

How to Deal with Problem Children



Walking Through the Land of God's Promises (Part 10)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again, sharing with you some of the keys to successful living that God has placed in my hand through many years of personal experience and Christian ministry.

In my talk yesterday, I dealt with one of the most important choices that face us in life, "The Choice of a Mate," a wife or a husband.

Today I'm going to deal with the difficulty that can arise within the close relationships of a family. Unfortunately, it is one that arises very often today: problem children. Does the Word of God offer us direction and encouragement in such a situation? I believe that it does.

For our first Scripture, we are going to turn to the last prophet of the Old Testament. The prophet Malachi, chapter 4, verses 5 and 6. This is a scene that will be fulfilled at the close of this age. It applies particularly to the time of the end, the time which I believe we are living today. The Lord says:

> "See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the Lord comes. [Sometime before the tremendous climax of this present age.] He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers; or else I will come and strike the land with a curse." (NIV)

So accurately does the Word of God with its prophetic insight pinpoint the greatest single social problem of our age: the problem of disrupted families, disharmony between parents and children. This is the thing on which this prophecy focuses, the wrong relations within the family between the fathers and their children. And the indication is that if these relationships are not adjusted and the situation is not changed, the result will be that the whole land will suffer a curse.

I am firmly convinced that this describes the situation in America today. This is our greatest single problem, greater than other problems: military problems, political problems, economic problems. The greatest is the social and the family

problem, the disrupted homes, the fathers and children out of right relationship with one another. And unless we accept God's solution and turn back to God and meet His conditions, the result will be that a curse will settle upon this beautiful land of the United States.

In this Scripture that I have quoted, God places the primary responsibility for healing the situation upon the fathers. He says that He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children; the hearts of the children to their fathers. The hearts of the fathers have to turn first, then God says the children will turn back to their fathers. So, the primary responsibility is with the fathers. This is logical and in accordance with the principles of God's Word because the primary responsibility for the right order in the home is placed by the Word of God, very clearly upon the fathers.

That does not mean that mothers have no responsibility. Indeed, they have a great responsibility to stand with their husbands and to be the kind of wives and mothers that the family needs. But the initial and primary responsibility for the order of the home and the family is placed by God upon the fathers. This is clearly stated in Ephesians 6:4:

> "And, fathers, do not provoke your children to anger; but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord." (NAS)

Those are two primary responsibilities of a father: discipline and instruction. He has to maintain order in the home through discipline (through proper discipline), and at the same time, it's his responsibility to give his children instruction in the ways of the Lord, instruction in the principles of Scripture and right living in the Christian faith.

Now, I would have to say on the basis of my observation that most American fathers today have failed to do this. They have not given the discipline and instruction that their families needed. I deal with uncountable numbers of cases where the root problem in the life of the person I'm dealing with is the failure of the parents in the home. I would say the reason why most American fathers have failed and are failing today is through failure to establish right priorities. They don't value their homes and their children as highly as they should. They put other things first, success in business, pleasure, entertainment, making money, keeping up with the Joneses. Many other things take priority over that most valuable, wonderful possession which God has given, their children. And consequently, they do not fulfill their duties and responsibilities toward their children. That's the primary cause.

Another major factor in this problem is disharmony between the parents, between husband and wife. James 3:16 tells us this:

> "For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice." (NIV)

So, where there is envy or competitiveness between husband and wife, and where each is guilty of selfish ambition, there will be disorder and every evil practice. And my observation convinces me that children that grow up in that atmosphere are bound to have serious problems, emotional and personal problems. In most cases, such problems go back to childhood and to the home.

Another factor in this is that wrong relationship between husband and wife hinders their prayers. In 1 Peter 3:7 Peter says:

> "Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers." (NIV)

The implication is that wrong relationship between husband and wife hinders their prayers on behalf of their children and in all areas. On the other hand, Jesus told us that if two people could agree, could harmonize together, anything they pray for would be granted. What two people should be better able to agree and to harmonize together than husband and wife? And when they do that, that atmosphere of harmony will permeate their homes and their prayers will be answered by God on behalf of their children.

Well, we've painted in the background and we've seen some of the main factors in the breakdown of family relationships and disharmony in lack of discipline and all the evils that come from there. What are the remedies? I want to suggest to you three steps that parents need to take.

First of all, each parent should repent before God of his or her failure in any respect in relationship with the other partner and with the children. Repentance opens the way for the restoration of God's blessings.

Secondly, if there's disharmony between parents, they need to be reconciled with each other. As I have already said, that will open the way for their prayers to be answered. But while there's a wrong relationship, that hinders their prayers.

And thirdly, if parents have seriously failed their children in their duties as parents, another thing they need to do is

humble themselves and go to their children, acknowledge their failure and ask forgiveness. And let me say that this is the thing that I as a parent, had to do in the past in my life. I've had more than once to go to one of my children and say, "I'm sorry. I did wrong. Please forgive me." And always that's opened up the way for the restoration of a good relationship and of God's blessing.

Once we've taken these steps as parents, then we qualify for the blessings of God's salvation. And these blessings include our children. There are many Scriptures to this effect. I'll just quote two passages from the book of Psalms. First of all, Psalm 103:17-18:

> "But from everlasting to everlasting, the Lord's love is with those who fear him, and his righteousness with their children's children, with those who keep his covenant and remember to obey his precepts." (NIV)

You see, there is a promise to those who keep God's covenant and remember to obey his precepts. One part of the promise is that God's righteousness is with their children's children. Not merely the next generation, but the following generation also will be included in the blessings of God's righteousness.

So, once we are keeping God's covenant and obeying His precepts we have the right to expect that God will work this out and His righteousness will descend to our children and our children's children.

And then again, in Psalm 112:1-2:

> "Blessed is the man who fears the Lord, who finds great delight in his commands. His children will be mighty in the land; each generation of the upright will be blessed." (NIV)

There is another clear promise that if we are pleasing God in our ways, then our descendants will be blessed.

Then there are promises of the restoration of our children. Isaiah 49:24-25 says this:

> "Can plunder be taken from warriors, or captives rescued from the fierce? But this is what the Lord says: 'Yes, captives will be taken from warriors, and plunder retrieved from the fierce; I will contend with those who contend with you, and your children I will save.'" (NIV)

So the forces of evil, Satan and all his invading armies, have moved into our homes and captured our children and taken them from us, maybe with drugs or illicit sex or the occult or whatever form of evil or deception. It's like we've been invaded by an evil army but God promises, "I will contend with those who contend with you, and I will save your children; they'll be delivered from their fierce captors."

And then, closing, Jeremiah 31:15-17, a beautiful promise for mothers:

> "Thus says the Lord, 'A voice heard in Ramah, Lamentation and bitter weeping. Rachel is weeping for her children; She refuses to be comforted for her children, Because they are no more.' Thus says the Lord, 'Restrain your voice from weeping, And your eyes from tears; For your work shall be rewarded,' declares the Lord, 'And they [your children] shall return from the land of the enemy.' 'And there is hope for your future,' declares the Lord, 'And your children shall return to their own territory.'" (NAS)

That's a promise for believing mothers. If you will hold on to that, God will answer it. I've seen it many times.

Well, my time is up for today. I'll be back with you again next week at this same time, Monday through Friday.

Next week I'll be continuing with this same theme, "Walking Through the Land of God's Promises." The promises I'll be dealing with next week will be related to God's provision of prosperity and healing.

Radio Program

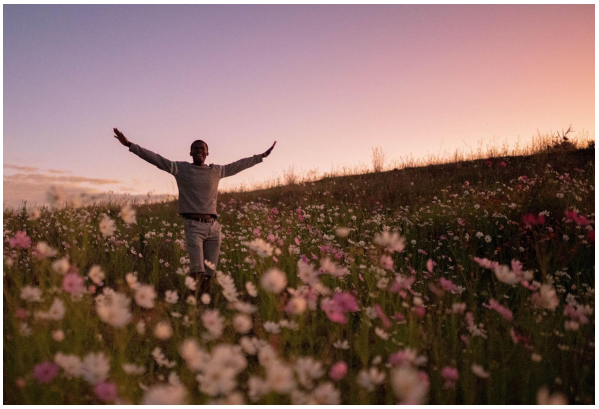
Transcript: TS-R025-105-ENG
Last Updated: 13 Apr 2023
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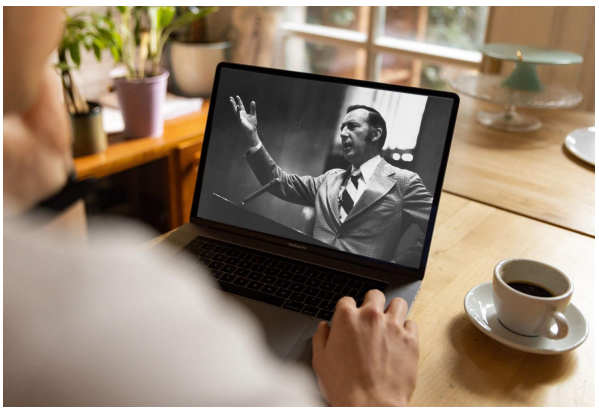
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