
BIBLE INSIGHT

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth. (2 Timothy 2:15)

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A People Prepared For The Lord

by Phillip Shumake

(Luke 1:13, 17) But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your petition has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will give him the name John. (17) "It is he who will go as a forerunner before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, TO TURN THE HEARTS OF THE FATHERS BACK TO THE CHILDREN, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous, so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." (NAS95)

I am humbled by the wisdom of God in this passage. While you and I might have made elaborate plans for preparing a nation to welcome the long awaited Messiah, God lays down just two specific matters of preparation for John to carry out. First, he is to wake up the fathers of his day so that their hearts will be focused on their children, and secondly John was to address the disobedient attitudes of the people. Let's examine the power of making these simple changes.

A Father's Heart

Turning the hearts of fathers is a powerful work of preparation because it prepares the generation AFTER Jesus' death for the good news of the gospel.

Thanks to John's work of preparation, the children who would be raised while Jesus was on the earth would not be neglected by their fathers, but shown one of life's greatest lessons by seeing what a loving father can really be. Having fathers focus on their children would provide the coming generation with an innumerable list of blessings. Fathers whose hearts were turned to their children would give them the gift of recognizing that Fathers love, that Fathers discipline, that Fathers forgive, that Fathers sacrifice, that Fathers care, that

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church of Christ at Beverly Shores

Sun. 9:30 a.m.—Bible Classes
Sun. 10:30 a.m.—Worship
Sun. 6:00 p.m.—Worship
Wed. 7:00 p.m.—Bible Classes

1318 Griffin Road
Leesburg, FL 34748
352-365-9946

Welcome Visitors!

We are glad to have you visiting with us today, because you are part of our goals. This may sound odd, but please let us explain. Our goal is to worship God in spirit and in truth (John 4:24) and to glorify Him in all that we do. (1 Cor. 10:31)

God will always be our number one priority, but the Bible speaks of secondary goals that this church also recognizes. Today, we consider you our honored guest, and hope to prove ourselves welcoming and hospitable. In fact, we hope that you can tell we are loving.

1 Timothy 1:5 says: "But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith."

Because this is our goal as well, we hope that you can see love in our teaching. We hope you can see people with pure hearts, a good conscience, and faith that is totally genuine. Only then will we really be doing our job.

So please, stay a while after services so we can greet you. Feel free to take a welcome packet with you as you leave, and if you have any questions, don't hesitate to ask. Helping you is part of our goals.

Fathers listen, that Fathers worship...the list can go on and on. By having John call his generation of fathers to invest their whole heart into their children, the next generation would be able to appreciate God's true nature as our Heavenly Father. A generation that has been raised by a Godly father is PREPARED to receive the good news, because based on their experiences with their earthly fathers, it will make sense that our Heavenly Father would love, save, and guide us.

The book of Malachi closes with the prophecy that quoted by Luke of a prophet who would come to turn the hearts of fathers back to their children, and the hearts of children back to their fathers. John fulfilled this prophecy as he prepared the way for Jesus. This prophecy and its fulfillment highlight God's wisdom and His desire to provide for even the unborn.

Attitude of Righteousness

Of course, God also had great plans for preparing the current generation by transforming their attitudes. John called those who were disobedient to, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Matthew 3:2) By having John teach his own generation to seek righteousness, they would be ready for the righteous teachings of Jesus. Not only would they be ready to follow them, but most importantly to recognize them. Remember, the Pharisees had such a perverted sense of righteousness that they condemned Jesus for healing people, just because it was the Sabbath. It was very important for John to show his generation what true righteousness is all about. In preparing the people, John didn't have to teach them what to obey – he simply had to teach them to be willing to obey what is right. This made those who would listen to John not only ready for Jesus teaching, but thirsting for it.

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It is great to recognize that God was deeply interested in the attitudes of the people, not their perfection. Becoming flawless isn't what God expects of those who would prepare to come to His Son. Instead, he simply expects an attitude that loves righteousness and shuns disobedience. That is the kind of heart that God can do wonderful things with!

Today's Application

How prepared are we for Jesus' teaching? Some of us are lucky enough to have been raised by fathers whose hearts were turned to us even while we were children. Are we passing on this great blessing to our children? Are our hearts turned toward their wants and needs in a healthy, Godly manner? If this was not your experience with your father, are you committed to breaking the cycle and imitating your Heavenly Father's heart to give your children the blessing of preparedness? The distractions of life were just as demanding on fathers back then as they are today, but the change can be made if we choose to turn our hearts towards our children.

In addition to the concerns we have about our children, we must also ask ourselves is my heart turned to righteousness? When you study the Bible does a fear of being imperfect hamper your appreciation of Jesus teaching? Does a heart of disobedience pull you away from God's love? Are you afraid to come to God because you know too well your own flaws - don't be. If you want to be prepared to have your life changed by Jesus, just consider the preparations made by John..

We can be a people prepared for God's love and God's Son if we will take the time to examine our own life and turn our hearts, just like those in John's day.
