

THE LEADER AND HIS FAMILY

An outline of presentation by Stephen Adei at the African Association of Bible Schools conference Accra, 20th June, 2012

Reading: Genesis 1:26-28; 2:18-25, 1 Tim 3:1-7, Ephesians 5: 21-33; 6:1-9

I. Introduction

- ❖ Why does family life feature so much in the qualification of a church leader (1 Tim 3:1-7)?
- ❖ Note the clusters of qualification:-
 - Quality of personal life
 - Standing in community
 - Family life (marriage and parenting)
 - Ability to teach
- ❖ Dr Hunter once said “if a man says he is filled with the Holy Spirit I will ask his wife”.
- ❖ Of all that one does to prepare for ministry (assuming one is born again and has God’s Holy Spirit in him/her) be it education both secular and theological, experience etc, none is as important and most powerful in shaping one’s own life, ministry and impact on others as the quality of one’s family life.

II. THE IMPACT OF THE FAMILY ON CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP

- ❖ It is normal to talk about a leader leading and influencing his family and yet the family itself is a major crucible in shaping the leader.
- ❖ Character (integrity, honesty and accountability) of the leader is best seen by his family
- ❖ His “love” for spouse authenticates his profession and servanthood.
- ❖ His relationship with his children and household is the best training ground or equipment.
- ❖ His family alter becomes a model of cell groups.
- ❖ When one is truly authentic in faith servant in leadership loving / submissive as a spouse and instructs his children in the fear and admonition of the lord. It is almost impossible not to be recognised as a leader in the church, community at work and even in the nation.
- ❖ Sad to say many church leaders are seen as phony because they neglect their family life

II. THE BIBLE AND FAMILY LIFE

- The Bible does not leave to chance as to what we are to do with our family.
- In fact, it is our primary calling as a married person and only exceptional cases have people being called to “sacrifice” their family for the sake of the gospel and ministry
- Besides being born again the greatest Legacy of a Christian is his family.
 - Genesis 18:17-19 shows that the primary calling of Abraham was to lead his family to the lord. All other things followed.
 - When General Joshua, leader of Israel was ending his life the only thing he would speak positively was that “ as for me and my house we will serve the Lord” (Joshua 24:15)
 - We hear very little about Joseph of Nazareth besides raising Jesus up to twelve years but he may be one of the greatest saints that ever lived because of his family.
- It is important to note that Scriptures go to great length to expose the family life of the men and women God uses both positively, (Abraham, Joshua, Noah, Mordecaiah, etc.) and negatively (Aaron, Eli) and “so-so” (David, Solomon) etc.
- It is worth studying the family life of God’s people both in scripture and in history.
- No wonder God’s master plan to continue the act of creation was entrusted to the “male and female” he created in his image (Gen 1: 28)
- Expectedly therefore from Eden (Gen 3) to today the family has been the object of attack of Satan.

III. LEADING ONES FAMILY

The Bible gives guidance as to how one is to marry and lead the family. The Book of Proverbs is worth reading in that regard. In a one hour presentation instead of devoting a section of my presentation to the leader and his marriage and another to the high calling of raising Godly children I have decided to present the following general principles to guide the leader

- i. Marriage and family life are ordained by God and of the highest priority in the divine scheme of things to glorify his name, to model the triune God, to reflect Christ-church relationship, to raise Godly heritage and to manage God’s creation. These and other roles played by the leader’s and the leader’s family have no substitute. (Genesis 1:26-28; 2:18-25 Malachi 2:13-16, Eph 5:21-6:9)
- ii. Flowing from the above having positive attitude to marriage and family life and given highest priority to ones relationship with the spouse and raising Godly children as things of highest delight to God, of great blessing to family and members and the best heritage one can leave on earth are keys to positive family life.

- iii. Appreciating the status of the husband and wife in marriage as equal, different and complementary
- iv. The leader must be unambiguously clear as the responsibilities and roles of members of the family not as traditionally defined but as Scripture teaches including:
 - ❖ The goals of Christian family
 - ❖ The building blocks of strong marriages based on the Biblical injunction to lead and cleave to oneness.
 - ❖ The importance of building oneness in spirit, soul and body
 - ❖ Understanding the primary responsibilities of members of the family such as unconditional love of the man for his love, submission to the authority of the husband by the wife, Godly instruction and love of parents and submission and obedience of children
- v. Commitment to lifelong marriage (Gen 2:24)
- vi. Acquisition of basic knowledge to handle the flash point of family relationships especially:
 - ❖ Communication
 - ❖ Money/ family finances
 - ❖ In-laws
 - ❖ Parenting
 - ❖ Sex
 - ❖ The triumvirate enemies of self, tradition and Satan.
- vii. Learning and practising total love between the couple and the couple on the one hand and their family *a la* C S Lewis's four loves of *Agape*, *Storge*, *Philos* and *Eros*

IV. INSTRUMENTS OR PROVISIONS IN GOD

- ❖ His word, the Holy spirit, his church
- ❖ Your lynch-pin: the family alter
- ❖ Modelling of servant, shepherd and Christ like leadership.
- ❖ The power of prayer
- ❖ Judicious use of experts (Doctors, Counsellors, youth groups like SU and State provisions).

V. THE LEADER AND/OF HIS FAMILY

One of the most neglected responsibilities is leading one's family. Most Biblical and contemporary leaders are what I term "successful failures" mainly as a result of the neglect of their families. It is so easy to be preoccupied by the illusion and grandeur of position, ministry, and pursuit of power and wealth even within the church and Bible/Theological schools to the neglect of one's primary calling of

being the leader of one's family. No wonder spiritual giants like Eli, Samuel and David failed miserably as leaders of their families.

True leaders in God's economy are spiritual, servant and transformational leaders (SSTLs). By their character, leadership ability and care for their followers they leave behind a trail of godly heritage for generations.

Being the leader of one's family has three major components

- ❖ Modelling the way in terms of personal spirituality, discipline, love, service and care for the members of one family as Christ did for the church
- ❖ Helping to cast family and individual mission and visions as to God's calling of the family and its members and developing the agenda under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and mobilising the "resources" (talents, finances, expertise, network etc) to support each other to make the vision come true under the power of the Holy Spirit.
- ❖ Inspiring and mobilising the family and individuals to realise their God given potentials.

Often times this will entail challenging the status quo, being in touch with the Holy Spirit and the willingness to lay aside one's pride and other ambitions to serve the cause of the family.\

VI. CONCLUSIONS

"Now therefore fear the Lord and serve him in sincerity and faithfulness put away the gods that your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt and serve the Lord. And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the Lord choose this day whom you will serve whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River or the gods of the Amorite in whom you served. But as for me and my house we will serve the Lord" (Joshua 24:14-15 ESV)