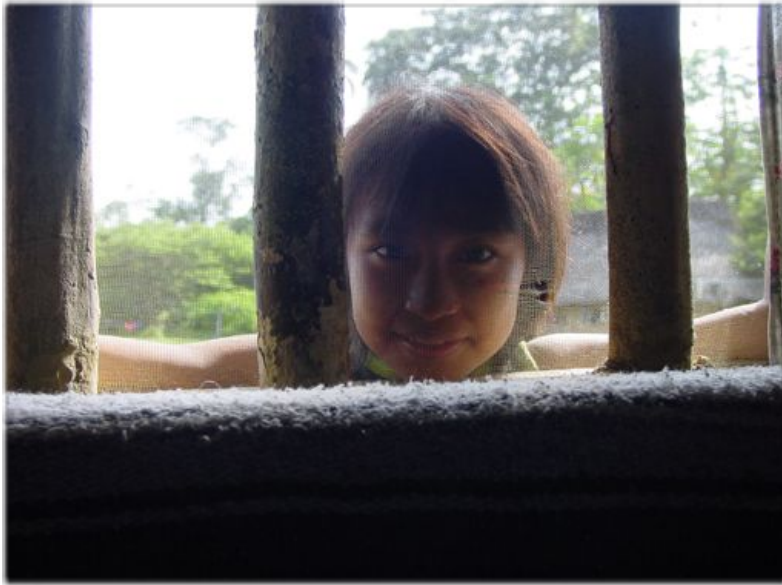


“The Wife of Thy Covenant”

It's A Jungle Out There...



NOVA LENA

I recently had the privilege of visiting a very remote jungle village in South America. I stayed in a mud hut and lived as Indians live. I learned many interesting things as a result of that opportunity.

A very sweet little Indian girl named Nova Lena was living in that village at the time. Although she was only nine years old, according to their customs, she is old enough to marry and has been married since I left the village.

When a man wants to get married in the village, he will come to the young girl's hut and take her, along with her hammock. If her father does not stop them, they are married.

WHERE DID OUR CANADIAN WEDDING TRADITIONS COME FROM?

In Canada we do things different because we have been taught to do things different. Our wedding traditions, unlike those of the jungle, come from the Bible.

No other book has influenced society like the Word of God has. For example, the title “*The Dominion of Canada*” came from Psalms 72:8 where we read, “*He shall have dominion also from sea to sea.*”

The Magana Carta, the Bill of Rights, and the

Constitution of the United States were all influenced by the Bible. Christopher Columbus set sail, knowing the world was not flat, after reading Isaiah 40:22 that says, “*It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth...*”

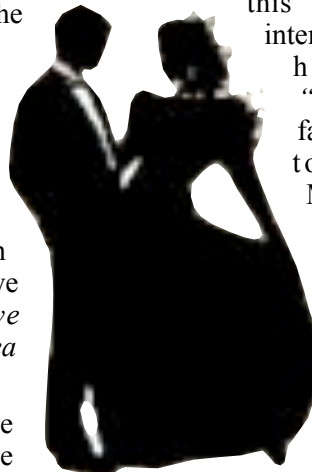
The Liberty Bell has Leviticus 25:10 inscribed on it and many government buildings have the Word of God inscribed on them.

There are over fifty famous paintings from the Old Testament and another sixty-five from the New Testament in museums. Handel's Messiah quotes fifteen Books of the Bible.

We use Bible influenced expressions in our everyday lives. Such as, “*His hair stood on end,*” “*Money talks,*” “*A little bird told me,*” “*His ears are burning,*” and about forty-five others that came from the Word of God. The Bible has influenced every area of our lives.

OUR WEDDING TRADITIONS ARE ALSO INFLUENCED BY THE BIBLE

In the days when Jesus walked this earth, if a man was interested in marrying a girl, he would make a “*covenant*” with her father. The Bible refers to this covenant in **Malachi 2:14** where we read, “*The LORD hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth...thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant.*”



When this covenant was established the man and woman were regarded as husband and wife, even though no physical union had taken place.

We have an example of this in **Matthew 1:18, 19** where we read, "Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused (Thayers Lexicon-"to be promised in marriage") to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost... Then **Joseph her husband**, being a just man, and not willing to make her a publick example, was minded to put her away privily."

Joseph was considered Mary's "husband" once the "covenant" was made with her father. At this point Joseph began taking the responsibilities of a husband.

It is significant that when it was **assumed** that Mary was having a child out of wedlock, neither of her parents are mentioned. God did not direct her father to take care of the situation, but rather He directed Joseph to take care the situation.

A COVENANT IS NOT A CONTRACT

A **contract** is based on **mistrust**; therefore it has become acceptable to have a pre-nuptial agreement.

A **covenant** is based on **trust**.

A **contract** establishes **liability**. It prepares for an unfavourable outcome, with the focus on self.

A **covenant** establishes a **new responsibility**. This responsibility fell on the one who *initiated* the covenant. It has a focus on the one he will marry rather than a focus on himself. (See Ephesians 5:23-33)

A **contract** can be broken by mutual **consent** of both parties.

A **covenant** cannot be broken without **continuing consequences**. (Note: The phrase, " *The wife of thy covenant,*" is referring to the covenant made with the father of the bride. Obviously the couple getting married

could call off the wedding as they had not as yet made a covenant with each other.) The Bible says, "Joseph was minded to put her away." (Matthew 1:19)

AFTER THE COVENANT WAS MADE

The groom returned to his father's house to build a home for his bride.



When it was finished he would return with a torch light procession to the bride's home. The bride would be expecting the bridegroom to come, however, as she would not know the exact time of his arrival, it was preceded by a shout and the sounding of a trumpet.

It is a beautiful picture of Christ returning for his bride. In John 14:1-6 we read Jesus said, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it we not so, I would have told you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." This is followed by, "The marriage Supper of the Lamb."

OUR WEDDING TRADITION OF FAMILIES SITTING ON OPPOSITE SIDES OF THE CHURCH

The reason we began having the families of the bride and groom on opposite sides of the auditorium was a direct result of a covenant found in the Scriptures. When the Israelites came out of Egyptian slavery, God made a covenant with them. This covenant was established by requiring the people to pass between

the pieces of a calf that had been sacrificed.

Jeremiah 34:18 speaks of, "...The men that have transgressed my covenant, which have not performed the words of the covenant which they had made before me, when they cut the calf in twain, and passed between the part thereof."

Seating the families on each side of the auditorium symbolizes the sacrifices each has made in order for the bride and groom to enter into this covenant, and the sacrifices the bride and groom will need to make in order to be true to the covenant.

THE GROOM COMES IN FIRST

When the groom enters the auditorium first it signifies that he is the covenant *initiator*. The one who initiates the covenant assumes the greater responsibility for seeing it fulfilled.



"PLEASE JOIN YOUR RIGHT HANDS"

The bride and groom take each other's right hand during the wedding vows, which is symbolic of a hand shake, as they agree together to keep the vows of the covenant.

WHO GIVETH THIS WOMAN

The tradition of the father of the bride giving away the bride at the altar is symbolic of the covenant he has made with the groom. He has now made that previous covenant public.

SIGNING THE GUEST BOOK

The signing of the guest book was more than someone's idea of having

a way to figure out who came to the wedding. The guest book is significant of those who are *official witnesses at the wedding covenant*.

THE RECEIVING LINE

The receiving line is taken from the covenant Boaz entered into with Ruth to marry her. All the people that were in the gate and the elders witnessed and gave their blessing. In Ruth 4:11 we read, *“And all the people that were in the gate, and the elders, said, We are witnesses.”*

WHEN DO CHILDREN



BECOME ADULTS?

As parents we sometimes refuse to let our children become adults. A few years ago my father gave me a ride to pick up my truck that was being repaired at a service centre. One of the attendants behind the counter asked my Dad if they could help him. His response was, *“No thanks, I’m just here with the young lad.”* The *“young lad”* was nearly fifty years old at the time.

DOES THE BIBLE TELL US WHEN A CHILD CEASES TO BE A CHILD?



This is a very important question because the Bible commands

parents (especially fathers) concerning their responsibilities when dealing with **children**. It also commands children concerning their responsibilities in relationship with their parents.

WHEN IS A PERSON AN ADULT?

I am thinking of a young man, twenty-three years of age who came from a Christian home. He decided he wanted to go to Bible college. He had a full time job and had been living away from home for several years. His parents, who were Christians, were not in favour of him quitting his job to go to a Bible college. What should he do? What if the man was thirty or forty years old and his parents were still against it?

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

In John 9:21, the parents reply to the Pharisees concerning their son being healed was *“He is of age; ask him: he shall speak for himself.”* Does the Bible tell us when a child becomes *“of age”* and is no longer considered a child?

The phrase, *“from twenty years old and upward”* is found in twenty-two verses in the Bible. There are three other verses that read, *“from twenty years old and above...”*

THE CHILDREN IN THE WILDERNESS

In Numbers 14:2-3 we read God’s people said, *“Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt! Or would God we had died in this wilderness! And wherefore hath the LORD brought us unto this land, to fall by the sword, that our wives and our children be a prey? were it not better for us to return to Egypt?”*

WHO WERE THE ADULTS?

Numbers 14:29-31, we read that God said, *“Your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness;...from twenty years old and upward,...but your little ones, which ye said should be*

a prey, them will I bring in, and they shall know the land which ye have despised. According to the word of God, those “from twenty years old and upward,” are considered adults.

TWENTY YEARS TO GET THE JOB DONE



A father has **twenty years** to fulfill his responsibilities in raising the children in his home. Fathers are given **twenty years** to, *“...Bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.”*

GOD DEMANDS MORE THAN A PHYSICAL PRESENCE FOR DAD

God commands the Dad to be the spiritual leader in the home. He is required to teach Bible principles to his children. Deuteronomy 6:7 says, *“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.”*

HOW GOD DEALS WITH HIS CHILDREN

God does not force His children to be good. God works at creating a *desire* in us to want to be good. He has given us the Word of God and He has given us parents and pastors to teach us His Word.

God makes sure we have His rules explained. He tells us what will happen, if we do what is right, and

what will happen, if we do not. He has given us the Holy Spirit to guide us. If His children do wrong, it is **their choice** to do so, and they will have to suffer the consequences of wrong choices. If His children do right, they will enjoy the blessings that come as a result.

TEACHING AND TALKING

Fathers are given *twenty years* to teach Bible principles to their children. They are to **“teach them diligently,”** and they are to **“talk”** about Bible principles.

The Bible says, *“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.”*

Fathers must tell their children what will happen, if they obey, and tell them what will happen, if they don't.



THE CHILDREN MUST BE TAUGHT TO MAKE CHOICES AND THEN LIVE WITH THE RESULTS

The Bible is full of promises that are *conditional*. God commands us regarding our *actions* and then He *reacts* in direct accordance with our action.

For example we read in Matthew 6:33, *“But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”* God lays out a course of action. He says, *Seek ye first the*

kingdom of God, and His righteousness.” If we choose to do it, He promises, *“All these things shall be added unto you.”*

In Proverbs 3:5-6 we read, *Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths.”*

Once again God reveals some steps of action for His children. Action number *one*, *“Trust in the LORD with all thine heart.”* Action number *two*, *“Lean not unto thine own understanding.”* Action number *three*, *“In all thy ways acknowledge Him.”* God's reaction, *“And he shall direct thy paths.”*

There are hundreds of action and reaction verses in the Bible, however, God does not force anyone to follow His commands. Once His children are old enough to understand, He does all He can to get them to want to do right and leaves the outcome with them.

In Isaiah 5:4-6, we read of one of God's reactions. He says, **“What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? Wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?”**

Because His children refused to do right we see God's reaction. He said, *“And now go to; I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard: I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be trodden down: And I will lay it waste: it shall not be pruned, not digged; but there shall come up briars and thorns: I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it.”*

The Bible record that Joshua chose right and he suggested that everyone else should do the same. He said, *“And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve;...as for me*

and my house, we will serve the LORD.” (Joshua 24:15)

Proverbs 22:6 says that we should, *“Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.”* Obviously the training must take place when the children are still considered children.

BIBLE ADULTS IN POSITIONS OF LEADERSHIP

Concerning the Levites and their responsibilities we read in Ezra 3:8 they were appointed, **“from twenty years old and upward, to set forward the work of the house of the LORD.”** In Second Chronicles 31:17 we read about the **“Levites from twenty years old and upward, in their charges by their courses.”**

There are many verses in the Bible that indicate that once one reaches the age of twenty years old and upward, God considers them adults. We would be wise to do the same!

MAY I MARRY YOUR DAUGHTER?

When a young man comes to Dad with the question, *“May I marry your daughter?”* a wise father will be prepared. He should know what areas he wants to discuss. Obviously, he would want to make sure of the relationship the prospective groom has with the Lord. After that, every area of concern a father has, should be discussed.

SOME SUGGESTED QUESTIONS

When you have children, will you send them to a Christian school? What will you do if, because of medical reasons a doctor advises you to abort your unborn child? What is your view concerning the local church? What do you believe about divorce? These are just a few sample questions. A father should have **many** questions and be sure to cover all the areas that concern him.

He must also be certain that he is concerned about the happiness of his daughter, her husband and their children, rather than his own.

Dad better be careful to get everything settled at this point. According to the Scriptures, he is making a "covenant" with the young man to give him his daughter.



WHAT IF THEY DON'T LISTEN

What can a father do if his daughter decides to marry someone against his wishes?

Years ago I saw a presentation entitled, "Every Action Has A Reaction." The entire floor of a large room was covered with mouse traps. On each mousetrap was a Ping-Pong ball. A man tossed one more Ping-Pong ball into the room and soon the entire room was alive with hundreds of little white balls jumping around the room.

When we must make decisions concerning something as serious as this, we should remember that every action has a reaction. Sometimes how we react to a situation can cause more problems.

God has promised that, if a father takes his responsibilities serious, and he "teaches" and "talks" with his children for twenty years as he is commanded to do, he will not have a problem of rebellion or disrespect when his child is older.

God promises that if we, "Train up a child in the way he should go... when he is old, he will not depart from it." If there is a rebellion

problem when the child "is old," we must conclude that Dad failed to do his job right, or God does not keep His promises.

If Dad failed to teach his children to make wise decisions during the first twenty years of their lives, when it was his responsibility to do so, he would be wise to be very careful how he reacts concerning handling them after they have become adults.

ACTIONS AND REACTIONS

The right responses by Dad at this point can keep the lines of communications open and give him and his wife an opportunity to have a part in the lives of the couple and their children.

A wrong responses can cause a family feud that may last for years and ruin any opportunity to be involved in their lives. Everything said and done, at this point, should be bathed in *much* prayer.

Ephesians 6:1 commands children to "obey" their parents. This word in the Greek speaks of submitting and is the same word used in Ephesians 5:22 where it says, "Wives submit yourselves unto your own husbands."

Ephesians 6:2 says, "Honour thy father and mother." The word honour means to revere. There should never come a time when parents are not honoured, however, there is no verse in the Bible that commands adults to obey their parents. In fact, the wife is commanded to obey her husband when she has one.

SOME FINAL THOUGHTS

The training program of a child will change as he or she matures. It would be ridiculous to attempt to teach a baby to make right decisions.

When children are old enough to understand, we must begin to teach them the consequences of making

wrong decisions and the blessings of right decisions.

Remember, Deuteronomy 6:7 says, "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." In other words, it must be a full-time priority for Dad.

We are living in an age that demands we give even more attention to the needs of our children.

According to recent reports, thirty years ago, the greatest fears of grade school children were: Animals, being in a dark room, high places, strangers and loud noises. Today, children are afraid, divorce, nuclear war, cancer, pollution and being mugged.

Pray for your children and pray with your children everyday Listen to them, don't just hear what they are saying. Give them your attention and direct eye contact when they speak to you. Your children will let you know what concerns or problems they have when they sense that you really care.



Find as many things as you possibly can to praise you children for. Criticism kills!

Spend quality time enjoying your children. Get down on their level and see the world they see.

Have your children in a good church. Be there with them at all the services you can possibly attend. Discipline with love, patience, humility, compassion, kindness and teach them right from wrong as early as possible. Be continually learning what the Bible has to say about this important responsibility.



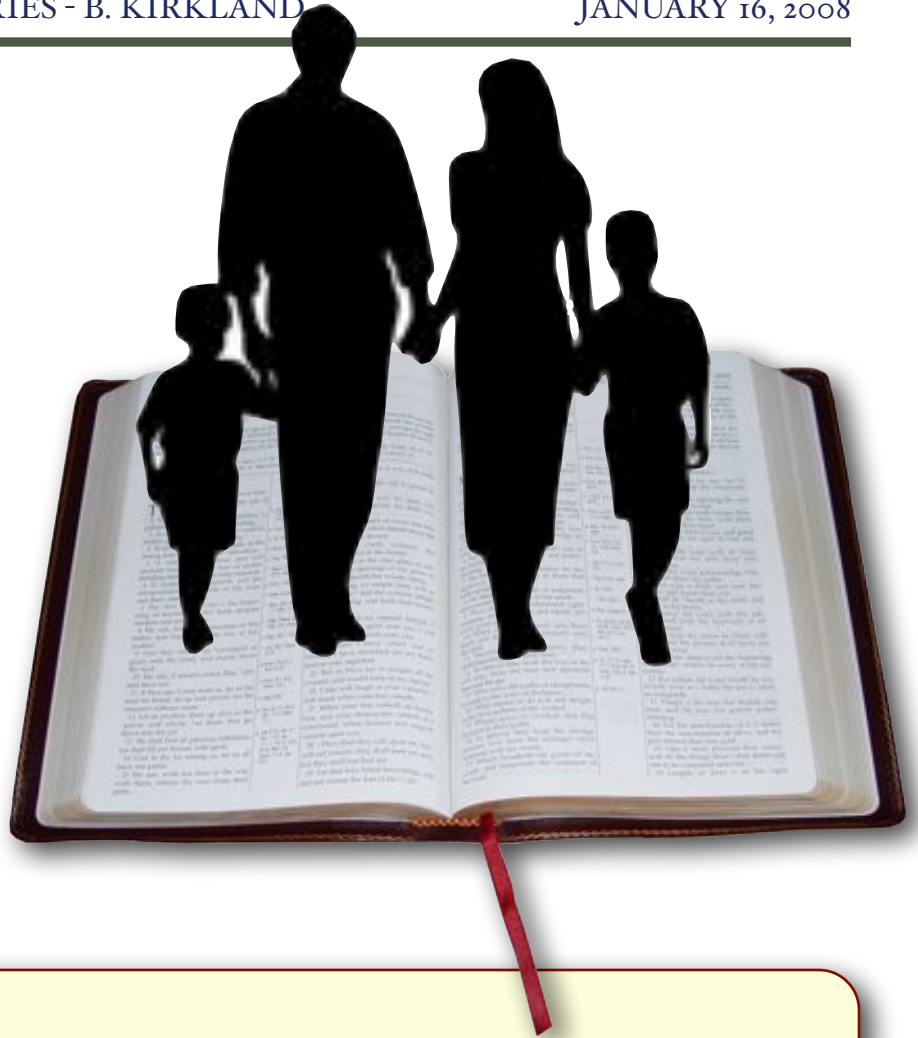
There are two primary methods of teaching. The first is by example, the second is by specific instruction.

In Deuteronomy 6:6 we read, “*And these words which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart.*” The next verse continues, “*You shall teach them diligently to your children...*”

All of our instructions will fall on deaf ears, if we as parents are not setting the right example.

There’s nothing more challenging in life than raising godly children in an ungodly world. It is a day by day, child by child experience.

Pastor B. Kirkland



“And ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.”

(Ephesians 6:4)

Local Church Ministries

“An Outreach Ministry of FairHavens Baptist Church - Sarnia - Ontario - Canada

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