

It is a fact that currently in our country, the Christian faith is having less and less of an impact on young people. As a result, one is forced to say that the Christian faith in America is in decline. I have been reading study after study this week...

Are Young People Really Leaving Christianity? Cold Case Christianity.com 2012

What can be done about all this?

Today, I offer one little part of the solution.

A couple of weeks ago we were in Genesis 46 and looked at the beginning of the nation of Israel.

I related the lesson then to the beginning of our nation and our current situation.

Some of you noticed the design of God in that message coinciding with our Memorial Day weekend.

Genesis 48 contains a powerful Father's Day message. Alas, we have missed the day by a week.

Or, maybe you could think of it this way: This message is for fathers who want to prepare for Father's Day.

And, after all, what better way to prepare than purposing in your heart to pass on the blessing of God.

Fathers: Pass on the Blessing to your Children and Grandchildren.

Right away you might come up with a few objections:

Objection 1: I'm too old. My fathering days have passed.

No, you're not. You don't ever retire from being a father... nor from walking with and serving God.

Furthermore, it is the case that the man whose example we will be studying this morning is 147 years old.

I think it's likely that you are younger than that. It is not too late.

Objection 2: I'm a woman. I'm not a woman, but you might be.

Well, you are supposed to be a helper to your husband. And, there are things that you'll think of that you can pass on as well.

It may be that you are here today and have children, but no husband.

Then you have to pick up the slack and bless your children in the place of a man who ought to do it.

Objection 3: I have no children.

Well, there are examples in the Bible of a blessing being passed on without a blood relation.

Moses passing his role on to Joshua. Elijah passing his prophetic mantle to Elisha. Jesus commissioning His disciples.

There is Paul the apostle blessing Titus and Timothy as they set out to serve God.

And, so, if you want to you will find others who you can mentor and then leave them a blessing.

Objection 4: I am too young and have no children.

Well, on the one hand, you can save up this lesson for later. It is good for a man to begin his fatherhood with this understanding.

On the other hand, I know teenagers who have sought to mentor others and leave a blessing of God with them.

You can start today. Lead a Bible study. Find someone to pray for and encourage.

Objection 5: Things are so bad in our culture today that the next generation is simply doomed.

No, it's just not true. In fact Jacob finds himself in pagan Egypt and his sons have been a very messed up bunch.

Jacob and his sons are not surrounded by loving believers. Even there in Egypt, he seeks to pass on to them the blessing of God.

Objection 6: My children are not believers.

Well, we have no confirmation that Jacob's sons, or Joseph's sons had a strong faith.

Jacob knew very little about God and had little faith when he was blessed by Isaac.

Jacob learned to trust God after he had received the blessing from his father. Your children might be in the same situation.

We begin with Jacob remembering how he had learned to trust God after he had been blessed by his father.

I. Cling to the promise and the blessing of God. vss. 1-7

Jacob is 147 years old, sick, and he cannot see. Blessing his sons will be the last thing that he does.

But, before he does he gives his son and his two grandsons some context. He tells them his story.

Jacob begins with what happened back when he was 40 and fleeing from his brother. God spoke to him for the very first time.

God made him a promise then, and he's never forgotten.

It is the same promise God gave to Jacob's grandfather Abraham and his father Isaac.

It was a promise given unconditionally. Jacob did not deserve it. It was an expression of God's goodness and grace.

But, it has changed Jacob and his life forever. God became his savior. Then he learned what that would mean. It wasn't easy.

Are you a Christian? Have you shared with your children how God saved you and what He has done in your life?

There are few things more important for a parent to do. Your children need to know why you are following the Lord.

They need to see you doing it. They need to look at your life and understand what it means to be a Christian.

Many Christian parents think that this is somehow the job of the pastor or youth worker.

"My kids are supposed to learn about God in church... in Sunday school... in the youth programs."

Maybe. Maybe they will. Maybe they won't. Maybe they won't pay attention there.

First and foremost, they need to hear about God and His promises from you! Fathers.

You might say that it's not manly, that's for my wife to do. I focus on hunting and fishing. Boloney!

If you do it it's manly! If you're a man. Don't push the spiritual leadership of your family off on your wife.

That's what Adam did in the garden.

You might say, "But pastor, I'm a busy guy. My wife has more time."

Well, it's time to get your priorities straight.

You might say, "I just don't know enough about the Lord... about the Bible."

Well, then it's time to learn. And, for now... you can tell them what you know. How did God save you?

You might say, "But, I think I'm not a Christian yet."

That's the only good excuse. It's time to turn to God in faith, repent, and believe in what Jesus has done on the cross for you.

Then you will be able to tell them about the blessing of God and bless them as well.

Why does Jacob bless these two grandsons?

It is because Jacob is about to bless all his sons and these two he is elevating to be among them.

Why does he elevate these two sons of Joseph?

We don't know. Maybe it is because Joseph is special. We can see that in blessing them he is blessing Joseph as well.

What we do see no is this...

II. God's blessing to you is meant to be passed on. vss. 8-16

Now, it is important to get the scene clear in your head. These are not little boys.

Jacob is a wizened old shepherd sitting up in the bed. Joseph, dressed in Egyptian finery is standing by after prostrating himself.

Joseph has brought Manasseh and Ephraim to the bedside. They are probably in their 20s. They are kneeling.

It is a solemn and important moment. Jacob puts his hands on their heads and blesses them.

And, he is not blessing them with something from himself... he is passing on the blessing that God gave him.

What is the nature of the blessing?

He places them under the blessing and care of God who does three things.

1. God is the one before whom each one of us walks. Me, my fathers, everyone who has believed before.
2. God is the one who takes care of each of us, like a shepherd cares for his sheep. And, Jacob knows of what he speaks.

Jesus called himself a shepherd... **John 10:11-16**

3. God has redeemed him from all evil. And, there has been plenty of that.

God has rescued him, saved him, purchased him (what redeem means) from all kinds of evil...

his own sins... the sins of others... the sins of his own sons... painful circumstance... all of it.

Have you placed your children, grandchildren in the care of the shepherd who has redeemed you?

Do they know it? Like this? I'm going to.

Maybe they're not saved... yet... but they need to know that you have placed them in God's care.

He then asks God to bless them... no doubt like God has blessed him.

That they would be called the people of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob... and so they will be.

This is how God identifies Himself 400 years later. We know who God is by the people who He has redeemed.

People will know who God is by looking at you.

Have you asked God to reveal Himself in the lives of your children?

"And may they grow into a multitude" = this is no arbitrary request... "God make them great."

This is what God has promised to do!

Jacob is asking God to fulfill His promise and make these young men a part of that fulfillment.

And, so, you should ask for your children... and let them know that you are asking God on their behalf.

You might even make it a solemn occasion, or plan a special day... or if you are ready to die, bring them to your bedside...

If your children are young, of course you will begin teaching them all of this in little ways.

But, at some point you want to make it inescapably clear that you are passing on the blessing of God in your life to them.

That God would be their shepherd as He has been yours... that He would redeem them from evil...

That God would be seen in their lives and use them to expand His kingdom on earth.

It is a prayer. It is the most important blessing that you can give them.

III. God works out His blessing in unexpected ways. vss. 17-22

Joseph notices that his father's arms were crossed... that Jacob has given first place to the second place. He has made the last, first. Sound familiar?

Indeed, Isaac was the younger. Jacob was the younger. Joseph and Benjamin, the two youngest, are the favorites.

Solomon, the youngest, becomes king after David.

The only firstborn in the Bible who obviously takes first place is Jesus.

And, Jesus Himself said that in the kingdom of God the least shall be the greatest and the last shall be first.

It is God's way to choose people according to His will and not ours. His ways are higher than ours.

Fathers, parents, mentors... you don't know how God will use the blessing you pass on. No doubt it will be different than you expect.

But, if you fail to pass on the blessing that God has given to you, there might be nothing for God to use.