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(Joshua 22)

**Intro.** We probably all have family traditions which are important to us, whether there are certain things we do each week, month or certain times of the year. It may be a camping or hunting trip, special trip to the beach or mountains, trips to theme parks, family game night or special holiday traditions. In the greatest comedy movie of all-time, National Lampoon’s “Christmas Vacation,” Chevy Chase has just driven his family an hour or two from their home in Chicago to a Christmas tree lot (show 2:10 clip). Whatever your family tradition is, you can agree with me that some matters must be passed along to your children & grandchildren. The most important of these is “Passing on the Faith to the Next Generation.” Today, we look at Joshua 22 in our series on “Moving Forward.”

Theme: Parenting & discipleship

Background: Yahweh brought His people Israel into the Promised Land through Joshua’s leadership & worked on their behalf, performing miracles & fighting for them, so they defeated all the major city-states throughout Canaan. Then the tribes of Israel inherited their respective land & were allotted it. Now the 2 ½ tribes are about to head back across the Jordan River & into the land they requested from Moses a few years earlier.

### Overview of the Narrative:

- The story begins with the 2 ½ tribes receiving an honorable discharge from Joshua to return to their home on the east side of the Jordan & Joshua commended them for keeping their promise to fight with the rest of Israel in taking the Promised Land
- As he dismissed them, Joshua admonished them to remain faithful to the Lord in all things & blessed them as they parted
- As the 2 ½ tribes go to their land, they build an altar (scholars debate which side of the Jordan the altar was built) & word comes back to the rest of Israel & they assume it is for false worship practices
- The law of Deuteronomy 12 didn’t insist on the limitation of one central sanctuary, although this is the way it was widely understood—the chief concern of Deuteronomy 12:5 was to set the place where the Lord was to be worshipped in sharp antithesis to the places where Canaanites practiced their fertility rites (Woudstra, 320)
- The Israelites consider the act of building another altar to be a breach of the purity of worship & therefore a threat of apostasy (see Leviticus 17:8-9; Deuteronomy 13:12-15)—thus, they are ready to go to war to preserve loyalty to Yahweh
- Phinehas led the cohort, probably because of his leadership several years earlier in confronting the false worship of Baal with zeal (Numbers 25:1-9)—10 leaders accompany him, 1 from each of the 10 tribes living west of the Jordan
- Once they confront the 2 ½ tribes & ask why they rebelled, the tribes praise Yahweh & claim they had no such intentions, but wanted to set up an altar as a reminder (not a place of sacrifice) to their children that they, too, were part of Israel, even though they dwelt on the other side of the Jordan
- The news was good to Israel, so they departed & labeled the altar as “Witness”

### ➤ Core Elements for Passing on the Faith to the Next Generation so you can be “Moving Forward”:

#### I. Love the Lord completely & live for Him wholeheartedly (22:2-3, 5)

- These are 2 sides of the same coin—it hearkens back to Deuteronomy 6, which speaks of loving Yahweh & expressing that love in the way one lives
- The infinitives are covenantal language, especially with the words “love” & “cling” (cf. Genesis 2:24; Ruth 1:14-17)

- The future rest for Israel & the believer's future rest in heaven are directly tied to their faithfulness—God grants grace but once we receive it by faith, we are expected to live it out
- Understand an important truth here—Israel wasn't exempt from future obedience to the Lord just because of past obedience to Moses & Joshua (& this generation was largely obedient, whereas their parents weren't)
- This truth is important because some professing Christians today are tempted to check out of the Christian faith & think they are okay because they were faithful for 30 or 40 years—past decades of obedience doesn't grant you merit to live a few years in disobedience, because the command is to love the Lord fully

## **II. Seek purity before peace (22:12-20)**

- The “breach of faith” (22:16) was also used of Achan's sin (7:1)—since God held all Israel accountable when one man & his family kept some of the devoted things, Israel had learned their lesson & was ready to remain pure before the Lord
- That Israel was ready to go to war with their own extended family members means they understood putting Yahweh first may mean separating from your family—they put purity in the Lord ahead of peace with their family members
- Too many Christians confuse this issue today, ready & willing to accept their family members for any heinous act & fail to confront them on issues of sin

Illus: Several years ago Annthea & I had to distance ourselves from a family member living in sin, because we didn't want the negative influence on our children, but we told the family member why we weren't spending time with them & they eventually repented & asked for our forgiveness, which we were quick to give

- Purity in the sight of God comes before peace with others in the faith (see James 3:17) & that's why church discipline is so important & necessary—some Christians wander in belief or practice from the faith & rather than remain at peace with them, God expects His church to be pure

## **III. Establish your witness before the Lord & His people (22:22-28, 34)**

- When the 2 ½ tribes respond with “The Mighty One, God, the LORD” twice, they lift Him up as the greatest of all gods & claim He is all-knowing & ask Him to deal with them if they lie to the rest of Israel
- The word “witness” (22:27-28, 34) occurs 4x here & is common in covenant-making texts—much like a minister may invoke the witness of God & family & friends at a marriage ceremony where vows are taken as a witness to others of how a couple will live out their marriage
- This witness was more for the future generations rather than the current generation—older generations must always be cognizant of what they are leaving the next generation

Illus: We're asking parents & grandparents to be part of our “Purity Works” conference on Saturday, October 10. I realize some kids are playing sports, but ask a friend to take them while you attend the conference, because it will help equip you for the future in how you parent. The conference is low-cost & offers a low-cost kids' camp, as well. We expect several from the community & will need extra helpers with the kids' camp (so contact Amy Bailey, if available). We offer conferences like this to equip you to pass on the faith in a more productive way to the next generation

**Conc.** I don't know what all your family traditions are, but I know some of you get a picture with the fat man in red each year & some of you get a family picture at the flowery cross. You may have a mom or grandmother who bakes a great turkey or ham or apple pie for special holidays. Traditions can be meaningful, but the one tradition you & I are called to pass along to the next generation is the faith. Teach them about the holiness of God & their own sinfulness. Tell them God sent Jesus as the only hope for the world. Encourage them to repent & trust in Christ. Let God work in their lives to draw them to Himself. And when that happens, we'll be “Moving Forward.”