

Pr Mark Turner: Family - Stewards of God's Property (30/3/19)

Introduction:

We have come to the end of the first quarter of 2019. During Sabbath School for the second quarter we will be learning about God's plan for family. Today's sermon will be an introduction to that topic, as well as serving as a reminder of the theme from our recent sermon series.

You may remember that in the beginning of our recent series on Stewardship we spoke of Jesus' parable in Matthew 25 about the talents.

In reflecting on this parable we noticed that Jesus called us to be faithful stewards over the gifts that God has given each one of us.

There are at least 10 kinds of gift that Jesus could have been referring to in that sermon:

- Gifts of the Holy Spirit
- Natural Abilities
- Mental Faculties
- The Power of Speech
- Influence
- Time
- Health
- Strength
- Money
- Kindly Influences and Affections

But today I would like to talk to you about one that was not included in the above list - family.

Just as with any other gift, the gift of family is a privilege that we have been gifted, which are to be stewards over. But let's take a look at what the Bible says about the gift of family how we are to oversee that gift.

Psalm 127:3-5

1. Children are a gift from the Lord!

- Society seems to have a different perspective than that which we read about in this Bible verse. It seems that the world around us view children as a burden, rather than a blessing. But this is NOT God's perspective.

"Children are the heritage of the Lord, and we are answerable to Him for our management of His property.... In love, faith, and prayer let parents work for their households, until with joy they can come to God saying, "Behold, I and the children whom the Lord hath given me." Ellen White, The Adventist Home, pg 159

- 1 Samuel 1:1-5,10,11,19,20,25,28
In the days of Hannah, children were extremely desirable. Not only did they provide a woman with much fulfilment, but in their culture children were also meant to be the ones who would provide for their parents when they would get older. However Hannah was not primarily concerned with herself. She recognised that Samuel was a gift from God. As such, she knew that she was under a sacred obligation to be a steward of that gift. So she gave her son back to God in service.

2. Parenting is a sacred responsibility.

- We talk a lot about putting our faith and trust in God, but God has also placed His faith and trust in us! He has entrusted us with children to take care of on His behalf. What a sacred privilege!

"Children are committed to their parents as a precious trust, which God will one day require at their hands. We should give to their training more time, more care, and more prayer. They need more of the right kind of instruction.... Remember that your sons and daughters are younger members of God's family. He has committed them to your care, to train and educate

for heaven. You must render an account to Him for the manner in which you discharge your sacred trust." Ellen White, *The Adventist Home*, pg 161

Deuteronomy 6:4-7

Teach your children:

- i. Meal Times (when you are sitting down)
 - This is a great time for focused discussion as a *teacher* to establish core values.
- ii. Drive Time (when you walk by the way)
 - This can be a time for informal dialogue as a *friend* to help your child interpret life.
- iii. Bed Time (when you lie down)
 - This is a time for intimate conversation as a *counsellor* to listen to the heart of your child.
- iv. Morning Time (when you rise up)
 - This is a great time to speak encouraging words as a *coach* who gives a sense of value and instills purpose.

Ephesians 6:4

- In the parental team it is the Father that has the primary responsibility. Not to be harsh, cold or dictatorial, but to teach, train and mentor.

Genesis 33:1

- Jacob and Esau were polar opposites. When there were reunited after many years apart Esau was really keen to go home together with his brother and the whole family, but Jacob knew that the pace at which Esau and his crew would go would be far too fast for the women and children in his company. So he told his brother that he would stay back with the women and children and 'lead them on softly.'
- This is a super important lesson for husbands and fathers to learn today. Too often we can get carried away and try to lead our families at our own pace - leaving them for dead. God's plan is for the leader - the man - to take responsibility to lead at a pace that is comfortable for the rest of the family to follow.

3. Families are God's instruments to influence the world.

Psalms 127:3-5

- "Quiver full of them..." Again, this is a stark contrast to the way that most of society would view children. Because of the increased burden of having a large family in today's society, smaller families are often favoured over larger ones. But the Bible indicates that they are a blessing. Why?
- The concept is that they would be a weapon. Children are the parents' weapons for achieving a success that they, because of their limited resources, were unable to achieve. They are to be sent out into the world, after the principles of the parents have been instilled in them, as an influence for the good.

"The home in which the members are polite, courteous Christians exerts a far-reaching influence for good... One well-ordered, well-disciplined family tells more in behalf of Christianity than all the sermons that can be preached... The greatest evidence of the power of Christianity that can be presented to the world is a well-ordered, well-disciplined family. This will recommend the truth as nothing else can, for it is a living witness of its practical power upon the heart." Ellen White, *The Adventist Home*, pg 31,32

Story about raising kids:

When Pastor Mark was studying at university he would go home during his breaks and work as a horse trainer to earn money to pay his way through college. Training dogs or horses, 'that was easy' he thought, but training children 'now that seems impossible!' Until he met the child of one family who he trained horses for.

The child's mother had asked Mark if her son could watch him breaking the horse in. 'No way,' Mark thought, that is too dangerous. But as his fears were allayed by the confidence that this mother had in her child's obedience, he reluctantly agreed to let the boy come with him to watch him training their horse. Upon arrival at the yards where the horse would be trained Mark gave the boy specific instructions as to where he could sit (so that he would be safe) and that he was not to move at all - or he could be in serious danger.

To Mark's astonishment the boy was perfectly obedient! He did everything that Mark asked him to do and was perfectly safe throughout the breaking process. When they arrived back at the house after the training session the boy's mother asked Mark how her son had behaved himself. Mark, expressing his astonishment, told her that he could hardly believe how well her child was trained to obey. 'How did you do this?' he asked. The mother went on to explain to Mark that they had used a parenting seminar called "Growing Kid's God's Way" as their textbook. At that, Mark tucked that information into the recesses of his mind thinking to himself 'if I ever have children I will be sure to use that too!'

Challenge:

Let us be faithful stewards of the gift that we have in our children (or the children of our church family)!

"Parents who have neglected their God-given responsibilities must meet that neglect in the judgment. The Lord will then inquire, "Where are the children that I gave you to train for Me? Why are they not at My right hand?" Many parents will then see that unwise love blinded their eyes to their children's faults and left those children to develop deformed characters unfit for heaven. Others will see that they did not give their children time and attention, love and tenderness; their own neglect of duty made the children what they are. Parents, if you lose your opportunity, God pity you; for in the day of judgment God will say, "What have you done with My flock, My beautiful flock?" Ellen White, Child Guidance, pg 516