



CELL GUIDE 2015

Theme	Jubilee – Year of Family
Topic	Establishing Faith@Home
Speaker	Elder Lok Vi Ming
Date	16 th and 17 th May 2015

Message Summary

Spiritual Objective: Raising our children faithfully

In a time where the terms of success are so clearly outlined by the world, it's easy to forget our Lord God's definition of success for us. Parents often take the yoke of raising 'successful' children upon their shoulders, using their children's achievements, or even godliness, as yardsticks to gauge their accomplishments as parents. In his message, Elder Lok urges parents to take a step back, to reevaluate what their role truly is as parents and redefine what they've come to regard as success.

Parenthood is challenging!

As much as parents resist admitting it, parenthood can sometimes feel like a burden.

For one, our world has become more complicated; more competitive, fast-paced and demanding. With the advancement of technology, expectations have been raised and overall stress at work has increased. As a parent, the obligation to do well at work, to put food on the table, to give their children a comfortable (and if possible, luxurious) life can be strenuous.

This strain to be successful in their careers, and thus *successful* parents to their children, is further weighted down by the desire for their children to be spectacular as well; to do well in exams, be outstanding in CCAs and on top of all that, be godly people. They convert their children's *successes* into their own accomplishments, counting their children's standing in the world as their worth as parents.

As Elder Lok urges us to look deeper, we find that the root of all this striving and stress is the **fear of failure**. Simply put, parents want to excel in their jobs and raise outstanding children because they don't want to feel as if they've failed as parents.

While this is a sentiment all of us can appreciate, Elder Lok leads us into understanding one key point: we do not have sovereign control over our children. **God does**. Using Eli and Samuel to illustrate this point, he demonstrates how men of God, who did little or no wrong in the eyes of the Lord, still raised children who were wicked [1 Sam 2:22-25; 1 Sam 8:3].

Being the *perfect* parent = Obeying the Lord in faith

Since the lives of our children are in the hands of our sovereign Lord, parents can do their part by providing their children with the **momentum**, the **impetus** to make godly decisions. As every child is blessed with the power of free will, a parent's job is to **limit their access to bad options**, to train their children to walk in the fear of the Lord, point them in the right direction and thereby instil in them an **instinct** for the things of the Lord. In sports, it is known as **muscle memory** i.e. an instinctual behaviour acquired over rigorous and constant practice.



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Elder Lok stresses that there is no formulaic solution to parenthood. Instead, it is **faith** that God recognises and honours. He reminds parents that bringing up children is a mission sent by God and our **primary job** is to have faith. Ezekiel's life was used to illustrate just this; God sent Ezekiel to warn Israel of the consequences that would follow because of their wicked ways. Yet, God's purpose for Ezekiel was not for him to change their minds as He knew they would be unyielding. All God required of Ezekiel was his **obedience in faith** [Ezek 3:4-11].

Similarly, a parent's role is to deliver the messages and lessons God has purposed for our children. What follows next must be left up to God. Having faith and obedience is **all** there is to the job.

And what an important job that is! For the effects of faith are far-reaching and we should never underestimate the power of faith. In Noah's case, we see how his faith and abidance in God's commands led his family (his wife, three sons and daughters-in-law) to salvation on the ark [Gen 7:1]. For Rahab, her obedience in hiding Joshua's spies saved her household from destruction [Josh 6:17].

Indeed, if one person's faith in the family earns great favour from the Lord, much less two! When mother and father join forces to commit their household to the Lord in faith, we can be sure that life transformation will come upon its members [Acts 16:31].

Finally, Elder Lok reminds parents of the other facets of parenthood. More than mentoring, parents are called to bless their children, just as God blessed Adam and Eve when He first created them [Gen 1:27-28a]. Furthermore, fathers are to love and protect. God takes extra care of the orphans and widows, stepping in place to protect the fatherless for fathers are indispensable. Indeed, a true father is rare. Many can teach and mentor, but finding a true father is like uncovering a gem.

The Bottom Line

To establish faith at home, parents must first have faith in the Lord as faith has amazing transforming powers when it exists in the family [Mal 4:6]. Thus, in the home, it is important to attribute every good thing to God. For everything we enjoy – the comfort, the providence received, the affluence of our city – we have done but little [Deut 6:10-11]. As such, we must point back to the Lord, that in His providence, we can provide for our children, and in His overflowing grace can we then shower grace and blessings upon our children.

For in teaching our children not only of His commands but also of His goodness, we raise them in the knowledge and fear of the Lord.



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Questions

1. What are some challenges people face during parenthood?

(Leader's notes)

A simple reflection cum recall question that is duo-pronged; urge existing parents to confront the worries they have/had as parents. For non-parents, lead them to reflect on the challenges they think their parents face or for themselves as spiritual parents.

2. What are some positive ways in which you have experienced or seen faith being practised at home?
How do you think this came about?

(Leader's notes)

In Deut 6:6, we learn that parents cannot give what they do not possess i.e. they cannot teach that which they do not practise themselves. The thrust of this question is to lead the believing parent or family member to see that it has to begin with themselves; they should take the initiative to verbalise and live out the faith at home. They can do it anywhere, anytime and as they do so, it will slowly change the spiritual atmosphere and culture of the family.

3. As you consider the effect of faith in the household, how does this encourage you to live out your role in the family – be it as a child, sibling or parent?

(Leader's notes)

The last question serves as a reminder that anyone in the family can spearhead a faith transformation in the household. For parents, lead them back to the spiritual objective i.e. raising their children with faith, and not success, in mind. Get them to share some practical steps they intend to take. For non-parents, explore the ways in which they can bring about positive change at home. Deut 6:6-9 can be used as a reference verse.