

# Your Family

## *Understanding Your Impact:*

Exodus 20:1-20

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Wesley J. Gabel

Family life can be hectic especially for mothers who juggle so many responsibilities.

Recently I came across a list of symptoms that suggest a mother might need a break:

*You know Mom needs a break when:*

*Her feet stick to the kitchen floor and she doesn't care.*

*She spends an entire week wearing sweats.*

*Her favorite television show is a cartoon.*

*She's so desperate for adult conversation that she actually talks to telemarketers.*

*She reaches over and cuts her husband's steak.*

*It's Mother's Day and she asks for peanut butter and jelly.*

Most young mothers shared one symptom in common, fatigue. I want you to be refreshed and renewed today, not by sleep during this hour, although you may want to, but by a good and strong word. Your acts of faith make an enormous impact.

Understand that God knows the difficult conditions in which you raise your children. If you attended our Family Ministry session on April 15<sup>th</sup> with Ryan Hawley, you heard a daunting challenge.

For many, many years, the three most important institutions in a community, the three most important influences in a person's life was their family, their school and their church. By common agreement, only people of high moral character were allowed to teach in schools. If there was a hint of immorality or illegality in a teacher's life, he or she was summarily fired. There was no generation gap because most differences between people were regional rather than age-related. However, the advent of radio and television changed that. In 1955 the majority of US homes had a television. As people were more and more exposed to content targeted to their

age, they found that their music, language and opinions were more distinguishable by their generation than their region.

Television and radio provided significant and influential relationships with musicians, actors, writers, producers, advertisers and all kinds of people. Did you know that the average teen listens to 40 hours of radio a week? Think of its content. Look at the TV with the most popular teen network being MTV, and other networks pushing their view of sexuality every hour of the day. Now, expand that media exposure to include web site designers, video game creators and all who text-message or instant-message our children. There is no wall of protection.

Do you know the average age of a child's first exposure to internet pornography? It is 11 years old. Do you know who the largest consumer of internet pornography is? Young people between 12 and 17 years of age! They also become addicted at high rates and turn to alcohol, drugs and anti-depressants. Our friend, Ryan, went on to document many more problems in our nation, in Minnesota and in Rochester.

The most alarming is the loss of faith. Those in America who in their childhood were not tutored by the television embrace an orthodox faith at a rate of 65 percent. They believe in God, that his Son was born of a virgin, that Jesus provides the only way of salvation, and that all people will someday experience either heaven or hell. However, only 35 percent of the so-called baby boomers, raised with television and radios, believe that; and our current society is shaped by that leadership. Think of what we taste now with only 35 percent of people born from 1946 to 1964 embracing a biblical perspective. The following generation, raised with cable TV, video games, video cassettes and walkmans, embrace orthodox faith at 16 percent. Now add the internet, iPods and cell phone text-messaging, and only 4 percent of youth hold orthodox beliefs. Imagine the nation when they lead. Christian parents no longer enjoy a supportive community in

the faith and values they wish to impart. Despite all the innovation and creative Christian education, midweek children's programs like Awanas, amazing youth groups and rallies, state of the art Vacation Bible Schools, and church school, we produce a biblical faith in only 4 percent. Highly acclaimed children's and youth ministries aren't getting the job done. You mothers and father face a choice. You can choose to cut off most ties with the outside world, or we can look at a pattern the early church developed to grow disciples in hostile cultures. It is working in cultures hostile to the gospel all over the world.

God has a battle plan. It actually is a blessing plan. In the Ten Commandments God says that we have an amazing impact, both for good and for bad. God says:

***I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand [generations] of those who love me and keep my commandments.*** (Exodus 20:5-6, NIV)

From the Ten Commandments we learn that all blessings are found in God alone. We sing: "Praise God from whom all blessings flow." Blessings do flow from one generation to another. So do curses. Parents are God's conduit of care, God's channel of blessing and curses. Families grow people of character. Families grow habits of life. Families grow disciples. When parents sin, even their great-grandchildren suffer. When parents act in faith, all succeeding generations taste the love of God. (A thousand generations is at least 20,000 years and recorded history has not yet reached 6,000.) Did you know that the Sunday School is a little over 200 years old? Most children's ministries are younger than that? The key to developing the next generation is not some cool church program that attracts a lot of children and youth. Instead, the critical factor is a parent or parents that make their home a center for discipleship. That is not to diminish children and youth workers. They are important and make an impact every time they act in faith; however, God does place us, protect us, and grow us in families.

Churches have impacted families when older men and women help parents function in their vocation and family responsibilities. The Apostle Paul, in his letter to Titus (chapter 2), called for coaching of the older men and women so they could model and even train the younger in family living.

An American Indian once asked a Christian, if a danger came and you had to make a choice, would you rescue the young or the old. The Christian answered, “We’d rescue the young. We feel they have their lives ahead of them.” The Indian answered. “We’d rescue the old. It takes only 9 months to grow a child. It takes 60 years to grow an elder.” Does God grow you to retire and play, or to be elders who guide and invest in generations to come. You singles and seniors have a call to invest in mothers and fathers who are raising the next generation. Do they have in you a model, support, and partnership?

Some parents here are solo in the faith. Your husband or wife neither shares your faith or morals. Don’t dismiss the power of your life. Honor your marriage:

***For the unbelieving husband has been sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife has been sanctified through her believing husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy.*** (1 Corinthians 7:14, NIV)

Your holiness in Christ is greater than any uncleanness. The Bible tells us:

***The one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.*** (1 John 4:4, NIV)

Don’t dismiss your impact. It lasts a thousand generations. So do the following: First, *pray blessing on your life and family.* God does answer prayer, whatever you see happening.

Second, *establish relationships with people who are both passionate and maturing in their love and faith.* Cool coals catch fire from burning coals. Mix your time and activity with people on fire and people who are mature... not just your peers. Then you will enjoy wisdom.

Third, *make it your aim*, whether you are a mother, father, senior or single, *to fulfill the Great Commandment*: to love God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself. God shows love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commandments. Be a Great Commandment person fostering Great Commandment families. The quest for personal fulfillment, in individuals and families, quickly degenerates into selfish living. The pursuit of happiness is not a wholesome family activity. The pursuit of God is.

Fourth, *see God's blessing and be encouraged*. God partners with you through friends, pastors, camps, Sunday School teachers, youth leaders and prayer warriors. You have a team of blessing. Give thanks, and get after it.

Mom, Dad, you are not alone; and God's battle plan and blessing plan will work. In faith you are changing, and so are we. It is not important what we are. It is far more important what God wants us to be, and what we can be in faith. Praise God.