

Good men; bad dads

Leviticus 10:1-11

Aaron was a good man. He was appointed by God to be the mouthpiece for Moses, his older brother. He was supportive of his more famous brother and was even willing to hold up Moses' arms to support the military effort against the Amalekites (Exodus. 17:12). After delivering the Ten Commandments, Aaron was anointed by God to be the nation's first high priest, a position he served well.

But Aaron's two sons, Nadab and Abihu, who served with their father, "offered unauthorized fire before the LORD, contrary to his command. So fire came out from the presence of the Lord and consumed them, and they died before the LORD" (Leviticus 10:1, 2). Their offense was serious and God judged them severely.

A number of good men in the Bible had sons who did not walk in their father's footsteps. The high priest Eli had two sons, Hophni and Phineas, who blasphemed God by their greed and immorality while serving in the tabernacle. King David's sons, Adonijah and Absalom, brought disgrace to their father by their rank immorality and rebellion. The prophet Samuel's sons, Joel and Abijah, accepted bribes and perverted justice to the point that the elders told Samuel his sons were not worthy to lead them. King Hezekiah walked with God, but his son Mannasseh was considered the

most wicked king who ever reigned over Judah.

Why did these godly leaders fail to pass the baton of faith on to their children? Were they so preoccupied with their spiritual duties they didn't take time for their families? Were they passive in disciplining their children? Were they overindulgent with their God-given prosperity?

In each case, these fathers made flagrant mistakes in their walk with God and set poor examples for their children. Aaron assisted in fashioning an idol. David committed adultery with Bathsheba. Hezekiah became prideful of his wealth and power.

However, fathers who have rebellious children should be heartened by three facts. First, there is no perfect father. "There is no one righteous, not even one" (Romans 3:10). There's a sense in which every child has to overcome the imperfections of his or her father.

A son of an alcoholic dad excused his own alcoholism saying, "What would you expect? My dad was an alcoholic." His twin brother, however, explained why he chose to be a total abstainer: "My dad was an alcoholic. I know better because of what happened to him."

Second, sometimes children go astray and it really isn't the parent's fault. Proverbs 22:6 says, "Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it." Like

some other verses in Proverbs, that principle is generally true but not a guaranteed promise.

Third, fathers can take heart because the power of Christ can transform the most rebellious child. A New Testament father had two wayward sons. Zebedee's sons were real hotheads. Their nickname was "Sons of Thunder." They could lose their temper in a second and would even call down fire from Heaven to consume those who mistreated them if they could. But Jesus transformed James and John into apostles of love and peace.

Billy Graham's son, Franklin, rebelled against his father's faith in his early years and lived absolutely contrary to what his father preached. But eventually Jesus Christ transformed him and today Franklin Graham is a powerful influence for the Christian faith. He wrote about his repentance in his biography titled, *Rebel With a Cause* (Thomas Nelson, 1997). Fathers, if your adult children do not share your faith right now, keep praying, keep loving, keep reaching out, and maybe one day you'll rejoice when the prodigal comes home. ■

©2002 Bob Russell

Bob Russell is senior minister at Southeast Christian Church, Louisville, Kentucky.



Day by Day With the Bible

Use this guide to read through the Bible in 12 months. Follow Bob Russell's comments on the highlighted text in every issue of THE LOOKOUT.

Day 1 □ Matthew 17:14-27
□ Acts 24
□ Psalm 39
□ **Leviticus 5-7**

Day 2 □ Matthew 18:1-14
□ Acts 25:1-12
□ Psalm 40
□ **Leviticus 8-10**

Day 3 □ Matthew 18:15-35
□ Acts 25:13-27
□ Psalm 41
□ **Leviticus 11-13**

Day 4 □ Matthew 19:1-15
□ Acts 26:1-18
□ Psalm 42
□ **Leviticus 14, 15**

Day 5 □ Matthew 19:16-30
□ Acts 26:19-32
□ Psalm 43
□ **Leviticus 16, 17**

Day 6 □ Matthew 20:1-16
□ Acts 27:1-26
□ Psalm 44
□ **Leviticus 18-20**

What Do You Think?

1. In what ways has your relationship with your earthly father influenced your relationship with your heavenly Father?
2. How does knowing you have a perfect father in Heaven affect your Christian life?