

**USE IT...TO SHAPE & TUNE UP YOUR FAMILY**  
*Psalm 127*

“How can I,” she wondered, “get what I want here? How can I make it happen?”

Her opportunity appeared when her aging, dimly-sighted husband, keenly sensing his mortality, longed that his eldest son do for him what, perhaps, he'd done 50 times before.

“Esau, my son...take your weapons, your quiver and your bow, and go out to the field and hunt game for me, and prepare for me delicious food, such as I love, and bring it to me so that I may eat, that my soul may bless you before I die.”  
(Genesis 27:3)

Rebekah knew – in the divine economy of those ancient days – Rebekah understood just how much THE BLESSING of the father could mean. THE BLESSING was nothing short of winning an ancient PowerBall lottery...the conferral of the rich favor and mysterious endowment of the God of Abraham.

Isaac's end-of-life BLESSING conferred an extra-ordinary advantage both from above and from below.

By custom, it should have – without question – belonged to Esau, the oldest...even though years before, he foolishly sold his birthright to his younger brother for a pot of porridge.<sup>i</sup> Still, the father was determined to bless the older, Esau. Rebekah, his aging bride, was even more determined that it land on the younger—whom she favored—Jacob.

GEN 27:8-10 [“JACOB,” she demanded] “Now therefore, my son, obey my voice as I command you. Go to the flock and bring me two good young goats, so that I may prepare from them delicious food for your father, such as he loves. And you shall bring it to your father to eat, so that he may bless you before he dies.”

The ruse was on. While Esau tramped the fields, Jacob slaughtered animals from the pen. Saved goats' skins were wrapped on his arms and hands; he donned his brother's earthy garments. With haste and cunning, Rebekah made the meal and Jacob catered it to his father. And within minutes, with Esau still away looking for prey, a deceived Isaac dismisses his doubts, embraces the older—who was in fact the younger—to say,

“See, the smell of my son  
is as the smell of a field that the LORD has blessed!  
**May God give you** of the dew of heaven  
and of the fatness of the earth and plenty of grain and wine.

**Let peoples serve you**, and nations bow down to you.  
**Be lord** over your brothers,  
and may your mother's sons bow down to you.  
**Cursed be** everyone who curses you,  
and **blessed be** everyone who blesses you!"

No sooner had Isaac's words evaporated mid-air, Esau eagerly enters with the promised, aromatic meal. But THE BLESSING was imparted; once spoken no revocation was possible. Esau, deceived a 2<sup>nd</sup> time by his brother, breaks down.

Now, the significance of this in the historical story line of Scripture must wait for another day. But I tell this Genesis 27 story for another reason. This gift from God, this BIBLE, so useful



- to become a complete man/woman of God 2 Tim 3:16-17
- to discern what God has revealed about what he is doing
- to hear the Spirit's voice
- share the gospel – the good news about what a grace-driven God has done for us
- get our understanding of God correct

also pulsates with wisdom and insights and brutal honesty about FAMILIES. In other words, when you READ the Bible through the “lens” of family life, you discover how passionate God is about the family, and each person in it. About...

- ↪ your marriage and my marriage
- ↪ your family and my family
- ↪ your kids, and grandkids, and mine
- ↪ your parents and grandparents...and mine

Your Bible...**why not use it** to tune up your everyday life...in your family? Perhaps your question is **HOW?**

**1<sup>st</sup> – YOUR BIBLE reveals IMPORTANT WARNINGS on HOW FAMILIES CAN GO SIDWAYS**

When you read your Bible through the “lens” of family, the warnings almost literally jump off the pages...I mean right from the earliest pages. They reveal there is an Enemy who seeks your family's demise, and we have hearts that sometimes choose to cooperate with His schemes --

- ✓ Genesis 1-2 answers the question, “How did God set up the first married couple to succeed?”
- ✓ Genesis 3 answers the question, “Why did the first couple fail?”
- ✓ Genesis 4 answers the question, “Why couldn't two brothers get along?”

- ✓ Genesis 5 poses the question, “Why did virtually no, ancient family leader walk with God?”
- ✓ Genesis 6 answers the question, “What happens to the world of men when generation after generation of families refuse to worship and obey the Lord?”
- ✚ Abram’s marriage went sideways (Gen. 12) when he fearfully lied about his wife to the Egyptians
- ✚ The relationships between Jacob’s sons went sideways when they lacked the humility to understand what God was saying to young Joseph (Genesis 37)
- ✚ Eli the priest’s family went sideways when he failed to strongly discipline their sin but allowed them to serve in places of spiritual power and privilege (1 Samuel 2)
- ✚ David’s family went sideways when as king he coddled temptation, began to multiply wives, resulting in the murder of one of his most loyal soldiers, adultery with the soldier’s wife, and absolute chaos in his family for years after that. (2 Samuel 11-23)

Or...spend any time in the book of the PROVERBS – that section of the Bible which teaches that “God is near through prayerful humility” – and there isn’t a chapter that doesn’t yield incredible insight what can go wrong when it is brought into the life of a family. Within five seconds, opening to a random page in Proverbs, I found these nuggets in chapter 11 (p.535 ESV):

A gracious woman finds honor...  
 A man who is kind benefits himself,  
 but a cruel man hurts himself.  
 Those of crooked heart are an abomination to the Lord;  
 Those of blameless ways are His delight.

Why not use the Bible to discover – to drink in its revealed warnings – about how a family can go sideways?

In his new book on PARENTING: 14 Gospel Principles That Can Radically Change Your Family, Paul David Tripp knows what we are up against:

*Your house is noisy and not as clean as you’d like it to be, you and your husband haven’t been out together for a long time, the laundry has piled up once again. You just discovered there’s nothing to pack for lunch, you’ve just broken up another fight, the schedule for the week looks impossible, you seem to have more expenses than money, none of the people around seem to be satisfied, and you feel exhausted and unappreciated.*

*In the middle of all the endless parenting activities, many parents get lost. They are doing lots of things, lots of good things, but they don’t know why. They’ve been swallowed up into the daily grind of parenting, but they’ve lost sight of what it is that they’re working for or building toward. They don’t understand why these ones that they love have the power to pull such irritation and frustration out of them. The menial tasks that they have to do day after day get reduced to an endless catalog of unattractive duties that don’t seem to have any overarching vision that holds them all together and sanctifies them with meaning and purpose.<sup>ii</sup>*

He continues –

*As I've traveled the world talking about parenting, I've had thousands of exhausted parents ask me for more effective strategies for this or that, when what they really need is a big picture parenting worldview that can explain, guide, and motivate all the things that God calls them to do as parents. If you are going not only to cope, but to thrive with vision and joy as a parent, you need more than the next book that gives you seven steps to solving whatever. You need God's helicopter view of what He's called you to do. You need **a big gospel parenting worldview** that will not only make sense of your task, but will change the way you approach it. Yes, you did read it right. I am deeply persuaded that what is missing in most Christian parent's parenting **are the big grand perspectives and principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ.**<sup>iii</sup>*

Should you be reading through some of the letters which Paul wrote to Christians – that section of the library that offers instruction on how to be Jesus' disciples in Jesus' body – you'll run across this reminder. Paul says to the Corinthian church family--who need to share true forgiveness with one another—"we would not be *outwitted* by Satan, for we are *not ignorant* of His designs."<sup>iv</sup>

So that leads to a second way to USE YOUR BIBLE.

### **2<sup>nd</sup> - Your Bible gives remarkable coaching on HOW FAMILIES CAN BE SOLID**

Here's a simple truth: There are a thousand different ways the world and our culture wants to shape you and the life of your family. A rapidly decreasing percentage of that is aligned with God and holiness. Therefore, what is needed by parents who lead their home, is a prayerful, obedient intentionality which cooperates with the Word/the Spirit. Solid families are a result of God's word, God's Spirit, and our prayerful intentionality.

Nothing could be more clear than what we find in Deuteronomy chapters 6 (p. 151 ESV). This priceless passage is found on THE LAW bookshelf in the library—the part of the Bible which reveals God's plan to reclaim and redeem people. Deuteronomy means "2<sup>nd</sup> Law Giving" – God's guiding law to a new generation of parents who are going to take their children into God's promised land. So how should they do that? How can their families be "solid" and not a mere copy-cat of the pagan cultures which will surround them. Begin in vs. 1 --

**Deut 6** "Now this is the commandment—the statutes and the rules—that the LORD your God commanded me to teach you, that you may do them in the land to which you are going over, to possess it, <sup>2</sup> that you may fear the LORD your God, you and your son and your son's son, by keeping all his statutes and his commandments, which I command you, all the days of your life, and that your days may be long. <sup>3</sup> Hear therefore, O Israel, and be careful to do them, that it may go well with you, and that you may multiply greatly, as the LORD, the God of your fathers, has promised you, in a land flowing with milk and honey.

<sup>4</sup>“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. <sup>5</sup>You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. <sup>6</sup>And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. <sup>7</sup>You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. <sup>8</sup>You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. <sup>9</sup>You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

- A priority in our family is to OBEY THE LORD: how can we together learn to obey Him?
- A priority in our family is to LOVE THE LORD: how can we together grow in our love for God?
- A priority in our family is to IMBED IN OUR HEARTS THE LORD’S COMMANDS: how can we together memorize God’s instructions?
- A priority in our family is to DISCUSS THE LORD’S COMMANDS IN OUR LIVING: how can we talk about and stay aware of the Lord’s commands in what happens in our days?

Imagine for a moment that you want to obey the Lord, love the Lord, imbed in the hearts of your family the Lord’s command **to be truthful**. Five verses in Proverbs echo the Lord’s command:

**Proverbs 14:25** A truthful witness saves lives,  
but one who breathes out lies is deceitful.

One dad put it like this. “Truth telling is important to our family...”

Our kids were familiar with the fictional story about young George Washington and the cherry tree. It goes something like this:

*George Washington’s father came to him one day and asked, “George, did you cut down the cherry tree?” Young George’s alleged reply was, “Father, I cannot tell a lie. I did.” Rather than punishing him, George’s father praised him for telling the truth.*

*Our Scott, who was always a jokester, came to me one day. “Dad, I have a little twist on the George Washington story.”*

*He said, “One day, a father came to his son. ‘Son, did you knock over the outhouse?’ ‘No, father, I didn’t!’ the son replied. The father proceeded to tell him the George Washington story and then asked his son again, ‘Did you knock down the outhouse?’*

*“This time, the son admitted, ‘Father, I cannot tell a lie. I did knock over the outhouse.’  
With that, the father bopped his son upside the head.*

*The young boy, a little confused, looked up at his father. ‘Father, I’m puzzled. You told me that when George Washington was honest about cutting down the cherry tree, his father praised and rewarded George for telling the truth. But when I told you that I pushed down the outhouse, you bopped me.’*

*“His father looked at him and frowned. ‘Son, one difference in the story. George Washington’s father was not **in** the cherry tree’.”<sup>v</sup>*

The point is that a SOLID family knows what it is about. They talk about it, they laugh about it, they clarify it. They hold each other accountable. A solid family has parents which use the Bible to clarify what our family STANDS FOR because we belong to Christ. A solid family’s VALUES are

clear, grounded in specific instructions in God’s word, and talked about on the pathways of life or over pillow talks before the day is done. Christy, a mom of two, put it this way:

*When it comes to parenting, I want my kids to know that our relationship with God colors every choice we make. They know we don’t have much money to spend on clothes, but we spend a lot of money supporting missionaries. They know we pray and seek God’s leadership for all decisions. They see Bibles all over the house, and they know God’s Word influences everything we do. They know when things are hard, we look to God for joy and peace. They hear us talking about God as a natural part of our daily conversations. We seek to love God with all we’ve got—heart, mind, soul, strength.<sup>vi</sup>*

### **3<sup>rd</sup> – Your Bible teaches that SOLID FAMILIES REQUIRE PREPARATION...and TUNE UPS**

Psalm 127

Unless the Lord builds the house,  
those who build it labor in vain.  
Unless the Lord watches over the city,  
the watchman stays awake in vain.

You might ask, “What do those verses mean?” Well, I’m pretty simple about stuff like this. If my home, my family, my kids and grandkids are going to be what God created them to be, I need HIS help. We are in this “together.” Which means no matter who you are in your family – the mom, the dad, the young adult, the growing child...you and the Lord can make your family great. Families can go sideways, but God can build great families when every member at home “buys in” to His blueprints...which are found in this book.

**Use your Bible** – and helpful resources that are based on the Scriptures – to build and tune-up

- Know what the Enemy will try to do to tear down your marriage, your home
- Look into Scripture for clear coaching from the Spirit on clarifying who you are as a family
- Never stop preparing and tuning up your home...it is the greatest eternal investment you can make

You’re not alone in this. One of the great advantages of this body of Christ – one which is highly committed to FAMILY ENRICHMENT – is that families can learn to thrive together when we use God’s Word to build solid families. There are incredibly helpful resources like these publications (slide<sup>viii</sup>), and Karen Heiligenthal, Amy Baker, Lisa Teske – our CM staff, would delight in investing time with you to help shepherd your kids, your family. Your questions...

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<sup>i</sup> Cf. Genesis 25:29f. See also Hebrews 12:16-17.

<sup>ii</sup> Tripp, Paul David. "Introduction" to *Parenting: 14 Gospel Principles That Can Radically Change Your Family* (p. 11). Crossway. Kindle Edition.

<sup>iii</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>iv</sup> 2 Corinthians 2:11 ESV

<sup>v</sup> From Ken Blanchard, Phil Hodges and Tricia Goyer, *Lead Your Family Like Jesus; Powerful Parenting Principles from the Creator of Families* (Tyndale House, 2013), 49-50.

<sup>vi</sup> From Ken Blanchard, Phil Hodges and Tricia Goyer, *Lead Your Family Like Jesus; Powerful Parenting Principles from the Creator of Families* (Tyndale House, 2013), 50.

<sup>vii</sup> Gary Chapman, *The Marriage You've Always Wanted*, Paul David Tripp, *Parenting-14 Gospel Principles*, Blandard, *Lead Your Family Like Jesus*, Jodie Berndt, *Praying the Scriptures for Your Children*.