RAISING CHILDREN IN THE FAITH

Passing On a Faith They Will Own

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Preface

Every pastor has seen it.
A boy who sat in the front row from the day he could walk. He knew every song. He knew where the Bible verses were. He carried the chairs and ran the errands and was in the building more than anyone.
And the day he left his father's house, he left the faith.

Every pastor has seen the other sorrow too: the sons and daughters of ministers who grew up in the house of God and never met the God of the house.

How does that happen?
It happens when a child is raised around God and not raised to know Him.

In *30 Days of Family and Parenting*, Pastor Cathy and I walked with families through the daily life of a Christian home: prayer together, the Word in the house, words that build, love that corrects. That book is about the home. This one is about what the home is for.

It is about handing on the faith.
Not handing on a habit.

Not handing on a church.
Handing on the faith, until the child holds it in his own hands and says, "This is mine."

I have built this book on a child who lived in the temple and did not yet know the Lord. His name was Samuel. His mother gave him to God. An old priest taught him to answer. And one night the Lord called him by name.
The God who called Samuel still calls children by name.

This book has two parts.
The first is for the home: for every father and mother who wants a child who will not only go to church but go on with God.
The second is for the house of God: for every pastor, every teacher of children and every leader, and for the leader's own house.

May these pages turn your home into a place where children ask, and are answered with the testimony.
May they turn our churches into places where children are not forbidden but brought near.
And may we live to see a generation that knows Him for itself.

Raise them around God.
Raise them to know Him.
Then let them go on with Him.

— Emmanuel Mukisa

PART

One

In Your Home

CHAPTER

1

Did Not Yet Know the LORD

A child can be raised around God and not yet be raised to know Him.

Before we see how the faith is handed on, hear the words.

The English dictionary defines to raise as "to care for a child or young animal until it is able to take care of itself" (*Oxford Learner's Dictionaries*).

Hear the end of that sentence: *until it is able to take care of itself*.

Raising has an end in view. You do not raise a child to keep him a child. You raise him for the day he stands on his own.

The word came into English from the Old Norse *reisa*, and it is related to *rear*. To raise is to lift up. To rear is to bring up until the thing can stand.

So it is in the faith. The end of raising a child in the faith is not a child who stands beside your faith. It is a child who stands in his own.

The New Testament gives us the word for handing on. Jude wrote that we should "earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3). The word for *delivered* is *paradidōmi*: to hand over, to give into another's hands.

Paul used the same word of the gospel: "For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received" (1 Corinthians 15:3).

Hear it: the faith is something received and something delivered. It passes from hand to hand. Every generation receives it, and every generation must hand it on.

The Old Testament gives us the word for what we are handing on to. It is *yada*: to know. Not to know about. To know by acquaintance, by experience, by meeting.
And it is the word in the verse on which this book stands: "Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, neither was the word of the LORD yet revealed unto him" (1 Samuel 3:7).

So hear it whole.
In English, to raise a child is to care for him until he can stand.
In Greek, the faith is a thing delivered, handed from one to another.
In Hebrew, what we want is a child who knows the Lord.

Now look at the child in the temple.

Samuel was not a stranger to the house of God. He was brought there as a little boy. "And the child did minister unto the LORD before Eli the priest" (1 Samuel 2:11). He wore the priest's garment: "But Samuel ministered before the LORD, being a child, girded with a linen ephod" (1 Samuel 2:18). He slept in the temple, near the ark, where the lamp of God burned through the night (1 Samuel 3:3).
He opened the doors. He served the priest.
And Samuel did not yet know the LORD.

Hear that again.
He lived in the house.
He wore the garment.
He did the work.
He did not yet know the Lord.

Nearness is not knowing.
A child can sleep beside the ark and not know the God of the ark. A child can be in every service, sing every song, carry every chair, and not yet know the God those songs are about. Samuel was faithful in everything he had been given. He simply had not yet met the One he served.

And this is the gap where so many children are lost.
We bring them to the house, and we think we have brought them to God.
We teach them the behaviour of believers, and we think we have taught them to believe.
We give them our faith to carry, and we think it has become theirs.

But a faith that is carried is not yet a faith that is owned.
The child who only carries his parents' faith will set it down the day he leaves their house, because it was never his to keep.

This is why the raising of a child in the faith has one goal beyond every other: that the child come to know the Lord for himself.