

Give Your Children A Spiritual Heritage

By Senior Pastor Prince Guneratnam

Some very meaningful spiritual lessons are found in Second Kings chapter two. These can help parents see the value of teaching and training their children for life here and in the hereafter. The chapter begins with Elijah and Elisha on a journey. Each place that Elijah took Elisha to has a great spiritual significance. These thoughts can be presented in a family relationship context because Elisha called Elijah "Father" (II Kings 2:12).

In the relationship between Elisha and Elijah, I see some struggles parents have bringing their children up. Parents want to help their children avoid all hardship, if possible. Though Elijah was reluctant, yet he was willing to take Elisha along. This is the responsibility of all parents. Children must be given the opportunity to learn hardship and experience God for themselves. To do so, children model parents.

On Father's Day, Shawn Wong a young Royal Ranger, recited a poem entitled, 'That Boy' to the congregation. It reads like this:

*He wants to be like his dad:
You men, did you ever think as you pause,
That the boy who watches your every move
Is building a set of laws?
He's moulding a life you're that model for,
And whether it's good or bad*

*Depends upon the kind of example you set
To the boy who'd be like his dad.*

*Would you have him go everywhere you go?
Have him do the things you do?
And see everything that your eyes behold,
And woo all the good you woo?
When you see worship that shines
In the eyes of your lovable little lad,
Could you rest content if he gets his wish
And grows to be like his dad?*

*It's a job that none but yourself can fill;
It's a charge you must answer for;
It's a duty to show him the road to tread 'ere
He reaches his manhood's door,
It's a debt you owe for the greatest joy
On this earth to be had:
The pleasure of having a boy to raise
Who wants to be like his dad.*

Billy Graham once said, "Each generation is responsible to reach their own generation for Christ. God will not hold us responsible for the next generation." We can, however, help contribute to the success of the next generation. We may all not be parents in the natural, but as members of the local Church, we can be spiritual parents to the many spiritual infants and toddlers who are looking up to us as spiritual models.

Like good parents, we ask our children, "Tell me, what can I do for you before I am taken from you?" (II Kings 2:9).

Also like Elisha, our children are saying to us, "Let me inherit a double portion of your spirit" (II Kings 2:9). Dare we respond like Elijah did, "You have asked a difficult thing," Elijah said, "yet if you see me when I am taken from you, it will be yours – otherwise not." (II Kings 2:10)

Elijah said, "Observe me". The answer was simple, but what a responsibility! Do we dare ask our children to observe us as parents in times of temptations, trials and blessings? What will they learn from examples?

Let us take a look at Elijah's journey with Elisha. There are spiritual truths to learn from this significant journey.

The Journey Began at Gilgal

Elijah and Elisha started at Gilgal, the special place where the children of Israel crossed over the Jordan River into the land of promise (Joshua 5). It was also the place of circumcision as well as the place where God said to Joshua, "Today, I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you." (Joshua 5:9).

What was the reproach? The children of Israel had been slaves in Egypt but now they had been made a powerful nation by God.

Circumcision is one of the types used in the Old Testament to teach spiritual truths. In the Old Testament, circumcision was a physical sign to a people who had a covenant with God. In the New Testament, the demarcation is not of the flesh but of the heart. In the book of Romans, 2:28, 29 say: "A man is not a Jew if he is only one outwardly, nor circumcision merely outward and physical. No, a man is a Jew if he is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Such a man's praise is not from men but from God." This means that a Christian is a new person (II Corinthians 5:17); he is born again. He has a lifestyle that makes him different from those who do not believe in Jesus Christ. This is the result of the circumcision of the heart that Paul talks about.

There are at least 3 truths or important lessons we can draw from the significance of the Old Testament circumcision.

- As parents, our first responsibility is to lead our children to salvation. They first need to believe on Jesus Christ and accept Him as their Saviour and Lord. God has no grandchildren. They have to know God as their personal heavenly father. The reproach of sin must be dealt with. Only Jesus can help us deal with the sin problem in our life.
- Secondly, we cannot depend on the flesh. We have to depend on the Holy Spirit and be totally submissive to Him. We have no strength, wisdom and power of our own to adequately handle the flesh life. We need Jesus to baptize us with the Holy Spirit and to empower us (Acts 1:8).
- Thirdly, circumcision teaches that there is no secrecy with God. Nothing is hidden from God's sight. Everything is laid bare before His eyes (Hebrews 4:13).

These are vital truths our children need to know and believe.

Bethel – the House of God

After Gilgal, Bethel was their next stop. What is the significance of this place? It was there in Bethel that Jacob had had an experience with God. He saw the angels of God descending and ascending into heaven. Bethel means the "House of God". Parents, teach your children about the House of God. Love, seek, respect, and appreciate the House of God. After salvation, you need to come to the House of God. The assembling of believers together is taught in the scripture – Hebrews 10:25. Jesus was found in the temple. God's presence is where God's people are (Matthew 18:20). The importance of the House of God must not be neglected. From Bethel, they went to Jericho.

Jericho – A Place of Victory

What is the significance of Jericho? Jericho represents the place of victory. It was at Jericho, where the children of Israel walked around the walls of the city seven times and on the seventh day, for seven times before the walls came down (Joshua 6:15). It was a strong fortified city but it could not stand against God's people. What a great victorious experience of God's power. I am sure, the parents told their children and it is no wonder, it is recorded in the scriptures. Therefore, we need to testify to our children how we overcome problems in our lives. We also need to testify to them of the victories over the temptations and crises that come our way. Let them know of your crises and observe you as you go through them. They learn better by observing than by only hearing.

Finally, the crossing of the Jordan River

It was the River Jordan, that John the Baptist baptized Jesus (Matthew 3:13). It was a place where baptism took place. It symbolizes a place of death and resurrection.

The greatest fear of mankind is death but Jesus had already conquered it (Matthew 28:1-7). Death is not to be feared. It is not a stumbling block but a stepping stone.

Here are 3 biblical lessons to teach our children about death:

- It is the means of putting on the new body (1 Corinthians 15:42-44).
- It is the way to be present with the Lord (II Corinthians 5:8).
- Death has no sting (I Corinthians 15:55 & 57).

The other side of death is heaven, a city whose Builder and Maker is God. We as parents must talk about heaven to our children. It is a glorious place and a great reward. The Bible has a lot to say about heaven (Revelation 21). Jesus taught about heaven by using many parables. It is a real place. We are going there as believers when we leave this wicked and sinful world. We should show that we believe in heaven by the way we live.

The journey concludes with Elijah being taken away by the chariots and horses of fire (II Kings 2:11). Elisha sees Elijah being taken away, picks up the cloak of Elijah and begins a greater and more powerful ministry than Elijah. What a dynamic inheritance Elisha received from the Lord through the faithful teaching and leading of Elijah. Give your children a spiritual heritage. **“Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not turn from it”** (Proverbs 22:6).