



SPIRITUAL LEGACY

PJ MATHEW

Note: All the scriptures quoted in this article are from the New International Version of the Bible.

In this article, I would like to emphasize the significance of the spiritual legacy that can be passed on to our posterity. The Webster’s Dictionary defines legacy as “handed down from the past, as from an ancestor or predecessor.” Joshua made a defying cry to the Israelites regarding the choice they would make for their generation (Joshua 24:14-15). After the death of Moses, Joshua took over the leading of the people (Joshua 1:1-3) into the promised land. He had begun the exodus from Egypt along with Moses and the rest of the Israelites. It is believed that about six hundred thousand Israelites excluding women and children (Exodus 12:37-38) had started the journey but many of them perished in the wilderness because of their doubt and unfaithfulness. The first generation of the people of Israel who had started their journey died in the desert except for Joshua and Caleb (Numbers 32:11-12). After crossing the river Jordan, Joshua

conquered all the territories, in the land of Canaan, and then the Lord gave rest to Israel. Joshua was very concerned for the people in case they would forget God who had brought them from the land of slavery (Egypt) to the land of milk and honey (Canaan). *“But he brought us out from there to bring us in and give us the land that he promised on oath to our forefathers”* (Deuteronomy 6:23).

Joshua believed that his people (Israelites) would serve the Lord God, and he challenged them to make a commitment through his own example. *“On that day Joshua made a covenant for the people, and there at Shechem, he drew up for them decrees and laws. And Joshua recorded these things in the Book of the Law of God. Then he took a large stone and set it up there under the oak near the holy place of the Lord”* (Joshua 24:25-26). Joshua made a commitment before the people, *“But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord”* (Joshua 24:15). Serving the Lord was the heritage that he passed on to his family. Many were the

wonderful acts and conquests of Joshua the son of Nun. Nevertheless, securing the people to make a commitment to serve the Lord stands out as a great spiritual legacy of Joshua. *“And the people said to Joshua, ‘We will serve the Lord our God and obey him’”* (Joshua 24:24). I have explained here a few thoughts on spiritual heritages that we can bequeath to our own generation.

Family Altar

The first and foremost, spiritual legacy that we can exemplify to our generation is family worship. *“A family that prays together stays together.”* There are innumerable examples in the Bible which uphold the value of prayer at home. Job was the wealthiest man of his time. He remembered to sacrifice burnt offerings early in the morning for his children (Job 1:5). It is a true statement that a decision made by the parent will affect the future generation no matter how significant or insignificant it is. If it is a good decision it will impact the generation with a blessing. If it is a poor decision, the outcome will be very harmful. Noah was a righteous man in his generation, and he obeyed God in every detail of building the ark for the salvation of his family (Genesis 6:18). Noah and his family survived the great waters that flooded the earth for a hundred and fifty days (Genesis 6:24-25). Abraham made a good decision to follow God which made him and his generation the chosen people of God (Genesis 12:1-3). Lot made a poor decision of choosing the well-watered plain of the river Jordan near Sodom (Genesis 13:10- 11), which eventually devastated his generation. Cornelius was a centurion who, with all his family, was devout and God-fearing. Such devotion and God-fearing nature of the family of Cornelius had broken down the barrier that existed between the Gentiles and the Jews. *“The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on Gentiles. For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God”* (Acts 10:44-46). The Jews had denigrated the Gentiles and thought that they didn't deserve the mercy of God.

The father of the family is also the priest of the family and has an obligation to call his wife and children for family prayer. The family is the first and most basic unit of the local church. The church service begins first at home. In the book of Deuteronomy, we read how we should teach our generations by reminding them of the mighty acts of God. *“These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates”* (Deuteronomy 6:6-9).

Family Table

The family dinner table provides a wonderful occasion for the members of the family to sit and talk to each other. A family that eats and communes together can share the experiences of the day. It opens new opportunities for everyone in the family to see where and how they fit into the responsibilities of the household. The rapport and the cooperation among the siblings will be better fostered during that time. In Psalms 128:3, we read, *“Your wife will be like a fruitful vine within your house; your sons will be like olive shoots around the table.”* The family table is a place for connection, brokenness, forgiveness, and thanksgiving. Jesus taught us how to pray in Matthew 6:11, *“Give us our daily bread.”* Meals are blessed at the dinner table and the whole family partakes of the food together with a thankful heart.

The Thanksgiving Day in the United States of America echoes the gratefulness of the early pilgrims. The first American Thanksgiving was celebrated less than a year after the Christian Plymouth colonists had settled in the new land of America. Prayer before the meals and table disciplines have been ignored somewhat in the modern technological world. If we lay the foundation of the family table in our homes, it will continue as a family practice for generations. While Jesus fed five thousand people with five loaves and two fish, there was an order involved where all the people sat together in groups of hundreds, and fifties on the green grass. They all ate and were satisfied (Mark 6:40).

Family Occupation

The father of the family must have an occupation. He should be willing to teach his children the ethical value of his trade. It is very important that our children should see us engaged in productive tasks. In 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 10 & 12, we read, *“In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we command you, brothers, to keep away from every brother who is idle and does not live according to the teaching you received from us.”* (verse 6) *“For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: ‘If a man will not work, he shall not eat.’”* (verse 10). *“Such people we command and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to settle down and earn the bread they eat”* (verse 12). The Apostle Paul saw that some of the Thessalonian church members were idle and acting like busybodies. As fathers of the family, it is our responsibility to set an example for our children to earn an honest living. The Bible has many examples in the book of Proverbs regarding the outcomes of hard work. *“Lazy hands make a man poor, but diligent hands bring wealth. He who gathers crops in summer is a wise son, but he who sleeps during harvest is a disgraceful son”* (Proverbs 10:4-5). *“He who works his land will have abundant food, but he who chases fantasies lacks*

judgment” (Proverbs 12:11). An old adage fits well here, “An idle mind is the devil’s workshop.”

Family Finances

Teaching financial principles or values is the key factor to the economic health of our generation. Efficient financial management has a strong correlation to the spiritual, social, and emotional health of the family. One of the main causes of divorces and separations in the family is the careless and inefficient way of money administration. Spending more than one is earning leads to debts, abuse of credit cards, and other types of borrowing. It is very important that our fiscal operations remain transparent and properly maintained. One of the effective ways of devoting our resources is tithing, which is a divine order. It began with Abraham who gave his tithes to Melchizedek. “*Then Abram gave him a tenth of everything*” (Genesis 14:20). By giving, we honor God with what God has given to us. Malachi 3:10 says, “*Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this, says the Lord Almighty, and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it.*” “*Honor the Lord with your wealth, with the first fruits of all your crops; then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine*” (Proverbs 3:9-10). If we set a precedent in paying tithes and offerings, our generation will continue to follow this divine order and partake of the blessing of God.

Family Trait and Hospitality

The word trait is defined as a distinguishing quality or characteristic. It is typical in a neighborhood that we see many diversities in terms of ways of living or lifestyles. However, a Christian, born-again family is uniquely different from the rest of the families in a locality. They go to church every Sunday, have devotions, and are faithful in partaking in spiritual activities. Punctuality, honesty, truthfulness, generosity, and hospitality are some of their traits. Abraham and his wife Sarah received three angels with hospitality (Genesis 18) which resulted in a blessing by which Sarah conceived a son in her old age. When Peter’s mother-in-law was healed from her fever, she got up and waited on Jesus (Matthew 8:14-15). Martha and Mary were the sisters who also were hospitable to Jesus. Not long after Lydia of Philippi and her household were baptized, she requested Paul to stay in her house for more spiritual fellowship (Acts 16:15). Mary poured an expensive perfume at Jesus’ feet and wiped his feet with her hair (John 12:3). These qualities are Christian traits that can be passed to the next generation. “*Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it*” (Hebrews 11:2).

Discipline

It is training that corrects, molds, or perfects the mental faculties or moral character (Merriam-Webster dictionary). Christian discipline is one of the many legacies that can be passed on from family to family. In Proverbs 13:24 we read, “*He who spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is careful to discipline him.*” Again, in Proverbs 12:1, “*Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but he who hates correction is stupid.*” Hebrews 12:7- 11 says, “*Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline) then you are illegitimate children and not true sons. Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us; and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live! Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good that we may share in his holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained for it.*” Discipline entails a whole range of things dealing with life from infancy to mature adulthood. A family that does not instill discipline at an early age will have to pay a great price for the consequences of indiscipline. Indiscipline breeds disobedience; disobedience leads to rebellion. “*To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of the rams. For rebellion is like the sin of divination, and arrogance like the evil of idolatry*” (1 Samuel 15:22-24).

Inculcation of the Fruit of the Spirit

Another of the important legacies of a family is the exercise or demonstration of the fruit of the Spirit although it is a hard one. We read in Galatians 5:22-23, “*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.*” Fruit is the end-product, deed, or outcome of an action in one’s life. Jesus said, “*You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit – fruit that will last*” (John 15:16). A small seedling begins to grow to be a plant or tree till it bears fruit. The fruit contains many seeds which have the potential of breaking forth into seedlings and growing to bear fruit. It is an evolving and mysterious process in nature. The human mind can hardly grasp the secret of a tiny little seed that has the potential to grow to be a mighty tree one day. Jesus said “*The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of all your seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and perch in its branches*” (Matthew 13:31-32). “One can see no similarity whatsoever between the tiny seed with its black crusty covering, and the beautiful red poppy which waves its petals in the breeze: no similarity between the little blue egg in the nest, and the

bird that flies aloft into the atmosphere on wings of liberty. In fact, if we did not understand the mysterious processes of nature, we would consider one a fool to suggest that the seed and poppy are one and the same thing: or that the egg and the bird are one and the same thing. And yet they are in kind, in nature, in possibility. So it is with the birth of the Spirit. Thank God for the incorruptible seed, by which we have become ‘partakers of divine nature’ (2 Peter 1:4), or ‘born again’” (1 Peter 1:23) - (George Warnock, *The Feast of Tabernacles*, pp. 45-46). How powerful it is to sow a spiritual seed of the fruit of the Spirit in our posterity and see the good decision that we made has matured into fruition in due time. We will be amazed to see how it all transforms our young minds when we try to instill the spiritual truth through precept upon precept, step by step, here a little and there a little (Isaiah 28:10).

Encouragement

Ephesians 6:4 says, “*Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.*” “*Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged*” (Colossians 3:21). As parents, it is very easy to get angry at children and be unreasonable. Children look up to their parents for love, compassion, direction, and leadership. A wrong upbringing may result in a bitter childhood and ultimately a bitter person. Encouraging is better than criticizing. Every child is not born gifted. They need time and space to grow, just like a seedling needs sunlight and water. Any child, gifted or not, can do well under a reassuring environment. In a family that encourages their children, they usually do well compared to the children who are always being criticized and who become exasperated. We thank God for godly parents who were instrumental in shaping our character in our formative years. Jesus loved children and He admonished His disciples not to hinder them from coming to Him (Matthew 19:14). Again, we read in Matthew 18:1-4, “*At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, ‘Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?’ He called a little child and had him stand among them. And he said, ‘I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.’ Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.*” Jesus emphasized the importance of child-like humility in us. Jesus went on to say in verses 5-6, “*And whoever welcomes a little child like this in my name welcomes me. But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea.*”

Conclusion

The legacy that the earlier generation can pass on to the next is not primarily material things, but rather spiritual attributes. Posterity will be thankful for the wealth they inherit, nonetheless. If they don’t know how to be a good steward of what is inherited, it will be a terrible folly. They should know the value of hard work and how to distinguish between the needs and wants of life. It is the same with the spiritual life. That birth of the Spirit, caused by the incorruptible seed, grows to be a fruit-bearing branch and cannot be destroyed by any evil force. It may take a whole generation for the realization of the spiritualities or pieties mentioned above to take complete hold of an individual. “*Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain*” (1 Corinthians, 15:58). †

GLOBAL MISSIONS INC.

Global Missions Inc. was founded in 1944, as a Christian mission to promote and encourage the preaching of the gospel to every creature.

Global Missions reaches into many countries in Africa, India, the Caribbean, the United States of America, South America and the Philippines. These local churches are established on the foundational truths revealed in God’s word and through His unfolding revelation. Local churches are governed by local residents who are referred to as elders.

Global Missions is a nondenominational Christian church.

Headquarters:
802 Airport Road
North Battleford, SK S9A 2Z3 Canada

Mailing Address:
P.O. Box 934
North Battleford, SK S9A 2Z3 Canada

Telephone:
(306) 445-2733

Email:
info@globalmissionsinc.org

Online:
www.globalmissionsinc.org

Traveling Ministry Contact List:
www.globalmissionsinc.org/about

SHARON STAR

The Sharon Star is a monthly publication and mailed as a free-will offering plan. The articles within are intended for inspiration and information to those who are interested in the unfolding revelation of the Word of God.

Published by:
Global Missions Inc. in North Battleford,
Saskatchewan, Canada.

The Sharon Star is found online at:
www.globalmissionsinc.org/sharon-star

Publications Mail Agreement 40012206

Subscribe by mail or online.