

THE CRISIS IN AMERICA—AND HOW TO FIX IT!

What if you were given the task of “fixing” the problems of America? Where would you start? Although there are various problem-solving models, each generally starts at the same place—listing and defining the problem or problems. So what are the problems in America? There is the problem of...

- addiction to both alcohol and drugs—so much so that we are said to be having an opioid crisis
- gun control and mass-shootings
- illegal immigration and overcrowding at our southern border
- there are health-care problems and poverty problems
- and then there are moral problems—abortion, pornography, same-sex marriages, and gender identity “confusion” which should really be called what it is—“gender *rebellion*.”

So how do you fix all of these? Seems hopeless and overwhelming, doesn't it? What if—underneath all these problems—there was only *one* problem? Wouldn't it be much easier to tackle one problem than dozens of them? I, for one, believe it would. If there is only *one* problem, what would it be?

David Blankenhorn wrote: “The irony of this Father's Day is that the United States is an increasingly fatherless society. Tonight, more than one-third of our nation's children will go to sleep in homes in which their fathers do not live. Before they reach age eighteen, more than half of our nation's children will spend a significant portion of their childhood living apart from their fathers. Fatherlessness is now approaching a rough parity with fatherhood as a defining feature of American childhood.” This was written in **1993**—sixteen years ago—and the number of fatherless homes has undoubtedly increased since then.

In his book “Fatherless America: Confronting Our Most Urgent Social Problem,” Blankenhorn makes the following observations:

- Over 70% of juveniles in long-term correctional facilities grew up without their fathers
- Females from fatherless homes are 111% more likely to have children as teenagers and 164% more likely to have children before marriage
- And the chances that an abuser (sexual) of a child is someone other than the biological father is 40:1

Along the same lines, Suzanne Venker made this observation: Of the 27 deadliest mass shootings in U.S. history, 26 of the shooters—all but one—had the same thing in common—they grew up *without their biological father*. That stat doesn't get a lot of press, does it?

Is fatherhood important? It certainly is! Does God have anything to say about fatherhood? He certainly does! This morning we are going to talk about a father whose name appears 230 times in the Bible—160 in the OT and 70 in the NT. Of the 66 books in the Bible, he is mentioned in 27 of them. He is referred to as the “father of many nations,” the “father of the Jews,” and the father in whom “all families of the earth will be blessed.”

His name? Abraham! Please take your Bibles and turn to Genesis 18:17-19. In God's conversation here with Abraham, we will be looking at three eternal truths that also apply to us as fathers: God's perception of us, His priority for us, and His promise to us.

Two disclaimers before we dig into this passage:

1. Just because I quoted David Blankenhorn a little earlier doesn't mean I agree with everything he says. In fact, I was saddened to learn that he has flip-flopped his position. Instead of being an advocate for a biblical parenthood—one man and one woman—he has come out in favor of same-sex “parents” in homes.

2. I'm not suggesting that *all of America's* problems will be fixed if men who fathered children became Biblical fathers. Only God can fix America, but the predominant attitude in young men--that "there is no fear of God before their eyes"—could be changed a lot if respect for authority was taught by fathers in the home.

1. **God's perception of us**—"For I know him" (18:19)

What did God know about Abraham?

A. God knew what Abraham was thinking (17:15-19)

Flip back a page or 2 to Genesis 17, verses 15.

--v 15-16 "I will give thee a son also of her" (Sarah). In Genesis 16:16 we see Abraham had a son from Hagar whose name was Ishmael. God was letting Abraham know that Sarah would be the mother of nations—that she, too, would be having a child.

--v 17 "Then Abraham fell upon his face, and laughed, and said in his *heart*"

God knew that Abraham was thinking he and Sarah were too old to have children. How do we know that?

--v 19 "And God said, Sarah *thy wife* shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac..."

And just as God knew Abraham's thoughts, it is good for us to be reminded that God knows **our** thoughts.

Psalms 94:11 "The LORD knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are vanity."

Psalms 139:2 "Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off."

B. God knew what Abraham was doing (17:17-19)

Notice verse 18: "And Abraham said unto God, O that Ishmael might live before thee!" Why did Abraham bring up Ishmael? Because Abraham doubted that Sarah would have a child. And because in his mind Sarah wasn't going to have a child, he had to come up with a plan to **help God** make him the father of many nations. So in essence he says, "Here's my offspring—bless him, God!"

God knew Abraham's doubts—and Abraham's plan. He knew what Abraham was trying to do. That's true of us, isn't it? God knows what we are doing. We noticed that in Psalm 139:2 "Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising..." God knows when we sit—and when we stand; He knows when we lay down at night—and when we wake up in the morning. Psalm 139:3 "...art acquainted with all my ways."

God also knows what we are doing even when we think NO ONE knows what we are doing. Psalm 139:11-12 "If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. ¹²Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee."

God knew what Abraham was thinking and God knew what Abraham was doing.

C. God knew what Abraham would do (18:19)

Back to Genesis 18:19 "For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him..." God knows what we will do in the future; He knows how we will respond. He knows the rest of the story before the story unfolds. Was Abraham perfect? Not hardly!

--In Genesis 12:1-2 we see God's promise to make of him a great nation

--In verses 10-12—not long after being told by God that he would become a great nation—he fears **for his life** and asks Sarah to lie about their relationship.

--In Chapter 13:15-16 God tells him his seed will be as the dust of the earth; in chapter 15 the promise is repeated. But in chapter 16 he agrees to have a child with Sarah's maid so that *that* child could be the heir.

--We also saw in chapter 17 that he laughed when God told him Sarah herself would have a son

--And yet in spite of these failures and lapses in faith, God says of Abraham in Gen 18:19 "I know that he will command his children and his household after him..."

Let's pause here for just a moment. Is God's perception—His knowledge—limited to knowing only what Abraham would do in the future? No; He knows what **we will do** in the future. If God was writing this about *you*, how would it read?

--Would it read, "For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him..."—or will it read differently?

"For I know him, that he will only go to church if he has time"

"For I know him, that he will let his wife be the spiritual leader"

"For I know him, that he will leave his wife for another woman..."

God knows how it will read, but God isn't writing it—**you** are! Abraham didn't always do it right, but he grew and changed and became a spiritual leader that we are still talking about 4000 years later. Human failure is never final as long as the grace of God is at work! (MacArthur)

God knew what Abraham thought...and what he was doing...and what he would do. Lastly...

D. God knew what the outcome of Abraham's obedience would be (18:19)

God not only knew what Abraham would do in the future, he knew what the outcome would be. "I know Abraham will command his children and household after him" and I know the result: "...and they shall keep the way of the LORD..." We have a wonderful example of his children keeping the way of the LORD and his name is Isaac.

--Turn to Genesis 22. We have here God's instructions to Abraham to offer up Isaac. How old was Isaac? We are not told, but we have a pretty significant clue in verse 6: "And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and *laid it upon* Isaac his son..." Although no age is mentioned, it's pretty safe to imagine he was at least a teenager because if he were younger than that he could not have carried the wood!

And if he was strong enough to carry the wood, I don't think I'm going out on a limb to suggest that he could have overpowered his 100 year old plus father! But he didn't, did he? In Genesis 22:9 we see Isaac allowing himself to be bound because he trusted God's plan. Isaac trusted God's plan because Abraham had taught him the ways and workings and will of God.

First, God's perception. Just as God knew Abraham, God knows us. He knows what we think and what we do and what we will do and how it will all turn out.

2. God's priority for us (Gen 18:19)

Back to Genesis 18. What was God's priority for Abraham? God's priority—the thing he wanted Abraham to do and that he knew Abraham would do—was to **command**—to lead—his family.

--It was Abraham's responsibility—not Sarah's! "For I know **him**, that **he** will command his children and his household after him..." It doesn't say, "I know him, and he will ensure Sarah does it..." He, Abraham, will lead. He will command. He will provide guidance and instruction and hold the family accountable for what they were taught. It was his job to do that and God knew that he would do it.

--What was the commanding—the instructing—to be in regards to? House-building? Amassing a fortune? Attaining fame or power? Being a mighty warrior? It was none of these, was it?

--Abraham was rich; Genesis 13:2 says "Abram was very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold."

--He was also a great warrior—he and his servants helped rescue Lot and his family in Genesis 14. His name also became great as evidenced by the fact that we are still talking about him today.

None of these things were God's *priority*, though. God's priority was that Abraham teach his family "to keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment."

They were to be taught what right looks like—and to do it. They were to be taught that there is blessing in doing right—and there are consequences for doing wrong. They were to be taught to love God and keep His commandments. Fathers teaching their children the ways of God is mentioned a number of times in God's Word:

Deuteronomy 6:5-7 “And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: 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.”

Joshua 24:15 “...but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”

Ephesians 6:4 “And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.”

How about it, Dads? God’s priority is for you to be the spiritual leader in your home. Are you? If not, what are you waiting for?

Lastly, notice **3. God’s promise to us** (18:19)

Verse 19 “...that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which He hath spoken of him.” Some promises of God are unconditional—meaning they will happen whether we are obedient or not. Here are just a few:

A. Unconditional Promises

--God will never destroy the world again by a world-wide flood (Gen 9:11)

--No one can pluck God’s children out of the Father’s hand (John 10:27)

--Nothing will separate God’s children from the love of God that we have in Christ (Rom 8:38-39)

B. Conditional Promises

Again, there are a number we could look at; I want to draw our attention to several that pertain to raising our children for the Lord.

Psalm 119:9 “Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word.”

Young men will have the right kind of life if they obey God’s Word. Their fathers ought to teach it.

Proverbs 22:6 “Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.”

Both Mom and Dad should be involved in this process. If men leave the training to just their wife, don’t be surprised if your boy follows your example of being disinterested.

Proverbs 29:15 “The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame.”

Why? Because the fear of the Lord bringeth wisdom, but the fear of the Lord starts with a proper respect toward authority and that authority should be Dad.

Proverbs 29:17 “Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest; yea, he shall give delight unto thy soul.”

Delight comes not from catering to the whim of our children; it comes from patiently correcting them and teaching them.

Last one—and this one applies to all areas of life:

Proverbs 3:5-6 says, “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.”

God promises to guide and direct us, but it requires that we “acknowledge Him” in all our ways. If there was ever an area we need wisdom and direction from God, it is in raising children for Him.”

So how are you doing, Dads? God knows how you are doing, doesn’t He? The perception of others is one thing; the perception of **God** is the accurate thing. Is teaching our children the ways of God the priority it should be? If not, it needs to be. Don’t wait—don’t think it’s too late—don’t think you’ve given up too much ground. Human failure is never final because the grace of God is still available!

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS:

1. Men; who is the spiritual leader in your home? I hate to sound mean, Dad, but if it’s not **you**, you are adding to the problems in America—not working to fix them!

2. Here's another consideration—how would God finish this verse if He was writing of you: “For I know him, that he will _____”

3. Lastly—and this is for all of us—are you a child of God? It is impossible to teach anyone how to **live for** God if you yourself are a rebel **against** God.