

Father's Heart to His Children

The last of the prophets for centuries before Jesus was Malachi. Almost all regular attendees in the Church of God movement can quote Malachi 4:6.

*And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,
And the hearts of the children to their fathers,*

It is easy to say that but in reality what do we see within the Church of God and certainly in our society. Many children don't know their fathers at all. The children were born out of wedlock and one or both of the parents never wanted to be together. Fortunately that is different in the Church of God.

What isn't different is the effect of the Atheistic Public School system on children. This is a system that encourages the Government to be the all knowing and directing parent. It teaches children that they need to grow up and be independent and strong and not overcome by the bigotry (anything not politically correct for atheists) of their parents.

Even Christian parents often praise their children's independence and strength as they become adults seeking to make it on their own. Sometimes this is good as it means they take full responsibility for their actions but far too often it is used to describe someone who is being dishonourable to elders and parents. Dishonour to parents is treated as a good trait by labeling it independence. It is not good but sin. This relabeling of poor respect for parents and those in authority is done quite frankly in this world and sadly by many in the Church who have been influenced by their surrounding, myself included.

This led me to consider for some time how I have done as a Father. Where have I succeeded? Where have I failed? What did I want to do but have left undone? What should I have done better? Most importantly, what can I still do? This message is not about beating up the children to turn their hearts to the Fathers, but what us Fathers and Mothers are doing to help our children. What examples are we providing? What forethought has gone into our parenting?

We are instructed many times in the law to teach our children. God expects our children to know enough to be judged by the time they are adults. Are you fulfilling that requirement with respect to faith, trust and respect? Or do we do it with respect to meeting their earthly needs of food and clothing and maybe teaching them to ride a bike and drive a car?

If I asked you, "*Should God be mentioned in School?*", "*Should Protestants be able to pray to God in Jesus Name in School?*", "*Should the Ten Commandments be front and centre in School?*". Many in the Church of God would say, "*Yes and politicians should remember our Biblical heritage*".

However, did you pray with them this morning or last night? Easy to say everyone else should recognize God but how are you doing it each day with your own family? Those questions hit a lot closer to home for many of us.

In praying with your children how well do you display a trust in God?

I am a Father that likes sports. On occasion my child may be treated better or worse by a coach then I think he deserves. I agonize over my children not being treated fairly at times. I pray many hours that they won't lose heart in the matter but seek to focus on what they can do and not what is out of their hands. I wish sometimes I could throttle the offender, but then I remember God knows all things and that I need to forgive and be forgiven.

Is it important with God we be treated fairly at all times? Not so much. It is important to Him that we grow in the Spirit. Maybe that path is not what God would have us take and a better path is open to us. Do we look to represent God's character and display trust in Him or do we force our desires into the world around us? Quite often being seen as right is not the best direction for us to proceed. The desire for others to know we are right is actually sinful as it is based in pride. This doesn't mean we don't speak up for those who can't speak up for themselves, but that we do it with respect and ensure that God's character is first and foremost what we are wanting to pass on to our children.

I used sport above but it could represent an unfair assessment from a friend, teacher, boss or even a minister along the way. Do we represent a trust in God when we pray and a desire to see God's character first and foremost over pursuing what we want or think we deserve. Joseph deserved much good, but found himself unfairly in prison. We don't hear him complain, but busy doing whatever his hand was given to do as unto the Lord.

Personally I have had great successful moments as a father in sports and great failures. My failures are reflected in being too protective of my children when I have had no need to be.

My success is in teaching them:

"Whatever you set your hand to do, do it with all your might." Eccl 9:10
They should never be known to be lazy in any sport or employment.

"You play the game, the ref calls the game."

Too often we spend time judging those we have no right or responsibility to judge and lose our focus from what we have been given to do. Many players fail to be ready for the next play because of their complaining to the ref about the last play. The players are not responsible for calling the game but playing it. Refs do make mistakes, as do players and the rest of us. Do we let a mistake by someone else

destroy our game, our career, our life by focusing on their mistake and judging them or do we just focus on the next thing I have to do and get busy doing it.

Verses that help with this are Psalms 34:13 *“Keep your tongue from evil.”* And Romans 13:2-3 *Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same.*

Thinking on these I started thinking about some of the verses I memorized from my youth:

This first one isn't a verse but does reflect a biblical perspective *“cleanliness is next to godliness”* as God is clean and wants us to be clean in all things.

Exodus 20:8 “Remember the Sabbath day to keep it Holy.”

Romans 3:23 “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” This was mentioned to me when I wanted to talk about others sins.

Ephesians 6:1 “Children obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.”

Matthew 5:14 “You are the light of the world.” Usually this was said when I wasn't being a light.

My home's mission was Micah 6:8 *He has shown you, O man, what is good; And what does the Lord require of you? But to do justly, To love mercy, And to walk humbly with your God?*

And of course the verse that was mentioned every time we got a little puffed up with ourselves *Proverbs 16:18 Pride cometh before a fall*

When you were bitten with the bug to get something new (my father always wanted to call covetousness a bug) *“No one can serve two masters.” Matthew 6:24*

These verses have been very helpful in my life.

What verses have my children memorized that come to mind in daily life for them? Most of the ones above I am sure they have heard as I did but what ones do I think would be beneficial for them in any situation? I keep thinking those verses that instruct in character. What about praying for them? I pray for them lots and quite often it is reactive to what has occurred but as they get older now it's in the evening praying for them to be wise and strong and covered with angels. More and more I think I should have been praying with a purpose and a plan that would lead them along the path to God.

Here is what I have come up with:

GOD'S PROTECTION Psalm 91:11 *"For He will command His angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways."*

SUBMISSION TO GOD Romans 12: 1 *"...offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God this is your spiritual act of worship"*

TEACHABLE SPIRIT Proverbs 1:5,8 *"Let the wise listen and add to their learning and let the discerning get guidance... Listen, my son, to your father's instruction and do not forsake your's mother's teaching."*

WISDOM Proverbs 8:10-11 *Choose my instruction instead of silver, knowledge rather than choice gold, for wisdom is more precious than rubies, and nothing you desire can compare with her."*

SELF DISCIPLINE 2Peter 1:5-8 *make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

CARING Colossians 3:12 *Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.*

GRATEFUL Ephesians 5:20
Giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,

PURSUIT OF EXCELLENCE Colossians 3:12
Whatever you do, do it with all your heart, as if unto the Lord and not for man.

AVOID NEGATIVE INFLUENCES Proverbs 1:10,15
My son if sinners entice you do not give in to them...do not set foot on their path.

A GODLY PARTNER 2 Corinthians 6:14
Do not be bound together with unbelievers ; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship have dark and light.

LONG LIFE Proverbs 3:1-2
My son, do not forget my teaching, but keep my commands in your heart, for they will prolong your life many years and bring you prosperity.

PRAISE THE LORD Psalm 147:1

STRENGTH Isaiah 43:5
Fear not for I am with you.

REMEMBRANCE Proverbs 20:11
Even a child is known by his actions.

A POSITIVE OUTLOOK Phillipians 4:8
Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy— meditate on these things.

FAITH Acts 16:31
Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved.

THE SPIRIT OF THE LAW Micah 6:8
*He has shown you, O man, what is good;
And what does the Lord require of you? But to do justly, To love mercy, And to walk humbly with your God?*

I know that no matter what is included in the list it will be incomplete but it is a good start to focus my prayers on and then for me to set an example in for them to hear and see and lastly for them to memorize for eternity. The more I think about what they need to learn the more I lean myself. The more patience and compassion I have too!

God, Our Father, left us these verses to memorize and to take to heart and as it brings us great happiness to see our children internalize God's Word, by their actions.

When we do that I am sure we also bring a smile to God's face.

3John 4
"I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth."