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How to Avoid the Second-Generation Fallout.

This will be a longer than usual devotional letter instead of the usual **Weekly Sermon**. Here, I believe God would again have me address an issue of the family – especially the Christin family.

A curious phenomenon has plagued families for as long as there have been families. It's that age-old problem of second-generation fallout that breaks the hearts of godly moms and dads. The scenario goes something like this:

A man and woman fall in love and get married.

They love Christ and desire to serve Him with all their hearts.

Their faith is tempered in the furnace of AFFLICTION and hammered out on the anvil of HARDSHIP.

They press on in their spiritual growth by becoming involved in a local church, giving generously and consistently, and serving in various capacities.

As their children come along, they TEACH and TRAIN and PRAY that God will get hold of their little lives and use them for His glory.

Childhood runs its course, leading to the teen years with all the inevitable adjustments and struggles.

The family gets busier than ever, walking gingerly through the minefield of FINANCIAL PRESSURES, SCHOOL ACTIVITIES, and RELATIONAL skirmishes.

Nothing blows apart, thank goodness..., and before they know it, the kids are out of high school and on to college, vocations, the military, marriage and whatever.

Mom and dad breathe big sighs of relief ("We made it!"), still stable and strong in their Christian walk.

But now we ask what about the now-grown kids? Ah, there's the rub. Somewhere along the way God got pushed way down on their list of priorities. Disciplines like prayer, church attendance, tithing, serving, and serious Bible study got lost in the shuffle.

Is this some kind of twenty-first century malady?

Has some giant spiritual eraser somehow wiped-out recent generations, leaving us to accept reality and pick up the pieces?

You know better, even a cursory reading of the Scriptures reveals that generational fallout has always been with us. More parents' hearts have been broken than we could number.

ADAM and EVE surely wept over Cain's murderous act.

NOAH was grieved because of Ham's shamelessness.

ISAAC and REBEKAH must have spent countless sleepless nights worrying about their twin boys Jacob and Esau.

ELI, the priest, was embarrassed more than once because of his two immoral sons. I Samuel 2:7 tells us, "...the sons of Eli were sons of Belial; they knew not the Lord."

DAVID, a man the Bible says "after God's own heart", found himself at a loss to understand Absalom. Upon Absalom's death David cried, "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son."

The list continues even to this present day, and some of you could add your own name to it. The dilemma is not new. In Psalm 78:1-11 we read.

"Give ear, O my people, to my law: incline your ears to the words of my mouth. (2) I will open my mouth in a parable: I will utter dark sayings of old: (3) Which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us. (4) We will not hide them from their children, shewing to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and his strength, and his wonderful works that he hath done. (5) For he established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children: (6) That the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born; who should arise and declare them to their children: (7) That they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments: (8) And might not be as their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation; a generation that set not their heart aright, and whose spirit was not stedfast with God. (9) The children of Ephraim, being armed, and carrying bows, turned back in the day of battle. (10) They kept not the covenant of God, and refused to walk in his law; (11) And forgot his works, and his wonders that he had shewed them."

Would you again notice in verse 7 the purpose of passing down the testimony from one generation to the next, **"That they might set their hope in God, and not FORGET the works of God, but KEEP His commandments."** Questions:

**How does a great nation, a growing ministry, move so quickly from the ideal to ruin?
How does a person depart from spiritual heights to experiencing less than God's best?
How does a successful family that appears to be spiritual on the outside somehow in the next generation have spiritual fallout?**

Many assume that a Godly beginning or a great spiritual heritage ensures continual blessing. We live in an age that is saying, **"since things are going well, everything must be okay."** This mentality is threatening our local churches and even our fundamental churches, Christian schools and families.

In Psalm 78:9 notice, **"The children of Ephraim, being armed, and carrying bows, turned back in the day of battle."** The Ephraimites turned back in the day of battle. They turned from faithful commitment to God's cause to weak conviction.

**It is disheartening to see ministries that were once strong become weak in their convictions.
It is disheartening to see men who once stood firm for the whole counsel of God, who once earnestly contended for the faith, now taking the easy way out and surrendering convictions for the sake of convenience.
It is disheartening to see spiritually strong families disintegrate into carnality in a matter of a few years.**

Now to understand the Ephraimites attitude and actions in Psalm 78, we need to go back to the closing chapters of Genesis. In those closing chapters, we have the story of Joseph who endured through great difficulty. Joseph withstood the harsh experiences of being sold into slavery by his brothers and then being imprisoned for no wrong on his part. But through it all, he did not turn against God. In the process, God gave Joseph two sons:

**The first child was named Manasseh, which means "Forgetting."
The second child was named Ephraim, meaning "Fruitful."**

These two sons became heads of two of the twelve tribes of Israel. Now while Joseph had been chosen of God to endure hardships and to go before his family and the nation to preserve them there in Egypt, Ephraim was apparently protected from adversity.

While Joseph as a father and leader kept his eyes firmly fixed upon God and was totally dependent upon God, it appears that Ephraim was totally dependent upon what he could accomplish. Reading other parts of scripture, it appears that Ephraim grew up in a **COMFORT ZONE** with a background of ease. Hence the Ephraimites were characterized by a **COMFORT MENTALLY**.

Perhaps our present generation, like the Ephraimites, has been given too many things, too many toys. We have become content with **COMFORT**, and **COMFORT** is a dangerous position if not handled properly. So, looking back at Psalm 78, what caused the Ephraimites to turn in the time of battle?

FIRST: They had a WEAK HEART. The first weakness is found in verse 8, "The Ephraimites were a stubborn and rebellious generation; a generation that set not their heart aright." Here we discover the Ephraimites had a weak heart.

In Proverbs 4:23 we read, "Keep thy HEART with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life." When our heart turns from God, every part of our life is harmed.

Neglecting God's Word is the first step to becoming spiritually weak, because we cannot maintain strength for warfare through the arm of our flesh. Remember God's word has the power.

Neglecting prayer is another step to becoming spiritually weak, because we cannot maintain contact with our Heavenly Father unless we "**pray without ceasing.**" Neglecting personal daily prayer, family prayer time and even neglecting prayer in God's house will make one spiritually weak.

Neglecting the "House of God" and its services is still another step to becoming weak. I want you to follow a progression here that I have seen over and over again during my 57 years of ministry.

The **first** generation of believers in a family is FAITHFUL to the LOCAL CHURCH. They are there every time the church doors open. Nothing will keep them away from the "**House of God.**"

The **next** generation doesn't think it is important to go to church all the time. They do God a favor when they show up once a week. This generation believes in being in the house of God, except:

when they have company from out of town, or

when they can get some overtime, or

when they find other activities more appealing.

They believe that a person ought to be in church, but they are inconsistent about attendance.

The **third** generation doesn't go to church, but once in a great while. They don't seem to need church. Even Sunday School is not on their list to attend.

SECOND: They had a WEAK SPIRIT. Notice again in Psalm 78:8 their "**spirit was not steadfast with God.**" When my spirit is weak, I have no desire to march onward for the faith. But when my heart is strong, no matter what circumstances I face, my spirit can remain strong.

Remember the Apostle Paul's words in I Corinthians 15:58, "**Be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.**"

THIRD: They had a WEAK WILL. In Psalm 78:10 we read that the Ephraimites "**kept not the covenant of God.**" It's easy to make a commitment to God while sitting under the preaching of God's Word and during an invitation. But how long will we keep that commitment unto God once we leave the sanctuary? Listen, as harsh as this sounds:

When we choose to neglect the Word of God,
When we choose to surrender to our human flesh and as a result have weak wills, and
When we choose to neglect the teaching of God's word in our homes and living as an example
before our families,

We are contributing to the spiritual delinquency and destruction of the next generation!

FOURTH: They had WEAK FEET. Again in Psalm 78:10 we read, "They kept not the covenant of God, and refused to walk in his law." **Weak feet** are the logical result of a **weak heart, weak spirit** and **weak will**. In Psalm 119:105 we read, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path." By choosing disobedience and comfort or the easy way, the Ephraimites ended up refusing to walk in God's way. Again in Psalm 37:23 we read, "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord; and he delighteth in his way."

FIFTH: They had a WEAK MIND. In Verse 11 the Ephraimites "forgot His (God's) works." When we forget the works of God, God's Word becomes academic and no longer changes our lives. The second-generation syndrome reminds us why the Ephraimites drifted from God. They forgot His works.

By observing the Ephraimites, we ought to learn that a "**GOOD HERITAGE DOES NOT NECESSARILY GUARANTEE A GOOD LEGACY.**"

The Ephraimites turned from God in WAR,
The Ephraimites turned from God in their WALK, and
The Ephraimites turned from God in their WORSHIP.

Some had better wake up and get a hold of what is being said. We must be consistent. If we are not careful, no matter how good we are, or how strong our convictions are; when we become lax and inconsistent, we are going to reap heartbreak in the lives of our children. Here is another progression to ponder:

In whatever we are inconsistent, our children will be tolerant of.
Of whatever our children are tolerant, their children will embrace and endorse, and
In whatever their children endorse, the very next generation will literally propagate and promote in society.

This means in just four short generations, there can be a complete turnaround in one family because of the **INCONSISTENCY** of a godly person in the first generation. **I DON'T KNOW ABOUT YOU, BUT THAT SCARES ME!**

The **FIRST** generation has **CONVICTION**.
The **SECOND** generation will **COMPROMISE**.
The **THIRD** generation operates in **CARNALITY**.

The **FIRST** generation is interested in **PEOPLE**.
The **SECOND** generation is interested in **THINGS**.
The **THIRD** generation is interested in **SELF**.

Perhaps you are asking, "**What should we do?**" Our youth are certainly looking for the real thing. They are looking to see if our faith is for real. Please allow me to be painfully honest with you as I offer three basic suggestions for preventing this tragedy:

First: In your life, there must be exposure to the REALITY of Christ. If Christ is not real to you, a teenager will see right on through you. You talk with teenagers long enough and you will hear them say:

"Christ is not real in my father's life. He is not real in my mother's life. It's all talk, all Sunday show. Christ is not real in their lives, so why should I practice their Christianity? Christ isn't

real to them through the week, so why should He be real to me?"

Apparently, our teenagers are being taught that all this theological talk during church services is just talk! But if you are going to have your child **SET THEIR HOPE IN GOD, YOUR FAITH MUST BE REAL - SEVEN DAYS A WEEK.**

Second: In your life, there must be exposure to the REALITIES of this world. There are more, but here are SEVEN things that will show your children how to conduct their lives:

- 1. You must show the exceeding sinfulness of sin.** We live in a sinful world. Evil is getting increasingly worse and more cleverly disguised. You better commit yourself to making sin exceedingly sinful for everyone in your home, or else the very sin you harbor will overcome your children. **SIN DAMAGES, SIN DESTROYS, SIN DAMNS!** If it is sinful for your child to watch that TV program or that DVD, then it is also sinful for you.
- 2. Expose your children to Godly heroes, Godly music, and Godly books.**
- 3. DO NOT, I repeat, DO NOT allow your children to spend a lot of time under the leadership of the unregenerate in sports, or other activities.**
- 4. Together in prayer, face crises in life, so they know on whom you depend for guidance. Interpret life's daily events in light of the Word of God, so they can recognize the truth.**
- 5. Teach them through restraint.** You must set the standard of discipline and be consistent with it. Place restraints around them. I may trust my children, **BUT I DON'T TRUST THE OLD SIN NATURE IN THEM.** Check out their activities and friends. Remember, "**Evil companions will corrupt good morals.**"
- 6. Overcome EVIL WITH GOOD.** Everything removed from your child as an evil or wrong influence must be replaced with something better. That means you must research church and community activities to discover positive influences and take advantage of them.

Third: In your life, there must be exposure to the REALITY of Spiritual truths. Again there are more, but here are SEVEN essential truths to teach the next generation:

- 1. They need to be saved by Grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.**
- 2. They are God's children,** but you, as their parent, are raising them for Him. As long as they are in your care, they **MUST OBEY** and **HONOR** you, because you stand in God's place. One day you must give an account to God for them.
- 3. They must learn the Fear of the Lord.**
- 4. Every Christian has two natures.** One nature allows them to honor Satan, and with the other nature they can honor the Lord.
- 5. This world is a temporary training ground,** a place of preparation for eternity.
- 6. This world is ruled by Satan,** who hates God.
- 7. One day they will stand before the Judgment seat of Christ** where the saved will give an account of their life before God.

Parents and Grandparents, will you join hands with me for the sake of your children and grandchildren? Years ago I had a dream for my children that they would be totally committed to the Lord. Oh, there are some areas of reality that are only beliefs in their lives even though they were strong convictions in mine. But together my wife and I worked hard on them, and now we are training them from afar, through prayer and counsel.

However, for your children I too have a dream. Over the years, I have seen both outcomes - those who have turned towards the Lord and those who have become like the third generation and have drifted away. Each is ultimately responsible for making an individual commitment to the cause of Jesus Christ.

Consider the REALITY of this life. I am for you. I am your pastor. You are my people. I am not against you. I am begging you to join with me and allow me to do all I can to help you. In God's dear name, let's work together to develop the children who stood tonight and others who are a part of this ministry. Let's help them to become all they ought to be

for the Glory of God - **That they too might set their hope in God.**

If God has spoken to your heart after reading the sermon "**The Second-Generation Fallout**" then right now talk to God about what He has spoken to you.

Do you have the assurance that one day you will go to heaven? If you have no assurance that you know Jesus Christ, then I trust you will decide to accept Him as your personal Savior. The Bible tells us in

Acts 16:31, "**...Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved...**"

Romans 10:13, "**For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.**"

This prayer is here for those who need to ask Jesus to be their personal Savior: "**I do want to go to Heaven. I know I am a sinner, and I do believe Jesus Christ died for me. I realize I cannot buy this great salvation, nor can I earn it. Knowing Jesus died on the cross and arose from the grave to pay my sin debt and to purchase my salvation, I do now trust Him as my Savior, and from this moment on I am completely depending on Him for my salvation.**"

If you made the decision to accept Jesus Christ as your personal Savior let me know? Please send an e-mail to, pastormiklas@aol.com and I will send you some literature that will help you in your Christian life.

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