

Growing the Covenant Family in the Fear of God

By adminlen On June 3, 2011 · Add Comment

We don't often think of Abraham as a missionary, but that is exactly what he was. [Hebrews 11:8-10](#) tells us, "By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as *in* a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker *is* God." Abraham was converted, called, and commissioned to leave his home land and travel to a land of promise where he would erect an altar to the one true and living God. Though Abraham failed often, he set forth a testimony of faith in the God who called him, an example of proper worship, an ecclesiology that declared that he understood the place of God's ordained institution in his life, and the witness of living out the second greatest commandment in the presence of his neighbors. He lived in the shadow of the covenant that God made with him. For the most part, he lived confidently in that shadow, not despairing that God would ultimately fulfill all his promises.

Abraham certainly had some difficulties in managing his family. He sinned more than once when trying to take family matters into his own hands, even when those family matters had already been addressed in the specific covenant obligations and promises from God himself. Abraham was not perfect! But the words of the Lord in [Genesis 18:17](#) ought to temper any low opinion of the Lord's servant, and, more importantly, provide instruction on what the Lord values in a family to bring honor to himself. We read there,

And the LORD said, 'Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do; seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.'

The flow of the Genesis passage is significant. Abraham's ability to honor God does not begin with his own choice or wisdom. The "bookends" of this flow are that the Lord foreordained ("knew") Abraham, chose him out of his paganism and darkness, in order to fulfill his own sovereign purposes in and through Abraham. The process between God's initiation and God's accomplishment are the duties that are incumbent upon every family that desires to serve the Lord who chose them to bring glory to Himself.

The first duty that confronted Abraham was his obligation to command. This word is not complicated. It simply means what it says. It has to do with the proper exercise of commissioned authority in the home. In order to honor God, Abraham could not relax or abandon the authority God gave him to any other. Sarah called him "lord" not out of fear, but out of proper reverence and recognition of the place he held by God's appointment. Without being tyrannical, he expected and received obedience on the part of his children, even when death was on the line. This duty is echoed in the requirements for an elder in the letters to Timothy and Titus, that an elder must rule his house well.

The second duty is to "keep the way of the LORD." Having an orderly household is necessary, but it must be order unto godliness. As expressed in verse nineteen, godliness is characterized by "justice and judgment." God's law comes into play here, guiding the decisions, actions, and thoughts of a believer's family according to what is fair and righteous in the sight of God. It impacts the way the family interacts with the world around it — remember that Abraham insisted upon paying for the cave and field where he would bury Sarah? that he gave Lot the first choice of land? that he paid the tithe to Melchizedek? that he did not take advantage of the king of Sodom in order to enrich himself? that he insisted that Isaac marry from within his own people? When Abraham failed to keep the Lord's way, the results were disastrous, and his testimony before the heathen was materially damaged. But when he kept the Lord's way, the Lord did indeed bless him and his witness.

The covenant family lives in the fishbowl of the public eye every day; an orderly and righteous family life stands in bold contrast to the fallen world around it. By God's grace, He requires of us that his authority be rightly modeled in our homes, and that from that order comes righteous living that lends credence to the message that we preach. Praise God for the example of Abraham. May God grant every believer's family the grace to honor him as he accomplishes his purposes through them.