

Lifebyte 71

Scripturally Reliant Fathers and Grandfathers Guiding the Destiny of Generations



*Because of my love for You, my Lord,
I will tell of Your ways to my children and to their children
so that they may know of Your commands and praiseworthy deeds,
Your power, and the wonders You have done.
So that my descendants would know them,
and they in turn would tell their children.
My desire is that they would put their trust in You
and would remember Your deeds and would keep Your commands.
It is my desire that they would all be with me forever with You,
and none would ever have a stubborn and rebellious heart
whose spirit is not faithful to You.*



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“From everlasting to everlasting the LORD’s love is with those who fear Him, and His righteousness with their children’s children—with those who keep His covenant and remember to obey His precepts” (Psalms 103:17,18)

“I have chosen Abraham, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing what is right and just, so that the LORD will bring about for Abraham what He has promised him.”

(Genesis 18:19)

Let’s begin with a key foundational understanding: The *Hebraic Restoration* is our Father’s means of returning those who love and follow His Son Jesus as Lord of their lives to the *trust-filled, obedience-based lifestyle* of the Bible’s first recorded Hebrew, Abraham. Why should we today pay particular attention to this Patriarch? Because he fulfilled what God requires of every father, *“to direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing what is right and just.”*

Abraham obeyed God by leaving everything that was familiar to him (Genesis 12:1).

This man was able to trust God so completely that he was willing to sacrifice his only son, Isaac, the one from whom would emerge the human lineage of Jesus (Genesis 22:1-16).

Because of Abraham’s obedient trust, God blessed him through an eternal Covenant (Genesis 12:2-3).

Our Lord valued Abraham’s obedience so greatly that He shared the Gospel with him in advance (Galatians 3:8).

God declared Abraham to be the father of all who put their trust in Jesus (Romans 4:16).

Consider what it must have been like to be Abraham’s descendants, regularly hearing of the depth of both *his trust in God* and *his obedience to Him*. Today the life of our spiritual ancestor, Abraham, harbors far greater implications for fathers in particular and their families than most Christians have ever considered.

- If you’re a father or grandfather, what reports of faithful trust and obedience have your children heard about you?
- Does anything about your relationship with God inspire them to live likewise?

Almost every day the news vividly depicts the curse of God on this nation because *fathers* have neglected to emulate the trust-filled obedience of Abraham in his love-enacted relationship with his Lord. That flagrant disregard for parental responsibility has elicited a devastating response in this younger generation: self-absorbed, entitlement-demanding, perpetual adolescents who perpetrate *without conscience* whatever evil they can imagine.

Why has this leap into individualist narcissism exploded so dramatically in the past two decades? Because fathers failed to **role model** and **instruct** their children *“to keep the way of the Lord.”*

The Psalmist’s lament is tragically contemporary: *“The wicked freely strut about when what is vile is honored among men”* (Psalms 12:8). What has happened to this nation to release such disdain for biblical boundaries—and who is to blame? Too many older people fault the younger generation but refuse to acknowledge their *own failure* to obey God’s Word and *personally instill* a heart of obedient trust in their children.

Here’s how it happened. For several decades the spiritual training of children throughout Christendom has been outsourced *away from the home* to the religious establishment. The bitter fruit of this pattern? Within two generations *Bible-based believers* in this nation have dropped from 65% to 4%. The culpability can be squarely placed on *grandfathers and fathers* who forsook their biblical responsibilities to God and to their children.

Fathers have failed to discern God’s eternal goals for each generation that is under their watch. Nor have they exercised His methods for spiritually training the next generation.

Our Father purposes in *every generation* that His righteous commands be fulfilled by each one who knows and follows Jesus as their Lord. Think about it. Both the ancient Israelites and we today have the same call: to *reveal our Lord* to all peoples of the earth (Isaiah 43:21; 1John 1:1-3). We who love Jesus are empowered by His indwelling Spirit to *walk in the obedient trust* that can penetrate the world’s darkness.

Observe [My commands] carefully, for this will show your wisdom and understanding to the nations, who will hear about all these decrees and say, ‘Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people’ (Deuteronomy 4:6)

Our awesome God, Who alone created the entire universe, calls upon His children to reveal Him and His righteous commands to the world (Matthew 28:18-20). Through the love-motivated lives and testimony of Jesus’ followers, He wants the world to know that *in Christ alone* is found the salvation of mankind (Luke 10:2).

In *every generation* our God desires to use those who belong to Him to accomplish these purposes. He first called the Israelites to do this, but they lost sight of His goal and failed. For the past 2000 years He has intended to use those who belong to Jesus to represent Him to the world in the way His Word calls for. Yet among westernized “Christians” in particular, this vision has been replaced by a self-centered, me-first perspective that for the most part *serves self*.

A common thread in Christian history recounts in part why the world has not been told about the One True God:

- During the early 4th century Christianity became a political force—an *ecclesiastical system* emulating the Roman Empire government. Its vast, ever-growing resources were used to construct grandiose edifices to sustain an image of strength and control for the powerful few. Any attempt to bring Christ to the nations was under the guise of forced conversion at the edge of the sword.
- To maintain its dominance, the ecclesiastical hierarchy *displaced the father* in his primary responsibility to raise up a godly generation who would reach the world for Jesus.
- The result? Rather than fulfilling the Kingdom purpose through *unity of the Spirit* to *evangelize the world*, Christianity has split into 38,000 competing expressions. People have been seduced into religious complacency and disinterested ignorance of the eternal purposes of God. Far from receiving God’s blessing, this fracturing of the body has brought about a *curse!* Can you deny it when you’re inundated with reports of widespread clergy sexual misconduct and divorce rates that exceed that of unbelievers?

By God’s grace it’s time for fathers and grandfathers to rid themselves of the smug complacency they’ve given way to. The Bible affirms that the primary place for spiritual training is *the home*. Our Father sees “family” in terms of *generations*. He purposes that one generation would build on the Biblical wisdom and applications that have been passed along and role modeled by prior generations.

Remember, our God wants “*godly generations*” (Malachi 2:15), people wholeheartedly eager to show their love for Him by doing His will. Fulfilling His purpose calls for a determined intensity that’s reiterated

*“He who **gets wisdom** loves his own soul; he who **cherishes understanding** prospers”;
By wisdom a house is built, and through understanding it is established” (Proverbs 19:8; 24:3)*

by Jesus to those who love and follow Him:

Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.

These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts.

Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.

Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.

(Deuteronomy 6:5-9)

Keep in mind that *loving God* and *loving your neighbor* as commanded in both Testaments are expressed as His people *live out the commands* He has given! Learning to do this happens first *in the*

home. Home-grown training especially by fathers is emphasized by the apostle Paul: ***“Fathers, do not embitter your children; instead, [you] bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord”*** (Ephesians 6:4). Because of the inter-generational understanding of “family” in the Bible, “fathers” here includes *grandfathers*. Both generations of fathers must uphold their responsibility for the spiritual training of succeeding generations. Nowhere does God’s Word allow for children to be outsourced for others to spiritually train—NOWHERE!!!

“He will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers; or else I will come and strike the land with a curse”
(Malachi 4:6).

Today many fathers *are* leading their families out of the religious system estab-



Generational Influence



Both upholding God’s Word by *applying it to our daily lives* and *teaching His ways to the next generation* leads to generations who reflect the wisdom of God and are also blessed by Him. Impressed into them will be a heart motive that’s based on *love for God* and a yearning to *please Him*.

Again, as each generation adds to the wisdom of past ones, the world learns more about the one true God and may ultimately seek Him: ***“Observe them carefully, for this will show your wisdom and understanding to the nations, who will hear about all these decrees and say, ‘Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people’”*** (Deuteronomy 4:6).

Because of their *love for God* and *for one another*, righteous generations are guided by, “How does this please our Lord?” Since love is the motivator, guilt serves as a warning sign that one has violated God’s commands. And, love draws them to repent and return to His way. These are the ones for whom this testifies: ***“His mercy extends to those who fear Him, from generation to generation”*** (Luke 1:50).

Those who refuse to uphold and apply God’s Word and teach it to the next generation produce a *generation of reprobates*—slaves to their own degenerate sin nature.

The progression shown in Romans 1:21-32 reveals an unrestrained pursuit of *sensuality*, then *perversion*, and finally *reprobation*. Reprobates live in rebellion against God’s Word as they satisfy the cravings of their sin nature. Because they deny the wisdom of God, they rationalize, “What’s wrong with what I’m doing? Everyone else is!”

Since they have no love for God or His Word, they either deny or overlook guilt so they can freely indulge their sin nature. Throughout Christendom this warning has become reality: ***“The time has come when men will not put up with sound doctrine”***. *Instead, to suit their own desires, they gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear”* (2 Timothy 4:3).

* doctrine is a lifestyle which reflects the accumulated application of God’s Word as Truth.

"I am a friend to **all who fear You**, to all who follow Your precepts... May those **who fear You rejoice** when they see me, for I have put my hope in Your word" (Psalms 119:63,74)

ishment. **But**, too many of these are also neglecting to follow through in their FULL responsibility to God to raise up a "godly generation." Sadly, they're self-satisfied that they're no longer looking to others to spiritually train their children—but *they're not filling in that very necessary need either!*

The hearts of fathers of each generation who claim to belong to Jesus must be turned fully to what the Bible requires of them in training their children. That's what love for God and love for others means—lining up with God's perspective and following through! And in response, the hearts of the children will be turned to their fathers and grandfathers for wisdom and role modeling a way of life that displays loving God and the wisdom of living by His Word.

This can only happen when men fear God sufficiently in awesome reverence to fully obey Him. It's grievous that Paul could be addressing many in this generation of fathers and grandfathers when he mourns, "*There is **no fear of God** before their eyes*" (Romans 3:18). Earlier we cited that God intends for His own to disciple a Godly generation so that they might go forth to reach every tribe, nation and language for His Name's sake (see Revelation 7:9). Such an intention calls for both wisdom as well as the power of His Spirit to carry out His will.

Where does the *wisdom* that God teaches, His holy perspective which our children and the world need to learn, begin? His Word makes that clear: "*The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding*" (Proverbs 9:10; see also 2:1-8). All Abraham needed was to look around at the natural world and realize

that Someone far greater than himself had created it (Romans 1:18-20). That's the *general revelation* of God's existence that's evident to anyone with a will to see! In *any* generation that one realization should inspire holy fear and awe.

Neglect of spiritual responsibility by fathers and grandfathers today isn't a new issue. The Old Testament ends with the warning that the hearts of fathers and children will turn to one another or else catastrophe on a national level will arise. (See Malachi 4:6). Even 2400 years ago there was an unwillingness of fathers to righteously parent their children, and a resistance of children to receive fully from their fathers. But does that nullify God's will for the generations? Not at all! Rather, *every generation of fathers must fully turn their hearts to the children and instill in them the wisdom by which God would have them live.*

You may wonder, what keeps each generation of fathers from fully turning their hearts to the children of the next generation? Why did God have to repeatedly remind Israel of the responsibility of fathers and grandfathers to teach the generations to come to testify about God and trust Him? (See Psalm 78:3-7, for example.) *Each* generation must resist their *own sin nature* and its attraction to *demonic seduction* if they are to genuinely love our Lord and obey His commands (John 14:23,24).

When a generation of fathers fails to resist their sin nature and gives way to demonic seduction, they not only sin against God by not raising up a godly generation, but they also sin against their own children and their children's children.

Without the foundation of God's Word, each generation of children is

"Show me, O LORD, **my life's end** and the number of my days; let me know **how fleeting is my life.**"
Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a **heart of wisdom**" (Psalms 39:4; 90:12)

deceived, cursed with the spirit of delusion by which the world lives. They'll live by the lie that there are no righteous standards of God. That's certainly what our sin nature wants to believe! And because fewer and fewer are even aware of God's wisdom to impress into their children, "For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie" (2 Thessalonians 2:11).

If these children are outsourced to public education, which is an institutional system organized to feed government demands, their condition will be all the worse. The Humanism which denies that there are any God-given standards is the worldview that penetrates every course of every public institution of higher learning. That's what flows out of the public universities that are producing today's teachers. The *intentional hidden agenda* of public education today feeds the self-absorbed sin nature of today's youth: **"Do whatever feels good!"**

Consider this appalling reality: Instead of each succeeding generation of fathers *adding* to the applied wisdom of God's commands, today each generation must *start anew* in learning and applying them. Because they *haven't* received as a spiritual inheritance an accumulation of the wisdom of past applications, only 4% of America's young people today even believe in the Bible as God's holy Word.

From generation to generation our *legal system* has done a better job than families do in building off historical truth. Our judicial system has a body of past applications of laws called "legal precedence." Judges today can draw off the wisdom of past applications of law in order to render objective verdicts. This is important to judges because they have a goal—just and impartial decisions.

Our *military* does a better job of pass-

ing along wisdom from one generation to another than today's families do. The military organization understands its purpose: In order to defend this nation it must ALWAYS be prepared to achieve victory. Accumulated wisdom from past conflicts factors into this goal.

For fathers and grandfathers to possess this same dedicated focus for their own families, they must have a firm grasp of God's eternal purpose—the *salvation of them and their families*. Each generation of fathers is responsible to ensure that as far as it depends on their loving obedience to God, a godly generation is raised up who will be welcomed into heaven. Since every generation dies, the eternal and most important issue is this: *Will you and your descendants be welcomed into heaven or suffer condemnation in hell?*

Each generation of fathers and grandfathers must ensure that not only they themselves are heading for the narrow gate by the grace of Jesus (Matthew 7:13), but must also exercise intentional purpose to help succeeding generations find welcome.

- How high a priority for you is the eternal destiny of all those you care about?
- What are you willing to do on their behalf to afford them every opportunity to be welcomed by Jesus in heaven?

***"As for man, his days are like grass,
he flourishes like a flower of the field;
the wind blows over it and it is gone,
and its place remembers it no more"***
(Psalms 103:15,16)

It's probably not been long since you attended a funeral. I, Mike, was raised with a large number of relatives and family friends living nearby. It seemed like we went to two or three funerals a

*“My righteous one will **live by trust**. And if he shrinks back, I will **not be pleased** with him” (Hebrews 10:38)*

year as I was growing up. I used to wonder about all the effort put into burying someone—the abundance of flowers, the expensive casket, the many people who took time off work to attend the service.

Every funeral ended with us at a cemetery where the final prayers and goodbyes were said before the casket was lowered into the grave. One afternoon at the cemetery the realization of the final end of ALL humans really struck me—we *ALL die one day*. At that moment was launched the very beginning of my spiritual pilgrimage that ultimately led me to embrace our Father’s Covenant and follow Jesus as Lord of my life.

Now in our 60s, the words of the Psalmist have even more meaning that spurs the two of us to purposefully press on to make Christ known across the world:

*Even when I am old and gray, do not forsake me, O God, **till I declare your power to the next generation, your might to all who are to come...** May God be gracious to us and bless us and make His face shine upon us, **that Your ways may be known on earth, your salvation among all nations** (Psalms 71:18; 67:1,2)*

If you’re younger it may be difficult for you to realize that you *are* aging, and that one day you may be old and facing death. But there’s something you can do right now in order to not fail the generation(s) behind you: *Internalize* God’s eternal perspective of you. Recognize that there are eternal consequences of not loving Jesus and walking in His steps of obedient trust. Without the covering of His blood by faith, we stand condemned to face God’s deserved wrath for our sin. (See John 3:18.)

Don’t imitate your forefathers who practiced religion but neglected to apply God’s Word to their own lives and those of their children. Even a cursory knowledge of God’s holy standards in the Bible broadcasts that the United States has now become a reprobate nation.

What you have under your control is to *love God responsively*: to align your way of life with His commands found throughout the Bible. The Bible isn’t God’s means to add to your knowledge so you’ll become prideful, nor His guide book to increase your worldly abundance. Rather, His Word exposes the darkness of your own sin nature so that you may obtain His grace of forgiveness through repentance and trust in what Jesus has done on your behalf.

*For the word of God is **living and active**. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it **judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart** (Hebrews 4:12)*

Repentance is the sorrow of conviction you experience when you realize that you’ve violated God’s holy commands. *And*, repentance requires that you *change course* from the path of serving your sin nature; to do a 180° shift to make His commands your way of life (1Peter 4:1,2). That’s why He promises out of love to indwell you by His Spirit—so you can be strengthened and encouraged to do His will and bring others into His Kingdom! (John 14:15-17). While you still breathe it isn’t too late to yield to His call to repent and to conform your life to His gracious commands by His Spirit in you.

For you fathers and grandfathers who’ve failed to personally instill God’s Word in your progeny, ask their forgive-

“If in spite of these things you do not **accept My correction** but continue to be hostile toward Me, I myself will be hostile toward you and will afflict you for your sins seven times over” (Leviticus 26:23,24)

ness. Offer to help them make God’s Word *a way of life* so they may receive His blessings.

In the remainder of this Lifebyte are several important issues for you to consider. Examine yourself and your household to see how you’re abiding by God’s standards and where you fall short. Wherever you find that you’ve sinned, repent! Turn from it and cry out for the grace to live as God would have you.

Fill in each and every old attitudinal and behavioral rut with God’s way so that your repentance is complete. In essence, as we repent, our spirit yields to His Spirit in us, and we’re changed to become more Christ-like in our motives and actions.

“The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, ‘We have found the Messiah!’”
(John 1:41)

Out of love for our Lord do you have the eager, responsive heart that propelled Andrew? When he found the Truth he did something about it—he ran to tell the brother he loved! What have you done with the truths our Father has revealed to you?

- If you’ve gone through ***Demolishing Strongholds***, how many other people have you helped get free from besetting, agitating spirits? Or, have you let yourself slip back into the same ruts of behavior and/or strongholds? Do you still attend a congregation or fellowship gathering that hasn’t been freed from strongholds? If yes, why?
- If you’ve gone through ***God’s Instruments For War***, how has the Spirit been able to use you to bless others? How many other people have you helped discern their spiritual gifts?
- If you’ve learned the rudiments of biblical

confrontation from our book ***Growing Relationships Through Confrontation***, how many others have you taught how to effectively confront so that love can grow?

- If you’ve read ***The Gospel of the Covenant is the Pilgrimage to Salvation***, how many copies did you hand out to others you care about who have yet to be found in Christ?

“Fathers, do not embitter your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord”
(Ephesians 6:4)

Bitterness is a major curse that’s passed on to children by fathers who fail to personally teach them God’s ways with a loving heart. A child can become bitter through bad experiences, from unfulfilled false expectations, or because of a sense of unjust treatment. Not being taught God’s way by a father and/or grandfather opens the door for bitterness; into that void the world’s values, ways and goals insinuate themselves.

We’ve found that bitterness has become the most tolerated sin within western Christendom. Not surprisingly, the most common demonic stronghold besides deceit is bitterness. Bitterness leads to *emotion guardedness*—the inability or unwillingness to give others the affectionate love needed in a relationship. Those who never allow themselves to *feel* have a difficult time forgiving others, and find they hold grudges a long time.

Bitter people may cast off restraint and adopt the world’s values to satisfy their carnal desires (1 John 2:15-17). In one way or another, by their bitterness they defile everyone they encounter (Hebrews 12:15), including their hapless children. Their refusal to forgive often ends in divorce.

"I am a stranger to my brothers, an alien to my own mother's sons; for zeal for Your house consumes me, and the insults of those who insult You fall on me" (Psalms 69:8,9)

- Have you seen any of the above symptoms of bitterness in your children or grandchildren?
- Have any of your children or grandchildren been divorced because of your failure to instill God's Word as a way of life for them when they were receptive to your input?
- Have you asked their forgiveness for not being the father/grandfather God called you to be?
- Do you live in fear of anyone? Who comes to mind that causes apprehension for you?
- If you're a husband, to whom does your family turn the most for guidance and correction—you or your wife?
- Do you fear having to leave your lukewarm or unbelieving faith community in order to be true to our Lord?

"Fear of man will prove to be a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD is kept safe"
(Proverbs 29:25)

Many years ago the founder of a popular men's ministry used our workbook *Demolishing Strongholds* with his staff. The change in these people's lives was so dramatic that he wrote a lengthy letter to his constituency touting the value of the book. In the weeks to follow, however, a number of Evangelical pastors warned him not to support the book, saying "deliverance is too hot a topic to get involved with." Because of that one man's *fear* of what others thought, thousands failed to hear about and experience the freedom the people on his staff had received.

We can certainly identify with how saddened Paul must have felt when he wrote about how his good friend, Barnabas, was led into hypocrisy by the fear that Peter gave way to:

*Before certain men came from James, [Peter] used to eat with the Gentiles. But when they arrived, he began to draw back and separate himself from the Gentiles because **he was afraid** of those who belonged to the circumcision group. The other Jews **joined him in his hypocrisy**, so that by their hypocrisy **even Barnabas was led astray** (Galatians 2:12,13).*

- Do you fear confronting your friends when they use God's Name as a swear word, or when they try to include you in activities you know displease Him?

"If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you"
(John 15:19)

Christian pollster George Barna has found that the majority of self-identified Christians hold the *same unbiblical values* as unbelievers.

- Other than attending religious services, what biblical distinctives and values separate you from the world? What biblical distinctives and values separate your children and grandchildren from those of the world?
- What in your life would cause the "world to hate you" and our Lord to commend you?
- Do you fear representing Jesus through testimonies to unbelievers? If yes, consider our Lord's warning:

Whoever acknowledges Me before men, I will also acknowledge him before My Father in heaven. But whoever disowns Me before men, I will disown him before My Father in heaven (Matthew 10:33).

"The righteous are as bold as a lion"
(Proverbs 28:1)

If you find it hard to live as the person your Lord needs you to be as His representative and child, examine yourself for any unrighteousness. This may come through: 1). unconfessed sin; 2). demolished strongholds; 3). old symptoms of demolished strongholds that still filter and control your actions because they haven't been replaced by God's ways.

The righteous ARE as bold as a lion. They don't have to make themselves so, they ARE by the assurance of His Spirit in them! That's how you recognize a righteous person—by their boldness and willingness to represent Jesus out of love for Him and for others.

- Scrutinize yourself and your family life:
Do you excuse unrighteous activities in your home—TV programs, Internet sites, reading materials and music, and anything else that allows sin to go on there?
- Next take a close look at the people in your faith community:
Are they still in bondage to their strongholds?
Do you recognize a pattern of tolerated sin in their lives?
Do their lifestyles fail to motivate you to become more Christ-like in character and to fulfill your part in His kingdom according to His will for you?
- If you answered "yes" to any of these questions, why do you still take part in these activities and join with others who do as well?

If there's unrighteousness in your family, you must confront it! If you find unrighteousness in your faith community, you must confront it or leave if they refuse to repent. (See Matthew 18:15-17.) If you refuse to do so, you may be evi-

dencing a cowardice that denies Jesus as your Lord. And that puts you in detestable company before Him.

But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death (Revelation 21:8).

A coward lacks the courage to undertake or endure dangerous or unpleasant situations or circumstances even if these are the will of God.

- Are you cowardly?
- Does your life reflect a lack of trust in God?
- Do you delude yourself into believing that your cowardice to publicly confess Jesus as your Lord and obey His commands will still bring you a heavenly welcome?

"For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs" (1 Timothy 6:10)

If you resist pursuing money as an end in itself, you're demonstrating an authentic trust in God as your ultimate Provider. The writer to the Hebrews makes this connection: ***"Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, 'Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you'"*** (Hebrews 13:5). From our Lord's vantage point as Creator of everything, your *trust* in His love for you, His reliability, His truth, and His power is foundational in your relationship with Him. Your trust in God reveals your total acceptance of Who He knows Himself to be—a God Who is TOTALLY trustworthy.

*"Let us draw near to God with a **sincere heart in full assurance of faith**, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water" (Hebrews 10:22)*

Wholeheartedly pursuing money for self-fulfillment or to assuage anxious worry is the antithesis of trust in the God Who knows what you need. (Matthew 6:31-34). If you've retired and have accumulated wealth so that your life feels secure, be alert to the fact that it can disappear overnight. Consider Paul's admonition:

Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their trust in God, Who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment (1Timothy 6:17).

If you haven't pursued wealth, you can identify with the Psalmist's cry when you're around those who call themselves "Christian" but have made earthly wealth and security their chief pursuit: *"O LORD, by Your hand save me from such men, from men of this world whose reward is in this life"* (Psalms




17:14a). This man cried out to God to "save" him from such people. Should a follower of Jesus accept their goals and values without a word, allowing them to blindly pursue the broad path of destruction without warning them of its outcome?

- As a parent or grandparent, what do your children see as the goals and motives of your lifestyle?
- Do they hear testimonies reflecting your trust in God? Or, do they hear you concerned about and pursuing the values of this world?

Conclusion

You can probably sense that very shortly our Father is going to confront the sins of this nation in an undeniable way. The chastisement that is coming will test and refine the faith of many (1Peter 1:6,7). Sadly but inevitably, the lukewarm and half-hearted will deny Jesus as Lord as they have in every gener-

The Effect of Strongholds on Your Soul
(soul = mind, will, and emotions)

 Mind	 Will	 Emotions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Self-righteous <input type="checkbox"/> Self-centered <input type="checkbox"/> Insensitive <input type="checkbox"/> No Spiritual Power <input type="checkbox"/> Spiritual Blindness <input type="checkbox"/> Hypocritical <input type="checkbox"/> Delusional <input type="checkbox"/> Rationalize <input type="checkbox"/> Misuse Scripture <input type="checkbox"/> Knowledge without Love 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Unforgiving <input type="checkbox"/> Addictive Behavior <input type="checkbox"/> Compulsions <input type="checkbox"/> Manipulative <input type="checkbox"/> Striving <input type="checkbox"/> Lack Trust <input type="checkbox"/> Stubborn/Insolent <input type="checkbox"/> Chronic Grumbling <input type="checkbox"/> Spiteful <input type="checkbox"/> Gossip/Slander <input type="checkbox"/> Lustful <input type="checkbox"/> Fornication <input type="checkbox"/> Adultery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Withdrawal <input type="checkbox"/> Loneliness <input type="checkbox"/> Inferiority <input type="checkbox"/> Inadequacy <input type="checkbox"/> Timidity <input type="checkbox"/> Pleasing People, Not God <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of Trust; Worry <input type="checkbox"/> Depression <input type="checkbox"/> Despair <input type="checkbox"/> Self-pity <input type="checkbox"/> Anger/Hatred <input type="checkbox"/> Begrudging

Do any of the above symptoms influence or control your soul?
(Place a checkmark by the ones that do — then do something about it!)

*"But my righteous one will **live by trust**. And if he shrinks back, I will not be pleased with him. But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who **trust and are saved**" (Hebrews 10:38,39)*

ation where God chastises His people to purify them.

As a loving Father, our God may already be disciplining you so that you will flee sin and repent of any unrighteousness in your life *before* the Dark Days of Chastisement come. Take a lesson from David when it comes to going through difficult times:

*Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I obey Your word. It was **good for me to be afflicted** so that I might learn Your decrees. I know, O LORD, that Your laws are righteous, and **in faithfulness You have afflicted me** (Psalms 119:67, 71,75).*

Now is the time for you and those close to you in the faith to rid yourself of *every sin* and *anything that hinders you* from being the bold representative to the world our God privileges His own to be.

The United States is already experiencing the dire consequences of its sin-borne guilt. Only widespread repentance, beginning with the family of God as Peter calls for, can change our future. (See 1 Peter 4:17-19 for "marching orders" if you're loving and serving Jesus.) You may not be able to save this nation, but through your trust-based obedience and wholehearted love you and those you care about can be assured in Jesus.

We leave you with this guidance of hope:

Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—His good, pleasing and perfect will (Romans 12:2).