



SERMON SERIES BY PASTOR SANDY ADAMS
SCARY FAMILIES: PART TWO
WHEN THE PATIENTS TAKE OVER THE ASYLUM
TEXT: JUDGES 21:25

We're in a series of Bible Studies we've entitled, "[Scary Families - Taking the Fright out of Family Life.](#)" People tend to lose their inhibitions around family. They assume liberties they'd never try with outsiders. Family members are prone to take one another for granted... All kinds of weird stuff can happen in a family. That's why family life can get very, very scary. Each week in our series I'm showing a few photos of spooky families. Most of you have no idea what a scary family looks like - you live in such a healthy and loving family - so I'm using these snapshots to set the mood...

First, **the kids with Santa**. But how often do you see a Santa with a shiner? He's been cold-cocked. Here's a scary thought, *maybe the kids did it? That's scary!* Here's a **nice, family portrait**. Girls in dresses, boy sports a tie, Dad wears his best bermuda shorts, *that's strange... But what's up with Junior?* While everyone says, "cheese," he's choking Mom. *That's really scary!* Speaking of mom... you've got to **feel sorry for this mom**. For a professional portrait you want everybody looking nice. I'm sure her son wearing black lipstick is not what she had in mind. *The Goth kid is a bit scary.* Finally, **another family portrait... But what are these parents thinking?** Why dress up your seven kids up in prison garb? What kind of aspiration do they have for their kids... "Our family the chain gang?" *Just scary..* Which leads us to this morning's episode of "[Scary Families - When The Patients Take Over the Asylum.](#)" When a leadership vacuum occurs in a family its members go nuts. There's no guidance. People tend to act selfishly. They *harm* rather than *help* each other.

I want to start by reading the last verse of the book of Judges. It speaks of Israel at a time of great peril, but it also describes the lack of leadership in families today. Judges 21:25, "**In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.**" Here was the cultural climate that led to Israel's cry for a monarchy. There was no consensus on right and wrong - no moral imperative to make sense out of life. Everyone did as they pleased. Self-gratification ruled the day... Israel was desperate for spiritual leadership. And when our homes lack leadership, and moral authority... it's *katy-bar-the-door*. Families get scary!

Maybe you've seen the AMC show, "[The Walking Dead.](#)" It's about a post-apocalyptic world where social structures have crumbled. Anarchy rules in the streets. The world is overrun with Zombies - former humans who've been traumatized. They're called "[Walkers.](#)" These *walking wounded* roam around preying on anything alive. The few surviving humans live in fear of the shuffling Zombie hordes who are out to get them. I'm not sure if it's the intention of the show's writers, but it seems to me "[The Walking Dead](#)" is a cultural metaphor of the horror that exists in today's world. We live in a time where the foundations of truth and morality have been torn down. Moral anarchy reigns. And it's produced a crippled generation that lacks a conscience - a moral compass. People today are like spiritual zombies - roaming around, preying on other folks, led about only by their appetite. It's a tragedy.

And sadly, all our vain efforts aren't fixing the problem. Condom distribution, clean needles, and anti-bullying campaigns aren't teaching morality to our kids. *It begins at home.* What goes on in the streets is a direct reflection of what's happening in our homes. Recently, the mayor of Philadelphia, Michael Nutter, went off on a 25 minute rant against his city's parents. And I quote, "[Parents, get your act together, right now! Or you're going to find yourself spending quality time with your kids in jail... If you're not providing moral instruction to your children, you're just a human ATM.](#)" It's dads and moms that need to teach their kids truth, and model morality. Or else their kids will grow up confused, and undisciplined, and self-absorbed Oh, for a society of thinking, loving, principled folks. Not selfish Walkers on the prowl for more to consume.

At the turn of the 20th century, Thomas Cuyler, wrote, "[I care little for the government that presides at Washington, in comparison with the government that rules millions of American homes... The home rules the nation.](#)" And it's true. **The home does rule the nation!** But when there's no one holding the reins... when Dad vacates his role and responsibility, or when Mom gets distracted by other concerns... kids are left to grow up on their own... *That's when families get scary.*

We just read of the terrible conditions that existed in Israel during the days of the Judges. "[Everyone did what was right in his own eyes...](#)" Well there was a prominent man alive at the time who's name was Eli. Eli lived in the hills of Shiloh, at the Tabernacle. And as the Hebrew High Priest he offered up prayers, and praise, and sacrifices to God. He even entered the Holy of Holies to intercede for the people. Eli was the nation of Israel's spiritual leader. But for some reason, Eli failed to lead in his own family. He was "[Big Man](#)" at the Tabernacle, but a "[Big Flop](#)" at home. In some ways Eli's influence touched an entire nation, but somehow it missed his own boys. Was he too busy with "*church work*" to tend to his own sons? Whatever tripped up Eli, we're not sure. But his sons made a mockery of the things of God.

1 Samuel 2:22 tells us, "[Now Eli was very old; and he heard everything his sons did to all Israel, and how they lay with the women who assembled at the door of the tabernacle of meeting.](#)" This was a *sizzling sex scandal*. Imagine, the headlines in the Jerusalem Post. Eli's sons, priests themselves, were guilty of brazen rebellion. They hosted orgies on the steps of God's house. The news rocked the priesthood. It heaped shame on the nation. It cast a cloud over Eli's ministry.

When Eli first received news of his son's immorality he reprimanded them - but it was little more than a "[slap on the wrist.](#)" It wasn't the action God required. When God pronounces judgment on Eli, He speaks sternly, "[I have told \(Eli\) that I will judge his house forever for the iniquity which he knows, because his sons made themselves vile, and he did not restrain them.](#)" Notice, Eli's sin... he failed to "[restrain](#)" his sons. And as a result, our Father God held this father - at least partly responsible - for the sins of his children.

Note, the job of every father, first and foremost, is to "[restrain](#)" his children. A dad's duty is to [curb their rebellion - tame their temper - defuse their defiance.](#) Yes, every father needs to nurture his kids. Show them compassion and kindness. Be loving... but [a dad's primary obligation is to keep his kids in check.](#) A dad is the captain of the ship and it's his main responsibility to put down mutinies when they occur. God puts a dad in charge of training and leadership. Hebrews 12 reminds us that a father who truly loves his son will discipline him. The dad who never restrains his kids - who always gives in to what they want... despite what he says, really doesn't love them.

One night I'd retired to the living room after putting my children to bed. My three year-old had gone down squirming. He really wasn't ready to head to bed. I'd just gotten comfortable in the lazy boy when my son trots through the room wanting to see his mom. I said, "[Son, what in the world are you doing out of bed?](#)" I'll never forget, he turns to me with this defiant look, and says, "[Dad, mind your own business.](#)" Well, I

proceeded to show him exactly what my business was. I spanked his little rump and put him down for the final time! *A dad's business - his God-ordained job* - is to restrain and discipline his kids. *And at three years old it's just beginning.* Don't ever forget, God brought judgment on the house of Eli because he failed to "restrain" his sons. But honestly, that doesn't satisfy my curiosity. Why did Eli drop the ball? He was priest. He lived his life for God, what caused him to fail his own family? [How did a priestly family become a scary family?](#)

I want to spend the rest of my time this morning, painting three more pictures that help explain why a dad, or a parent vacates the leadership in the home... *And when they do the zombies, or walkers, or kid-os, or relatives - or whatever you call them... take over!* The patients end up running the asylum!

The first portrait I want to present is King David. And I'm actually reluctant to cast David in a negative light. There was so much commendable about this man. The Bible calls him "a man after God's own heart." David was a warrior. He feared only God, and fought His battles. Under David's reign, the twelve tribes were consolidated. He expanded the nation's borders. And David was also a worshipper. He knew God's heart like few others. He wrote nearly half the psalms.

History knows David as a **dude!** But at home David was a **dud.** Like Eli, he inspired a nation, but failed his family. The David who ran to battle to confront Goliath, stood by while his own house veered off the rails. As a dad, *here was David's problem...* He was **paralyzed by guilt.**

You recall the fateful night. It was springtime, when normally kings go off to battle. But David stayed home. He wanted to take it easy. Enjoy a little R and R. My word, if anybody deserved a vacation, it was Dave. But idleness is the devil's workshop, and that night after dinner, he strolled out on the balcony. As he surveyed his city, he caught a glimpse in the moonlight of a naked woman. Her shadowy silhouette haunted him. He had to meet her - admire her beauty up-close. His rendezvous with Bathsheba led to adultery, illegitimate pregnancy, lies, the murder of her husband, an ugly cover-up that went on for more than a year... It was awful. The guilt devastated David. He writes of his experience, Psalm 32, "When I kept silent, my bones grew old through my groaning all the day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; my vitality turned into the drought of summer..."

When you track David's life you can make a case that he never recovered from his own personal failure. 2 Samuel 11-12 recount David's adultery, and how God brought it to *the light of day in a very public way.* When the baby died shortly after birth, David rightly took it as God's judgment. The blood of his son was now on his hands - and it caused the king great grief. Though King David rose up and went back to work - it seems he never overcame the shame of his sin. **Guilt paralyzed his parenting.** David never regained the moral high ground in his own family. He felt unworthy. He forfeited his authority, and never found a way to rise up and get it back.

It's no accident in the very next chapter, 2 Samuel 13, we see David's family unraveling. The king has a son, Amnon, who falls in love with a half-sister, Tamar. Amnon is a weasel. He's a snake in the grass. He feigns a sickness, and lures Tamar into his bedroom. The spoiled brat professes his love to the Princess, but when she refuses his advances - he rapes Tamar. 2 Samuel 13:14-15 recounts the sordid event, "being stronger than she, he forced her and lay with her. Then Amnon hated her exceedingly, so that the hatred with which he hated her was greater than the love with which he had loved her. And Amnon said to her, "Arise, be gone!" Amnon uses her up, and then spits her out.

And here's the blight on David's record... **he did nothing!** The Scripture says, "When King David heard of all these things, he was very angry." *But did nothing!* The King of Israel - more importantly, the Head of his household - refused to *step in* and *step up* and address this injustice. He refused to discipline his own family. 2 Samuel 13:23 tells us, "And it came to pass, after two full years..." For two years David overlooked his son's sin. He ignored the brutality, and its impact on Tamar. She'd been violated. *Did her dad even care?* Well, her brother Absalom cared. He lured Amnon into *his kitchen* where the rapist was stabbed to death.

And rather than get mad at himself for creating this scenario - *forcing the elder brother to take matters into his own hands*. David took out his anger on Absalom. It caused a breach in David's own family that never healed. In fact, David's conflict with Absalom later erupts into full-scale rebellion. Absalom and his colleagues no longer trusted King David's leadership. They launch a coup-de-that to drive David from the throne. In the end, his son, Absalom, dies - and though David's rule is restored - his heart is broken forever.

Here's an observation... **guilt is a terrible obstacle for a parent to overcome**. A parent with a checkered past has a hard time coming down on his kids when they make the same mistakes. They become paralyzed. *Promiscuous kids later become permissive parents*. *Who am I to steer my kids away from drugs, when I smoked pot - or worse?... How can I come down on my daughter for dressing a little provocatively when she was born three months before her dad and I got married?... Who am I to get too upset over my son's poor grades, when I dropped out of school my junior year...* Well, I'll tell you who you are - **you're the kid's parent!** It's time you stopped sulking - and stood up in the grace of God - and started acting like a parent.

Just because you were a rebellious kid, doesn't mean you have to be an reluctant parent. I've always told my kids that if they don't turn out better than me I'd be severely disappointed. *And that's not a cop out...* I've been actively involved in their life, and I've tried to help them avoid the mistakes I've made. *I mean it*. My problems growing up have been a motivation in my parenting, not a paralysis. **My pain is my kid's gain!**

Sadly, some of us misunderstand God's forgiveness! We're like a disobedient dog that jumped its leash, and failed to obey its Master. We got spanked, and brought back in line. Now we're wagging our tail, and chewing on a biscuit, and minding our manners again. That's not forgiveness. That's behavior modification. God's forgiveness deep cleans. It changes who I am in the deepest parts. It cleans up my mind, restores my conscience, clothes me in a new identity. I possess a *brand new heart*, and I'm given a *brand new start*.

And all that means I can now parent guilt-free! I don't have to be paralyzed or crippled by my past sins. **Jesus retook the high ground, and He gives it to me**. Certainly, I'm going raise my kids with an appreciation and understanding of the grace I've been shown. But the Bible calls me "**the righteousness of Christ**." If I believe in the power of God - then I believe His power is sufficient to keep and enable my kids. Here's the miracle of the Gospel... people who were slaves to sin have become ambassadors for Christ. And the first place I'm to live it out is in my family! Never let guilt from the past paralyze your present!

But there's another story I need to tell. Genesis 34 exposes another scary family - the family of Jacob. Imagine, twelve brothers and one sister... I recall when Mack was born, my daughter, Natalie, cried profusely. She thought she wanted a sister. I assured her, "**Honey, if we have another little girl; then you wouldn't be daddy's only princess. You'd have to share his special affections. Favored child status would no longer be yours.**" After thinking it through, she dried her tears, and I never heard about it again.

That was the case with Dinah. She was the twinkle in her daddy's eye. Twelve *bad brothers* had her back. And wow, were they mad when they heard about a guy who had *done the dirty* with their beloved sister... One day, Dinah had *gone out to hang out* with the teenage girls at the local mall. And where there're teenage girls you'll usually find some teenage boys. A Gentile neighbor saw Dinah, and lusted after her. He and Dinah wound up in the backseat of his camel, where he stole from Jake's daughter her purity. The boy's name was Shechem, and this Shechem rushes home to his daddy, and asks him to arrange a marriage. He won't find any gal "*fine-a*" than "*Dinah!*"

Apparently, Shechem never speaks to Jacob. The brothers intervene. And they could care less about nuptials. They have one thing on their mind - *revenge!* But they play it coy... The boys tell Shechem what he wants to hear. *Why don't they ALL intermarry!* The one problem is that Shechem's kin are uncircumcised. Have all Shechem's men circumcised and multiple weddings will begin! And Shechem's crew agreed...

Now I hate to torment the males here this morning, but men, imagine for a moment, you - a grown man - undergoing an unanestisized surgical procedure on your privy member. Just the thought is terribly painful. I have a friend of mine who endured this as an adult. I was tempted to put him in the shadows, and gargle his voice to protect his identity, and let him tell you his horror story. *Talk about a scary family moment.* I decided not to put us all through such a brutal ordeal. Just know... these men were incapacitated...

And that's exactly what Jacob's boys wanted. No one is going to get away with disrespecting their sister. So on the third day, post-surgery, they swoop in with drawn swords and slaughtered Shechem and his buddies. *It was brutal. It was bloodthirsty. It was wrong.* There had to be a better, less violent way to solve the problem. But evidently, there wasn't a dad around to help the boys think through a more godly reaction. Again, a lack of leadership creates [a scary family](#).

It amazes me the first words out of Jacob's mouth when he hears about the bloodlust of his own sons. I mean, *blood is still dripping from their swords...* Genesis 34:30, "Then Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, 'You have troubled me by making me obnoxious among the inhabitants of the land, among the Canaanites and the Perizzites, and since I am few in number, they will gather themselves together, against me and kill me, I shall be destroyed, my household and I.'" Here's his first thought, [what will the neighbors say?](#)

Not... *what have you done? Or what could you have done differently? Or how will God judge your actions?* All Jacob cares about are other people's opinions... His status in the community... What'll happen to him... More specifically, he was concerned about *keeping the peace*, instead of *doing what was right*. At least his sons - though horribly misled - sought to correct an injustice. All Dad wanted, was to avoid making waves.

Here's another reason parents, particularly dads, back away from leadership - [keeping the peace is seen as more important than pursuing what's right](#). It's peace at any price! Even *peace over principle*. "[Whatever you do, don't rock the boat!](#)"

This is why a husband cowers to a strong-willed wife. He laughs and sloughs if off, "[Well, if mama isn't happy, nobody's happy.](#)" But sometimes mama isn't happy because there's not a man in her life who loves her enough to help her check her emotions and make a wise decision. Few wives like it when their husband disagrees with them, but they need his godly wisdom. A husband isn't loving a wife when he always caves in to unreasonable demands just to avoid a conflict.

This is also true of a wife who puts up with an abusive husband... He pays the bills. He puts food on the table. In return everybody tiptoes around him on pins and needles just to keep him from going ballistic. This makes for unhealthy family dynamics - it creates a **scary family**. Hey, **peace at any price is not a virtue**. Just because a man pays the rent and fixes a few leaky faucets doesn't give him the right to run roughshod over the family's feelings, and act like a jerk. *It's not love that puts up with an abusive spouse.*

When Jacob gives the brothers his "don't make waves" rationale, his boys fire back at him in verse 31, "But they said, 'Should he treat our sister like a harlot.'" Somebody needs to be held accountable, whether the neighbors agree or not. *What about righteousness?* At times the boat needs to be rocked... Real love calls people to task. Jesus brings grace and truth. Whereas, *peace over principle* creates a **scary family**.

Here's a third and final portrait of a man who failed to lead his family, and let the patients take over the asylum. 1 Kings 21:25 tells us, "There was no one like Ahab who sold himself to do wickedness in the sight of the LORD, because Jezebel his wife stirred him up." Ahab was a man who did evil because he let his wife stir him up. He followed her lead rather than vice versa. Rather than set a godly pace in his family, Ahab allowed his wicked wife to drag him to hell with her.

Let me say this gently... Ahab was a spineless wimp. And his cowardice emboldened a dangerous woman. King Ahab married a Phoenician princess named "Jezebel." The name itself has become infamous. If you have a baby name this is one name you don't even consider. You strike it from the start. Who names their daughter "Jezebel?" It reeks of evil. When the "Mrs." is a "Jezebel" you know it's a **scary family**.

This woman single-handedly plunged Israel into the dark abyss of idolatry. She imported the Phoenician idol, Baal, and 850 priests to propagate his blasphemy. Scripture says Jezebel fed these *ambassadors of idolatry* with food from the king's own table. Imagine, how God felt... The State of Israel was subsidizing idolatry - and the king just rolled over and let it happen. Ahab was King of Israel - and king over his own castle - but he did nothing to stand up to Jezebel and her evil. He vacated leadership. And a truly mad, crazy woman took over the reins of his family and his nation.

There's a frightening story in 1 Kings 21... Ahab finds a fruitful vineyard near his palace, and offers to buy it from it's owner. But Naboth tells him it's not for sale. The king comes home, lies on his bed, and pouts like a cry-baby. Jezebel sees it, and it turns her stomach. Her husband's weakness emboldens her sinfulness. She concocts a scheme to frame Naboth - accuse him of blasphemy and have him stoned to death. The plan goes off without a hitch. Before long she's gifting the property deed to her hubby. And rather than investigate his wife's actions... Ahab just plays dumb. He takes the vineyard. *You don't confront a Jezebel.*

But he should have. Ahab's complacency provoked God's wrath. God didn't ignore the evil that was done. The Prophet Elijah calls out Ahab. He tells the king that where the dogs licked up Naboth's blood, they'll feast on his blood. God plans to cut off the house of Ahab, and turn Queen Jezebel into puppy chow. How's that for a *scary end* to a *royal family*?

But this is what happens in a family when leadership is vacated through **cowardice**... *bloodshed result*. Maybe not literally, but spiritual violence occurs. Husbands and wives don't just part ways. They don't agree to disagree. In a power struggle people get hurt. Families end up torn apart. Kids stop speaking to their parents. And parents can't stand their kids.

Families become [scary families](#) when fathers and mothers succumb to fear, and fail to restrain their kids. Understand, your children are little Jezebels. They're little Phoenicians. Just because you bring them to your home from the hospital doesn't mean they'll embrace your values and worship your God. *To the contrary...* When you bring a baby home from the hospital it's like Ahab bringing Jezebel from Phoenicia to Samaria. [Your kids are idolaters. They worship themselves.](#)

Here's the Jezebel attitude... Every kid has it. You want a vineyard - *just take it* - take whatever you want. Your child has to be taught to work hard, and save money, and respect the rights of other people, and obey the law, and pay for property when and if it becomes available. *You don't just take what you want.* It's been said, ["Give an kid everything, and he or she won't appreciate anything."](#) This is the Jezebel attitude.

And if you're afraid to stand up to your kids - to insist on *correct belief* and *right behavior* - they'll run wild. Your kids will take over the asylum. A parent's weakness doesn't garner a kid's respect. It does just the opposite - it emboldens their evil. Give in once, and see how often that child will try to exploit your soft spot, and get you to cave in again. That's like Ahab's approach to Jezebel... Just let her do as she pleases... ask no questions... bury your head in the sand... Take that approach with your children, and your family will turn into a real-life horror movie.

This is why every family needs brave leadership. When a wimp is at the helm, Jezebel takes advantage. Don't you dare take the approach... ["We're not going to try and influence our kids. We don't want to impose our values, or shove anything down their throat. We'll just let them choose their own beliefs when they get older."](#) That my friend, is the height of madness. You're playing right into the devil's hands. Don't you understand your kids are not a blank slate. They have a sin nature. A propensity toward selfishness and evil.

And neither do they live in a neutral environment. Trust me, *the world, the flesh, the devil* are working overtime to influence our kids. Every day a tidal wave of temptation targets them. If the parents don't try to protect and influence their kids, who in the world will? Certainly, one day our kids will have to choose for themselves - we won't be able to decide for them. But in the meantime, parents need the courage, and resolve, and determination to steer their kids in the right direction even when they're not anxious to follow.

I've heard it said, ["Kids will forgive you for your mistakes, but your cowardice will send them elsewhere for strength."](#) We all gravitate toward strong leadership. Every human is looking for something to believe in that's worth standing for, and fighting for, and living for.

Actually, a new medical disorder has been identified. It's been labeled, ["WPS - Wimpy Parent Syndrome."](#) It starts when you let the kid suck on the pacifier too long. It grows when you buy the toy to stop the temper tantrum - and reward the guilt trip with a nicer car. If you want a child to learn patience, self-control, and delayed gratification - then the parent has to be strong enough to tolerate the kid's unhappiness at times.

It takes guts - nerve - gritty faith - and an unswerving devotion to what's wise and right - to be a good parent. Your daughter is not going to like it when you send back her swimsuit because it's too skimpy... Your son isn't going to nominate you *"Dad of the Year"* when you take away his car keys after he gets a speeding ticket.. Parents need to remember, ["We're not running for re-election."](#) Your kids have plenty of friends who'll tell them what they *want to hear*. But you're their parent! And your job is to tell your kids what they *need to hear*.

One thing is certain, *when parents no longer discipline their kids... and when husbands no longer lead their wives...* the patients take over the asylum. And that's what creates a **scary family!**

Don't you become paralyzed by guilt and vacate leadership in your family. As Christians we regain the moral high ground when we see ourselves in Christ. And **don't pursue a peace at any price**. Family life gets spooky when everybody is afraid to rock the boat, and nobody is willing to hold each other accountable. And **don't cower from a confrontation**. Spouses need to stand up for what's right. Parents need to stand up to their kids. Tough love is a necessary family skill.

This morning, if your family has been slipping away, I want to pray, and ask God, to help you get it back. Let Him wash away your guilt - replace your fears with faith - lift you out your weakness in His strength! Rather than **scary families** let's be **faithful families!**