

Christian Family

Part 1

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[00:00:01] Dear Brothers and Sisters, I would like to have some words this morning on some aspects of the Christian family. When I say family, on the one hand, I mean a natural family, father, mother and children. But on the other hand, I am also thinking of the family of God, like a local assembly, which is to a certain extent also a family, having older ones and younger ones. And just two remarks before I read a text from the Bible. When I speak about family and responsibility of parents and of children, I don't do that because I have been a good father.

The Lord has given us in His grace five children and six grandchildren, and unfortunately we use the opportunities to make a lot of mistakes. [00:01:02] So I am not speaking to you as one who made everything correct and rightly, but as somebody who has made a lot of mistakes. And the second remark I would just like to make is, I know that in Germany, in Europe, in New Zealand, all over the world, there are a lot of families where children do not follow the Lord Jesus.

Should we blame each other for that? We should never do that. I would just like to read one verse from the prophet of Isaiah, which has encouraged me several times.

Isaiah chapter 1, where God Himself says, I have nourished, in verse 2, I have nourished and brought up children.

And when God is bringing up children, He does it in a perfect way, doesn't He? [00:02:02] But what was the result? And they have rebelled or transgressed against Me. Perfect education does not always mean that children will follow the Lord Jesus. If they do so, it is only grace, nothing but grace.

Now I would like to draw your attention to a very well-known chapter in the Old Testament, and I would like to read it and to make then some applications on our family lives. And the chapter I would like to read is Genesis chapter 22.

Genesis chapter 22, verse 1.

[00:03:03] And it came to pass, after these things, that God tried Abraham and said to him, Abraham. And he said, Here am I.

And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son, whom thou lovest, Isaac, and get thee into the land of Moriah, and there offer him up for a burnt offering on one of the mountains, which I will tell thee of.

And Abraham rose early in the morning, and settled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son. And he claimed the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up, and went to the place that God had told him of.

On the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place from afar. And Abraham said to his young men, Abide ye here with the ass, and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come back to you. [00:04:02] And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it on Isaac his son. And he took the fire in his hand, and the knife, and they went both of them together. And Isaac spoke to Abraham his father, and said, My father. And he said, Here am I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood, but where is the sheep for a burnt offering? And Abraham said, My son God will provide with the sheep for a burnt offering. And they went both of them together, and they came to the place of which God had told him. And Abraham built the altar there, and piled the wood, and he bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood. And Abraham stretched out his hand, and took the knife to slaughter his son.

[00:05:02] And verse 19, Abraham returned to his young men, and they rose up, and went together to Beersheba.

And Abraham dwelt at Beersheba.

Of course, dear brothers and sisters, if we consider this chapter, the first meaning of the chapter is the prophetic meaning, which gives us a wonderful picture of what God has done when he gave his only begotten son. This is for sure. This is the first meaning of the chapter. The second meaning of this chapter is that we see here how God tries his children. It is a temptation for Abraham, a trial, a test for the faith of Abraham, and we see how wonderful Abraham reacted to this test of his personal faith in this chapter. But there is a third meaning in this chapter, and this is before us this morning. [00:06:07] Here we have a father together with his son, or we could say we have an older man together with a younger man. And this gives me the freedom and the liberty to apply this chapter to the relationship or to some aspects of our relationship between parents and children, Abraham the father, Isaac the son, but also to the family of God, Abraham, an older man, Isaac, a younger man, how they are related together, how we are related together.

And I think in this chapter there is quite something to learn for us, for our family life, natural family, family of God.

[00:07:02] And I would like to make things a little bit easier and to divide the address into 10 different points that I would just like to underline a little bit. The first point is that we see in this chapter how important is a good example.

Abraham was a good example, was a good model, gave a good pattern for his son Isaac.

Isaac could follow the example his father has set.

Abraham was obedient to what God told him.

Abraham showed a wonderful faith towards his God and Abraham shows commitment and dedication [00:08:04] to God.

So Isaac could see his father's life and he could learn for his own life. He saw the obedience of his father. God told him to go to Moriah and Abraham did so. He did not complain, he did not object, he just obeyed. And by offering his son, he showed a wonderful faith. And by going to Moriah in order to worship, to be an adorator, he showed dedication and commitment to God.

So the first point for us is, in our families, as parents, as fathers and mothers, in our local assemblies, as the older ones, are we a good example for our children? [00:09:03] Are we a good example for our young people?

What would they see if they consider our lives?

Young people observe the older ones.

Children observe their parents. Young brothers and sisters in the meetings observe the older ones. What would they see?

Would they see these wonderful characters Abraham shows forth in this chapter? Obedience, faith and dedication.

Would that be an encouragement for young people to follow the good example of the older ones? Are we good models that young people can follow?

This is the first point that comes up when we consider this chapter under this viewpoint [00:10:07] of family life, of relationship between olders and youngers.

Do we live for the Lord or do we live for our own? Our children will realize that very soon.

The second point I would like to underline is that in the house of Abraham there was an atmosphere of love.

God told him, take thy son, but not only that, thine only son.

And then he adds, whom thou lovest.

[00:11:02] There was a relationship of love between the father, Abraham, and the son, Isaac.

I'm sure Isaac loved his father too.

But here the point is that Abraham loved his son.

Of course, we as parents have to see that we raise up our children in the discipline of the Lord. This is clearly stated in the New Testament that it's necessary. But we should never forget that our homes, our houses, and also our local assemblies should be places of love.

[00:12:01] There should be an atmosphere of love.

Now what does it mean to love our children?

What does it mean to love the young people in the local assembly? Does love mean that we give to our children, that we grant our children everything they would like to have?

There are some parents who give their children everything they would like to have. And they think this is love. Is it love?

Let's consider the perfect example of our Heavenly Father. He does love us, doesn't he? But what does it mean that God the Father loves us? Does it mean that he gives us everything we want? If he did so, he wouldn't love us. No, he does not give us everything we want.

[00:13:05] God loves us in giving us everything which is good for us. That is a big difference, isn't it? God gives us everything that is good for us, that is needful for us, that would be good for our spiritual health.

So to love our children means to give them what is good for them. To love our young people in the local assemblies means that we give that which is good, which is necessary, which is useful for them.

The opposite of love is not hatred, it is to a certain extent, but in another sense the opposite of love is egoism.

[00:14:02] Egoism means we want something for ourselves. Love is we want to give something to others. So in our families there should be this atmosphere of giving something to others, giving to the young people, giving to our children. We don't expect to receive, but we would like to give. That is the way God deals with us. He loves us and He gives us all we need, all that is good and necessary for us.

The third point I would like to mention is that there was not only an atmosphere of love, but there was also an atmosphere of confidence in the house of Abraham.

[00:15:02] If we read this chapter, if we read this history, this story here, we get the impression that Isaac had a full confidence in what his father said and in what his father did. He could trust a hundred percent in his father.

There is no negative reaction reported, reaction from the side of Isaac in this chapter. He accepted what his father did, he could trust in him a hundred percent.

Our confidence or trust is something we need in the relationship between elder ones and younger ones, between fathers and sons or daughters, between mothers and sons and daughters, [00:16:01] or also grandparents with their grandchildren. Could they trust in us? Could they have confidence in us?

How is it possible to get an atmosphere of confidence and trust?

Can confidence be claimed or can confidence be demanded? I think this is impossible.

Confidence and trust has to be acquired, hasn't it? It has to be acquired.

How can we acquire confidence and trust?

I think the answer to this question is when our words and our deeds, our acts are in accordance, in harmony, then trust and confidence can grow.

[00:17:05] If we say white and do black, our children will not have trust in us.

If, for example, we as parents say, dear children, you have to attend the meetings regularly and we ourselves don't go to the meetings regularly, how can our children rely on us? We will lose confidence if we do things like this. Again, young people and children, they are good observers and they will see whether that what we say is in accordance with that what we do in our families at home and also in the local assemblies.

If we speak other things than we do, our young people will easily be offended. [00:18:08] They will not have trust and confidence in us. So it is very important that these two things, words and deeds, are in accordance so that they might be an atmosphere of trust and confidence between older and younger ones.

The fourth point I would like to mention is that we see in this narrative here that Abraham had a clear target in mind.

He knew exactly what he wanted to do or what he had to do, but there was a clear target. [00:19:01] I and the lad will go yonder and worship, does he say in verse 5.

I would apply this to our families, to the local assemblies, when we talk about our children and our young people, are we having clear targets in mind?

We have to raise up, to bring up our children, but what is the target that we have in mind when we bring up our children? Do we have clear targets for our young people and for our children? Now what is the main target when we talk about educating our children?

The general target, the main target is that what the Lord Jesus said himself, let the children come to me. [00:20:02] That is the main target of education, to bring the children to the Lord Jesus Christ. We remember this wonderful scene in the Gospels when there were those who brought the little children to the Lord Jesus. By the way, who brought the children to the Lord Jesus? Generally we say the mothers brought the children to the Lord Jesus, but if you look into the New Testament you will not find that the mothers brought the children to the Lord Jesus. It just said they brought the children to the Lord Jesus. It is left open who did it, most probably the mothers did it, but Scripture doesn't say so.

They brought the children to the Lord Jesus, they, fathers, mothers, grandfathers, grandmothers. It is a wonderful responsibility, a wonderful challenge to bring children to the Lord Jesus.

[00:21:08] And also in a local assembly, it is a wonderful challenge for all of us to bring others, to bring our young people, our children, our teenagers in contact with the Lord Jesus Christ. That they might accept Him as their personal Savior and Lord. That is the main target of every education, that they accept Him as their personal Savior, but also as their personal Lord whom they would like to follow.

Of course there are also earthly targets in educating our children, this for sure, [00:22:05] but the priorities should be clearly set.

The most important thing is that they get in contact with the Lord Jesus. A successful career here on earth, welfare and all these kinds of things are okay in their place, but this is not the most important point. The most important point is that they accept the Lord Jesus Christ. I would just like to read one verse from the Gospel of Matthew, a well-known verse, Matthew chapter 16, verse 26.

For what does a man profit if he should gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his soul?

[00:23:04] What does it help? If our children will become rich and honorable, if they have a high position in this world, that is all okay, but what does it matter, what does it help, what does it profit if they suffer the loss of their soul? That is the main target in educating, in bringing up our children that they would accept the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior and as Lord.

The fifth point I would like to stress is, or to present, is that we as parents should on the one hand challenge our children, but that we should not expect too much from our [00:24:07] children.

Look what Abraham does.

He took the wood of the burnt offering, verse 6, and laid it on Isaac his son.

That was a certain burden he put on his son. He challenged him. He had to carry the wood.

But then he took the fire in his hand and also the knife he took in his hand.

He did not give the fire to his son. He did not give the knife to his son, but he gave the wood to his son.

From this we can learn that we have to challenge our children, we have to challenge our young [00:25:05] people according to their age, according to what they can carry on, but we should not expect too much.

Sometimes as parents we do not challenge our children at all. We do everything for them so that they don't need to do anything. That is not good. But on the other hand, there is a danger that we expect too much of our children. So these two dangers should be clear in mind. Yes, we should challenge them. We should put certain burdens on them, but don't overdo it. Don't expect too much. The wood on Isaac, the fire and the knife in the hand of the father.

[00:26:02] Help and assistance is important.

We should help our children. We should assist them.

But we should also have a look that they come, get along on their own, that they get and have a certain personality and that they could take over responsibility on their own shoulders in due time.

This is the responsibility of the parents. But there is also a responsibility of the children and also of the young people. They should take over, shouldn't they? Isaac took the wood, yes. He accepted the

wood on his shoulders.

If I would, I would like to apply this to the local meetings. Younger brethren, younger sisters, you should take over responsibility. [00:27:03] This is important.

One day the older ones will no longer be there and then you will have the responsibility. So start early enough to take over.

There is a wonderful example, there are more than one example, but there is one example I would like to show that is the example of Moses and of Joshua. And I would like to read from Numbers chapter 27, just to encourage us in this respect.

Numbers 27, verse 18.

And Jehovah said to Moses, Take Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the Spirit, and thou shalt lay thy hand upon him, and thou shalt set him before Elias the priest, and [00:28:10] before the whole assembly, and give him commandment before their eyes, and thou shalt put of thine honor upon him.

Joshua was ready to take over responsibilities.

Young man, young woman, take over responsibilities in the local assemblies. This is very vital. It is necessary for the local assemblies.

The sixth point I would like to mention is the importance of the presence of parents in regard to their children.

[00:29:06] Isaac had a question and he said, My father Abraham, and what did Abraham reply? Here am I, my son.

He was there when Isaac needed him.

Let us turn to the prophet of Ezekiel chapter 34, where we have the wonderful example of the Lord Jesus.

Ezekiel 34, verse 11, For thus says the Lord Jehovah, Behold, I, even I, will both search for my sheep and tend them.

[00:30:07] Three things are mentioned in this verse, Behold, I, even I. The German translation has, I am there.

That is the presence of the parents. I will both search for my sheep.

To search means to have interest in them, and I will tend them. That means I will help them.

Our children, dear brothers and sisters, need our presence. They need their parents' presence.

And young people in the local assemblies need the presence of the older ones. They need the

presence of the older ones, they need the interest of the older ones, [00:31:03] and they need the assistance, the help of the older ones. And in our families it is exactly the same. Our little children, our growing up children, they need our presence. They need our interest, and they would need our help.

Are our homes and houses places of security and safety, where children know that their parents are there when they need them?

Is there an atmosphere that they come to us when they have got a problem at school, at university, with their friends or whatever? Are our assemblies places of safety, of security, where the younger ones would know when I have [00:32:03] got a problem, I can approach an elder brother or an elder sister. He will or she will help me, she will assist me, she has got a certain interest in me. This is so necessary. Young people need the presence, the interest, the help, the assistance of the older one as God is always there when we need him.

His eyes are always open for us. His ears are always open for us. His heart is always open to us. And in the same way we should deal with one another, with our younger ones. Our ears should be open whenever they have got a question. Our eyes should be open to see what they are doing, where they might run into a problem or into a risk. And our heart should always be open for them, to help them, to assist them, and to come [00:33:04] back to the second point, that we love them.

The seventh point that I found in this chapter is that Azrahan and Isaac had a common way.

Twice we read, they went both of them together.

We love to apply this to God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. But let us apply this this morning to our relationship in our families.

They went both of them together.

It is so important for us that we have common ways with our children, common activities, [00:34:03] that we go together, that we are together with our children, that we take them with us.

If we don't take them with us, if we don't go with them, a day will come when they will no longer go with us.

It is ever so necessary that we do things together, in our families, but also in the local assemblies.

Not the younger ones there and the older ones there. No, let us do it together. We are one flock. We are one family.

The older ones, the younger ones. Let us do things together, in our families, common activities. [00:35:03] Yes, we as parents, we can play with our boys, rugby or cricket or whatever you play or in Germany we do it, football or soccer, yes, that's okay, but common ways also and this is the priority in following the Lord Jesus, going together.

If we follow the Lord, our children will follow the Lord, young and old together.

Again, there is a wonderful example in the Old Testament. Should we just turn to 2 Kings, 2 Kings chapter 2.

We have the wonderful example of Elijah and Elisha. [00:36:02] 2 Kings 2, verse 1, Elijah went with Elisha from Gilgal.

The end of verse 2, the younger one says, I will not leave thee. Verse 4 at the end, again the younger one says, I will not leave thee. And then in verse 6, as Jehovah liveth and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee and they two went on.

It is the same expression as we have in Genesis 22, they went both of them together. The older one and the younger one, two servants of the Lord, an old servant and a young servant, they went together, Elijah and Elisha went together. What a wonderful example for us.

[00:37:04] The older brothers together with the younger brothers. The older sisters together with the younger sisters. They went together, common ways, common activities, common interests.

The eighth point is the importance of communication.

Abraham and Isaac talked to each other.

Isaac had a question and Abraham gave the answer.

There was conversation.

They were not silently going to Moriah, but they talked to each other.

It is so important, so vital for our families that we talk together, that we have communication [00:38:09] between parents and children, children and parents, and again also in our local assemblies that we have communication, good conversation between the older ones and the younger ones. Not talking is the death of a family.

Not talking is a death of a local assembly. We have to open ourselves. We have to talk to each other.

We have our questions and we have our answers.

Whenever our children, according to their age, have questions, are we as parents ready to answer to their questions? [00:39:02] If we don't answer the questions of our children, others will do it. And if others will give the correct answers, it's another point, isn't it? So better we give the answers than somebody else, or maybe the internet gives the answer to the questions of our children. No, we, it is our responsibility to see that we have the right answers for the questions of our children. And sometimes it is good to provoke questions. Children are different, aren't they? Some children, they always have questions and they express their questions. Others, they do have questions, but they don't express them. They don't talk about it. Then it might be a good thing for us as parents to provoke their questions by asking them questions. That is also the way God is dealing with us. [00:40:02] Look how many questions the Lord Jesus asked when he was on earth, and he never asked because he didn't know the answer. He knew everything, but nevertheless, he had asked a lot of

questions to provoke something in the heart of the one with whom he was talking. So let's talk together.

And what is the main subject when we talk together? Yes, we have to talk about earthly things, of course we have, but the main subject we are talking about is the Lord Jesus Christ. We are talking about his precious word. We have this wonderful verse in Deuteronomy 6, I would just like to read it without any more comments. And these words, Deuteronomy 6, verse 6, these words which I command thee this day shall be in thy heart, and thou shalt impress them on thy sons, and shalt talk of them when thou [00:41:07] sittest in thy house, and when thou goest on the way, and when thou liest down and thou risest up, and thou shalt bind them for a sign on thy hand, and they shall be for frontlets between thine eyes.

It is so important to talk about the Lord Jesus Christ, to talk about his word.

There is a ninth point, that is the importance of obedience and of honoring parents.

That is something particularly for the younger ones, for the children, sorry, who are here this morning.

Obedience and honoring, this is what we read in Ephesians chapter 6.

[00:42:03] Children obey to your parents, honor thy father and thy mother.

There is a responsibility for us as parents, we can make it an easy thing for our children to obey us, and we can make it a very hard thing for our children to obey us. If we have a right atmosphere, an atmosphere of love and confidence, it will be easy for children to obey us.

But it is the responsibility of the children. Obey your parents.

Obedience is something that has to be learned, that has to be exercised. Obedience means that we do, that the children do what their parents say.

[00:43:03] Obedience to the parents will come to an end when children are fully grown up.

When they get married on their own, they do no longer be obedient to their parents. But what will remain forever is that they honor their parents.

That will never come to an end. As long as we live, we have to honor our parents. And we can still honor them even if they are with the law. We can still honor them.

Honor thy parents, speak good of thy parents.

Don't insult them.

And the same applies to the local assemblies. [00:44:03] Obedience and also honoring or respect.

As younger ones, we should respect the older ones.

And the older ones should make it an easy thing for the younger ones to respect them, to honor them.

The tenth and the last point I would like to mention is that there was a moment where Isaac was released, where Isaac was discharged.

Where he was no longer linked, strictly linked to his father.

We read the verse 19, Abraham returned to his young man and they arose, they all together, [00:45:09] Isaac and Abraham, and went together.

The third time mentioned in this chapter that they went together, the both of them, to Beersheba.

But then it says, Abraham dwelt at Beersheba. Not Abraham and Isaac, but Abraham.

It's only Abraham who is mentioned. No more Isaac is mentioned.

There will be a moment in the lives of our children when they are fully grown up, when they are responsible individuals on their own, and we have to let them go.

We have to discharge, we have to release them.

[00:46:04] That is not an easy thing.

My wife and I, we have got four children who are married. When they marry, we as parents, we have to let them go.

I think many here from experience can say that is not an easy thing. But we all did the same, didn't we? Those who are married. Let them go.

Let them be alone.

Children are not our servants.

We can't keep them. They are a gift on loan. The moment comes where we let them go, where we release them. That is the moment where we can no longer ask for obedience, still the honoring that remains.

But the moment comes when we have to release them. [00:47:04] It is also a certain responsibility to make them ready for that very moment. It does not come from one second to the other. We have to prepare them for the very moment when they will be on their own.

Abraham let Isaac go.

We have to let go our children.

Now these were just some points with regard to family life, a little bit seen in this chapter of Genesis 22.

It was not at all my intention, dear brothers and sisters, the German brother to come to New Zealand to offend you or to hurt you in any respect, not at all.

[00:48:01] I hope that this is very clear. The word of God is the same in Europe, in New Zealand, in America, wherever. The principles that we apply to us are all over the world the same ones. So just take it as a word coming from the heart of a German brother to your hearts here in New Zealand or from wherever you are. We would like to encourage us, one another, to follow the good principles of the word of God as to our family lives, common responsibility as we had yesterday night, but also the personal responsibility with regards to our own families. The Lord bless us all.