

Moses' family Parenting Harmoniously

Intro: There is no character in the history of Israel who was venerated more by the Jewish people than Moses. God providentially spared his life as a baby from Pharaoh's decree that all Hebrew males be killed at birth. Many years later He rescued him from the anger of Pharaoh when Moses had slain an Egyptian in defense of one of his fellow-Israelites (Ex. 2:15-16). And then in the security of the pastureland around Mount Sinai, God from the burning bush called Moses to the great task of leading the children of Israel out of bondage (Ex. 3). He would be God's spokesman and miracle worker before Pharaoh and his fellow Israelites. Moses accepted the mission; yet he later made the most amazing statement as he reports his efforts to make his way with his family back to Egypt to carry out God's commands:

Now it came about at the lodging place on the way that the Lord met him and sought to put him to death. (Exodus 4:24)

How do we put this piece into the picture we have created of God and Moses? God saves Moses' life twice, sends him to Egypt, and then seeks to put him to death on the way. How could that be, and why?

These studies in family life have caused me to take a more detailed and careful look at what is one of those enigmatic passages in the book of Exodus:

Now it came about at the lodging place on the way that the Lord met him and sought to put him to death. Then Zipporah took a flint and cut off her son's foreskin and threw it at Moses' feet, and she said, "You are indeed a bridegroom of blood to me." So He let him alone. At that time she said, "You are a bridegroom of blood"—because of the circumcision. (Exodus 4:24-26)

What are we supposed to learn from this account in Moses' life? Let's take a moment to try to unpack this condensed account.

Moses and his family are making their way back to Egypt to carry out the mission that God had given him at the mountain.

However, there was in Moses' life a matter of disobedience that God could not let pass. He had neglected to circumcise his son in keeping with the command of God to Abraham and his descendants. This act was important to Moses as the leader of the children of Israel on a number of levels.

First the act of circumcision itself was a sign of the Lord's covenant promise to deliver Israel and make of them a great nation.

Second it was a manifestation of Israel's identity as the Lord's people. Therefore, God considered Moses' neglect of this command an important matter.

How could God bless Moses in his efforts to lead the Israelites to faith in God's promises while he himself was neglecting an

essential sign of them? If a man cannot take care of his own house, how can he lead the larger house of God? (cf. 1 Tim. 3). How would he be able to identify with the suffering slaves of Jacob's house when he had refused to accept that sign of identity for his own son?

Apparently the failure to carry out this command had been due to a disagreement or difference between Moses and his wife Zipporah.

For whatever reason Zipporah apparently had not wanted to carry out this act; and it would take the threatening of her husband's life to motivate her to change her attitude.

She apparently understood that it was the uncircumcision of her son that had brought the Lord's judgment upon her husband. God had solemnly warned that the incompassionate would be "cut off" from among the Lord's people (Gen. 17:14); and in this case her husband would bear that punishment as the head of the family whose obligation it was to see that God's will was obeyed in the matter.

Her actions and statements seem to reflect her displeasure in complying with God's command.

Her displeasure is first seen in throwing the flesh of her son at the feet of Moses. Usually such an act would indicate some measure of contempt or repugnance.

Her displeasure is secondly seen in her comment to him, "You are a bridegroom of blood to me". The expression seems to suggest that in a sense she had acquired Moses again as her husband (redeemed him from death) through the shedding of the blood of her son, a thing that she did not relish doing.

However, when the couple had complied with the Lord's requirement the wrath of God was turned away. And not only this but God graciously gave to Moses assurance of the success of his mission, by the coming of Aaron to meet him and the positive response of the people to His proposal of deliverance.

Important lessons about parenting harmoniously

We need to obey all the commands of God no matter how seemingly insignificant to us.

This act, though seemingly small to us, was made an important part of God's purpose for Abraham and his descendants. What God commands may at times seem trivial or "unimportant" to men; and often we hear people suggest that they cannot believe that the neglect of this or that is essential to go to please God.

When couples have differences about matters of personal taste they must learn to compromise; but when matters of obedience to God are involved there can be no compromise—only obedience, if we want to please the Lord.

We cannot lead others to do what we have not been willing to do ourselves.

Moses could not have effectively led Israel, while neglecting to be an example of obedience to God. How could he have said, “I am one of you! How could he say, “The Lord says we must do this to be delivered?”, when he had such disobedience in his own life? Whatever influence we hope to have our children and others around us hinges in our willingness to be obedient to God when His requirement might not be the most pleasant. Our neglect may give others the reasons they seek not to do God’s will; but when we live with a clear conscience we remove a ground for criticism or uncooperation.

Parental disagreement may lead to disobedience that hinders God’s blessing.

The deliverance of the children of Israel from Egyptian bondage was one of the great acts of God of the OT. But it is an event that might not have happened had Moses disqualified himself as Israel’s deliverer.

What blessings have we missed because our obedience was less than what it should have been? Though we affirm that grace is the grounds of our salvation, we must resist the feeling of license that says, “this won’t matter to God”. When we fail to be obedient to God there is always loss to us.

Parental harmony will result in God’s use of us in fulfilling His purposes.

Moses became a tool in God’s hand to bring redemption to the whole nation of Israel. By his compliance he vindicated God’s choice of him to lead His people and he became a venerated leader of Israel. When we live obedient lives, we show God that we are available to be used by Him. By obedience we also vindicate God’s choice of us to be his instruments in an even greater deliverance—not merely the salvation of a single people, but the salvation of the whole human race!

Conclusion: As parents we then need to strive to approach parenting with a harmony that is based on respect for God’s authority and real inner conviction that derives from it. Even when what God has said may seem unnecessary or inconvenient to us, we act firmly upon it simple because we know it is God’s truth. Only then can we have the greatest influence on our children. Only then can we be a...family nearer heaven.