

BLESSING YOUR CHILDREN

by Brian Burgess, Forefront Families LLC

There's a habit in the USA for people to say, "Bless you" when someone sneezes. That habit actually came from the highly lethal bubonic plague that swept London in 1665-1666. So many people were dying that, in the then Roman Catholic country, the priests could not keep up with giving the 'last rites' to people before they died. The last thing a person did when afflicted by that disease was sneeze. That was the sign to administer the 'last rites'. The priests commissioned people in general to bless the dying, and so the tradition has passed down through generations. The only difference is we don't die after we sneeze, well most of the time!

As traditions lose their meaning the power of those words also diminish. Blessings are a very important, God-ordained thing, far more rich and important than we can imagine. It is recorded in ancient times that the eldest son was always given a birthright blessing and that was worth dying for. It is recorded in scripture that Esau was supposed to receive the birthright blessing from his father, Isaac, but his mother and brother, Jacob, cheated him out of it and tricked his father into giving it to Jacob. Once administered it could not be given to anyone else. Esau's only thought after being denied his blessing was revenge on Jacob. He believed it was worth killing for. Why?...because a blessing is so powerful, even more powerful than we can imagine. Jews today still have a 'rite of passage' for their children through a Bar Mitzvah, a ceremony for admitting a Jewish boy, usually 13-years-old, as an adult member of the Jewish community. The boy knows he is a man at that point and his father administers a powerful blessing for manhood and prosperity. Girls have a similar ceremony. It seems like most cultures except ours has such an event.

I was raised in New Zealand. In that culture we have a 21st birthday party where a symbolic key is handed over by the father and a speech or blessing is administered. We have a very diverse population, but in much of our USA culture we do not have anything like this and we wonder why us men are often just grown-up boys. I believe it is because we do not have a 'rite of passage' where fathers bless their children into manhood and womanhood. Do you ever wonder why we seem so confused about our identity and we find it hard to mature?

As parents, I believe that we have a lot to learn from the Jewish community. Note how well they do in careers and life in general. I believe that when you know at age 13 you are a man or a woman after being given the blessing, and are expected to now get on with being an adult, life is smoother. You just get on with it. God's blessing on your life is awesome.

I would like to suggest that we start doing something similar. Call it what you like but have a special day with your child and in the evening all dress up

and have a special ceremony and dinner. Fathers, write a blessing for your child and read it to them and pray over them. It would be really cool to have a group of friends participate with their teens to make it an even bigger occasion. When you affirm your children like this you will not have the same problems that many have with their children through their teen years. Try it.

If you have any comments or questions on this subject, please do not hesitate to contact us at sally@forefrontfamilies.org. We invite you to also check out our website at www.forefrontfamilies.org and our blog site at www.forefrontfamilies.blogspot.com for further assistance.