

The Land of Shuddah

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Deuteronomy 11:18-22

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Well, today's Father's Day (Wait, you didn't know? Okay, Um, I think Lowes opens at 10). I remember when I first became a father. I was petrified. I thought about the added responsibility. I thought about the needs this child would have. I literally began to fret. See, I knew the job I had, and I knew what it paid. I knew that with just one of us working, it was going to be real difficult making ends meet. It's a guy thing ladies. Most men take their role as provider very seriously. And this was what was on my mind most of the time. How would I provide for this child both today and tomorrow?

One day, not long after Heather was born, I was in one of those worried moods while mowing the grass (yes, with THAT lawn mower). My heart was troubled. I thought about my little girl growing up and making friends. I thought about the sleep-over's or the pizza parties with those friends. And what concerned me the most was that here we were living in a small upstairs apartment. I was sure she would be too embarrassed to bring her friends over. I know it sounds strange that I would worry about this but, fathers, I think you know what I'm talking about here. You want to make sure they have the best. You feel this incredible responsibility toward your children, and you only want what is best for them. Well, in the midst of that worry, the Lord spoke some very comforting words to me. He pointed out that what my child needs the most from me is me. I needed to be a father who is involved with his children, not some corporate executive off on business trips all week. What my child needs most is a father who is there.

I am grateful that the Lord showed me what matters most in the lives of my children. I really treasure the time I was able to spend with my daughters. I've deep joy in knowing that together we worked on many projects around the house. Both girls helped in building our garage. I'm not sure how much of this they remember, but I'll treasure those times for the rest of my life. Anyway, because the Lord helped me to see what matters most, I avoided living in the Land of Shuddah like some other men I know.

I run into so many men who look back upon the time they spent with their children and find themselves living in the Land of Shuddah; where they think “I should a done this” or “I should a said that”. Some fathers never find that ideal place where there is a healthy balance between providing for and spending time with their children. But not me. I learned early on that the one thing a child needs is a father’s presence. But just when I was getting ready to pat myself on the back, I find that what God expects from me as a father runs far deeper than I had imagined. I thought all that my children needed was my time. Turns out it is far more.

¹⁸ “So commit yourselves wholeheartedly to these words of mine. Tie them to your hands and wear them on your forehead as reminders. ¹⁹ Teach them to your children. Talk about them when you are at home and when you are on the road, when you are going to bed and when you are getting up. ²⁰ Write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates, ²¹ so that as long as the sky remains above the earth, you and your children may flourish in the land the Lord swore to give your ancestors. ²² “Be careful to obey all these commands I am giving you. Show love to the Lord your God by walking in His ways and holding tightly to Him.” ¹

(Deuteronomy 11:18-22) It turns out that a father’s responsibility is more than just spending time with his children, but teaching them about God as well. Reading these verses puts a lot of us fathers right back into the Land of Shuddah.

Even if we father’s somehow learn the time lesson (where our children want our time more than our money), there is still the difficult lesson God speaks here about Spiritual matters. And the problem is that far too many fathers pass this responsibility along to someone else. Some fathers figure the wife can handle all the Spiritual things in the house. Some father’s figure that’s what the church is for. But the father who passes this responsibility along to others will find themselves in the Land of Shuddah. I should have been more involved with the Spiritual formation of my child.

What I love about the Bible is that it just doesn’t give us lofty ideals to obtain. It is also real by telling us stories about men who seem to fall short of those lofty ideals; stories of father’s like King David. Here’s a father who hopefully knew what

¹Tyndale House Publishers. (2004). *Holy Bible : New Living Translation* Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.

God expects from a man; that the father should be the one not just modeling God's laws but teaching them to his children as well. But David, it seems, was too busy with the nation and neglected the things that were important at home. It also appears that he left someone else teach his children about God's laws. As Absalom overthrew the kingdom, do you think David spent some time in the Land of Shuddah? Do you think David felt that he should have done this or that he should have said that? I just bet you he did because David did not seek his son's destruction. When his followers suggest killing Absalom, David is appalled. And I think it's because David realized the things he should have been doing all along. David blamed himself for what was missing in his child's life.

Fathers, do you find yourself living in the land of Shuddah? There are a lot of us who do. Too many of us have forfeited time with our children all because we feel a need to provide. Most of us have neglected our responsibility to model Christianity before our children. We've become passive in the Spiritual lives of our children, leaving them to find out the things of God on their own. I tell you, there are far too many fathers living in the Land of Shuddah. There are way too many fathers who hang their head in shame because of the things they should have said or the things they should have done.

I learned that my children will best see Jesus when they see Him living in me. I just hope I didn't take too long to make that change in my life. And I suspect that there are many fathers who look back upon their life just like I do and feel remorse for the things they should have done. If that's you I don't want you to stay there living in the Land of Shuddah for the rest of your life. I don't want to leave you this morning without hope. You see, as long as there is breath in our lungs and as long as that child still lives, there is time. It's never too late to say the things you should have said. It's never too late to demonstrate Godliness to that child of yours. It's not too late to come along side that child and show them what you've learned about God. It's time we father's stand up and become the Dad our children need to see. Sure we're not perfect, none of us are. But we can be real. We simply need to stand up and accept this responsibility that God has given us.