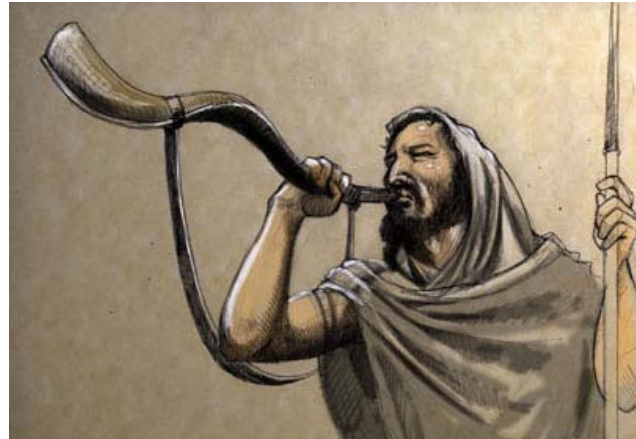


As for Me And My House

Joshua 24:14-15

Eddie Ildefonso

Introduction: On February 19, 1979, a small plane crashed into Ontario Peak in the San Gabriel Mountains, and a ten-hour story of death, courage, and survival began. The passengers of that Cessna 172 included the pilot, a young woman, an attorney, and his eleven-year-old son. The pilot and the attorney were killed in the crash. The boy said he knew his father was dead when he tried to rouse him and “he wouldn’t wake up.” The boy and the young woman huddled in the snow near the plane for seven hours, hoping to be rescued. Finally they decided they must attempt the treacherous descent of the mountain or freeze to death. Shortly after they began, the woman fell 350 feet to her death. The boy, all 75 pounds of him, was lost and all alone on a mountain in the freezing cold. Bloody and bruised, broken bones in both hands, his father lying dead a few feet away—what was he to do?



He never gave up. He slid most of the way down the mountain on the seat of his pants, clutching a stick in his fractured hands. Whenever he began to slide too fast, he wedged the stick in the snow as a brake. About 5 p.m. he was found near a village at the foot of the mountain and rushed to a hospital. Wet, bloody, and exhausted, he was still very much alive. Before his release from the hospital there was a news conference. The boy encountered a barrage of questions about his ordeal. How did he find the courage to go on? Didn’t he feel like quitting? He answered simply, “I’m alive today because my dad taught me never to give up.”

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****Dad, if you were to die today what legacy would you leave your children?**

There is no doubt about it that there are some lessons you want to be able to teach your kids. Maybe it is to ride a bike. Maybe it is to hunt or fish, whatever it may be. You probably want your children to be kind and respectful. You are probably even excited that they will carry on your family name.

Make no mistake about it. The role of dads is crucial in the life of a child. There are positive emotional things that come to a child when dad is in the picture as there are positive physical aspects that come from the presence of dad. Mom and dad I don’t think we realize what kind of impact we have on our kid’s lives—even in the smallest of circumstances.

ILLUSTRATION: In his book *The Effective Father* Gordon MacDonald tells a story about James Boswell, the great biographer of Samuel Johnson. Boswell often referred to a day in his childhood when his father had taken him fishing. To Boswell it was a special day, and years later he reflected on lessons he’d learned on that happy occasion. After his father’s death, someone checked the diary his father had kept to see how he remembered the day. The only entry was:

“Gone fishing today with my son; a day wasted.”

Gordon MacDonald, *The Effective Father* (Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House, 1977), p. 79.

So it is quite obvious we have tremendous influence in the life of our children. I believe that above teaching them to ride a bike or fish, the best legacy we can leave for our children is the legacy of faith. There are numerous examples of this being illustrated in the Bible. One of those instances is found in **1 Kings 2:1-4**. As we see in this passage King David is at the end of his life. He is on his death bed and he knows it. So he brings in Solomon, his successor and gives him his final words.

King David challenges his son Solomon to be strong and to show himself a man. He is having a heart to heart, man to man conversation. Here is how to be a man according to David: Be faithful to God. The key to God’s hand of blessing on King Solomon was to be faithful. The key to God’s hand of blessing on your child’s life is if they learn to be faithful to God. To follow his will, to obey His word.

ILLUSTRATION: What is really sobering about parenthood and I don’t know if you parents have realized this yet or not but you only get one chance with your kids. You don’t get a second or third time to raise them. This is it. So doesn’t it make sense that we learn to get it right as soon as we can?

TRANSITION: Now, we’ve got to be careful because it can’t be one of those “do what I say and not as I do” deals. Aren’t we really good at that? I mean what are we teaching our children if we’re speeding down the road and your kid looks over and says “isn’t the speed limit 55 MPH?” Or you are at a restaurant and kids under 3 eat free and you tell the hostess that your 4 year old is 3 years old? If we are going to leave a legacy with our children it will take more than just lip service. Moms, and especially Dads, we’ve got to walk the talk.

That’s why I love the story of Joshua especially chapters 23-24. Joshua is a leader AND a father. He influenced an entire generation. He was the successor of Moses who led the children of Israel into the promise land. Toward the end of his life he called together all the tribes of Israel before they went in and enjoyed their inheritance. He had what is called a “covenant ceremony.” A covenant was a pact, a treaty, an agreement between two parties. This ceremony was a reminder of the covenant God made with the children of Israel. And a typical covenant ceremony included the following:

- 1) Reciting their sacred history**
- 2) Obligations to the covenant**
- 3) Blessings that come with being faithful**
- 4) Consequences for not being faithful.**

As you read **Joshua 23-24** you see those elements. Joshua was the spiritual leader for Israel and the spiritual leader of his family and he doesn’t pull any punches. He makes his case for commitment to God. He clarified the price of commitment. And he provided an example of commitment.

Read Joshua 24:14-15

Let’s be honest here. It is never easy. Living a life of faith and having a godly home and teaching your kids to love God in a very self-centered world seems like sometimes it is impossible. We are not the only ones that have felt like that. We are not alone. Although it is

difficult it is possible because many have made that commitment. But leaving a legacy of faith to your children begins with a choice. Look at **verse 15**. We make the deliberate choice. Just like Joshua did in this passage. Whether anyone else did or not, Joshua and his family were going to serve and follow the Lord. The same remains true for us today. We decide. No matter what kind of home you have right now. Parents, you can change it with a choice. Maybe God wasn't the center of your home growing up. Well, parents it doesn't have to be that way in your home. You can choose who and what is going to be the center of your home. Of course many homes are indifferent about matters of faith. A very dangerous perception that many parents have about faith in their home is, "my child can make their own decision." It is as if parents sit their children down at the table and say, "you can follow any god you want to." Of course we can't make children accept Christ into their lives but if you have just a basic knowledge of the Bible and its message why on earth would you and I not do all we could to help them see that Jesus is the way the truth and the life!? Did you know that most people who make a decision to follow Christ do so before they are 18 years old? Guess what, that is the amount of time your children are in your home. And most of the time if they don't make a decision to follow Christ by then they probably won't. I'm not saying it can't happen because it can. But that's not the norm.

Ecclesiastes 12:1-4

Leaving a legacy of faith also means a change of lifestyle.

This book was written during a time and backdrop of a very polytheistic culture. People worshipped all kinds of gods. There were sun gods, moon gods, fertility gods, etc. You may say, "I don't worship any sun god." Well, let's remember that a god is anything that keeps us from whole hearted devotion to God. It could be a job. It could be money. It could be pornography. It could be a hobby. It could be a relationship. Regardless, of what is Joshua very boldly says, remove anything that is keeping your whole hearted devotion from God. Fear God. Serve him with all faithfulness. When parents intend to leave a legacy there will be a change of life. Are there things in your home that have the potential to pull your child away from the faith? Are there things about your lifestyle that could pull your child away?

Tucked away in the last few verses of **Joshua 24** is **verse 31**. Israel served the Lord throughout the lifetime of Joshua and of the elders who outlived him and who had experienced everything the Lord had done for Israel.

By now you might be thinking, "Pastor Eddie, you want me to be perfect!" That's not what I am saying at all. God's not looking for perfect fathers, just fathers that seek to know God well. We all know King David wasn't a perfect father. Joshua probably wasn't either. They weren't without their sin and mistakes. Yet, they made a deliberate attempt to be faithful to God and point their kids in the same direction. Your kids know you aren't perfect. Your wife knows you aren't perfect. God knows you aren't perfect. So doesn't that feel good about now?

Although you aren't perfect there are some things you can put into practice. Maybe replace these lifestyle changes with the ones you need to leave behind. To leave a legacy for your kids let me encourage you to be....(Taken from **Discipleship Journal**. Copyright 2000 by The Navigators. Used by Permission Nav Press)

1. A Dad of prayer

Do your kids see you praying? Are you praying with your kids? Maybe this is new for you. Where do you start? Just start praying. It's a conversation with God.

2. A Dad of Purpose

You've probably heard the quote, "Beware of the barrenness of life." Do your kids ever learn from you that life is more than just being busy and working?

3. A Dad of Patience

No child will ever be perfect. They'll make mistakes. We can't ignore their problems, nor should we avoid corrective discipline. However we can guard OUR reactions.

4. A Dad of Play

Are you a "fun" dad? Don't be so serious with life. Have fun with your kids.

5. A Dad of Praise

I'm amazed at how often people complain. I'm amazed at how many Christians complain. I'm amazed at how often I complain. I can not think of a greater insult to God than to gripe with the mouth he has created for praise. There's plenty to complain about in our families. But if we want our children to praise rather than complain, they need a dad who leaves them a legacy of praise.

If you were to die today what legacy would you leave your children?

I realize there are fathers here today who are saying, "I missed an opportunity. I blew it with my kids. They are grown and out of the house." I want you to know you can still have an influence on their lives and the lives of their children. Others of you, you are here today and your father or husband is at home. And he does not take his role as spiritual leader seriously. So maybe mom, even maybe some children—you are the spiritual leader in your home. God is with you and will help you. I encourage you to pray fervently for your dad or husband to know Jesus Christ. Pray for them everyday and live the life of faith in front of him.

Others of you are here and you have pretty bad memories of your father. Maybe he wasn't there for you. Maybe he was abusive in some way. I want you to know God has never left you. He cares for you and he wants to be the father you never had.

Psalm 27:10 "Though my father and mother forsake me, the Lord will receive me."