

Training, Guarding & Dedicating the Next Generation

The fact behind all other facts is that G-d created the universe as a Father. He left His Father imprint on every aspect of creation. The word here translated “fatherland” is *patria*, which is derived from *pater*, the Greek word for *father*. *Patria* is the Spanish word for homeland, literally the ‘home of my father.’ A straightforward translation could be: “*I bow my knees to the Father, from whom every fatherhood in heaven and earth derives its name.*” (See, Ephesians 3:14-15)

Amazing! All fatherhood in the universe did not begin on earth, nor did it begin with time or human history, it began in heaven. Ultimately it goes back to the Fatherhood of *Adonai*. Eternally He is the Father of *Yeshua HaMashiac*. He is described as such in many parts of the Bible. The intimate, personal relationship between the Father and His Son existed before creation ever began. *Yochanan* 1:1,2 states: “*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with G-d, and the Word was G-d. He was with G-d in the beginning.*”

Yeshua Reveals the Father

Yeshua was sent by the Father to accomplish two purposes: (1) to pay the penalty for our sins, that we might be forgiven and reconciled to G-d, and to (2) reveal G-d as our Father and to make us members of His family.

In *Yochanan* 17 *Yeshua* prayed what has been called His High Priestly prayer on behalf of His *talmidim*. It was, in fact, His last personal communication with them before His arrest, trial and crucifixion. This is where ‘The Passion of Christ’ movie begins. Both at the beginning and at the end of the prayer, *Yeshua* spoke of having made G-d’s *name* known to His disciples: “*I made your name known to the people you gave me out of the world...*” And again in verse 26: “*I made your name known to them, and I will continue to make it known; so that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I myself may be united with them.*” What was the name *Yeshua* made known to His disciples? It was not the sacred name *יהוה*. Our Jewish people had known that name for fourteen centuries. It was a new name—a name hinted at in the Old Testament but never openly revealed. That name was *Abba* (*Father*.) *Yeshua* described G-d as *Abba* six times in this prayer, and said, “*I have manifested (made known) Your name.*”

In John 14:6, speaking of His purpose in coming to earth, He said: “*I am the way (ha-derech), the truth, and the life...*” These words suggest a question: If *Yeshua* is the way, where is He the way *to*? A way is never complete by itself; it presupposes a destination. What, then, is the destination? The closing words of the verse tell us: “*No one comes to the Father except through Me.*” The destination is *Abba*! We talk a great deal about the Lord *Yeshua* as our Savior, our Intercessor, our Mediator and so on. All this is wonderful, but it stops short of His ultimate purpose: *to bring us to the Father*. In this respect there is an important difference between the revelation G-d gave through the prophets in the *Tanakh* and the revelation He gave through *Yeshua* in the *B’rit Chadasha*. In our weekly prayer, *Ha Elohim Asher* (Hebrews 1:1-2) we say: “*In the past G-d spoke to our fathers through the prophets, at many times in various ways; but now in the end of days he has spoken to us by the Messiah, his Son...*” More literally, however, these last words should be translated that G-d “***has in the end of days spoken to us in a Son.***”

The writer of Hebrews reveals that He was *a different kind of messenger*. He was not merely a prophet; He was also a *Son*. He brought a revelation, therefore, that had never been given before, a revelation that only a Son could bring: *a revelation of the Father*. In Matthew 11:27 *Yeshua* Himself emphasizes that He is the only Person who can bring the revelation of G-d as Father: “*My Father has handed over everything to me. Indeed, no one fully knows the Son except the Father, and no one fully knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son wishes to reveal him.*”

Are There Benefits in Knowing the Father?

1. Identity

Modern man has a real problem with identity; *Who am I?* It is significant that one of the most successful books and television series in the United States in the 1970s was *Roots*, the story of an African-American looking for the place he had come from. People who truly know G-d as Father no longer have an identity problem. They know who they are: they are the children of G-d.

2. Self-Worth

1 John 3:1 states: “*See what love the Father has lavished on us in letting us be called G-d's children! For that is what we are.*” Once we really comprehend that we are the children of G-d, that G-d loves us intimately and personally, that He is interested in us, that He is never too busy for us and that He desires a direct and personal relationship with us, then we discover our self-worth. This can truly transform many people's lives!

3. Awareness of a Home in Heaven

The Lord has an escort of angels ready to carry each of us to our eternal home.

4. Total Security

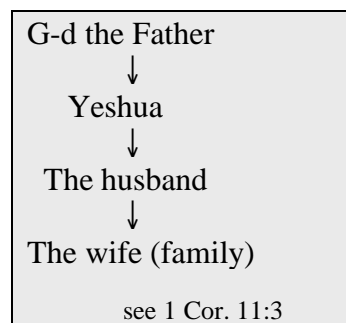
To His *talmidim Yeshua* also gave this assurance: “*Have no fear, little flock, for your Father has resolved to give you the Kingdom!*” (Luke 12:32). We may be just a little flock, surrounded by wild beasts of all kinds. But if our Father has committed Himself to give us the Kingdom, no power in the universe can withhold it from us!

5. Motivation for Service

In Philippians 2:3 Rabbi *Sha’ul* warns us as servants of the Lord: “*Fulfill ye my joy...Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory (selfish ambition or conceit)...*” Over the years I have observed that one persistent, pervasive problem in the Believing Community is the personal ambition of those in ministry, manifesting itself in competition with other ministers. Let me add that I observed this first and foremost in my own life. We often make the mistake of equating *security with success*

As for me, I have found my perfect pattern in *Yeshua*, who said, “*The Father has not left Me alone, for I always do those things that please Him.*” (John 8:29, emphasis added). And: “*Unless ADONAI builds the house, its builders work in vain.*” (Psalm 127:1) I am motivated less and less by personal ambition. I have discovered a sweeter, purer motive: *simply to please my Father and attempt to do His Will.* I am training myself to approach every situation and decision with a single, simple question: *How can I please my Father and Obey Him.*

All this and more, is made available to us through the knowledge of G-d as our Father. If we have found *Yeshua* as *Ha-Derech* (the Way), let us rejoice. But let's not be content to continue forever on the way without arriving at the destination: knowing G-d as Father. In a certain sense God has committed to every father the responsibility to embody, as a person, the ultimate revelation of the Bible, *fatherhood*. To be a real father is the most perfect depiction of G-d that any man can achieve—it is the ultimate revelation of God Himself. In fact, every father represents G-d to his family. That is not an option! The question is, *Do you as a father represent G-d rightly or wrongly?* The greatest curse of our present age is fathers who have misrepresented G-d.



First of all the one unique word connected with the *cohanim* (priesthood) is *corban* (sacrifice). Only a *cohen* (priest) may offer a sacrifice. So the father, as a *cohen*, has the sacred duty of offering sacrifices on behalf of his family. The role of the father as a priest is explained best this way: as a priest you represent your family to God; but as a prophet you represent God to your family, not only by what you say but more by how you behave. As a king the father governs his family on behalf of God. This involves, obviously, governance and leadership. He puts himself between his family and all the pressures and dangers of life. He also goes in front of them and sets an example of godly living.

The Father as Cohen

The following are four main ways in which may offer sacrifices on behalf of his family.

1. Offering Thanksgiving

Often the most effective prayers we can offer on behalf of others are prayers of praise and thanksgiving, invoking the name of Messiah *Yeshua* on them. When we put the name of *Yeshua* on those for whom we are praying, we invoke God's blessing on them. Few of us realize how much we uplift people in their spirits when we simply praise God for them. I would say to husbands and fathers: Take much more time thanking God for your family, because in so doing you create an atmosphere around them that makes it easy for them to succeed. *Have you thanked God for your child today?*

2. Making Intercession

Let's look at a picture of a man in the *Tanakh*, *Iyov* (Job), who was a model as priest of his family. *Iyov's* intercession did pay! In fact, it shows how urgent it was for him to pray for his family. That godly man had no idea that a disaster was coming in which all his children would be carried off in one moment. After the disaster it would have been too late to pray. But *Iyov* had prayed already. Every father, as priest of his family, needs to learn a lesson from *Iyov*. None of us has any guarantee that some unforeseen tragedy or disaster will not, in one instant, carry one or more of the members of our family out of time into eternity. Every father is responsible before God, therefore, to maintain day-by-day intercession for his whole household.

3. Making the Way for Salvation

It was through the sacrifice of the Passover lamb, you will recall, that Israel was delivered out of her slavery in Egypt and brought out to become a new nation. The Egyptians, who had no sacrifice, endured the judgment of God on their firstborn. The ordinance of the Passover depended on the father. No one else could do what he had to do. Each father was responsible to provide the sacrifice for his household, as the Lord told Moses: *"Speak to all the assembly of Isra'el and say, 'On the tenth day of this month, each man is to take a lamb or kid for his family, one per household."* (Exodus 12:3) Who was responsible to select the lamb? It was the father of every family. Who was responsible to slay the lamb? The father. Who was responsible to sprinkle its blood on the doorposts of the house? The father. In other words, the father had a God-appointed ministry as priest on behalf of his family. It was his responsibility to see that God's provision of salvation was made effective in his home. For us today there is a different sacrifice, but the father's responsibility is the same.

4. Exercising Faith for His Children

The dramatic incident of the epileptic boy in Mark 9:23-24 gives us many lessons on faith. The disciples could not heal the boy, so the father brought him to *Yeshua*. After hearing the father tell about all the sufferings of the boy, *Yeshua* replied: *"What do you mean, 'if you can'? Everything is possible to someone who has trust!" Instantly the father of the child exclaimed, "I do trust - help my lack of trust! (help my unbelief)"* What impresses me about this story is that the boy could not believe for himself, but that the Lord held the father accountable to believe for his son. This, I believe, is a principle: God holds fathers accountable to have faith for their children. *Yeshua*, in fact, never prayed for a child except on the basis of the faith of one or both parents. His ministry provides no precedent, then, for praying for a child without the participation of at least one parent. Parents have a much greater responsibility than many of us are willing to acknowledge.

The Father as Prophet

As priest you represent your family to God; as prophet you represent God to your family. Remember, too, that you can be prophetic not merely by what you say but by how you behave. Do you *naase v'nishma*?

1. Representing God by Example

A father represents God to his family by example, which is the most Godlike thing a man can do. But while a father may represent God to his family, but he may also *misrepresent* God to his family. Is the father, loving, accessible, compassionate, strong? It is easy for a child to picture God this way if that is how his daddy is. But if the father is bitter, angry, critical or just absentee and irresponsible, that child begins life with a negative idea about God. Often it takes a great deal to break down that early misapprehension. Many students at UF when asked about their fathers say: "I hate my father." Obviously their father had totally misrepresented God to them.

How does a father function as prophet to his family for good and not for evil? He functions first and foremost, by *love*. Every child is born into this world with an innate longing for love. The love of a mother is beautiful and irreplaceable, but it is not enough. There is a different quality to the love of a father. Even to an infant it imparts a sense of strength, of security, of being important, of being valuable. When this kind of love is lacking in a child's life, the result is a deep inner wound, probably best described as *rejection* — a sense of being unimportant and unwanted. Uncounted millions in our contemporary society carry inner wounds of rejection.

The symptoms of this wound may be either passive or active. On the passive side the symptoms may take any or all of the following forms: *depression, cynicism, lack of motivation, hopelessness* and, ultimately, *suicidal tendencies*. On the active side they may take the form of *frustration, anger, rejection of authority, violence, criminality* and, ultimately, murder. The undiagnosed cause of much of the crime and violence in Western society is, in my view, as simple and radical as this: the failure of fathers to love their children. Sometimes the problem is not that fathers do not love their children, but that they do not know how to demonstrate their love. Undemonstrated love does not meet a child's need.

I have ministered to many people who had severe emotional problems. I cannot estimate how many times a person's lack of self-worth or feeling of failure went back to an incident in childhood when he or she received negative treatment from a parent. It may have been criticism, being made fun of, being scolded unfairly in front of others-or worse. That treatment left a wound in the child's soul that had not healed for maybe twenty or thirty years. As a father, you must maintain discipline on the one hand, but not discourage your child on the other hand with unfair or excessive demands.

2. Representing God through Teaching

The exercise of discipline in the home will prepare the way for the second facet of your serving as prophet to your family: instructing them in the ways and Word of God. One of the things that became clear to me over the years of teaching is that if you cannot discipline pupils, you cannot teach them. That is why there are so many untaught children in contemporary culture. If you maintain discipline, on the other hand, you can also teach. My children have experienced prayers answered in times of great distress (e.g., many in Mexico.) An experience of answered prayer is an anchor when people are in danger of being swept away by the tide of this world. So let them remember something that happened when you prayed with them.

You do not bless children by taking all the responsibility from them. On the contrary, the more you commit to them, the stronger they will grow. But do it gradually and with wisdom.

3. Communicating Both Ways

In order to teach your family about God, you need to have clear lines of communication. First, the most effective communication between a father and child usually takes place in a non-religious setting. If children as-

sociate their fathers' instruction with something stiff, formal and religious, in the end they tend to resent both the faith and the instruction.

Another principle essential in communicating with children is not merely to talk to them, but to let them talk to you. The most important things you say to your child are often said in a casual or offhand way at a time you least expect it—gardening, mowing, on a fishing trip, cleaning out the garage, finding out why the car will not run. This is when you may be able to transmit to your son or daughter the deep principles of the Word of God. Just having a "family altar" by itself will not necessarily do it. A lot depends on how your family spends the rest of the time. Everyday situations lend themselves to real communication.

4. Saving Your Family in the Last Days

I have taught many times on the Scripture, “*As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man*” (Luke 17:26). I always point out that the evils of the days of Noah are being played out in front of our eyes today. But one day I saw the positive message in *Noah’s* story: “*By trusting, Noah, after receiving divine warning about things as yet unseen, was filled with holy fear and built an ark to save his household...*” (Hebrews 11:7). *Noah*, the righteous man, heard from God about the disaster that was coming, made preparation and saved his family

The days in which we now live are becoming more and more like the days of *Noah*. One particular feature of *Noah’s* day was that “*the earth [was] filled with violence*” (Genesis 6:13). That is certainly true of the earth today! Crimes of violence are becoming increasingly common. I can remember when a thief breaking into a car and stealing a woman's handbag would have made the headlines. Today major crimes of violence are so common they are scarcely even reported. You may also remember more recently when it was possible to board an airplane without any security check. Not today!

Let me relate briefly two incidents in which a parent's sensitivity saved one or more members of his family from possible death. {Marilyn being sent to Ocala and our sky light falling in the place the kids normally played.} The days in which we live call for fathers with a prophetic spirit like *Noah*-fathers who will be sensitive to intimations of danger facing their families and who will take protective action on their behalf.

The Father as King

As king, he governs his family on behalf of G-d. Just what does it mean for a father to be a king? In 1 Timothy 3:4-5 Rabbi *Sha’ul* discusses the qualifications for a man who wants to be a leader in the community. The most important area of all, writes Rabbi *Sha’ul*, is the condition of the man's home. Such a man “*He must manage his own household well, having children who obey him with all proper respect*” (1 Timothy 3:4). He is expected to exercise authority and to have his children respectful, obedient and under his control.

The Greek word translated manage means literally “to stand out in front of” or “to stand at the head of.” It contains various related ideas, including “to rule,” “to protect” and “to control.” Essentially the word means that the father stands at the head of the home. He puts himself between his family and all the pressures and dangers of life. He also goes in front of them and sets an example of G-dly living. Successful leadership at home, he goes on to say, is essential for leadership in the *congregation*. “*if a man can't manage his own household,*” he asks, “*how will he be able to care for G-d's Messianic Community?*” (Verse 5). If a man cannot achieve successful leadership at home, in other words, he cannot expect to succeed as a leader in G-d's Messianic Community.

Walking in Abraham's Steps

Let us look at something important that G-d said about Abraham (review):

“*יהוה said, "Should I hide from Avraham what I am about to do, inasmuch as Avraham is sure to become a great and strong nation, and all the nations of the earth will be blessed by him? For I have made myself known to him, so that he will give orders to his children and to his household after him to keep the way of יהוה and to do what is right and just, so that יהוה may bring about for Avraham what he has promised him."* (Genesis 18:17-19)

The NIV says, “*I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children...*” (verse 19). The word here translated “*give orders*” is the standard Hebrew word for “*command*,” that is, *mitzvah*. It is used regularly with that sense in all the ordinances of Moses. Whichever translation we follow, the fact of the matter is, Abraham was eligible for G-d's choice because G-d could rely on him to *command* his children and household. In Romans 4:11-12 we are told that Abraham is a father to all those who *walk in his steps*. That means I cannot just say, “Well, since I'm born again, therefore Abraham is my father.” To qualify Scripturally I have to walk the way Abraham walked. In no area is this more important than in the family.

Order in the Heavenly Family

For the perfect pattern of authority in the family, we should look to the divine family in heaven. Here is the pattern, then, of two divine Persons—the Father and the Son. The Father gave the commands and the Son learned obedience by obeying the commands. His obedience cost Him His life. There is no Biblical pattern for sloppiness or disobedience or carelessness. G-d is a precise G-d. He tells us exactly what He wants us to do and He expects us to do it. This pattern should be reproduced in the human family. We on earth have no liberty to improve on the pattern set for us in heaven.

Discipline in the Home

We see in Hebrews 5:8 that *Yeshua* had to *learn* obedience. This indicates that obedience needs to be *taught*. Teaching obedience is what we call *discipline*. If even *Yeshua* needed to submit to discipline, how much more do we and our precious-but imperfect-children! If you want to raise your children successfully, you must combine love with discipline. The way to produce unhappy, frustrated children, on the other hand, is to spoil them—to give them all they ask for, to do everything they want, to succumb to every demand. Children raised in this way will, when they grow up, expect life to treat them the same way their parents did. But life does not play the game that way! Life is pretty tough-and getting tougher. I have observed the lives of people whose parents treated them with unscriptural indulgence and I would say that, in varying degrees, they have all had difficult lives.

While our children were growing up, one portion of Scripture Marilyn and I gave them to memorize was I Samuel 15:22: “*To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams*” (KJV). Years later I have observed them teaching the same Scripture to their friends!

When We, Fathers, Fail

This suggests an important question: If faithful fatherhood produces a blessed and prosperous nation, what will happen to a nation whose fathers fail in their primary obligations? In Deuteronomy 28 Moses provides a vivid picture of what we may expect. This chapter of Deuteronomy falls naturally into two sections. In the first fourteen verses Moses lists all the blessings that will come on G-d's people if they obey Him. In the remaining 54 verses Moses lists the curses that will come on them if they disobey Him.

One verse in this latter section describes one of the curses that will come on a nation whose fathers fail in their duties toward their families: “*You will father sons and daughters, but they won't belong to you, because they will go into captivity.*” (Deut. 28:41) The Hebrew words here indicate that Moses is speaking to men. The word father refers primarily to the father's part in procreating children. So this verse is addressed primarily (but not exclusively) to fathers. What a shock when one realizes that not enjoying our children is a curse. I began to ask myself, *How many parents today really enjoy their children?* Not many, I concluded. What is the reason? I believe it is a curse for disobedience. G-d made children the greatest blessing He could give to men and women. When fathers and mothers-but especially fathers-do not walk in the way of the Lord, then their sons and daughters are no longer a blessing but a curse.

The CJB translates Deuteronomy 28:41 more literally than other translations when it says: “*...but they will not belong to you...*” This, too, is being fulfilled today. In countless broken families the children no longer belong to their parents. Parents and children are estranged from one another. This again is the outworking of a curse. Moses warned that the children would “go into captivity” (verse 41).

What happens if priests fail in their function? G-d declares: “*My people are destroyed for want of knowledge. Because you rejected knowledge, I will also reject you as cohen for me. Because you forgot the Torah of your G-d, I will also forget your children*” (Hosea 4:6) What a powerful word! G-d is telling our people, “*I expected you to be priests, but you rejected the knowledge you needed.*” This was not secular knowledge they rejected, but knowledge of the Ways (*haderech*) and Word of the Lord. As a result G-d no longer accepts them as priests-and even vows to forget their children.

As priest of his family, each father has the privilege to do what job did-to bear up his children continuously before G-d in prayer. This keeps them under the continuing oversight and protection of the Almighty. But when a father fails to fulfill his intercessory ministry as priest, G-d says, “*I will forget your children.*” The NIV renders this, “*I also will ignore your children*” (emphasis added). That is, “*Your children will no longer be under My special, watchful care.*”

Malachi's Diagnosis

Chronologically Malachi is the last book of the *Nevi'im* in the *Tanach*. Furthermore the last word in this last book is *curse* (i.e., *anathema*, *cherem* in Hebrew).

If G-d had no more to say to humanity after the *Nevi'im*, His last word would have been anathema (curse.) Thank G-d for the *Yeshua*, which shows us the way out of the curse! This is what G-d says in the last two verses of the Prophets: “*Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD. And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the earth with a curse.*” (Malachi 4:5-6) The CJB (Malachi 3:23-24) states: “*Look, I will send to you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible Day of ADONAI. He will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children and the hearts of the children to their fathers; otherwise I will come and strike the land with complete destruction.*”

Well over twenty five hundred years ago, G-d revealed to Malachi through prophetic foresight the greatest and most urgent problem of our day: delinquent fathers and unparented children. Economists and social legislators offer us all sorts of diagnoses and solutions. The real root of the problem, however, is in the family. Parents have reneged on their responsibilities to their children. Often both parents are guilty, but the primary responsibility rests on the fathers.

We must acknowledge that the women's liberation movement has mostly backfired. Apart from making headway toward equal pay for equal work, women have been liberated from their commitment to honor and obey their husbands. The husband, in turn, has been liberated from his commitment to be faithful to one woman. So the man gets tired of his wife and walks out. After that he has no more obligations, while the woman is left struggling to raise one or more children on her own. In most cases she is worse off than she was before.

I have deep concern in my heart for single mothers. In many cases, it seems to me, the contemporary believing community is not doing what it should for single mothers and their children.

In James 1:27 the Bible offers us a definition of what G-d considers true religion: *“Pure and undefiled religion before G-d and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.”* Sometimes I ask myself what would happen if every believing family who takes the Bible seriously were to accept responsibility for just one child who is in effect, if not in name, an orphan? That would include every child without proper parental care or provision. Our refusal to think about it does not make the need any less real or any less urgent. Almost against my will I am reminded of the words of *Yeshua* in Matthew 25 spoken to the "goat" nations: *“Inasmuch as you did not do it...”* (verse 45). As believers in the Western world, we shall be judged not so much for what we have done as for what we have not done.

Malachi's message was addressed to people extremely zealous in their religious practices, yet who complained that the Lord did not answer their prayers as they expected. In response the Lord pointed out their failures as husbands and fathers: *“Here is something else you do: you cover ADONAI's altar with tears, with weeping and with sighing, because he no longer looks at the offering or receives your gift with favor. Nevertheless, you ask, “Why is this?” Because ADONAI is witness between you and the wife of your youth that you have broken faith with her, though she is your companion, your wife by covenant.”* (Malachi 2:13-14)

G-d looked behind all their external religiosity and saw broken marriage vows and husbands abusing wives. In contemporary speech Malachi's message might be summarized like this: “Nothing you do in religion makes up for what you don't do at home.”

G-d went on to explain one main purpose of a monogamous marriage as He originally ordained it: *“Has not the LORD made them one? In flesh and spirit they are his. And why one? Because he was seeking G-dly offspring”* (Malachi 2:15, NIV). When husband and wife live together in harmony according to the principles of Scripture, they are qualified to raise righteous, G-d-fearing children. And when a marriage breaks up, it is the children who suffer the most.

G-d continued with a warning to all husbands: *“So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith with the wife of your youth”* (Malachi 2:15, NIV). He followed this with an uncompromising statement of His attitude toward divorce: *“For the LORD G-d of Israel says that He hates divorce.”* (verse 16).

How Will You Respond?

The final outcome of this crisis will be decided by the response of the fathers. They are the ones whom G-d holds primarily responsible. In G-d's message through Malachi, He requires first that the hearts of the fathers turn to the children. Only after that will the hearts of the children turn to the fathers.

The Believing Community today needs to present a clear message depicting the Believing family as G-d intended it to be—a message that defines the roles of husbands, wives and children. G-d intends the Believer's family to be a source of light to a darkened world, in two main ways. First, husbands and wives, by the way

they relate to each other, are to depict the relationship between Messiah and His Congregation. Second, fathers are to build families that depict the love of G-d as a Father to His believing people. The Bible also reveals one primary good work G-d expects from His people: to care for orphans and widows. This requirement is stated in many places in the *TNK* and is reemphasized in the *B'rit Chadasha*.

All Summed Up in One Word: Love

My frank, personal conclusion is that the contemporary Believing Community is delinquent. Thank G-d, there are some wonderful exceptions, but for the most part the Believers have not been demonstrating the love of G-d in the basic family relationships.

Various Christian organizations are seeking to confront the contemporary failure of male leadership and the resultant breakdown of the family-organizations like Focus on the Family, under the leadership of Dr. James Dobson, and, more recently, Promise Keepers. We need to ask ourselves why these and other groups have multiplied in the latter half of the twentieth century. The answer in most cases is that they are seeking to carry out tasks that *Yeshua* committed originally to the Congregations.

As I survey the contemporary Believing Community in the Western world, I keep recalling the words with which *Yeshua* dispatched the “goat” nations to a lost eternity: “*Inasmuch as you did not do it.....*” We need to remember that they were cursed not for what they did but for what they did not do.

Perhaps We Have Failed

In preceding messages we have outlined the three G-d-given responsibilities every father has toward his family: *as prophet*, to represent G-d to them, *as priest*, to intercede for them; *as king*, to rule them according to G-d's standards of righteousness. 1 Corinthians 11:31 reminds us: “*If we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged.*” Therefore, let us evaluate ourselves. Check your performance in each of these three areas, and ask yourself some relevant questions:

1. As priest of my family, am I faithful in regular, daily intercession for them? How often do I thank G-d for them?
2. As prophet, how well have I represented G-d to my family? Have I given them a picture of the loving Father in heaven? Or must I acknowledge that the picture I have given them of our Father G-d is actually an unattractive caricature?
3. As king, have I ruled my children with a discipline that combines love and firmness and that prepares them to take their place in society as responsible citizens? Have I set boundaries for my children that protect them from the evil forces at work in the world today?

What is your response to these questions? Do you recognize that you have indeed “*sinned and [fallen] short of the glory of G-d*”? That is no reason to be discouraged or to give up. G-d convicts us of our sins not in order to condemn us but to direct us to the remedy He has provided for us through the blood sacrifice of *Yeshua*.

Take Two Simple Steps

G-d's simple requirement is stated in 1 John 1:9: “*If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*” When we sincerely acknowledge and confess our sins to G-d, He not only forgives us but He also cleanses us from all sense of guilt and failure and restores to us pure consciences. To complete the cure, there is one further step we need to take. The second step is *to put things right with our fellow men by confessing our sins to them.*