

DANGERS SURROUNDING CHILDREN OF CHRISTIAN LEADERS

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OUTLINE

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PRACTICAL ASSIGNMENT INTRODUCTION

All of us love our children and want them to be successful, but often we are not aware of the special dangers that surround them. As a matter of fact, sometimes we barely know who our children are because we are so busy being a leader. But God has placed the responsibility of the family on the father and he should be aware of the extra dangers his children face because he is a spiritual leader. And once he knows these dangers he needs to actively protect his children from them.

DANGER NO. 1 — ALLOWING PUBLIC PRAISE TO PRODUCE PRIDE

SCRIPTURAL EXAMPLE:

In Leviticus 10:1-7 we have a story about two of the sons of Aaron. This was very early in the history of the nation of Israel when the laws were first being instituted and Aaron had just been established as the High Priest. The priesthood was to be passed on down the family lines, so Aaron's sons had gone from being nobodies to being priests who were to give their lives to serving God. Evidently, they began to feel that they were pretty important. Here were all these people looking to their father to communicate with God for them. And so in this new public spotlight they got the idea that they could do things their own way. After all, wasn't their father the High Priest above everyone? Weren't they themselves priests with special rights and privileges. So they decided to do it their own way and the Bible says, "*They offered unauthorized fire before the LORD, contrary to his command.*"

- Children of Christian leaders often have more opportunity to be before the public like Nadab and Abihu, Aaron's sons.
- They see the potential of influencing a crowd. Aaron's sons saw people bow before God's fire. Leviticus 9:24. "*Fire came out from the presence of the LORD and consumed the burnt offering and the fat portions on the altar. And when all the people saw it, they shouted for joy and fell facedown.*"
- Our children lack training and cautions in leadership. Nadab and Abihu were new to this whole thing and had not yet learned about being leaders or all that was involved so they went and did it "*their own way.*"

- Children of Christian leaders can become disillusioned when chastened. Nadab and Abihu didn't have that opportunity. God dealt with them immediately and severely. Children and young people are often blinded to the sin of pride. Proverbs 8:13 says, "*To fear the LORD is to hate evil; I hate pride and arrogance, evil behavior and perverse speech.*" And James 4:6 says, "*God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.*»

Danger # 1 is that public praise of parents can produce pride in children. So what can you do to help your children avoid this problem?



SOLUTIONS:

- Train them how to detect subtleties of pride.* Proverbs 6:16-19 lists seven things that the Lord hates, and the first one is "haughty eyes."
- Do not allow them to lead before a time of proving.* The Bible cautions about moving people up too quickly to positions of leadership or positions in the public eye before a person is mature enough to handle it.
- Explain how God has humbled you.* And make sure that your life is one of humility. You certainly don't want to pass on a heritage of pride to your family. They learn best by example.

DANGER NO. 2 — RESENTING CHURCH LEADERS FOR INADEQUATE FINANCIAL SUPPORT

SCRIPTURAL EXAMPLE:

Eli's sons serve as an example of those who feel they should make a profit out of their service to God. In I Samuel 2:13-17, 22 we have the story of how they seized the offerings and took the best even though it was not theirs.

- Children of Christian leaders may view their father as working **for the people***, as Hophni and Phinehas, the sons of Eli did. They were not thinking about serving the Lord God Almighty.
- They experience financial needs and make comparisons.* "The other kids have new clothes. Why can't I?"
- Our children lack spiritual maturity and personal dedication.* The Bible says that Eli's sons "knew not the Lord." Many children of spiritual leaders know all the right things to do and say simply because they grew up with it, but they may not be saved. They have "a form of godliness but know not the power there of."
- They are disillusioned by people's lack of gratefulness.* And this can be compounded by your complaining about this. "Nobody appreciates the sacrifices I make."
- Children of Christian leaders may reject or misuse the ministry to get what they want*, like Eli's sons. How many leaders' sons haven't been sent to America, supposedly to get a good Christian education, but with motives of greed and visions of wealth dancing in their heads. They felt they "deserved" it, but they never returned to help their people or serve the Lord as had been intended.

Danger # 2 is that children may resent church people for inadequate support. So what can you do to help your children avoid this problem?

SOLUTIONS:

- You and your wife **must** develop and communicate contentment.* I Timothy 6:6-8: "*But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that.*" The example of discontentedness communicates very quickly to children. If you see some of this resentment in your children, examine your own life and what you have been saying and how you have been acting.
- Keep a family log of needs and God's answers.* Learn to pray together as a family for needs. And then learn to praise God together as each answer comes in.
- Achieve and maintain financial freedom.* Don't let yourself be burdened down by debt. Learn to look to God for His resources and answers instead of trying to figure out whom you can borrow from to get out of a problem.

Children who do not sense financial pressures in their parents' lives are not open to Satan's temptation to blame others for not having enough. As a matter of fact they won't even notice that they don't have it!

DANGER NO. 3 — CHALLENGING THE HIGHER STANDARDS REQUIRED BY GOD

SCRIPTURAL EXAMPLE:

We see in Leviticus 10 that the sons of Aaron were not permitted to mourn. They were required to live by a higher standard than all the other people. Leadership brought special responsibilities. The same is true today of leadership.

- *The children of leaders must realize that you are judged by a higher standard.* James 3:1 says, "Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly."
- *Our children must accept the fact that they influence others.* People watch them to see how your message applies to daily living. Titus 1:6 says, "An elder must be blameless, the husband of but one wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient."
- *Children of Christian leaders must be warned that violating higher standards brings greater consequences to them and to you.* In Leviticus 10:9-10 we see what God had to say to Aaron and his sons Eleazar and Ithamar: «You and your sons are not to drink wine or other fermented drink whenever you go into the Tent of Meeting, or you will die. This is a lasting ordinance for the generations to come. You must distinguish between the holy and the common, between the unclean and the clean." You can see that the consequences were very high in the Old Testament. The principle remains the same now.

I Timothy 3:4-5 says, An overseer or leader "must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect. (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?)" This of course places an even greater responsibility on you to make sure you **have** raised your children in godliness. You cannot expect from them what you have not taught them.

Danger # 3 is that your children may challenge the higher standards required by God. So what can you do to help your children avoid this problem?

SOLUTIONS:

1. *Explain the irrevocable blessing they have by being in a family whose father is in Christian ministry.* They will be able to know God in a special way and see Him work in ways that most families don't. As a matter of fact, take the time to sit down and make out a list of benefits before you talk to your children. You may be surprised yourself!
2. *Establish a half hour Bible reading and discussion every day.* You need to interact with the children about the Bible. Let them talk about it. Don't make it a sermon.
3. *Relate pressures and problems to Scriptural principles.* Make sure that they see these things in the light of Scripture. The application of these Biblical principles become **household rules**. For instance, if you are dealing with the issue of laziness, show them what the Bible has to say about it (Proverbs is full of it!), and then explain how the rule of getting up at a certain time helps them not to be lazy. The rule of them helping with household chores is to train them in diligence. Relate it to Scripture.
4. *Integrate them as a vital part of your ministry* (prayer, visiting, counselling, witnessing, and shut-ins). Let them know that even when they help out at home, that is a valuable contribution to your ministry because it frees you to do these things.
5. *Train them to stand alone.* They need to have **a heart understanding** of the principles of Scripture, not just obey the rules. This is the only way that they will learn to stand for Christ and be counted. It is not good enough to say, "I said so," or "This is what the church says." You need to show them what the Bible says. The three most important Scriptural concepts they need to know and be able to apply in their lives are (1) God's design for marriage, (2) His design of authority and the **protection** He has created for us under authority, and (3) His design of our body as His holy temple.

DANGER NO. 4 — TREATING SACRED THINGS AS COMMON

SCRIPTURAL EXAMPLE:

You may remember the story of Uzzah, the son of Abinadab, in II Samuel 6:1-7. David was bringing back the ark of God to Jerusalem and everyone was celebrating. They had **not** followed God's regulations about how to move the ark and so had it on a cart instead of being carried by men. When the oxen stumbled, Uzzah reached out and took hold of the ark and "*The LORD's anger burned against Uzzah because of his irreverent act; therefore God struck him down and he died there beside the ark of God.*" Your children can face the same dangers.



- *Children of Christian leaders are constantly around sacred things*, just as Uzzah had become familiar with the ark, because it had been stored in his father's house.
- *Our children's familiarity tends to decrease their reverence*. Uzzah probably saw that ark every day. It became just another piece of furniture there.
- *Their acts of disrespect bring God's judgment*. The law was very clear about how the ark was to be treated, but Uzzah, in just a moment of time, touched it and lost his life.

Danger # 4 is for your children to treat sacred things as common. So what can you do to help your children avoid this problem?

SOLUTIONS:

- *Demonstrate respect and care for the Bible, communion (dishes and elements), church property, etc.* Even spiritual books should be taken care of properly. It is so easy to think, "Oh well, we have lots of them. So what if the baby got one and scribbled all through it." People have sacrificed for these things and we need to teach respect.
- *Train and enforce proper conduct in church*. Make sure you know where your children are during church. If they are in Sunday school, talk to the teacher and ask how their behaviour is. If they sit with other young people, make sure they are always sitting where you can see them.
- * When they participate in ministry ask for their motives; ask what do they hope to accomplish; how will what they do help others; what results do they hope to see from their service?

DANGER NO. 5 — BECOMING BITTER AND REBELLIOUS BY TAKING UP OFFENSES

SCRIPTURAL EXAMPLE:

In Numbers 16:1-34 there is an interesting story about Levi's descendants rebelling with Reuben's descendants.

- *Children of Christian leaders are directly influenced by the sins of the forefathers*. Levi took up offences for his sister Dinah instead of letting his father deal with it; Korah took up offences for Dathan and Abiram instead of letting them take their own grievances to Moses.
- *Our children become more involved than the ones they are defending*. Korah moved from one of those having a complaint to being the leader of a rebellion.
- *Children of Christian leaders receive the harsher judgment*. In Jude 11 we read, "*They have been destroyed in Korah's rebellion.*"
- *Their rebellion brings long-lasting separation*. God in the case of Korah totally removed them).

Danger # 5 is for your children to become bitter and rebellious by taking up offences. So what can you do to help your children avoid this problem?

SOLUTIONS:

1. *Warn them about the consequences of taking up offences.* Explain to them how they are not to be offended when it does not directly involve them because they are not part of the problem or the solution. Psalm 15:3 says, *“He does --- not take up a reproach against his friend.”* The results can be their own destruction.
2. *Train them how to respond according to Matthew 18:15-18 when they are criticized.* They need to have clear instruction in this, especially because of their vulnerability as children of a leader, and you need to set a clear example in this.
3. *Direct offended people to their offenders.* They are not to pick up that burden from someone, except to pray that the people involved will work it out. It is very easy for a child to be offended on behalf of his father. Guard your tongue as to what you say in front of your children so you will not tempt them to be offended on behalf of yourself.
4. *Have your children agree not to make promises to other people to keep secrets from you.* This will help to prevent them from getting embroiled in someone else’s arguments and offences. We all know the danger of gossip and how unfortunately active it is in the church. If your child never promises others to keep a secret from you, they will not be as vulnerable to this detrimental activity.

DANGER NO. 6 — BEING PRESSURED INTO THE MINISTRY WITHOUT SPIRITUAL UNDERSTANDING

SCRIPTURAL EXAMPLE:

We see in Scripture that as Samuel grew old, he appointed his sons as judges. But we are then told, *“But his sons did not walk in his ways. They turned aside after dishonest gain and accepted bribes and perverted justice.”*

- *Your children may be appointed into part of your ministry without proving themselves.* Samuel’s sons obviously had not proved themselves before they were appointed. It is a temptation to want your son to follow in your footsteps and to open up opportunities for him that he is neither deserving of nor capable of.
- *Children of Christian leaders will be tempted to use the office for personal gain.* Samuel’s sons took bribes. But your child may just take “power” from being in position. He may give into the temptation to lord it over others. What is his interest? How much he will get paid? He is going in the wrong direction.
- *Children of Christian leaders can easily conclude that God’s rules do not apply to them.* God has given us many examples of the training He has taken His leaders through, including Christ Himself. Youthful pride will feel they are the “one” exception to all of the rules.
- *Our children’s violations cause people to reject God’s ways.* We know that the people of Israel insisted on a king because of the wickedness of Samuel’s sons. What a huge impact the lives of Christian leaders’ children can have on the people of God.



Danger # 6 is for our grown children to be pressured into spiritual service without spiritual understanding. So what can you do to help your children avoid this problem?

SOLUTIONS:

1. *Build your priorities around the training of your children.* Deuteronomy 6:7 says, *“Impress them (the words of God) on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.”* You cannot spend too much time training your children. If you feel the ministry is more important than your children, you have lost your Biblical priorities.
2. *Make sure that they are committed growing Christians.* In Romans 12:2, we read *“Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but **be transformed** by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is -- his good, pleasing and perfect will.”* Do you see signs of growth in your child’s life spiritually? Do you see an increase of understanding of spiritual things? Are you praying for them regularly? Do you have private spiritual talks with them about the things of God?
3. *Teach them how to conquer temptations and habits.* Find out what specific temptations your child has at this time in his life. Help him to find Scripture verses that deal with it. Help him to memorize those verses

and learn how to use them when he is tempted. Train him to go to the Scriptures himself for daily encouragement and **application** to his own life. Train him to yield himself totally to Christ. (See Romans 6; 8:1-15.)

4. *Establish accountability for daily victory.* Hebrews 3:13 says, “*But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin’s deceitfulness.*” Ask your child if he was successful in fleeing temptation. Have a schedule to check him on the verses he is memorizing. Help him to write down some of the things he has learned through dealing with temptation.
5. *Teach them how God measures success in the ministry.* In John 15 we see Christ talking to his disciples about bearing fruit. What was Christ’s emphasis? **Abide in me.** You can do nothing without me. Obey my commands. Love each other.

CONCLUSION

We have covered six dangers that your children face:

1. Allowing public praise to produce pride
2. Resenting church leaders for inadequate financial support
3. Challenging the higher standards required by God
4. Treating sacred things as common
5. Becoming bitter and rebellious by taking up offenses
6. Being pressured into the ministry without spiritual understanding.

Maybe you have never given thought to the special dangers your children have, but they are real and urgent. And usually you, the father, are the one who leaves them open to these dangers by not preparing them, by not warning them, by not training them. Now is the time to examine how well you have been watching over them. Take a look at your schedule. You need to schedule in time to talk to your children about these dangers. Yes, it will take preparation, time, thought, but you are responsible for these precious children.

When you talk to them, be sure you communicate on their age level. An 8 year old doesn’t understand things the same way an 18-year old does, but they do often understand more than you think.

And take time to look at your own attitudes. Have you allowed pride in your life? Do you feel you don’t get paid enough? Do you resent being in the public eye and having to live by a higher standard than other Christians? Do you take the things of God for granted, preaching / teaching over and over without any freshness from the Spirit of God? Is there any bitterness in your life?

Any of these attitudes can easily rub off on your children. Make sure your heart is pure before the Lord. Ask for His forgiveness, and then ask forgiveness from your children for setting the wrong example. They are your responsibility. They are following you. Take the time now so you can prevent heartaches for yourself and them later.

What a solemn responsibility it is to recognize and resolve these special dangers our children are in. **Start building a praise time into your family lifestyle.** Begin by singing about the joy of the Lord or glorifying Him in a discussion with your wife. Let your children hear this. Then exalt God for the special privileges your children are having because you are privileged to serve Jesus. Let your children participate. Later do this regularly. Inspire your wife and children to be enthralled with this privilege of being part of a special spiritual family. Let praise ring from their mouths. **Let praise become their lifestyle.** Say hallelujah now. By God’s grace it is all possible. Hallelujah! Amen!

Blessings to you, our dear friends!

We are happy to present the video, audio and paper materials that have been prepared by **New Life for Churches**. You have the privilege *upon completion of your practical assignment* to use this lecture with others.

Practical assignment

Completed

- Review the lecture with your own children in mind. Choose between 2 and 4 of your children's greatest problems. Write these down and pray about it with your wife. ☐
- Based on the suggestions in the lecture begin to work with your children to develop them into godly examples for other young people. Remember to be positive and patient with them. Write a brief weekly report of you experiences. ☐