**Faith and the Rechabites and Values**

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*How blessed is the man who finds wisdom and the man who gains understanding for her profit is better than the profit of silver and her gain better than fine gold. She is more precious than jewels; and nothing you desire compares with her. Proverbs 3: 13-15*

It isn’t easy to impart wisdom and pass on our values to others. We find a story of a tribe of people in the Old Testament who did a phenomenal job of it. They were the Rechabites. Some of you may be thinking, “who are the Rechabites?” We find their story in Jeremiah 35. It is an interesting story, one I think we can all learn from. Read this excerpt from the Message Bible.

*The Message that Jeremiah received from God ten years earlier, during the time of Jehoiakim son of Josiah king of Israel: Go visit the Rechabite community. Invite them to meet with you in one of the rooms in God’s Temple. And serve them wine.* *So I went and got Jaazaniah son of Jeremiah, son of Habazziniah, along with all his brothers and sons–the whole community of the Rechabites as it turned out–and brought them to God’s Temple and house of the Lord, to the meeting room of Hanan son of Igdaliah, a man of God. It was next to the room of the Temple officials, and just over the apartment of Maaseiah, son of Shalium, who was in charge of Temple affairs. Then I set out chalices and pitches of wine for the Rechabites and said, “A toast! Drink up!”* *But they wouldn’t do it. “We don’t drink wine.” they said. Our ancestor Jehonadab son of Recab commanded us: “You are not to drink wine, you or your children. Neither shall you build houses or settle down, planting fields and gardens and vineyards. Don’t own property. Live in tents as nomads so that you will live well and prosper in a wandering life. And we have done it, done everything Jonadab some of Recab commande*d. The Message Bible Jeremiah 35: 1-9.

Jonadab left some very strict guidelines for his family and descendants. We are not sure how he delivered them; but he did it in such a way that they became known as Rechabites and these guidelines became their values and culture. I wonder how did he communicate them to his family that made them not only keep them for the first generation, but for the next and the next? My research said that by Jeremiah’s time, it had been 250 years since they had been living under these rules. These vows were not part of the Mosaic law, but were instituted by this father hoping to keep his descendants free from falling into the ways of the Canaanites. That is quite a legacy. How clear and set are your values? Would they withstand an invitation to the White House or the King of England? These people were not intimidated by the Temple surroundings or by Jeremiah’s personality. They kept true to their own beliefs, no matter what. By setting wine in front of them, as the Lord led, Jeremiah discovered how devout they really were. Life often tempts us to compromise our character, beliefs, or values. How do we not only keep them ourselves, but pass them on to the next generation?

As we skip down to verse 12, we discover the Lord’s purpose in Jeremiah’s invitation to the Rechabites. *Then Jeremiah received this Message from God” “God of the Angel Armies, the God of Israel, wants you to go tell the people of Judah and the citizens of Jerusalem that I say, “Why won’t you learn you lesson and do what I tell you?” God’s Decree. The commands of Jonadab son of Recab to his sons have been carried out to the letter. He told them not to drink wine, and they haven’t touched a drop to this very day. They honored and obeyed their ancestor’s command. But look at you! I have gone to a lot of trouble to get your attention, and you’ve ignored me. I sent prophet after prophet to you, all of them my servants to tell you from early morning to late at night to change your life, make a clean break with your evil past do do what is right, to not take up with every Tom, Dick and Harry of a god that comes down the pike, but settle down and be faithful in this country I gave your ancestors. And what do I get from you? Deaf ears. The descendants of Jonadab son of Recab carried out to the letter what their ancestor commanded them, but this people ignores me.* The Message Jeremiah 35:12-16. Wow, you can tell the Lord is upset with His people.

If we want to influence our children and others, we must decide what we want to pass on. By God’s grace, we modeled for our kids the importance of personal devotions and Bible study. We prayed with them as different issues came up–both big and small. It was important to us to show them that God is available and interested in every aspect of their lives . We modeled forgiveness and apology. It is a joy to watch them passing on these values to their own children. Could we have done better? Of course!

When I was pregnant with my first child, I read a fiction book about a pastor and their family, but it was based on a true story. The “church” criticized their children mercilessly. They expected 100% perfection all the time. After reading this book, I made a vow to never expect more of my children than God would. That I would help them learn His ways with grace and forgiveness. As pastor’s kids, they had their share of unrealistic expectations from our congregations, but we never disciplined them for other’s expectations. I did not want my children to think following Jesus was a bunch of rules, but a life-giving relationship. What are the values and expectations you want to pass on to those you influence? Jonadab the Rechabite made it very clear to his family his expectations. I don’t think we were as clear with our words, but more with actions. No matter what, I am so grateful my children are doing their best to pass them on. Often, more is caught than taught, right?

I don’t know why Jonadab made the particular list he did for his family, but there is still a legacy from their tribe. The Victorian Rechabite Tent is still functioning in Australia. The members sign a pledge to abstain from alcohol, and for a time lived in tents. It is a testimony of God’s faithfulness.

None of us knows how or what God is going to do with our obedience to God and His ways. It is in His hands. The good news is if we sow good fruit, we can trust Him with it. Clarify your values. I think the best ones are those that line up with His values. They are the ones who have the most potency. It is worth it.

*Father, I thank you for helping us sort out good values and teach us how to pass them on. Jonadab made set some obvious lines for his family. Help us do the same, in love with grace and mercy. Thank you for helping us influence generations to come by our actions. In Jesus’ Name, amen.*