

MCLEAN BIBLE CHURCH
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>> LON SOLOMON: You know, back in March, 1971, a street preacher named Bob he can hart gave me a Bible. And he challenged me to read the Bible. Something that I had never done before. I didn't know anything about the Bible. I didn't know whether the Bible was the biography or an anthology or a novel. I didn't know if it went introduction, main body, conclusion, anticlimax. I didn't know anything about this thing. So I thought, well, the best thing to do is start at the beginning.

And so I opened to the book of Genesis. And I began to read. And that went okay for a while. And then I got to the part where so-and-so begat so-and-so begat so-and-so. And I thought oh, man this is not getting me anywhere. How long does this go on?

So I switched to the New Testament. Once again, not knowing anything about the New Testament, I started at the beginning. The gospel of Matthew. And about a month later, I ended up giving my life to Jesus Christ. That was 41 years ago this coming spring. And it was the best decision I've ever made in my life. You say, Lon, that's wonderful; but why are you telling us this?

I'm telling you this because here at McLean Bible Church we are in a series on the book of Genesis. And today we come to the part where so-and-so begat so-and-so begat so-and-so. And you say I know what you're doing. You're just telling us you're going to skip it like you did 40 years ago.

Well, no, actually. We're not going to skip it. It may not appear that at first glance there's a whole lot of great spiritual value in Genesis chapters 4 and 5, but friends, God doesn't put things in the Bible that have no value. This is why 2 Timothy 3:16 says all scripture is profitable. And that includes so-and-so begat so-and-so.

And so what we're going to do today is look at these two chapters, Genesis 4 and #r5, draw the spiritual lesson out of there that God put in, and then we're going to bring all of that forward and talk about, well, what difference does that mean to you and me. Are you ready?

>>ALL: Yes.

>>LON SOLOMON: Little bit of background. Remember last week in the beginning of chapter 4 we saw how Cain murdered his brother Abel, and how as a result of that God cursed him and exiled him. This is where we pick up the story. And as we do, we learn that in Genesis chapters 4 and 5, the Bible describes to us the development of two different branches of human society in the early days. One branch with Cain as its patriarch, Cain's family, if you will, and the other branch with Seth as its patriarch. So first let's look at Cain's family.

Genesis 4:17: Then Cain had relations with his wife and she became pregnant and gave birth. Now, of course this brings us to that classic Bible stumper, where did Cain get his wife?

Friends, the answer to that is very easy. Remember last week we saw that when the events of Genesis 4 took place, when Cain murdered his brother Abel, Cain was 100 years old. Certainly Adam and Eve had other children in those 100 years than just Cain and Abel, and Cain married one of these other children. So Cain had relations with his wife. And a whole line of people began to emerge Genesis 4 goes on to tell us about them, all the way down to Cain's great, great, great grandson, a fellow named Lamech. And with Lamech, we begin to see the true spiritual

condition of Cain's family really coming to life. First Genesis 4:19 Lamech married two women. This was not God's plan for marriage. God's plan for marriage, Genesis 2:24 was a man shall leave his father and his mother and cleave to his wife. Singular.

And the two of them -- not the three of them or the four of them -- the two of them shall become one flesh. What Lamech being a bigamist, tells us is that he had no regard for God's authority in his life. That he had made up his mind, Isaiah 56, to go his own way, just like his great, great, great grandfather Cain had done. But there's more. There's a second thing the Bible tells us about Lamech. Verse 23 of Genesis 4, it says Lamech said to his wives, I have killed a man for wounding me; a young man for injuring me. If Cain is avenged 7 times, then Lamech shall be avenged 77 times. You see, not only was Lamech a bigamist, he was also a cruel man, a war-like man, an angry man, an aggressive man. And look what he said to his wives here. He says -- remember what God said to migrate, great, great grandfather in Genesis 4:15, he said if anybody hurt you, Cain, that they will be avenged 7 times. He says what I'm promising is if somebody messes with me, if somebody tries to hurt me or threatens me, I promise 77 fold vengeance.

Folks, this is the law of the jungle language. This is raw, brutal, unforgiving, violent language. Lamech even boasts to his wives that he's already killed one young man just to prove that he means business.

And so here we get to see the clear spiritual character of Cain's family, of Cain's branch of the human race. They're arrogant, self sufficient, brutal, unforgiving, vengeful and these are disobedient and rebellious against God.

Remember, we said there was a second line of people developing right alongside this line of Cain. And let's look at this family, shall we?

It was led by a fellow named Seth. Genesis 5:3 says when Adam had lived 130 years, he had a son in his own likeness after his own image, and he named him Seth.

When the Bible tells us here that Seth was in Adam's own likeness, after Adam's own image the Bible is not talking about Seth's physical appearance. It is talking about Seth's spiritual condition. About his heart for God. About his walk with God. And the Bible is telling us that Seth was a godly man, just like his father Adam was. Genesis 4:26 says then, in Seth's family, men began to call on the name of the Lord.

In contrast to Cain's family, the Bible says that Seth and his extended family was characterized by humility. And was characterized by reliance on God.

And was characterized by obedience to God.

And it goes all the way down to his great, great, great grandson, Enoch. Look, Genesis 5:21 says when Enoch, Seth's great, great, great grandson, had lived 65 years, he begat Methuselah. And Enoch walked with God, altogether Enoch lived 365 years. And Enoch walked with God, then Enoch was no more, for the Lord took him.

And what this means, Enoch was no more, for the Lord took him, it means that God took Enoch directly to heaven without his ever physically dying. In other words, God translated him right from earth to heaven. You say wait a minute, wait a minute, wait a minute.

How do you know that's what it means?

Well, I know it by comparing scripture with scripture. Let's go into the New Testament. Hebrews 11:5, it says by faith, Enoch -- there's our gentleman, right -- Enoch was taken up so that he should not see death

and he was not found -- directly quoting from Genesis 5 -- he was not found because God took him up; for before he was taken up, he had obtained witness that he was pleasing to God.

So not just was Seth pleasing to God, but his great, great, great grandson walked with God, was pleasing with God. In fact, his entire family walked with God. And who exactly were Seth's people?

They're listed out here in these chapters for you. Seth who lived to be 912 years old. There was Seth - 912, Enosh - 905, Kenan - 910, Mahalalel - 895, Jared - 962, Enoch - 365, Methuselah - 969. And this goes all the way down to Noah, Seth's great, great, great, great, great, great grandson. And what does the Bible say about him? It says and Noah, Genesis 6:8, found favor in the eyes of the Lord.

You say, Lon, wait a minute, before we go on, I got to stop you right here and ask you: You don't really believe these people lived this long, do you? 950 years, 960 years? You really believe that? Absolutely. Absolutely I do. You say, why?

I got three reasons. Number one, the Bible says it. And for me that's the end of the story. But No. 2, there's a problem, some commentators explain it by saying, the years here don't mean years, they mean months.

So therefore to get these people's true ages, we need to divide by 12. Small problem. Let me read it to you. Genesis 5:21, Enoch was 65 when he begat Methuselah, if you divide 65 by 12, he was 5 and a half years old. Now, I know these men were virile, but this is ridiculous.

And I want to say that a third reason I believe this is because of something called the Babylonian king list. On this inscription it talks about a great flood that once covered the earth. Very interesting. Ah.

And it says that before the flood, the kings of the earth lived anywhere from 36,000 years old to 64,000 years old. Now, those numbers are fantasmagorical, we know. But the importance of this is that it tells us that even in pagan tradition there is clear testimony to the biblical record that before Noah's flood, people had enormously long life spans.

And the long life spans of these godly men is spiritually very important. Because it means -- think now -- Adam and Seth, just those two alone provided 1712 years of continuous godly influence on their family.

For example, I believe that Adam and Seth probably led the worship services for their family. I believe they probably taught the Sunday school classes for their family. They probably preached. And they probably led the prayer meetings. And they probably worked with the young people. You know, folks, there were only 150 years old. They worked with them.

The point being, my friends, is that these people, these people, they exercised an enormous influence on their family. Seth's family was dominated by these godly men from the time of creation all the way to Noah's flood.

Methuselah, the longest living of all, died the year of Noah's flood. And look at the result of their influence. The result was that a group of godly fathers and grandfathers and great grandfathers and great, great grandfathers produced an amazing society of godly people by their steady godly influence. Let's sum prize. What we see here in Genesis chapters 4 and 5 is a tale of two families. A tale of two branches of human society. A tale of two lines of people -- don't miss this -- each one reflecting the spiritual character and the spiritual dynamic and the

spiritual condition of their parents, their grandparents, their great grandparents and so forth all the way back. Do we see that that?

>> Some members: Yes.

>> LON SOLOMON: That's the point. That's as far as we're going to go in the chapter because it's time for us to ask our most important question. And all of you at Loudoun and Prince William and Bethesda and in the edge and around the world on the Internet and here at Tysons, are we ready?

>> Some members: Yes.

>> LON SOLOMON: Come on, now.

1, 2, 3.

>> ALL: So what?

>> LON SOLOMON: Yes. Isn't that sweet?

It is. You say, Lon, okay. I didn't believe you were going to find anything to pull out of there, but you did. But what difference does any of this make to me? I mean, I'm probably not even going to live to be 80. So what difference does this make that these people live to be 900 years old and everything you've said?

Let's talk about that, shall we?

I want to share two very interesting verses from the Bible with you. Proverbs 20:7, it says a righteous man who walks in his integrity, how blessed are his children after him.

And Psalm 112:1, which says how blessed is the man who fears the Lord, who delights in his commandments; his descendents will be mighty on the earth. The issue that God is addressing in these verses, my friends, is the ongoing spiritual impact on -- that our spiritual lives have on our descendents. Remember what we just saw: That Cain's spiritual condition didn't just affect his children or even just his grandchildren. It permeated the 10 generations that followed him.

And the same thing was true for Seth, except in Seth's case it was for blessing. And I had like to suggest to you that this very same thing is true for you and me.

And therefore, when we -- when it comes to our influence as parents and grandparents and even future parents, hopeful parents, that we're going to be one day, I want to urge us not just to think in terms of the children and the grandchildren right in front of us that we can see. I want to urge us to think in terms of the ten generations who are going to come after them. In other words, I want to urge us to look at ourselves not just as parents and not just as grandparents, but to look at ourselves as patriarchs and matriarchs of the many, many generations that will follow us and who will be shaped by the spiritual condition and the spiritual example of our lives.

They'll either be shaped for blessing, as in the case of Seth, or they'll be shaped for cursing as in the case of Cain. But they will be shaped by the spiritual lives we live.

You know, just before the revolutionary war there was a massive revival that swept the 13 colonies called the great awakening. As a result of the great awakening, thousands upon thousands of colonists came to personal relationship in Jesus Christ. And it was really the great awakening that lay at the heart of America being established on the Christian foundation that it was.

But the great awakening actually began years before with a puritan preacher named Solomon Stoddard. And then after he went off the scene it was carried on by a gentleman most of us have heard of named Jonathan

Edwards. But you know, by the late 1700s, America had back slid badly. The colleges in America were especially in bad shape. Take for example Yale. Yale had been established in 1701 to train true ministers of the gospel because Harvard had gone liberal. But in 1799, Yale graduated only 5 people who were willing to publicly confess Jesus as their savior. The next year, 1800, Yale graduated only one person who was willing to publicly confess Christ.

But then Timothy Dwight came upon the scene. Timothy Dwight became the president of Yale in 1796. You want to know what his first official act as the president was?

He invited every single faculty member into his office one at a time, individually, and he asked them whether they would be willing to stand publicly in front of the entire student body and confess Jesus Christ as their Lord and savior.

Every single faculty member who said no, he fired them on the spot. Thank God for no tenure back then. All right.

Then he set up prayer meetings for the students that he led on campus. Then he set up a student church that met every Sunday. And he went in and did the preaching. Every Sunday. He went into classrooms and debated the students openly in front of the whole class about the merits of believing in Jesus.

This man had such an unrelenting passion and conviction for Christ that he pressed the need for Jesus on every student on that campus.

Well, in March 1802, 6 years after Timothy Dwight became president of Yale, he led his first student to Christ on campus. The next month in 1802 he led a second student to Christ. By graduation in 1802 he had led 50 students to Christ. And by 1806 graduation, 50 percent of the graduating class stood at graduation and confessed Jesus openly as their personal Lord and savior.

And this is so important because these men went out from Yale, and they became the foundation of something called the second great awakening, which swept America from 1810 to 1830. And turned America back to God again.

But there's more. A reporter a few years ago traced the records of 1400 descendants of Timothy Dwight and found that there were so many missionaries, there were so many preachers of the gospel, there were so many godly theological professors that had come from him, that it's too numerous to even begin to mention.

You say, Lon, that's all very fascinating, I guess. What is the point? Here's the point. Timothy Dwight -- do you know who his grandfather was?

Timothy Dwight's grandfather was Jonathan Edwards. And do you know who Jonathan Edwards' grandfather was and Timothy Dwight's great, great grandfather was? Take a guess. Solomon Stoddard. That's exactly right. The guy who started the great awakening years before. Here's my point, friends, here are four generations of influencers for Christ, all flowing out of one godly man, Solomon Stoddard, and not just that, but these 1400 people that this reporter was able to trace -- listen, Solomon Stoddard just didn't raise godly children, he just didn't raise godly grandchildren, he established an entire godly line of people whose impact for Jesus Christ is still being felt in America today.

I met in the lobby a man after the last service who is a direct descendent of Timothy Dwight and Solomon Stoddard who is walking with the

Lord and serving the Lord today. He came up, introduced himself to me. Unbelievable.

And this is what happened with Seth's family. And folks, I believe this is what God wants to happen with your family and my family.

You say, Lon, this is wonderful. I appreciate it. How do you do something like this? How do you get -- how do you establish a line like this? I've got three quick suggestions and we're done.

Suggestion number one, is be unashamedly passionate about your spiritual life and your faith in front of your children. Friends, more is caught than taught. You know that. And when our children and grandchildren can see our passion for Christ, can feel our passion for Christ, when it's obvious to them that it is genuine and authentic and soul and deep, that's when they pick it up and they take it to the next generation.

I'm not just talking here about bringing your kids to church, and I'm not just talking about saying grace at meals. I'm talking about having a passionate, unrelenting, pulsating, throbbing passion for Christ every day in your life, that can't be hidden and can't be quenched and that your children cannot miss.

Remember, the spiritual passion for Christ that Timothy Dwight had did not start with Timothy Dwight, it started with his grandfather Jonathan Edwards and before that, his great, great grandfather Solomon Stoddard. And I'm challenging you to be the Solomon Stoddard in your family. Not to have some embers that are just kind of glowing, I'm challenging you to have an out of control, raging fire for Christ in your life. In your family.

Number two, suggestion No. 2, is to inculcate the word of God into your children's lives with abandon. Proverbs 22, 6 says train up a child in the way he or she should go and when they get old, they will not depart from it.

But friends, spiritual formation takes spiritual intentionality.

If we're serious about the spiritual formation of our children and cannot be haphazard and it cannot be laissez faire. We must be deliberate. We must be intentional. And we must be consistent. We must have daily devotions with our children. And get on our knees and pray with them daily.

And memorize scripture with them daily. And make the sacrifices necessary to get them to Kids Quest and get them to Awana, and get them to junior and senior high group. We are not going to establish a line of godly descendents by being lackadaisical about investing the word of God in them.

And number three, and finally, suggestion number three is that we pray futuristically. What does that mean?

Most of us pray for our children. And some of us pray for our grandchildren. But that's as far as we ever pray. Folk, I'm suggesting it's great to pray for your children and grand children, but we need to pray much more futuristically than that. We need to pray for their future spouses, that they will be godly men and women. And we need to pray for the multiple generations of unborn descendents that they are going to have, that we may never even meet on this side of heaven. But that these people will stay true to Christ, that they will make an impact for Christ. That they will keep the chain unbroken in our family.

We need to pray. What I'm trying to say to you is not like a parent, but we need to pray like a patriarch and pray like a matriarch of a whole generation of people.

Just like Solomon Stoddard did. Just like Seth did. God will give you this if you want it, my friends.

You know, my wife Brenda and her brother and sister represent the 8th generation of followers of Jesus Christ in her family. On the -- on her dad's side, on the Lowry side, going back to her great, great, great, great, great grandfather Michael Lowry, who was born in 1760, who fought in the revolutionary war, and who was the Solomon Stoddard of Lowry family. In fact, one of Brenda's ancestors, other great grandfather, a man named William L. Lowry was a circuit-riding brethren preacher who was a farmer by day and kept four churches going on the weekend. And Brenda's mom and dad treasured this heritage deeply. Brenda's father said to me on a walk, he said Lon, you married into the Lowry family. And he said, Brenda is the 8th generation of believers in this family. And he said, Lon, I want to ask you that to the best of your ability, and by God's grace, that you keep the chain unbroken in my family.

I tell you I never forgot that. That struck me deeply. Because I didn't come from a family like that. It's a privilege for me to marry into a family like that.

And so I try very hard to keep these three suggestions with my children. The ones I've just given you.

I was passionate about. And I still am. And I'm happy to announce that all three of my sons today are walking with Jesus Christ in reality. They're the 9th generation in that family. Wait a minute. Doesn't stop there. Earlier this year I was riding in the automobile with my grandson Tyler, and we were talking about God. And Tyler said, Papa, he said, would you help me ask Jesus in my heart?

And I thought, well, Jamie's probably going to be mad at me because every father wants to do this with his own children. But you don't say no to a question like that. So we prayed and he asked Jesus in his heart. And when he came home, I said tell your mom and dad what you did. And I said Julie, I hope you're not mad at me. They said, no, we're not mad at you.

Tyler was 4 years old. You catch Tyler in the hall and you talk to him about the Bible and God, and he will flat talk you into the ground and under the carpet. This boy got the real disease. And he is the 10th generation of believers in the Lowry family. Praise God for that.

Applause)

>> LON SOLOMON: Let me say in closing, friend, if you came from a Lowry family, my challenge is you keep that chain unbroken in that family. Don't you dare let it break with you.

And if you didn't come from a Lowry family, like I didn't, friends, my challenge to you is start one. You be Solomon Stoddard. You be generation number one. Let your passion ignite a whole generation of people. If you want it, God will give it to you. Don't you be content to ask God for anything less.

Let's pray together.

Heavenly Father, thanks for taking a passage of scripture today that I'm not sure many people would see anything in and for developing it for us with richness, Lord. Thank you that there's nothing in your word that doesn't have value. And I want to pray you'd use what we talked about

today to challenge us to take a hard look at our lives and see what we're doing to be a Solomon Stoddard in our family.

And Lord, Jesus, I pray that you would use all of us here to either continue an unbroken chain or to start an unbroken chain of generations of people who love and serve and follow Jesus Christ.

Lord ignite that passion in us, and we pray these things in Jesus' name.

And what did God's people say?

>> ALL: Amen.

>> LON SOLOMON: Amen. Have a great weekend. God bless you.

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