

Raising Up a Family of Faith

by Dean Ridings

Just as marriage is God's idea—a very *good* idea—so the family is His idea. Here's how the psalmist puts it: "God settles the solitary in a home" (Psalm 68:6a).

All of us come from families. Granted, not all have had ideal family circumstances. Yet we who live with Kingdom-minded purpose long to instill faith in our families. It is our heart's desire to leave a legacy of faith that will endure for generations until Jesus returns. In order to do that, we must be intentional.

1. What roles do you play in your family?

Yes, God has placed each of us in a family. Yours may be larger than you realize! Here is an opportunity for you to list your immediate and extended family members. Think of your particular roles; for example, if you are married, you're a *spouse*; if you have kids, you are a *parent*; if your kids have kids, you're a *grandparent*. List the names of your living relatives, each person related to you in the following roles (include other family relationships, such as step-families):

I am the great-grandchild of:

I am the grandchild of:

I am the child of:

I am the sibling of:

I am the niece/nephew of:

I am the cousin of:

I am the spouse of:

I am the son-in-law/daughter-in-law of:

I am the brother-in-law/sister-in-law of:

I am the parent of:

I am the parent-in-law of:

I am the aunt/uncle of:

I am the grandparent of:

I am the great-grandparent of:

2. What legacy do you long to leave your family?

Let's consider an example of a parent in Bible times who stood as a picture of faith for his family. Jacob and his family are among the people mentioned in Hebrews 11. Jacob pondered a vision for his family as he stood before them near the end of his life: "By faith Jacob, when dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, bowing in worship over the head of his staff" (11:21).

Below we will look more closely at how Jacob blessed his sons. For now, ponder this picture: a patriarch who has a vibrant relationship with God longing to leave a legacy of faith for his family. Now write out the legacy of faith you long to leave:

3. What actions will you take now toward realizing the vision you have for your family?

You've thought through the legacy of faith you long to leave for each member of your family. As you seek to realize this vision—enduring faith until Jesus' return—the apostle Paul offers relevant counsel that it's not going to just happen. You need to take action: "Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it" (1 Corinthians 9:24). What would it look like for you to "run for the prize" of instilling a godly legacy in your family?

Let's return to Jacob's example. In the book *The Blessing*, Gary Smalley and John Trent observe key commitments Jacob and others throughout the Bible made in blessing their families. They say that the blessing as described in Scripture always includes five elements: meaningful and appropriate touch; a spoken message; attaching high value to the one being blessed; picturing a special future for him or her; and an active commitment to fulfill the blessing.

As you seek to "run for the prize" in terms of instilling a legacy of faith in your family—keep in mind each name listed earlier—how might the five attributes of the blessing inspire you?

4. How might this affect your prayer life?

In closing, entrust to the Lord your vision of a legacy of faith. Also, determine to pray regularly for each family member on your list—adding names as your family grows. Keep in mind the words of James, Jesus' half-brother, "the prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working" (James 5:16b).

