

Biblical Pointers in Leading the Family *Spiritually*

Fathers are increasingly preoccupied with and consumed by their jobs and businesses to the extent that they become unduly distracted from their God-given fatherhood responsibility. Their lack of time and affectionate attention in the nurturing of their children is detrimental to family life, with many fathers seemingly unaware of the spiritual damage that can be inflicted upon their families, especially their children. Some have altogether forgotten that they have a fatherly role to fulfil.

Even apparently spiritual men are not exempted from this fault. It is not uncommon to hear of spiritual leaders, like pastors and elders, neglecting their own children's nurture in their enthusiasm to care for the church. Yet the Bible unequivocally demands that their children be faithful and be properly nurtured. Concerning the households of church leaders, 1 Timothy 3:4-5 says that an elder must be "one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of

God?)" Likewise, "Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well" (1 Timothy 3:12).

Fathers Must Assume Responsibility for Their Families' Conduct

God holds the head of the household responsible for the conduct of his family. Despite the fact that it was Eve who first was deceived and sinned, the Bible says that "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners" (Romans 5:19; cf. 1 Corinthians 15:22a). Adam, being the head of Eve, was held accountable by God for the entrance of sin through Eve.

Further scriptural accounts make this very clear. When God sent Moses to Egypt to demand of Pharaoh that he let the Israelites go and serve Him, Moses' own son had not been circumcised. So "the LORD met (Moses), and sought to kill him." God held Moses responsible for this spiritual negligence. Thankfully for him, he must have taught his Midianite wife, Zipporah, about the covenant, for

we read that she saw the danger to Moses and circumcised their son to avert God's wrath (Exodus 4:24-26). Similarly, the high priest Eli was held accountable for the immorality of his sons. It was not sufficient for him merely to warn them. As the LORD said, "For I have told him that I will judge his house for ever for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not" (1 Samuel 3:13).

Dear Christian fathers, may none of us take this grave matter of our children's conduct and spiritual nurturing lightly. Otherwise, we will receive a rebuke from the Lord, like what Eli the high priest had received!

Fathers Must Live in Obedience to God

Living in obedience to God brings with it God's mercy and help. Without God's help, we will build our house in vain (cf. Psalm 127:1); we will not be able to build up a strong home nor lead our family well. "But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children; to such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them" (Psalm 103:17-18). Scripture says God offers His special promise of mercy to the children of those who fear Him and keep His covenant. So, live in obedience to God's Word, and be not self-willed; otherwise, you cannot be certain of God's blessings upon the upbringing of your children.

Fathers Must Teach the Word

Moreover, Scripture makes it clear that it is the father's chief responsibility to instruct his children with God's Word.

"Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life: but teach them thy sons, and thy sons' sons" (Deuteronomy 4:9). "And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up" (Deuteronomy 6:6-7; cf. 11:19-20).

Fathers, you should not think that the teaching of the Bible to your children is the duty of the pastor or Sunday school teacher. It is, first of all, the father's duty to teach his children God's Word. Have you been striving to fulfil this fatherly duty? Abraham of old is a fine example of a father who was dedicated in teaching his children God's Word. The Lord said about him, "For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment" (Genesis 18:19; cf. Psalm 34:11-16).

Now, it is important to remember that the purpose of teaching is not just to raise up "well-behaved kids", but rather that they may be regenerated by the Word (1 Peter 1:23), and then they may be enabled to live holy lives. The Bible is sufficient to make them "perfect" (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Hence, our prayer concerning the nurturing of our children ought to be "that the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born; who should arise and declare them to their children: that they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments: and might not be as their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation; a generation

that set not their heart aright, and whose spirit was not steadfast with God” (Psalm 78:6-8). This means we must endeavour to teach that “which we have heard and known (from God’s Word), and ... not hide them from their children, shewing to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and his strength, and his wonderful works that he hath done. For he established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children” (Psalm 78:3-5).

Fathers Must Pray for Their Children

Every father, who is responsible to God in raising up his children, must pray specially for his children. We see such a biblical example in Job, who would rise in the morning to pray for his children. “Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all: for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts. Thus did Job continually” (Job 1:5). A lifelong habit and commitment of praying for his children was the hallmark of Job’s fatherhood. How often do you take time to pray for your children’s salvation and sanctification?

Fathers Must Bring Their Children to Worship, Fellowships, etc.

Interspersed throughout the text of the Bible are historical accounts of parents who brought their children to gatherings of God’s people for public worship, Bible-learning, fellowship, etc. Consider the following:

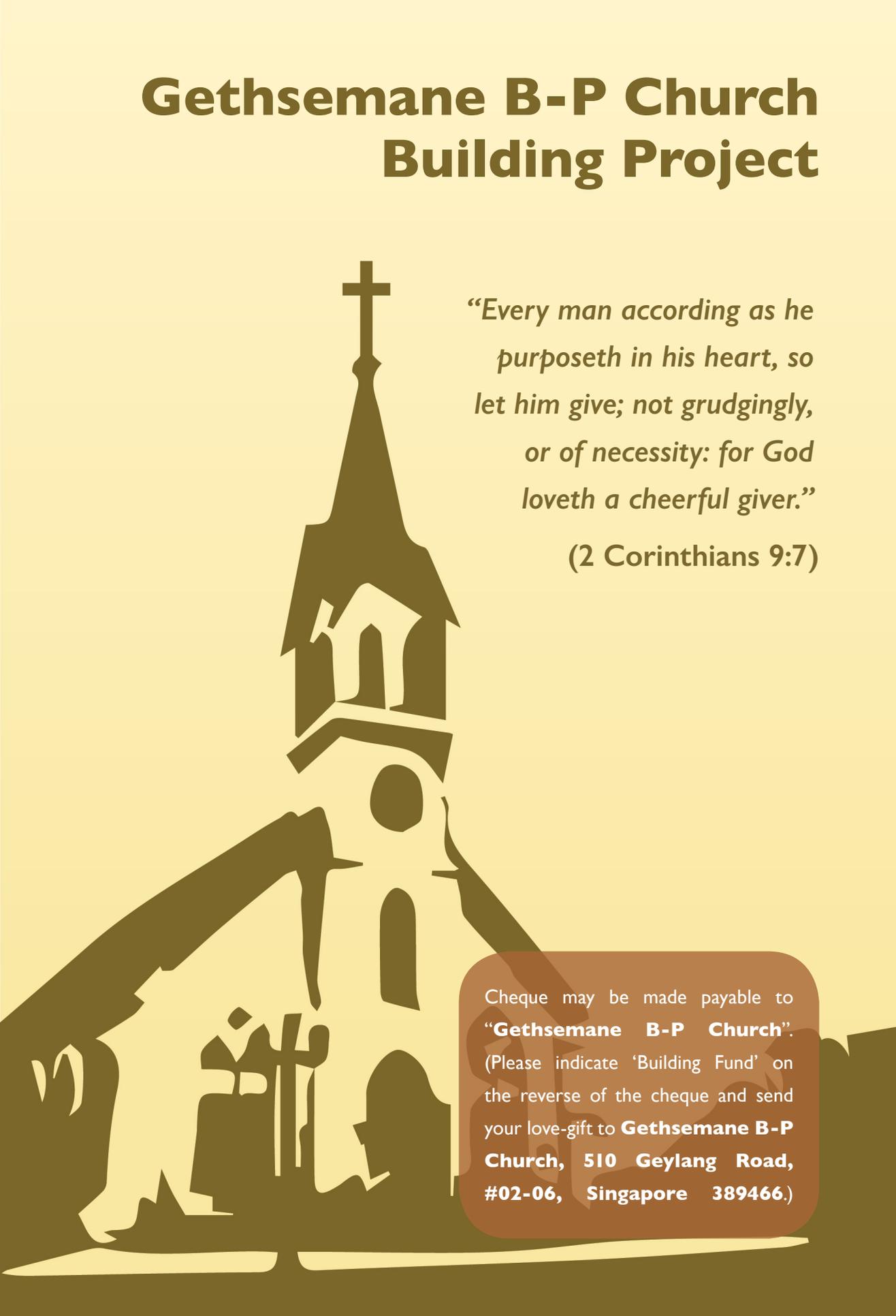
- “There was not a word of all that Moses commanded, which Joshua read not before all the congregation of Israel, with the women, and the little ones, and the strangers that were conversant among them” (Joshua 8:35).
- “And all Judah stood before the LORD, with their little ones, their wives, and their children” (2 Chronicles 20:13).
- “Also that day they offered great sacrifices, and rejoiced: for God had made them rejoice with great joy: the wives also and the children rejoiced: so that the joy of Jerusalem was heard even afar off” (Nehemiah 12:43).

Further evidence of children’s active involvement in public worship gatherings is seen in Jesus’ time. Remember Jesus’ words to His disciples and the parents of the children who came to Him? “But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 19:14). During Jesus’ triumphant entry into Jerusalem, we read of children enthusiastically joining the crowd that sang “Hosanna” to the Lord. “And when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the Son of David; they were sore displeased, and said unto him, Hearest thou what these say? And Jesus saith unto them, Yea; have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?” (Matthew 21:15-16).

Fathers, hesitate no more! Encourage your children to attend and participate in the church activities so that they may be nurtured in spiritual matters.



Gethsemane B-P Church Building Project



*“Every man according as he
purposeth in his heart, so
let him give; not grudgingly,
or of necessity: for God
loveth a cheerful giver.”*

(2 Corinthians 9:7)

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