

Proverbs Week #68 (6:20-23)

My son, observe the commandment of your father and do not forsake the teaching of your mother; bind them continually on your heart; tie them around your neck. When you walk about, they will guide you; when you sleep, they will watch over you; and when you awake, they will talk to you. For the commandment is a lamp and the teaching is light; and reproofs for discipline are the way of life. Prov 6:20-23

Today's family lesson adds two verses to what we read last week. I want to continue to focus on the importance of multi-generational wisdom. How will the commandments and teaching of parents guide, watch over, and talk to their children? These verses remind me of the Shema. See if you can hear the similarities.

These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children and you shall speak of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as tefillin between your eyes. Deut 6:6-8

When God redeemed us out of Egypt He wanted to set us free that we might serve Him. In the Messiah we experience this same kind of deliverance. When He gave us His promises He also made provision for us, giving us the opportunity to trust in Him and live according to His desires. He sets before us a life of freedom and He stores up provisions for us. These provisions enable us to live the kind of life He desires for us. I see in the Exodus from Egypt a reminder that God desired for families to experience this deliverance together and learn together in relationship to this very real, historical event. God has provided the curriculum for us to learn together.

To help illustrate the significance and importance of our involvement in this process as parents, children and members of a community, I would like you to think about the proper use and care of a flashlight. If we knew that we would have to explore and walk in unlit woods or along trails at night, it would be good to have a reliable flashlight on hand. In maintaining the flashlight it would be important to have fresh batteries and a bulb that was not too old. It might also be helpful to have spares of both handy just in case either one failed along the way. It doesn't take much wisdom to know how to use and maintain a flashlight, but even simple steps that are neglected in its care and maintenance might make it useless. I am thinking about this illustration in regard to the commandments that God has given to every parent and child (and the whole community for that matter) in the Shema. If our normal daily routine includes the words of God being taught and learned when children walk along the way, lie down, and rise up, then having the light of the commandments in our families is part and parcel with normal daily life. Our children will have the memories of being taught these things and might even remember when they were taught them (when they rose, walked along the way, or when they lay down). Learned habits might even be retained and passed on to children of their own.

God has granted all of us the opportunity to do and learn within a family, but what if we are not doing our part in relationship to teaching and learning? Are the experiences of doing, learning, or teaching God's commandments foreign to our normal family life? Returning to my flashlight illustration, this might be compared to buying an expensive flashlight but not buying batteries. It might also be compared to having a very reliable flashlight and a parent or child sticking the tip of it into tar. Thick black tar blocks out just about all light. Apart from God's grace, our inactivity in teaching and learning together as families may be just like that tar.

My encouragement to myself and to each of us as families is to continue to make the learning and teaching of Biblical wisdom a top priority in our homes and community. My desire to impress these words from Proverbs on our hearts and minds is because I believe that God has a much bigger plan for us than we can think or imagine. His desire is for us to live life to its fullest; to live as men and women, young and old who are free. The Messiah wants to set us free from the power of sin and death so that we can live as faithful members of His family.

As I mentioned last week, for this to happen all of us must do our part. We must recognize that each one of us has been created according to God's plan for His purposes. If we have had parents who were faithful to God that does not mean that we as their children are automatically faithful too! Each one of us needs to pray to God, thank Him, seek Him, and trust in Him. As we prayed earlier, "God, may you enlighten our eyes in Your Torah."