

2012

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### Recommended Citation

Fraser, Jasmine and Danihelova, Lea (2012) "Family Leadership: Legacies From the Abrahamic Family," *Journal of Applied Christian Leadership*: Vol. 6: No. 2, 56-68.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/jacl/vol6/iss2/5>

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JASMINE FRASER & LEA DANIHELOVA

## FAMILY LEADERSHIP: LEGACIES FROM THE ABRAHAMIC FAMILY

**Abstract:** The issue of leadership development remains a constant objective on the agenda of every organization aspiring toward maximum effectiveness. Timely research is frequently conducted and from the findings new strategic measures are extracted and implemented in an effort to move the organization to the next level of excellence. At times strategic measures lie in taking a new look at old methods of leadership development. This article looks at an antique method that has relevance for contemporary leadership development.

**Keywords:** *Family leadership, authority, covenantal agreement, abundant blessing*

The thought of family conjures various emotions. To have a family implies love; a sense of belonging and well-being, as mutual reciprocity nurtures the development of its members (Galvin et al., 2012; Newman, 1999). In the traditional sense, the family consists of husband, wife and child/children, but over time, the image of the family has changed (Balswick & Balswick, 2007). The emergence of various types of family is altering the structure of the family, but the needs of its members remain constant (Hicks, 2002; Newman, 1999; Prokos & Keene, 2010). The family is considered one of the strongest relational bonds shared among humans; it is hardly likely one can exist without some input or influence from a family of origin. Yet the family is more than a unit that interrelates and shares responsibility for the development of its individual members.

The family, classified as an institution, is the nucleus of civilization and to a great extent shapes society (Koenig & Bayer 1981; MacArthur, 2013; Martinson, 1970; Newman, 1999). Tracing its origin, we see stories or images of families throughout the pages of the Bible. We read about the patriarchal family lineage—Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Judah, David,

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and Jesus and His family. Images of “God as parent to the children of Israel; Christ as groom in relation to the church as bride; and the Holy Spirit’s indwelling empowering brothers and sisters in the Lord” (Balswick & Balswick, 2007, p. 20) illustrate the importance of family in God’s eyes.

Family implies relationship and community (Gallagher, 2012). In the postmodern world, it is popular to stress community and relationships and talk about openness, acceptance, and equality. However, the reality is that there is a rapid increase in the quantity of broken relationships and failed marriages within American society. Family violence is increasing, as are the numbers of single parents and at-risk children.<sup>1</sup> According to reports from the Domestic Violence Resource Center (2013), over 600,000 women and 100,000 men are victims of domestic violence each year. The Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics (2011) reported in 2011 that 69% of children 0-17 lived with parents (65% lived with both parents who are married), 27% lived with one parent, and 4% lived with no parent. McWhirter et al. (2007) concludes, “so many children are at risk for psychosocial difficulties that it is reasonable to say that the society itself is at risk” (p. 5).

The church, as God’s representative in society, is faced with the challenge of engendering intervention and restoration of some sort amongst families. To bring restoration is to empower families and enable them to grow in God’s ideal. This article posits that one of the failures in the family structure is that of neglect and displacement of leadership roles. This assumption is supported by briefly rehashing certain events of the Abrahamic family lineage and their implications for the current family structure. At the same time, it will propose that the key to triumphing over family brokenness is accepting and upholding three divinely appointed legacies: authority, covenantal agreement, and abundant blessing, all of which are rooted in the overarching legacy of grace. The story of Abraham and his family, distant in time, experienced these legacies that are relevant even today.

## **Lesson 1: Legacy of Authority and Faith**

Leadership styles (autocratic/authoritarian, participative/democratic, laissez-faire/free rein, transformative) as well as family styles are often described in terms of authority and power (Kippenberger, 2002).

<sup>1</sup>Extensive research on the issues that put children at risk shows that broken family relations is a major cause. The term “at-risk” is used by professionals in the context of the welfare of children and adolescents. “At-risk denotes a set of presumed cause-effect dynamics that place an individual child or adolescent in danger of future negative outcomes. It designates a situation that is not necessarily current, but that can be anticipated in the absence of intervention” (McWhirter et al., 2007).

Scholars also argue that leadership styles are formed and enhanced during childhood, thus closely connecting family and leadership (Bennis, 2004; Kelly et al., 2002; Koesten, 2004; Saphir & Chaffee, 2002; Zhang, 2007). It is imperative to study, understand, and improve families because children view their parents as role models. Inherited character traits and behaviors could influence children's leadership styles (Dong, 2005; Fitzpatrick et al., 1996; Prasitthipab, 2008). The family is a place where leaders originate. Therefore, the first legacy of leadership found in the story of Abraham and his family is connected to authority but, surprisingly, not so much to authority and power as to authority and faith.

The stories from Abraham's life show that he and his wife were confused about authority.<sup>2</sup> At the beginning, it seems as if they understood that the ultimate authority of the family leader (and any other leader) has its source in God (Nee, 1995). Abraham heard God's voice, took his whole family, and led them to a place unknown to him, following the leading of God (Gen. 12:1-9; Heb. 11:8).

Later, however, just as it often happens in life, Abraham took authority into his own hands. This self-appointed authority without any real power led Abraham to a desperate decision unworthy of a family leader.<sup>3</sup> "Say you are my sister," Abraham pleaded with his wife (Gen. 12:13). When God interfered by sending a disease on Pharaoh, Abraham was given a direct "hands-on" lesson on leadership authority. He was reminded that the ultimate source of authority is God.

Abraham learned the lesson that, even though discomfiting at the time, an effective leader places integrity ahead of comfort. In the flow of time Abraham was again confronted with the issue of leading with integrity; again, instead of making the decision based on God's authority, he made it based on his wife Sarah. God gives all members of the family their own roles and responsibilities.<sup>4</sup> It is important that all members of the family know the boundary of authority assigned to them by God and respond appropriately. Sarah overstepped her

<sup>2</sup> Compare also to the stories of Isaac (Gen. 17-28; Rom. 9:7) and Jacob (Gen. 25-37; Heb. 11:9, 20-21).

<sup>3</sup> The families of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were patriarchal (father was in charge of the household). Kostenberger (2004) suggests using the term "patricentric" (centered around the father), which better captures the essence of the role of the father in the ancient Israelite family structure. The Old Testament rarely focuses on the power of the father (Gen. 3:16). "Rather than functioning as a despot or dictator, in healthy households the father and husband usually inspired the trust and security of its members (Job 29:12-17; Ps. 68:5-6). Hence, it was not primarily the power and privileges associated with the father's position but rather the responsibilities associated with his headship that were emphasized" (pp. 94-96).

<sup>4</sup> The women and mothers of Israel had an elevated status in the society. Women, created in God's image (Gen. 1:27), named children, had specific roles in the household (Exod. 21), were required to be honored (Exod. 20:12), were considered to be wise (Prov. 1:8; Prov. 31), could become prophetesses, and participated in religious matters. According to Kostenberger (2004), "during the first decade of the child's life, he or she was the special concern of his or her mother. Since in ancient Israel the home was the primary place for education, the mother's example and instruction were vital" (pp. 96-99).

authority by taking on herself the role of God, just as Eve did in the Garden of Eden.<sup>5</sup> The promised son could be born only through the will of God.<sup>6</sup> It took almost a lifetime for Abraham and Sarah to understand the distribution of authority in their relationship with God and with each other. This resulted in a confused, rollercoaster-like approach to authority—not knowing when to submit and to whose authority.

Abraham and his wife misused authority. But there were also times when they submitted to the authority of God and acted in obedience to the authority He entrusted to them. They learned to recognize and obey God's voice. That was the reason Abraham was able to go in faith to the mountain of Moriah (Hebrew 11:17).<sup>7</sup> The course of Abraham, Sarah, and Isaac's acceptance and understanding of their own authority and the authority of God led them to appreciate who God is, and who they are in connection to Him. The ability to surrender to God's authority did not come easily for Abraham and his wife. It was born through everyday struggles, failures, and victories.<sup>8</sup> It was born through a growing relationship with God, who set Sarah's faith as an example to be followed and acknowledged Abraham by calling him the father of faith (Heb. 11:11; Gal. 3:9).

## Lesson 2: Legacy of the Covenant—Connecting Past and Future

The important task of a leader is to fulfill her specific role, but also to understand her position within the organization (group), to know its history, present situation, and plans for the future. Postmodern families are often uprooted from their cultural heritage, confused about their past, unsure about the present, and without a clear vision for the

<sup>5</sup> Sailhamer (1992) states that "the account of Sarah's plan to have a son has not only been connected with the list of nations in chapter 12:5, but also appears to have been intentionally shaped with reference to the account of the Fall in Genesis 3. Each of the main verbs (wayyaqtol forms) and key expressions in 16:2-3 finds a parallel in Genesis 3" (pp. 153, 154).

<sup>6</sup> According to Fretheim (2007), "we do not usually understand conception and birthing as determined only by divine activity." However, "God's resolve within a human situation may find openings into the future that seem impossible for human beings" (p. 118).

<sup>7</sup> It is important to note the role of Isaac in the narrative of Abraham. The children played important roles in the ancient Israelite families. They were held in high esteem. They were the fulfillment of the promise, the hope for the future (1 Sam. 24:21; 2 Sam. 14:7; Isa. 14:20-21). Children were considered to be created in the image of God (Gen. 1:27, Ps. 8). According to Kostenberger (2004), "the first and foremost responsibility of children and young people was respect for parents. . . . The second area of responsibility was helping in and around the parental home" (pp. 99-101). The children were also responsible for continuing the family line through proper marriage and providing for their parents in their old age.

<sup>8</sup> An important leadership lesson is summed up by Liker and Convis (2012), using the old Swedish proverb, "Rough waters are a truer test of leadership. In calm water, every ship has a good captain" (p. 185). Nee (1995) brings forth the same point from the life of Abraham: "A person who does not know the cross will think that he is more than qualified to work for the Lord and that there is nothing to be fearful of, but a person who knows the cross . . . will realize that he can do nothing and that he is totally incapable of doing anything by himself. When a person is brought by the Lord to the place of weakness and when he feels that he cannot do anything and is not worthy of doing anything, he can begin to work for the Lord" (p. 50).

future. Abraham was in a similar situation for most of his life. The story of the covenant teaches us how to find stable ground and a clear vision for the future.

Abraham, uprooted from the land of his fathers, followed God's leading to the land of promise because there his family would flourish. He was not following empty dreams. "The Lord made a covenant with Abraham and said, 'To your descendants I give this land'" (Gen. 15:18, NIV). Writing of Abraham's covenant-ratifying experience with God, Fretheim (2007) says that "God, whose presence is symbolized by the smoke and fire, actually passes through the divided animals. In this act of self-imprecation, God in effect puts the divine life on the line, 'writing' the promise in blood" (p. 37).<sup>9</sup> However, Abraham did not understand. His reaction was to obey Sarah<sup>10</sup> and take the covenant promise into his own hands, instead of waiting on God. Through this response Abraham limited the covenant to himself, his seed, and his land. But God, in His response, renewed the covenant with an added physical sign—circumcision—stressing the need for renewal of the heart and for deeper understanding of the covenant.<sup>11</sup> God wanted Abraham to realize that covenant is about God's actions, God's seed, and God's land of promise. To learn this lesson, Abraham had to stand on Mount Moriah with knife in his hand aimed at his only son. Later, Jesus said, "Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad" (John 8:56, NIV). Abraham understood that God has the ultimate authority; that He is the beginning, the end, and the center of all the stories. Abraham understood that the covenant of God was not a new covenant made only with Abraham and his physical descendants, but an eternal covenant between God and humanity. It was the covenant of a promise tying together all history—past, present, and future. Abraham realized that he should become a leader who would lead all people to God, to the great I AM, the Savior and Father, so that all who believe, regardless of their origin, skin color, gender, or race, would become a new nation. Abraham's son Isaac was only one grain in the big sea of sand representing God's children.

<sup>9</sup> Nee (1995) puts it this way: "To divide in the midst is to die; it is the cross. . . . To pass 'between pieces' is to die, which also means to pass through the cross. God showed Abraham that his inheritance of the land was based on the work of the cross, and that his seed was able to stand in this land through the death of the cross" (pp. 48-49).

<sup>10</sup> See Genesis 16, where Sarah convinced Abraham to lie with her maid, Hagar, in an effort to fulfill the covenant the Lord made with him.

<sup>11</sup> Another part of God's answer is "new names for all participants: Abraham, Sarai, and God. . . . The new names signal a re-characterization of their relationship with God. . . . The focus of Abraham's new name is certainly on God's promise, but it also is a more explicitly outward-looking name, drawing others onto the scene of God's activity" (Fretheim, 2007, p. 41).

To be called a leader within a unit as small as a family might seem less important compared to other callings. Abraham probably felt insignificant when facing Pharaoh and his kingdom. However, to be entrusted with the leadership of a family surpasses the family unit, reaching to both sides of eternity, touching the mystery of the Trinitarian Savior-God.<sup>12</sup> To become a family leader, or any other leader for that matter, means to see beyond one's own time and success, and to recognize one's place in the history of humanity and the account of the great controversy between God and Satan.<sup>13</sup> Consequently, Abraham was called the father of nations (Gen. 17:4; Isa. 51:2).

### Lesson 3: Legacy of Blessing

Galvin and Brommel (1999) define family in the following way: [Families are] networks of people who share their lives over long periods of time bound by ties of marriage, blood, or commitment, legal or otherwise, who consider themselves as family and who share a significant history and anticipated future of functioning in a family relationship. (p. 5)

This broad definition could be seen in the ancient Israelite concept of household and in an even broader sense in the concept of tribe and nation. The basic family unit, parents and children, is extended, accepting that we do not live in an individualistic universe, but that our lives are intertwined and interdependent on each other. Family leadership is closely tied to the broader community (neighborhood, church, city, nation, humanity). A true family leader (in proposing the third legacy of leadership based on the account of Abraham and his family lineage) becomes a blessing to people in his sphere of influence.

At the very beginning of Abraham's story, Abraham shares God's blessing with Lot and his family by calling them to join him on the journey to the Promised Land. Abraham also blesses people beyond his extended family relationships, sometimes by words of intercessory prayers<sup>14</sup> (pleading for the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah), but also by actions (helping the pagan kings to fight their enemies and protect their land).<sup>15</sup>

<sup>12</sup> See Deuteronomy 1:31; 8:5; Psalm 103:13; Isaiah 63:16; 64:8; Jeremiah 3:19; Romans 8:14-17; 2 Corinthians 6:16-18; Galatians 3:26; and Ephesians 5:21-33.

<sup>13</sup> "Ultimately, we human beings, whether we realize it or not, are involved in a cosmic spiritual conflict that pits God against Satan, with marriage and family serving as a key arena in which spiritual and cultural battles are fought. If, then, the cultural crisis is symptomatic of an underlying spiritual crisis, the solution likewise must be spiritual, not merely cultural" (Köstenberger, 2004, p. 26).

<sup>14</sup> According to Fretheim (2007), "the actions of the righteous within the communities of which they are a part and intercessory advocacy for those of which they are not a part may make a difference—to both community and to God. In a given situation, it may be too late. . . . But . . . the righteous are called to act and pray as if it were not too late" (p. 86).

<sup>15</sup> See Genesis 14, 17, 18, and 19.

But in contrast, the altruistic Abraham, who extends his blessing, suddenly becomes a curse for Pharaoh and King Abimelech (Gen. 12, 20). Abraham's vision narrows down to his own life and well-being, rejecting not only his acquaintances and friends, but his own wife. He forgets about her well-being, closes his eyes to the dangers of a king's palace. Sarah was his wife, the future mother of the son of promise. By giving her up, Abraham shifts from blessing to cursing. Abraham has yet to learn that to be a God-appointed leader of the covenant family, the father of nations, means to extend God's blessing to others and put their well-being in front of his own at all times, even when it seems inconvenient to do so.<sup>16</sup> To become a leader means to give up everything, more than one's own life, to give up the life of the promised son. God's way of leadership, which found its ultimate expression in Christ, is to become a servant.<sup>17</sup> Servant leadership is not reserved for the large institutions "out there"; it starts in the family—biologically and spiritually.

The basic characteristic of servant leadership is that a leader is a servant first. This means that she focuses on serving other people, helping to fulfill their needs so they may become better and more useful members of the society, organization, or institution. Leaders are individuals whose hearts are seeking the well-being of others, and who take the step toward serving others in simple ways that often go unnoticed. Servant leadership is a way of life. Servant leadership means to lead others through living the story of their own lives in a way that will enhance the stories of other people for the development of the community. Abraham learned to take the focus off self and become a servant. Through Abraham's leading as a servant, all people can be blessed (Gal. 3:8).

## Sociological Implications of the Patriarchal Legacies

Having looked briefly at the patriarchal family lineage from a theological perspective, it is necessary to see how the concepts of authority, covenantal agreement, and abundant blessing apply to family in a

<sup>16</sup> In the story of Hagar we can see that to become a blessing for others was a hard lesson for Abraham to learn. Abraham endangered the life of his son and the mother. Instead of blessing, Abraham again becomes a curse for his own family. God, just as in the case of Sarai, changes the curse to blessing. Hagar is blessed twice, both times by God. God in His mercy and grace did not give up on Abraham. He did not leave him where he was. Likewise, God does not give up on us. We are always His beloved children.

<sup>17</sup> People have a tendency to go to the extremes. First, they might be unwilling to serve; but then service can become their god. We cannot be a blessing to others. We can only extend God's blessing. Nee (1995) puts it this way: "When he (Abraham) heard that God wanted him to offer up Isaac, he did not feel that this was a difficult thing to do. . . . He did not even mention the word sacrifice. To him this was a worship! Nothing was more precious than God Himself, not even the most important work that He had assigned. Whenever God wanted him to drop something, he willingly dropped it. Everything was for God, and he did not argue with God" (p. 83).



postmodern culture. Applying lessons from the patriarchal legacies within the contemporary context is essential for benchmarking a sociological structure on which effective family leadership can be established. The family, a minuscule organization that feeds other microsystems and ultimately the macrosystems of the social structure, exerts its influence for good or bad in society (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; McWhirter, McWhirter, McWhirter, & McWhirter, 2007; Newman, 1999). Similarly, the influence of society shapes the contour of the family. McWhirter et al. (2007) use a tree metaphor to depict all the different entities in society (socioeconomic structure, culture, technology, school and peers) that impact the development of a child. Each entity is represented as part of the root that nurtures the outgrowth (p. 14).

Using Fisher's (1978) idea on systems perspective, one can assume that family existence is not merely the sum total of all the actions of all its individual members; rather, it is the interaction of all family members operating as a unit of interrelated parts, influenced by surrounding culture. An understanding of the interdependent nature of the different systems at the micro and macro level can serve to guide proactive leadership within contemporary families. To be proactive calls not only for self-reflection but also the ability to plan and implement with the end results in view (Covey, 1990).

### **Asserting Authority**

The structure and role of individual members of the family have shifted significantly (from those of the patriarchs). Breakdown in relationships, which often results in divorce, is one of the key causes contributing to this shift in the family. Galvin et al. (2012) uses terminologies such as "co-breadwinner," "stay-at-home mom," "noncustodial father," and "birth mother" to portray particular labels that have evolved from this breakdown. Many families today are also influenced by pluralistic and relativistic ideologies of postmodernism. A plethora of different ideas and approaches to given circumstances pervades the environment; it is not uncommon for individuals (within a family unit) to make decisions based on personal preference and self-interest rather than common virtue or what is suitable for family well-being. In the same way, standards become less relevant and absolutes are shunned in favor of individuals' perceptions of what is right. In such cases the essence of authority tends to fade or takes on a negative connotation. Individual family members often reject the authority roles they were called by God to fulfill. A lot of struggle is often caused by greed for

power and negligence, which stem from the lust of selfish gratification.

In calling people's attention to their God-given leadership responsibilities, the faith community should emphasize the fact that leadership begins in the family. The church should let individuals know that leadership also begins with intention—that of communicating meaning and value in a way that leads members to understand their leadership roles in the family and society, and to seek to fulfill those roles with integrity. In view of the confusing “anything goes” approach of the world, the faith community is challenged to be the light shining on a hill that points people to God's model of family leadership.

The words of William R. Wallace (1819-1881), “The hand that rocks the cradle is the hand that rules the world,” depict the significance of a mother's influence on a child's development and, ultimately, his or her place in society. This is a suitable application concerning the implications of the need for parents to exercise authority in guiding the development of their children in ways that will influence society positively. Over time, family roles are shared mutually and now it is incumbent on both father and mother to lead the world with intention as they lead their micro organization—their family.

Such leadership becomes evident when a father asserts his authority within his family in a manner that aligns with God's authority (Gen. 18:19; Deut. 6:4-9; Josh. 24:14, 15; Mic. 6:8). It becomes real when he chooses to love his wife (and children) even as Christ loved the church, giving His life for it (Eph. 5:25, 25). This sacrificial method of love is made manifest in various ways, including the time spent intentionally fostering healthy growth and development of family relationships. Leadership becomes evident in the wife who is cognizant of the need to see (and experience) submission not as a passive act but as a dynamic process that engages willingly, showing steadfast love and respect for the man she has committed to share her life with (Eph. 5:22). Her act of submission complements his divinely appointed authority implemented in favor of her well-being (Gen. 2:18; Ruth 3:1). Ultimately, effective leadership distinctly marks the role of both husband and wife as they submit to God, and to each other (Eph. 5:21). This synergy of mutually responsible roles of leadership between parents asserts the kind of authority that leads their posterity to contribute to the good of society. Children are more influenced by what they see than what they hear. Pollard (2012) stresses that parents need to be conscientious with their behavior, that they “practice” what they “tell” their children and that it is “important to give children the influence of godly example” (pp. 17, 18).

The practice of healthy authority within the family might not come easily and might take years to learn. However, acceptance and understanding of one's authority and the authority of God in the family will lead to deeper relationships between the individual family members as well as their relationships with God.

## **Covenantal Agreement**

The relative nature of society today seems to obscure the concept of covenant. A covenant's original intent is often altered through imposition of arrangements that are contractual, ones that are more transitory than permanent. The concept of covenant is characterized primarily by God's binding relationship with humanity. It is used metaphorically to represent relationships among family members. Anderson and Guernsey (1985) describe the concept as "love that provides the basis for family" (p. 40), a place where individuals give and receive unconditional love. The unconditional nature of a covenant calls for a kind of commitment to leadership in the family, similar to that of God to humanity. Balswick and Balswick (2007) describe God's action toward humanity (based on His covenant with them) as compassionate, loving, disciplining, guiding, pursuing, giving, nurturing, respecting, knowing, and forgiving (p. 20). On the contrary, the contractual arrangements that pervade society are often based on selfish conditions that inhibit the development of leadership potentials of family members. In essence, it reduces the quality of effective leadership in society.

The concept of covenant within the family stresses not only self-sacrificial love, but also love with a goal, love that brings life, love that ties humans' present reality with God's infinity. Christian parents supported by the communities of faith can fulfill their roles of contributing to effective leadership in society through intentional interpersonal family circles that allows members to learn and share values and meanings through narratives. In the words of Langellier and Peterson (2006), "the communication practice of storytelling is one way of doing family" (p. 109). Through stories, metaphors, and rituals, individuals learn to create meaning and set goals for their lives. In postmodern society, the pervasive effects of media and technology manipulate the senses, alter the quality of interpersonal transaction within the contemporary family, and mark storytelling as an extinct phenomena. God's instruction to the patriarchs remains a guide for today: "And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house,

and when you walk by the way” (Deut. 6:6-7, ESV). As beneficiaries of God’s covenantal love, parents today are challenged to share their experiences of such love with their children. In a time when hope seems elusive, it is vital to teach children that hope remains in the story of the self-sacrificing, unconditional love of God.

## **Abundant Blessing**

A concept embedded in Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) ecological model is a relevant instrument with which to measure the family’s input in society. This model assumes that individuals and their environments (microsystems, mesosystems, macrosystems) “are continually interacting, and that the individual exerts influence (that results in change) on the environment” (McWhirter et al., 2007, p. 18). As the foundational structure of civilization, family development of leaders inevitably feeds the caliber of leadership within the society. This is evident in the increase or decrease in morality and virtue. Adhering to developing and improving leadership within the family unit ultimately becomes a blessing to society. The presence of values and a sense of responsibility within the unit produce morals and virtue, ultimately leading individual members to cultivate self-leadership. Blanchard (2010), in highlighting the importance of self-leadership, proposes that “before you can hope to lead anyone else, you have to know yourself,” for “only when leaders have experience in leading themselves are they ready to lead others” (p. 89). When transferred into society, this kind of leadership has the potential not only to allay unscrupulous practices but also to have positive exponential effect. The family, supported by the church, becomes an environment where such individuals physically, intellectually, and spiritually develop in the image of God.

## **Conclusion**

In looking at leadership in the patriarchal clan, the recurring message is that family leadership is authorized by God for individuals and societal well-being. When the authority of God is undermined, it causes a rift in family leadership, and breakdown in family leadership has its negative impact on posterity. The need to develop leaders at their core (within the family) is essential for effective leadership in society. This is so because the success and well-being of the society is inevitably tied to the quality of family existence.

As part of society, the community of faith shares in the responsibility of cultivating the posterity of leaders; however, it is imperative that this

start with the family. This is done by not only intervening in the brokenness of different family relationships but also by preventing the lapse in leaders' awareness of their roles. To understand one's role in life is to first make reasonable sense of life, to connect a creation to her or his Creator. Methods for intervention and prevention have maximum benefits when they are relevant to the needs of both individuals and society. This creates the necessity to look at basic factors that enhance both entities at the same time, paving the way for ongoing change and development. Ultimately, the challenge for the faith community is to be uncompromising while at the same time being sensitive, authentic and relevant to the needs of postmodern society. It is to extract from every family member the ancient decision of Joshua: "as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD" (Josh. 24:15, ESV).

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