

As For Me and My House
Joshua 24

What Do You Want For Your Family?

The later you stay up, the earlier your children will wake up.

For a child to be clean, something else has to get dirty.

If the shoe fits, it will be expensive.

The longer it takes to prepare a meal, the less likely your children are to enjoy it.

If you can't get your child's attention, just get comfortable in a chair.

Putting your car in reverse in the driveway will ensure that your child will have to go to the bathroom.

You will spend the first 18 months of your child's life teaching them to walk and talk, and you will spend the next 18 years teaching them to sit down and be quiet.

The more wisdom you put into the foundation in the early years of parenting, the less work you have to do in the future.

Families are blessings from God, but that doesn't mean they're not messy. Relationships between spouses, parents and children, and siblings are all complicated by differences in beliefs, personalities, and understandings about how family members should interact, and, in the broader sense of "family," we don't always treat one another as brothers and sisters in Christ.

This series has helped us understand God's expectations for our roles in a family as explained throughout the Bible. In each part of the series, we'll learn how to apply Biblical principles of family values to ensure that we follow our family roles and see our families as blessings. Most importantly, we'll receive assurance of God's forgiveness when we don't do this perfectly. Families aren't perfect, but they do matter.

"But if serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord." Joshua 24:15

As a place to begin, let's consider these words by Chuck Swindoll:

Whatever else may be said about the home, it is the bottom line of life, the anvil upon which attitudes and convictions are hammered out. It is the place where life's bills come due, and the single most influential force in our earthly existence.

We live in a world that downplays the value of the home. We don't realize the kind of world our children face each day and how things have changed.

Kids in the '30s grew up during the Depression when times were hard, everybody had to work, and a dollar was a lot of money.

Kids in the '40s grew up with World War II, Frank Sinatra, and Bogie and Bacall.

Kids in the '50s grew up with black and white television, "I Like Ike," hula hoops, and a kid from Tupelo, Mississippi, named Elvis Presley.

Kids in the '60s grew up with the Beatles, LSD, assassinations, the summer of love, Vietnam, and violence in the streets.

Kids in the '70s grew up with Charlie's Angels, disco, Happy Days, MASH, Saturday Night Fever, and the Doobie Brothers.

Kids in the '80s grew up with crack cocaine, AIDS, MTV, PeeWee Herman, Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, Nintendo, and Nightmare on Elm Street.

Kids in the '90s grew up with the Simpsons, FRIENDS, Seinfeld, Michael Jordan, Monica Lewinsky, rap music, and Nirvana.

Kids in the 2000's grew up with 9/11, the War on Terror, American Idol, Harry Potter, South Park, MySpace, and Hannah Montana.

Kids in the Teens are growing up with Lady Gaga, Drake, iPhones, YouTube, Instagram, Snapchat, sexting, and gay marriage.

Our kids see more, they know more, they experience more, and they grow up so much faster. Sex talk is nothing to them because they hear it every day. Against that reality, these words of Dr. James Dobson strike home: "We must make the salvation of our children our number one priority. Nothing else is more important." He's right.

Joshua certainly understood the power of parents. As he came to the end of his life, he called the leaders of Israel together for one final message. Knowing he is only one step from death, he sounds a call to renewal that begins with a recital of God's blessings in the past (Joshua 24:1-13).

Then he challenges the people to be faithful to God (Joshua 24:14-27). In the middle of his message we find those stirring words that have been quoted and memorized for over 3,000 years, "But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord" (v. 15). In those words, and in the verses leading up to them, I find five decisions we must make if we want our families to serve the Lord with us.

5 Foundational Results of Parenting:

- Spiritually Awake

Parents need to leave a spiritual legacy.

- Emotionally Mature

In the early to middle school years of our children's lives, home is the place where they develop their identity.

- Self-Controlled

Single-minded – understanding their gifts and calling

Biblically-anchored – knowing God's Word and hiding it in their heart

Discipline teaches them structure, morals, and builds character in them.

The Enemy is focused on disciplining your children as well.

When Satan convicts you of sin, he starts with what you did and tears down who you are.

The Holy Spirit starts with who you are and helps you rebuild what you did.

As parents, we want to be used by the Holy Spirit to correct the wrong but, even louder, affirm their new identity in Christ.

You can instill Godly wisdom in them, so when they are out of the house, God can continue the work He started in them through us.

God has a purpose for your kids, and He will lead them in that direction after you hand them off to the One who created them.

A child learns identity by belonging, through beliefs, and by becoming what God has planned for them.

Who am I?

Why am I here?

Where am I going?

- Relationally Connected

In the middle school to high school years, they are learning about relationships.

The focus of parents of middle and high school students is to guard and guide our children's relationships.

Friends you speak with and listen to.

Friends you speak with but do not listen to.

- Career Capable

The college and career years are about learning how to give and make a contribution into the lives of others.

We parent through the pressures and pace of life.

What do you think success is in raising the next generation?

Culture says success is raising well-rounded, well-educated, and happy kids.

Unfortunately, employers don't want to hire people who are average at a lot of things, education does not often trump social skills and character, and "Do it if it makes you happy," leads us down the wrong path.

How can we pull this off?

Having kids is hard, and raising them is even tougher.

Raising them in the way they should go is demanding on any parent.

"85 percent of Christian parents admitted that while they acknowledged they were responsible for their child's spiritual development . . . the vast majority were not personally engaging in any activities that might guide their children to spiritual maturity except taking them to church." - *Perspectives on Family Ministry*

As Christians, we can create a Godly environment for our kids and raise them in such a way they cannot deny we love them, all while keeping their best interest at heart.

Take the posture of being a partner in their growth throughout your life.

When they fall, lift them up with direction, words of wisdom, and unconditional love.

Decision # 1: Build a Grace-Based Family.

As Joshua recounts the story of the conquest of the Promised Land, he reminds them of what the Lord had done for them:

"And you went over the Jordan and came to Jericho, and the leaders of Jericho fought against you, and also the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Girgashites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. And I gave

them into your hand. And I sent the hornet before you, which drove them out before you, the two kings of the Amorites it was not by your sword or by your bow. I gave you a land on which you had not labored and cities that you had not built, and you dwell in them. You eat the fruit of vineyards and olive orchards that you did not plant.” Joshua 24:11-13

Joshua wants the people never to forget they owe everything to God. After all, the Israelite army had won battle after battle, often routing the enemy from the field. It would be natural to start thinking, “We’re something special,” but that thought is always deadly. Joshua knew that once the people took credit for their victories, they would soon turn away from the Lord altogether.

Has God blessed you? Talk about it often.

We ought to do with our families what Joshua does with the people of Israel. It’s a good thing to review past blessings and to make a written record of God’s faithfulness. We need to say to our children, “Sweetheart, do you remember when you were so sick, we prayed to God, and you got better?” “Do you remember when Dad lost his job and we were afraid, so we prayed, and God gave him a new job?” “Do you remember when we prayed for Joe and Cheryl to be saved, and six months later they accepted Christ?” A good memory of God’s blessings is a bulwark against backsliding.

Has God blessed you? Write it down. Think often about it. Tell it to your children, your family, your friends. Pass it along so that succeeding generations can tell the story after you are gone to heaven.

Decision # 2: Teach My Family to Worship God.

“Now fear the Lord.” Joshua 24:14

When we think about the fear of the Lord, many people get the idea of cringing in terror. The Biblical concept is much broader than that. Fearing the Lord means having such a deep respect for God that we want to please Him in all we do. One writer says it refers to the “inner devotion” that causes us to honor God.

How do we share this “inner devotion” with our families? It’s more of an atmosphere than a program. When parents truly fear God, their children will learn to fear Him too. When they love the Lord, it will be natural for the children to love Him too. When they sing hymns, their children will learn the words. When they pray, their children will quietly pray with them.

Family religion is better caught than taught.

A famous painting by Norman Rockwell appeared on the cover of the Saturday Evening Post in 1959. It shows a suburban family going off to church, led by the oldest sister followed by mom who is followed by the younger sister. All three women are dressed for church. Following them is a young boy who appears to be going with some reluctance. What’s the problem? At the center of the painting is dear old dad slumped in a chair, in his pajamas, reading the paper with a cigarette in his hand. As junior walks by, he casts a longing eye at his father. He’s going to church, but he’d rather be with his dad.

Men, when will we learn that our actions speak louder than our words?

Decision # 3: Become a Student of Obedience.

“Now fear the Lord and serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your ancestors worshiped beyond the Euphrates River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord.” Joshua 24:14

The word “serve” is used in various forms six times in two verses. This is obviously the burden on Joshua’s heart. He wants the people to willingly choose to serve the Lord. He specifies what that means when he adds “in all faithfulness.” Every area of life must be surrendered to the Lordship of Christ. “All faithfulness” means there can be no “hidden rooms” that we reserve for ourselves. It means putting aside the false gods worshipped by the pagans. Matthew Henry calls them “dunghill deities” because they have no power to save, only the power to corrupt.

“Train up a child in the way he should go [teaching him to seek God’s wisdom and will for his abilities and talents], Even when he is old he will not depart from it.” Proverbs 22:6

- Train them to be responsible.
- Train them to be respectful.
- Train them to carefully select their friends.
- Train them to guard their minds.
- Train them to be generous.
- Train them to fear God.

You can train and change the generations to come by training this generation.

“Even when I am old and gray, do not forsake me, my God, till I declare your power to the next generation, your mighty acts to all who are to come.” Psalm 71:18

The most important task we have as a church is to teach the next generation the gospel.

- What Is Required

“Children, obey your parents IN THE LORD...” Ephesians 6:1

Children will not naturally obey. They must be taught to obey.

If you don't train up a child in the way he should go, he will naturally go the way he shouldn't go.

“Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord.” Colossians 3:20

“Discipline your son, for in that there is hope. Do not be a willing party to his death.” Proverbs 19:18

“A child who has not been disciplined with love by his little world will be disciplined without love by the great big world.” —Zig Ziglar

Discipline is correction driven by love.

Parents often rescue a child from the consequences of their choices.

“The rod of correction imparts wisdom, but a child left to himself disgraces his mother.” Proverbs 29:15

“Discipline your son, and he will give you peace, He will bring delight to your soul.” Proverbs 29:17

- What Is Right

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

The primary responsibility of teaching right and wrong to children does not belong to school teachers, but to parents.

“Honor your father and mother, which is the first commandment with promise.” Ephesians 6:2

The quality of your life will increase as you apply and cooperate with God’s truth.

The quality of your life will decrease as you run against God’s truth.

Teach them limits.

There are decisions in life that lead to life and decisions that lead to loss, and you have to teach your children the difference.

Teaching our children right from wrong and teaching them the right values is both demanding and rewarding.

- What Is Rewarding

“...that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth.” Ephesians 6:3

It is not enough to put a roof over your children's heads. You must put the Lord into your children's hearts.

“...bring them up in the respect and admonition of the Lord.” Ephesians 6:4

“You have taught me from my youth.” Psalm 71:17

When a child is raised by praying parents who walk according to God’s Word, 85 percent of the time they’ll develop a strong faith before age thirteen.

But what if your kids are already grown?

One of God’s titles is “Redeemer,” which means He can give you another chance.

Commit your life to Christ. That’s how generational cycles of failure are broken.

“My spirit and my words that I give you will never leave you or your children or your grandchildren, now and forever.” Isaiah 59:21

How can I compete with the negative influences around me?

Every study confirms that a parent has the greatest influence—greater than friends, school, or the media in determining the character and direction of a child.

Decision # 4: Remember Your Spiritual Heritage.

“And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell.” Joshua 24:15

These verses tripped me up when I first read them. Then I understood that Joshua was appealing to the democratic sense of his hearers. He offers them a series of choices. First, the true God. Then the gods beyond the River (meaning the River Euphrates), referring to the gods of Ur of the Chaldees. Those would be the gods

of ancient tradition—the moon god and the sun god. Then the gods of Egypt, meaning the gods of sun, rain, darkness, and natural disasters. Then the gods of the Amorites, meaning the gods of fertility and sexual pleasure.

We can't force people to serve the Lord.

Make your choice. If you don't want to choose the living and true God, then go back to the false gods you used to worship. Go all the way back to Ur if you like. Some people prefer the gods of this world to the one true God of the Bible. Their eyes are so blinded by sin and their heart so given to fleshly indulgence that they would rather drink from the cesspool of sin than to drink from the Water of Life.

Decision # 5: Choose Daily to Serve the Lord.

“But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.” Joshua 24:15b

This is one of the most famous statements in the Old Testament, and rightly so because it expresses the heart of a great spiritual leader at the end of his life. In these simple words we find the will of God expressly stated. We are to serve the Lord, and we are to do everything in our power to see that our family follows our example.

Matthew Henry said that serving the Lord involves “Serious Godliness.” That phrase captures the spirit of Joshua's words. If we are going to do what he did and say what he said, it will mean “Serious Godliness” for all of us.

Each of us must personally decide to serve the Lord. I can't choose for you, nor you for me. We need a generation of Joshuas who will make this choice for themselves. Parents have a special obligation to set the right example in this area. We can hardly expect our children to serve Christ when we take our duties lightly, and fathers have the highest obligation. There have been times when people have said that one of our children reminded them of me. There is a heavy burden implied in those words. If it's true that the apple never falls far from the tree, then I better make sure the tree is healthy, or else what will the fruit be like?

This is a public statement: “But as for me.” He means, “I don't care what the rest of you do. I'm going to serve the Lord.” Even though he was the leader of the nation, he was willing to part with his own people over this fundamental issue. We all have to say that sooner or later. It happens to us whether we are office workers, executives, business leaders, teachers, students, blue collar workers, or simply dealing with our friends, family members, and neighbors. If you follow Christ, there will come a time when you must say, “Do what you want, and whatever you do, I will still be your friend, but I'm going to serve the Lord.”

Choosing the Lord doesn't happen by accident.

This is a personal decision: “*But as for me.*” In the end it comes down to this. You must choose to serve the Lord. It won't happen by accident, and it can't be inherited from your parents. They can give you the heritage, but at some point, you must make it your own.

This is a persuasive declaration: “But as for me and my house.” This may be the most amazing thing of all. Here Joshua speaks as the God-appointed leader of his family. He claims the right to speak for his wife, his children, his grandchildren, his great-grandchildren, and even for his servants. “As the leader of this clan, I hold their proxy in my hand. I declare that my entire household will serve the true and living God.” Every Christian man ought to make a similar statement about the family God has given him.

This is a positive statement: “We will serve the Lord.” This is more than a statement about forsaking other gods, though that is implied. It means Joshua's family will orient itself around worshipping the God of Israel. His law

will be their law, His commandments will be their delight, His worship their highest goal, and His glory their ultimate aim.

Joshua had taught his family well for many years. Joshua does not say, "My house without me," which would be like that famous Norman Rockwell painting. Nor does he say, "Me without my house," which would be a different kind of hypocrisy. Both are joined together as God intended. "I will serve the Lord, and my family joins me in this pledge."

How can a man be so certain about his family? Joshua could speak like this because he had taught them well for many years, and he knew of their own personal commitment to the God he worshiped. Let no man read these words and think he may live carelessly and at the end of his life ask God to save his family. To live that way and then pray desperately at the end is to presume on the grace of God.

Can I guarantee that my children and grandchildren will follow in my steps and serve the same Lord I worship? The answer is "No," because God has given each of us the ability to make our own choices. We all know of sad cases where Godly parents produced offspring who did not serve Christ. What, then, does this text mean? Godly parents can tip the scales in the right direction. We cannot guarantee what our children will do, but we can provide an atmosphere of "Serious Godliness" plus heartfelt joy that makes it easier to choose Christ than to choose the way of the world.

We need "Serious Godliness" plus heartfelt joy. Is your mind made up? Are you ready to serve the Lord? Do you know where you stand with God? The application could not be clearer: "Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve." In the words of Bob Dylan, "You're gonna have to serve somebody. Well, it may be the devil or it may be the Lord, But you're gonna have to serve somebody."

No one gets a free ride, and no one can straddle the fence forever.

There is no room for neutrality. Every person needs a God, and every person must serve the God they choose. If you choose not to choose, you've already made your choice. You can't choose the true God by default or by inheritance.

Make your choice. Cast your vote. Choose your God. As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.