

The Power Of The Family Altar

Text : **Gen. 18: 16-33**

INTRODUCTION :

A. History has been dramatically altered by individuals.

1. Great leaders have changed the course of history.
 - a. Moses
 - b. Solomon
 - c. Jesus
 - d. The Caesars of Rome
 - e. Presidents of the United States
2. Great military leaders have changed the course of history.
 - a. Alexander the Great
 - b. Napoleon
 - c. Patton
 - d. Macarthur
3. Great inventors have changed history.
 - a. Foster – steam engine
 - b. Marconi – wireless
 - c. Edison – electric light
 - d. Bell – telephone
 - e. Ford – assembly line
 - f. Wright Bros. – airplane
 - g. Gates – windows operating system

B. What have you and I personally done to change history ?

1. Every person who ever lived on planet earth has affected history in some way.
 - a. **Each person is like a raindrop in the shower of time.**
 - b. **Every action is like throwing a stone into a quiet pond ... rings go out.**
2. We all influence more people than we realize. (**estimated average 10,000**)
3. We all influence :
 - a. immediate family and everyone with whom they interact.

- b. school mates and everyone with whom they interact.
 - c. those with whom we work and everyone with whom they interact.
 - d. those with whom we have social contact and everyone with whom they interact.
 - e. Checkout clerks and other business contacts.
 - f. service people (barber / beautician, doctors / nurses, repairmen, insurance)
3. It'll normal for us to underestimate the power of our influence.

ILL. : A young man had decided to kill himself so he went to the shopping center to buy bullets from the sporting-goods store. He was so preoccupied with his plan that he walked into an elderly lady knocking her down and causing her to spill her groceries. As he tried to help her up he stepped on her glasses and broke them. Without her glasses the lady couldn't drive home so he took her to get them repaired. The optometrist was busy and slow so they sat there talking for two or three hours. Once her glasses were fixed she insisted that she buy dinner for the nice young man to thank him for being so kind to her. L.S.S., the sporting-goods store was closed by the time he got her back to her car. His suicide never came up in the course of their conversation and he never saw the lady again, but the time spent talking with her saved his life. By the time he shared his story with me he had become a teacher, gotten married, had kids and was an active member of the church.

4. You have a greater influence than you realize and an even greater potential than you can imagine.

TRANSITION :

With this lesson we want to observe the power that your family altar can have to change this congregation, this town and even the world in which we live.

I. Our text is one of the most interesting conversations between God and a man recorded.

- A. It reflects the closeness of Abraham's relationship with God.**
- 1. Abraham was respectful, but intimate. (**not a conversation between strangers**)
 - 2. He felt free to express his heart.
 - 3. He was not afraid to ask God to change His mind. (**He desired to change history.**)
 - a. Do we have that kind of relationship with God ?
 - b. Are there any of us who did not ask our parents to change their minds ?
 - c. How do you think Abraham developed that relationship with God ?

B. Abraham did not stop negotiating until he thought he had saved the cities.

1. If just Lot's family had been faithful, the cities would've been saved.
 - a. **READ ... Gen. 19: 12-14**
 - b. Lot's immediate family included at least **10** people.
 - 1) Lot & Wife **2**
 - 2) Sons-in-laws & wives ... **4** (possibly children)
 - 3) Sons **2** (possibly wives & grandchildren)
 - 4) Daughters **2**
 - c. In addition, Lot had herdsmen and most likely domestic servants. (**Gen. 13: 7**)
2. Therefore, if Lot's family could have been listed among the righteous those cities would have been spared and the history of the Middle East would be different.

C. II Pet. 2: 7- and if He rescued righteous Lot, oppressed by the sensual conduct of unprincipled men 8- (for by what he saw and heard that righteous man, while living among them, felt his righteous soul tormented day after day by their lawless deeds),

1. Lot was a righteous man at heart.
2. He strongly disapproved of the actions of those around him. (**the pop-culture**)
3. **WHY** did neither his righteousness nor his disapproval direct his children's lives ?

D. Lot's family adopted his business values, but not his religious values.

1. Lot centered his life around his business, financial success. ... **Gen. 13: 8-13**
2. Sodom was a good place to do business.

(**He stayed in an evil place to make money.**)

 - a. It had plenty of water and feed for his sheep.
 - b. There was a ready market for his products. (cheese, wool, sheep)
3. He did not consider the environment into which he was taking his children.
 - a. His children were isolated from Godly peers. (**environment hostile to godliness**)
 - b. It is the responsibility of every parent to provide godly activities and to put their children into an environment where they will be influenced toward God.
 - c. Faith can be taught, but never inherited.

* **Thus, though Lot was a righteous man who hated evil, his failure to bring up his children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord changed the history of the Middle East. (Ammonites, Moabites, and destroyed cities)**

Abraham wasn't the only righteous person on earth; why did God choose him ?

II. Abraham's ability to influence his children to follow God was a factor in God's decision to call him rather than others.

- A. **Gen. 18: 19-** For I have chosen him, so that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice, so that the LORD may bring upon Abraham what He has spoken about him.
- B. **Lot was righteous because of the influence of Abraham.**
1. When they were called by God, Lot was isolated from all other family.
 2. Lot remained faithful even in the evil environment of Sodom.
- C. **The family altar was the key to Abraham's success. (Abraham truly worshipped.)**
1. Abraham's journey could be traced by his altars. **For example :**
 - a. **Gen. 12: 7**
 - b. **Gen 12: 8**
 - c. **Gen. 13: 4 (The altars were substantial enough to last.)**
 2. Isaac learned faith lying on an altar built by his father. ... **Gen. 22:9**
 3. Isaac built altars himself. ... **Gen. 26: 23-25**
- D. **Abraham's influence changed generations to come.**
1. Isaac taught his household.
 2. God blessed Isaac because of his father. (Abraham) ...
Gen. 26:24- The LORD appeared to him the same night and said, "I am the God of your father Abraham; Do not fear, for I am with you. I will bless you, and multiply your descendants, For the sake of My servant Abraham."
 3. What effect will our relationship with God have on our children ?
- E. **Abraham's faith was not the first man's faith to affect the flow of history. Gen. 5-6**
1. Enoch was so very close with God that God took him home before his death.
 2. The son of Enoch was also a significant figure in the Old Testament.
 - a. Methuselah was the oldest man to every live on the earth.
 - b. The name "Methuselah" means : "*When he dies, judgment*"
 - * Refer to the bulletin article. (See below)
 - c. The year Methuselah died, the universal flood occurred.
 - d. **THUS**, the extended life of Methuselah delayed the destruction of life on earth.

3. Noah was the grandson of Methuselah. (**Great grandson of Enoch**)
 - a. This would mean that Noah was influenced by one who walked with Enoch.
 - b. The faith of Enoch was passed down to Noah through Methuselah.
 - c. **THUS**, the faith of Enoch was instrumental in preserving life on planet earth.
4. Mary is a descendant of Shem, one of Noah's sons.
 - a. Mary was the mother of our Savior, Jesus the Christ.
 - b. **THUS**, the redemption of all mankind can be traced to the faith of one man, **Enoch**.

III. The family altar is just as important today as it was during the times of the heroes of faith in the Old Testament. (**Enoch, Noah, Abe, Isaac, Jacob, etc.**)

- A. Men of God have always lead their families in worship. (**And, they do today.**)
- B. There was organized worship in the time of Abraham, but he still built altars.
 1. **Gen. 14: 18- And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; now he was a priest of God Most High. (cf- Heb. 5: 6, 10)**
 2. We're not given the details, but this is a record of organized religion – **worship of God**.
 - a. Abraham respected the religion. ... **He paid a tithe.**
 - b. He did not allow the organized religion to replace **his personal worship**.
- C. Satan has been successful in using our modern culture and tradition to stop people from worshipping God.

We cannot associate worship solely with the assembly of the church !!

1. The fact that the church has a weekly assembly in no way indicates that we should not worship God at other times and in other places.
2. The fact that we are required to attend a corporate worship assembly does **not** even suggest that we should not worship God at other times.
3. The assembly is essential, but worship is NEVER a group activity.
 - a. When in the assembly, we all worship at the same time and place, **BUT** one can be in the group and do all the activities without ever worshipping.
 - b. Worship is a devotion to God which flows **from the heart**, not from activities.
 - c. True worship does not require a leader or an organized program.
4. The Christian worships God daily when his adoration for God **flows from his heart**.
 - a. God does not legislate how and when our daily worship occurs.
(**If He did it would no longer be worship, just commandment keeping.**)

- b. **The devoted heart cannot be restrained from expressing its love for God.**
- c. If my heart can be restrained from expressing its adoration for God, I have a severe spiritual problem.

ILL. - Devotion builds up like the steam in a pressure-cooker, and if it is not expressed, not vented, it will spew out unbidden. (Like Jer. 20: 9)

- 5. One's personal worship is not in competition with the assembly of the church.
 - a. The weekly assembly is commanded. (**Thus, faithfulness requires it.**)
 - b. Every Christian needs the assembly; it serves a vital purpose.

*** However, our personal faith depends upon our personal worship !!**

*** Abraham's relationship with God was build around the family altar !!**

CONCLUSION :

- A. The family altar is the key to building our faith to the point it controls our lives.**
 - 1. It's only such a controlling faith that will motivated us to surrender completely to God.
 - 2. It's only when one surrenders control of his life to Christ that he can trust Him to save.
- B. It is only when faith controls our life that we can change history for the better.**
 - 1. When others see that we have something good, they'll want in on it.
 - a. Family
 - b. Friends and neighbors
 - c. Acquaintances and social contacts
 - 2. **The family altar builds the faith of the next generation.**
 - 3. Abraham was called **SO THAT** he could command his household to follow God.
- C. We must overcome our culture and re-establish the family altar.**
 - 1. Worship is not just something one does in an assembly of the church. (**must do it**)
 - 2. Worship is not just the performing of acts of worship. (**must do them**)
 - 3. The more love is expressed the stronger it grows. (**Daily worship builds faith.**)
- D. Daily worship develops daily faith which enables a faith like that of Abraham.**

INVITATION :

Try it ! You'll like it !

Reading the scriptures is vital to our Christian walk and greatly to be encouraged, but when one takes the next step and begins to study them all kinds of amazing details begin to surface. It's fascinating how one discovery leads to another. For example, if one does the math, he finds that Methuselah died the very year the flood of Genesis chapters 6-8 occurred. Many have wondered and speculated about whether or not Methuselah died *during* the flood or if he died *before* the flood. Bible doesn't appear to give us the answer, but if we dig a bit deeper than a casual reading an answer begins to emerge.

Enoch was so close to God it's said he "walked with God" for 300 hundred years after the birth of his son Methuselah (Gen. 5: 21f) until God finally took him rather than allow him to die. (Heb. 11: 5, *"By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and he was not found, because God translated him: for he has had witness borne to him that before his translation he had been well-pleasing unto God:..."*) The name "Methuselah" may be the key to unlocking this mystery for us. As you most likely know, many of the names of individuals in the Bible are significant in that they have a special meaning attached to them. This is true of the name Methuselah. The significance of its meaning can hardly go unnoticed. Foreknowledge that could only have come from God Himself is reflected in the name Methuselah.

We see the significance of names clearly demonstrated in the life and family of Abraham. When called from Ur his name was Abram which means "*Father of Height*", but when God promised to make Abram's descendants a numerous as the stars of the sky, his name was changed to Abraham which means "*father of a multitude*," Rebecca laughed when it was prophesied that she would bear a child in her old age so her son was named Isaac which means "*laughter*," and Jacob means "*one who follows on another's heels*" or "*supplanter*." Just as these names had a special meaning attached to them, so, too, does the name Methuselah have a significant meaning attached to it. The meanings of the name "Methuselah" are "*When he is dead it shall be sent*" and "*When he dies, judgment*."

Apparently, God revealed to Enoch that the death of his son would signal the impending flood which would destroy the world. According to his very name, Methuselah would live until the year of the flood, but once he passed away the judgment of God would be manifest and we know that judgment to have been the Great Deluge which destroyed all life on earth, except for those few in the ark that through the grace of God were spared.

Studying the bible can be both fascinating and rewarding. I urge you to make it a part of your daily walk with God. You will never be disappointed by the scriptures and never bored by your study because the deeper you delve into the Holy

Scriptures the more intricacies open up into greater understanding of God's revelation for us. Unlike modern video-games, it cannot get boring because one never gets to the final layer. Each new discovery opens the portal leading to the next so the excitement never stops building. Try it, you'll like it.

Adopted from article by Dave Ferguson