

It's All in the Family

Job 1:1-5, Ephesians 3:18-19

Sunday, June 19, 2022 at The First Congregational Church of Marshalltown, Iowa

### Introduction

With today being Father's Day, I wanted to mention a passage rarely discussed in churches from one of the most ancient episodes of the Bible. It mentions the importance of the older generation, both fathers and mothers, to pray for the generations to come. I'd like to begin with a quote from an article from the Lifeway website. In it, author Mike Livingstone wrote the following: "I'm thankful for a father and mother who taught me, by word and example, to love God, treasure His Word, serve His church, and live on mission. This is what the psalmist writes about in Psalm 78. Asaph addresses the importance of the home and the vital role of parents and grandparents in leading the next generation to know, love and serve God. The psalm answers four critical questions regarding our responsibility to future generations: who, what, why, and how?"

Who's responsible for teaching the next generation? Take a look at verses 5-6: *"He [God] commanded our fathers to teach ... their children so that a future generation—children yet to be born—might know. They were to rise and tell their children."* Notice at least three, possibly four generations are mentioned in these verses—fathers, their children, the children yet to be born, their children.\* Now let's look at an example of this in one very ancient story.

### The story is very old

Tradition has it that Moses wrote the story of Job, in addition to the first five books of the Bible, but scholars do not believe that he originated the story. Job may have been very ancient and preserved in oral tradition for some time before Moses wrote it down. A word about oral tradition. Oral tradition in many cultures required precise memory. The scribe or the storyteller charged with remembering and reciting the story was expected to memorize it perfectly. It wasn't like the communication game of "telephone" in which people whispers a message in the ear of the person next to them and we see how corrupted the message is by the time it reaches the last person. In this tradition people were expected to learn the story perfectly, so we suspect people had been sharing about Job for generations before Moses wrote it down

### It describes perseverance

The purpose of Job is often debated, but I think the question is answered in the New Testament. The Book of James, in the only New Testament reference to Job, speaks of his perseverance, and there, I think is the purpose of the book as a whole. It is about how to persevere. Now I'd like to share a few other points about the Book of Job.

### God never answers Job's questions, but His Presence satisfies Job anyway

Much of the book of Job involves his misery and the debate he has with his friends. There's a whole new sermon just about that part of the book. At the end, God shows up, scolds Job's friends and then challenges Job. I find it interesting that He never answered Job's questions but Job is satisfied none the less. The Presence of God was better than answered questions.

### Job reveals the heart of an intercessor for his children

After all this background, I want to point out a passage, often overlooked, that demonstrates with Job a parent's praying heart for his children. The passage refers to them as "son", but they word

applies to daughters as well. The root of the word means "to build" or "to fortify", and its implications is that the "sons" will construct the future generation. There comes a point, and I think that Boomers are at that point, where we have to have the younger generations lead and we encourage, support and pray for them as they build what is to come. A great passage to guide our prayers for the generation is a prayer for the church in Ephesians, the great book of the church. In Ephesians 3:18-19 we find these words, that they "may be able to comprehend with all the saint what is the width and length and depth and height-to know the Love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God." "Comprehend" here means to know by experience, not simply by education. Let's commit to pray for the next generation that they would know, by experience, the greatness and love of God. It may be our best option in this troubled day and age.

### Conclusion

The greatest thing our generation can do is to support, encourage and help the following generations. Investing in them is investing in the future and we must pray earnestly that they know fully, and by experience the greatness and love of God in Christ.

\*Mike Livingstone <https://explorethebible.lifeway.com/blog/adults/teaching-the-next-generation-4-critical-questions-session-2-psalm-785-832-39/>