

Kingdom Living Today

Illustrating the WAY of God's Kingdom for a Modern World

35. Does Your Lack of Courage Grieve God?

“MY CHILDREN ARE RIGHTEOUS AND BLAMELESS AMONG THE PEOPLE OF THEIR TIME. OTHERS READILY RECOGNIZE THEIR LOVE AND COURAGE BECAUSE THEY LIVE IN UNION WITH ME.”

The morning outside the small frame house may have been blissfully quiet, but inside the home chaos and bickering loudly reigned.

“Maria, you’ve got to start disciplining your kids,” Lita exclaimed as she sat in her sister’s living room sipping coffee. “You tell me you’re angry with Dad and Mom for not wanting to babysit for you, but you and your husband have brought this on yourselves.”

“What do you mean?” her sister snapped back. “I think I’m a *very* caring mother. In fact, I think Roberto and I are better parents than ours ever were for us.”

“Not one bit!” Lita retorted unflinchingly. “Our folks loved us enough to correct us when we needed it. They did what God commands parents in raising children.” (Proverbs 19:18)

Maria lifted her chin defiantly at her younger sister. “I don’t think God commands parents to spank their kids. The books my husband and I have been reading say that spanking only causes children to become violent themselves.” (2Thessalonians 2:11)

“Maria, you and Roberto are believing lies,” Lita countered. Maria was surprised at this newfound confidence she hadn’t seen in her kid sister before. (Proverbs 28:1) Deep inside it began to dawn on her that her own position on not disciplining her children might be flawed. (Proverbs 29:17) At that moment Lita asked, “Are you and Roberto equally committed to the way you’re raising your children?”

Sheepishly Maria answered, “I wouldn’t say ‘equally’... I’m the one who’s pushed him into backing off from disciplining the kids. He’s told me a number of times that he thinks we need to correct our children like his parents corrected him.” (Proverbs 3:11,12)

“Can I ask, then, why you refuse to discipline them?” Lita pursued. “Don’t you find yourself getting emotionally worn out and angry over their bad behavior?”

“Yeah, I do, Lita. But isn’t fatigue and giving in to them what being a mother is all about?” her sister responded with a heavy sigh.

Lita gently put her hand on Maria’s arm. “Yes, we moms do get tired from the demands of caring for our children. But that shouldn’t come from tolerating defiant and disrespectful behavior. The God Who created us knows that we’re born with a desire to sin that goes all the way back to Adam and Eve.” (Genesis 8:21)

“What do you mean?” Maria inquired with a note of surprise, having never read the Bible.

“All of us are conceived with a soul, which is our mind, will and emotions,” Lita continued, “and in our soul is an innate desire to sin and do things our way rather than God’s way. Let me ask you: Did anyone have to train your children to fight

each other over toys or to pick on each other?"

Maria exhaled with a head shake. "No, I saw them doing things I knew were wrong almost from the moment they could crawl."

Lita pulled out her Bible. "Let me read to you God's perspective on training our children. And remember, He's the One Who brought them into existence in the first place! *"He who spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is careful to discipline him."*(Proverbs 13:24) *"Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline will drive it far from him."*(Proverbs 22:15) *"Do not withhold discipline from a child; if you punish him with the rod, he will not die."*(Proverbs 23:13) *"Punish him with the rod and save his soul from death."*(Proverbs 23:14)

Deep within Maria her conscience was stirring to overcome her revulsion to spank her children when they were defying her and acting rebelliously. "That last one you read says I can somehow save my kids' soul from death.(Romans 8:13) What does that mean?" At this point she was listening intently as she began to realize that how she raised her children when they were little could have such a great impact on them when they were older.(Proverbs 22:6)

"It means that you're purposefully taking the appropriate biblical steps to keep them out of hell!"(James 1:13-15) Lita answered resolutely.

"I do believe there's a hell," Maria responded with a nod, recalling bits and pieces of her childhood religion classes. "But I never thought that my failure to correct my children might contribute to them ending up there."

Lita looked directly into her sister's eyes. "The Bible tells us that our heavenly Father disciplines every person He accepts as one of His own children."(Hebrews 12:5-11) If He does that to *His* kids, whom He loved enough to have His own Son take the death penalty our sins deserve, what do you think He requires of us parents?"

"I believe that He wants us to do nothing less," Maria answered with growing conviction and repentance. "But Lita, I know that Roberto and I are going to need help with this." She paused and looked down for a moment before going on. "And I need to ask Dad and Mom for forgiveness for making them so uncomfortable about being around their own grandchildren."

Lita smiled with love at her sister. "I know an older couple named Jack and Dee who'd be glad to share some wise counsel with you both. And, you and Roberto might want to read some of the books on raising children God's way* that have helped Juan and me."

With that, she grabbed Maria's hand and led in prayer, filled with hope that Father God would intervene and begin a new season of parenting for this couple. [*suggested reading: *Sacred Parenting: How Raising Children Shapes Our Souls* by Gary L. Thomas; *Parenting By The Book* by John Rosemond; *Bringing Up Boys* and *Bringing Up Girls* by Dr. James Dobson; *Revolutionary Parenting* by George Barna]

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That evening an older, gray-haired man was walking through the shady park with a younger guy whose face was filled with anxious concern.

"Nate, the first thing you've got to do is quit being upset about your friend's illegal activities," Jack noted, calmly glancing at his agitated son in Christ. "Way back

in the Book of Genesis God accurately described our human condition as inherently sinful. From His perspective, *“every inclination of the thoughts of [man’s] heart is only evil all the time.”*(Genesis 6:5)

Nate relaxed somewhat at Jack’s counsel. “I know you’re right, Jack. But Damon and I go way back to technical college together.” He paused for a moment then went on, “Now he’s head of data services for the big phone marketing company where I just started this morning. He hired me because of our friendship.”

“Are you sure it was because of your friendship alone that you were hired?” Jack asked with a penetrating look. He then pressed his point. “Consider that on your very first day on the job, he tells you he’s taking kickbacks from the different vendors he purchases from.(Proverbs 4:19) Next, you tell me he offers to cut you in on the proceeds. Was it only because of friendship he hired you—or because he thought you could be bought?”

The startled look on Nate’s face showed that this idea was new to him. “I never thought of it that way, Jack.” After some reflection he disclosed, “I do have to confess, though, that the Nate who Damon once knew did a few things in the past that weren’t exactly aboveboard. But that was BEFORE I became a follower of Jesus.” He smiled somewhat grimly. “Yes, he’d have good reason to think I could be bought.”(Proverbs 13:5)

“That’s okay, Nate,” Jack reassured him. “It’s what you need to do *now* that’s important.”

“Please, advise me on what I should do!”(Proverbs 13:14) Nate pleaded earnestly.

Jack smiled at his son in the Spirit. “Let’s first ask for a Spirit of wisdom and revelation so we may have the Lord’s understanding of this.(Ephesians 1:17) Nate, why don’t you pray for us?”

The young man had barely finished praying when Jack had a prompting from the Holy Spirit. “Two verses come to mind that may help guide your motives, Nate. The first is, *‘Like a muddied spring or a polluted well is a righteous person who gives way before the wicked.’*”(Proverbs 25:26)

Nate broke in with a chuckle. “‘Muddied spring’ and ‘polluted well’ sure don’t sound good. So I think God’s saying He won’t be pleased with me if I don’t do something about this situation. What’s the second verse, Jack?”

The older man lifted his forefinger and pointed directly at the young guy’s chest. *“You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men.”* (Matthew 5:13)

“Boy, both those passages are incriminating,” Nate observed solemnly, feeling the weight of what his new job had gotten him into.

Another revelation from the Spirit stirred Jack’s spirit as he took the young man’s arm firmly. “If you fail to act promptly and Damon’s criminal activity is discovered sometime later, you’ll be guilty AFTER the fact because he told you about the kickbacks.” He added grimly, “And, you’ll be guilty BEFORE the fact because every time he takes a kickback in the future, you already know it’s illegal.”

“I don’t want to be part of this!” Nate bellowed with wide-eyed distress.

Jack stated definitively, “Then I’d suggest tomorrow that you first go to Damon and ask him to stop taking kickbacks. If he refuses to listen to you, go to his boss

and tell him what's going on." (Proverbs 13:6) His lips tightened. "I have a hunch they already have their suspicions about him." The two men prayed again before leaving the park, committing the next day's confrontation into their Lord's faithful hands.

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The next evening the phone rang at Jack and Dee's home. "Jack, this is Nate. You won't believe what happened today at work! I'm the new head of our department!"

"You're *what*???" Jack responded with both surprise and delight.

Nate related his story of the day's events. "I went to see Damon as soon as I got to work this morning. When I asked him to stop taking kickbacks, he laughed at me and told me I was naive. He also said that if I didn't go along with him, he'd fire me and give me a poor recommendation."

"I'm sorry he responded that way," Jack sympathized, knowing they'd been friends.

"I was hurt at first," Nate continued. "But then I remembered what you told me to do if Damon refused to listen. I went to Mr. Hadley, his boss. As soon as I said, 'I need to talk to you about something Damon is doing,' Mr. Hadley responded, 'Do you mean the kickbacks he's been taking?'"

Jack butted in, "So they already suspected?"

"Yes, they did!" was Nate's excited reply. "Mr. Hadley went on to tell me that they were about to take action against Damon but had held it up for a day or two to see what kind of person I was. Man, I'm so glad you and I talked yesterday!"

"I am too, Nate." Jack's heart was rejoicing as he stopped to pray with thanksgiving, "Lord Jesus, we thank you that You never fail to provide wisdom when two or three seek You together. (Matthew 18:20) We promise to share this testimony with others to Your glory."

"Amen!" Nate declared at the top of his voice.

Jack posed another question. "You're the new head of the department?"

"Yes, I am!!!" Nate exploded joyfully. "When Mr. Hadley was convinced I wasn't part of Damon's illegal activity, he called the Head of Human Resources and the Head of Security. They went to Damon and escorted him immediately out of the building to the police who were waiting at the front door."

"I bet you were glad you weren't walking beside him," Jack laughed.

Chuckling at the thought of it, Nate howled, "You betcha! When the dust settled, Mr. Hadley and the Head of Human Resources interviewed me right then and there and offered me Damon's position. They wanted not only someone who technically understood the job but also a man of integrity who could resist the temptation of kickbacks."

"I want to commend you, Nate, for seeing this through. I'm glad for your promotion, but I'm far more delighted in your courage to face down unrighteousness," (Psalms 5:12) Jack declared like a proud father.

"Hearing that from you, Jack, means more to me than the promotion I got. I sure see the benefit of seeking counsel from the wise. (Proverbs 22:17) And I appreciate having a testimony that glorifies our Lord!" (Psalms 34:3)