who would communicate the deliverance narratives, covenantal obligations, and various other Laws to their children (Deut. 6:7). In turn, this would lend toward a continual dialogue regarding the words of God and, through vigilance of heart, mind, and practice, God's words and their identity would be further "etched" into the hearts of their children (6:8-9). Let this resonate in your hearts: **the responsibility of preserving a holy and distinct identity begins first in the home.** The words and works of God were to be taught, discussed, and modeled within the home.

Furthermore, **the family is the institution that prepares children to enter society.** In the home, the biblical models of fatherhood and motherhood are to be emulated in such a way that our children enter into adulthood according to an ideal that aligns with God's creative design (Matthew 19:4-5). Much of our Apostolic identity is rooted in our distinctive understanding of these creative ideals. It becomes the family's responsibility to establish a proper model of masculinity and femininity. It becomes the responsibility of the family to develop a work ethic, integrity, and a biblically-driven code of ethics that will govern the acts and attitudes of our children in the future.

Proverbs 22:6 commands us to "train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it." The only true way to train children *in the way they should go* is to have them walk that way with you consistently. Indeed, this is what the word in the Hebrew implies: **continual training.**

Consider a well-worn path. The path is well-worn because it is frequently traversed. In the same way, when we make a concerted effort to guide our family down a path that fosters the preservation of a distinct, holy identity, we are walking that same path together daily. Just as fruit is the result of the process of cultivation, so also is the success of a generational legacy of truth. **Strong homes are cultivated homes.** Strong homes are consistent homes. Strong homes are those that follow a distinctive path and never deviate from it. The strength of a consistent future is founded on a consistent present.

Challenge for the Family

What are some things that you can do at home that will establish and preserve the distinct identity and culture of an Apostolic family? What things are you doing to establish a proper model of fatherhood and motherhood? As children in the home, what are you doing to develop and establish key principles of Apostolic identity and culture in your lives? Can you say that your family is consistent in devotions? Can you say that you are consistent in prayer? **Good families are the result of intentional efforts.** Take this time, as a family, to sit down and be honest with one another. As a father or mother, are you spending enough time with your children without distractions? Again, the home is the place where we are meant to develop our children to enter into society, and much of this training can only happen by spending time with each other. Sit down together and develop a scriptural memorization schedule. Memorize scripture together as a family. This week, memorize Deuteronomy 6:4-9 and quiz each other throughout the week. Search the scriptures as a

family and discuss key concepts that would be important to establish in your home. The book of Proverbs is a great place to find some of this material.

Week Two: Creating a Natural Rhythm in the Home

Take a Look: Exodus 12:1-26

In your “take a look” reading, you will have noticed how God was establishing the first Passover. However, once the charge was given that each generation continue to observe the holy feast (12:24,25), God declared in Exodus 12:26 that, *“it shall come to pass, when your children shall say unto you, what mean ye by this service?”*

One of the unique ways God sought to help the home preserve His words and maintain its distinct identity was to create **teachable moments within the home**. In other words, by observing certain feasts and festivals throughout the year, an opportunity and means would present itself to tell the story of God’s words and works in the past. It would enable teachable moments that occurred **naturally**, rather than by compulsion or commandment. Instead, because home life followed a natural rhythm that was punctuated by holy times and holy observances, children naturally developed their distinct identity as God’s chosen people. They learned it through family practice and participation.

As discussed in the first week, consistency is key. This is what rhythm implies. In music, it is a “strong, regular, repeated pattern of movement or sound” (Merriam-Webster). Rhythm is what gets stuck in our heads after we hear it long enough. We find ourselves humming the tune long after the tune has

ceased to play. In like fashion, when our home follows a natural rhythm, things begin to stick, and we find more opportunity to discuss important concepts of life and scripture in our home. Unfortunately, when homes fail to have a natural rhythm, opportunities are forced and unnatural and can often produce resistance and confusion. This is why it is extremely important to establish a repeatable rhythm in our homes by developing a schedule that, while it may stretch us, can be established and consistently followed.

The dinner table is very important and a place where a great deal of teachable moments can occur. I like to call this the Theology of the Table. Did you know that Jesus delivered some of the most powerful lessons from the pulpit of a table? Take time to look over a few of these events in scripture:

- Jesus at Levi the Publican’s Table (Luke 5:27-39)
- Jesus at the Pharisee’s Table (Luke 7:36-50)
- Jesus at a Certain Pharisee’s Table (Luke 11:37-53)
- Jesus at the Chief Pharisee’s Table (Luke 14:1-24)
- Jesus and the Last Supper (Luke 22:14-38)

These are just several examples of messages that were delivered from behind a table. In like fashion, the table is a place of conversation in our homes. It’s a time of discussion, daily reflection, and openness between family members. Consider that there are seven dinners a week for fifty-two weeks. Do the math! That is 364 days a year when an opportunity is provided to engage in teachable moments as a family. If dinner time lasted a minimum of one hour, that means you are given 364 hours of uninterrupted time with

your family. Teachable moments that happen naturally are important!

Even today, hinged upon the events of the first Passover, orthodox Jewish families undergo the ritualistic search for leaven within the home on Passover's eve. With candles lit and not a word spoken between the blessing and the finding of the leaven, families engage in a delightful, yet somber search to find and remove the leaven from the home. Believed in Jewish tradition to have originated via the searching of Jerusalem with candles in Zephaniah 1:12, the search for Chametz (leaven) became an activity in the home that reinforced, not only the narrative of God's Word, but an awareness of the importance of purity and obedience in the home.

Challenge for the Family

What are you doing in your home that creates teachable moments? Are you finding that electronics are getting in the way of these efforts? Why not create a box or a basket in the house where all electronic devices are placed at a certain time of the day? Play games together and start a family game night. Go to the store together and pick out a new game every month. During game nights, there are so many lessons that can be learned and discussed naturally. How about having the children write and perform neat Bible skits while you cheer them on! They can dress up like Bible characters and recreate stories in the Bible. How about picking a new Bible character every month to discuss during family devotion time? Pick King David one month, Daniel another, and Samuel another. Have the whole family participate in learning about these Bible

characters and discuss the events, the people, and various aspects of each of their stories. In other words, develop consistent rituals in your home that create teachable moments for God's words and works.

Week Three: The Threefold Cord

Take a Look: Deuteronomy 31:9-13; Ephesians 4:11-14

It has been said that it “takes a village” to raise children. Indeed, many can attest to this. Similarly, it is essential to recognize that God intended to utilize three primary institutions to preserve and promote His words, works, and the identity of His people. These are as follows: **the family, the church, and the ministry.** In the Old Testament, it was the family, the Tabernacle (called the church in the wilderness), and the Priesthood.

Too long we have prioritized these three institutions as a “one-two-three” system. We can’t do this! Instead, all three function as a threefold cord (see Ecclesiastes 4:9-12). When we speak of family, we should also speak of church and ministry. When we speak of church, we should be speaking of family and ministry. When we speak of ministry, we should be speaking of family and church! The church and ministry ought to be a natural part of the family. Fellowship, fun, prayer, worship, and every major facet of our lives ought to be interwoven into this threefold cord. However, everything begins and is solidified in the home! In your family, the Bible must serve as the cornerstone of its foundation and the narratives, moral guidelines, doctrines, and overall unified themes of the Bible spoken, discussed, and taught organically by parents who, in turn, are consistently developed, aligned, and instructed by a pastor in a local church that is supported by an anointed ministry team.

It is important that you discuss this threefold cord in your home. It is important that you are praying these three things together as a family. Build the church and ministry up in your family.

Final Thoughts

It is important to understand the role the family plays in society. The family is where we prepare our children to enter the world. Remember, children learn about fatherhood, motherhood, masculinity and femininity, and every other vital ideal that aligns with a biblical view of humanity from the family. It is crucial that we rescue the family from neglect, sin, and worldliness!

In regard to the Word of God, the family serves as the touch-point of truth. To put it another way, **the family is the medium for the message!** The success of Scriptural permanence and Apostolic identity depends upon the family’s responsibility to develop a natural rhythm in the home where, as noted before, the familial structure was to impress upon future generations the words of God as an engraver etches words into stone or granite. The heartbeat of securing an Apostolic culture depends upon the consistency of mothers and fathers teaching the commandments of God *“when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up”* (Deut. 6:7). Furthermore, God’s laws were to be written upon the posts of the doors and gates of the home and fastened, via phylacteries, upon their hands and upon their foreheads further establishing the necessity of God’s words to govern man’s mind and man’s strength.

Final Challenges for Parents

Dialogue

This week, sit down as parents and give your testimony. Don't highlight or glorify your sinful background, but instead, talk about when you first felt God. Discuss when you received the Holy Ghost, or life-changing sermons or services you remember. When you give your testimony or tell these stories, present them in such a way that creates **generational solidarity** (see Exodus 12:27; Deuteronomy 6:20 and usage of *us* and *we*). Instead of telling them "God delivered me," tell them that "God delivered us!" This helps to establish in their hearts a sense of belonging. They become a part of what God has done in the past, and they shoulder the task of continuing this in the future.

Connect and Convey

Take time to discuss what your pastor preached throughout the week. It is your responsibility to ensure that God's message delivered in your local church becomes a part of the rhythm of your home. Maybe your children are too young to understand what your pastor preached? Well, find a way to discuss the main points with your children in a way they will understand. The dinner table is a wonderful place for these discussions to happen.

Engage

Finally, make sure that you sit down and engage with your family. Look at some of the synonyms of **engage**: *capture, attract, gain, win, captivate*. Make sure you pray together, read the Bible together, and worship together. Yes, sing songs

and worship together in the home! Play board or card games, take hikes, connect with other church families, be at the church for every event possible, and make gadget-free time for each and every member of your family. Remember, everything rises and falls in the future on the present strength of your family.