

Road Of The Pilgrims

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Cover photo: Our whole family

Back row (left to right): Lydiyah, Ameliyah (Mama) Coover holding Yahladah, Elchaiyah (Papa) Coover, Gramma Coover (Elchaiyah's mother) holding Mattithyah and Lindseyah's daughter Abigail, Mattithyah (holding his and Lindseyah's son Caleb), Lindseyah (holding her and Mattithyah's son Benyamin), Rivqah. Front row (left to right): Eliyahna, Obadiyah, and Moriyah

Yahweh bless you! The Coovers

sons. This is what I have prayed for before you were even born..... that each of my sons will rise up to be humble, to be considerate, to be sincere, to be convicted, to be tender, to be compassionate, to be merciful, to be committed..... to be men, to be leaders.....

Love, Mother



The Entrance Of Thy Words Giveth Light.....

2 Timothy 4:3,4 "Behold, the days come when they will not stand for sound teaching; but according to their lustings they will follow teachers proclaiming what they want to hear; and will turn their ears away from the truth, and will be turned instead to perversion."

In light of recent deception and propagation of polygamous doctrines by false y-hwehist teachers such as Marshall (Moshe) Koniuchowsky and Simon Altaf of YATI / BYSW, the need has become apparent for an:

OFFICIAL STANCE OF THE NAZARENE HEBREWS ON BETROTHAL AND MONOGAMOUS MARRIAGE

By Brother Mattithyah Coover
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Marriage, as instituted by Yahweh in Eden, and defined by the Hebrew Scriptures, consists of a commitment to faith and physical fidelity between only one man and one woman for their entire life.

Betrothal describes a preliminary "hands off relationship" between the two who are committed to marriage, having sought parental guidance or other appropriate counsel, and unless widowed have retained their virginity (Lev 21:7,13; Ezek 44:22,23; Rev 14:4). A betrothal may only be terminated with

the unoffending party free to marry another on account of prior intimacy with an illegitimate partner (cf. Matt 1:18-20; 5:31; Deut 22:13-21) The context for this process, which Yahweh illustrates through his love-relationship with Israel, provides a pure and historically proven means of courtship established on a promise of fidelity (Hos 2:19,20) which creates a lasting foundation of nuptial love and reciprocal trust.

Within the context of marriage, "whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her, a woman who divorces her husband and marries another commits adultery against him" (Mark 10:11,12) "and everyone marrying her who is put away from her husband commits adultery" (Lk 16:18). "And when a man has taken a wife...and find in her an issue of unchastity...and write her a certificate of "putting away".... If when she departs she becomes another man's... then her former husband which sent her away may not take her again to be his wife, after that she is defiled; for that is an abomination before Yahweh, and you shall not cause the land to sin which Yahweh your Elohim gives you for an inheritance." (Deut 24:1-4) "But if her husband be dead, she is loosed from that (aspect of) Torah so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man." (Rom 7:3b) "The wife is bound by the Torah as long as her husband lives, but if her husband be dead she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in Yahweh" (1 Cor 7:39) Therefore "Let not the wife depart from her husband, and if she depart, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband divorce his wife (1 Cor 7:10)

Although temporary concessions were made and judgments enacted for men with multiple wives (Deut 21:10-17), as even for fathers selling their daughters (Ex 21:7-11) or males owning concubines or female servants — unarguably a form of sexual slavery to gratify their deviate desires (Judges 19:24-30), it must also be clearly stated that:

The practice originated among the descendants of Cain,

spoken it. And I will make with them a covenant of peace, and will cause the evil beasts to cease out of the land; and they shall dwell safely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods. And I will make them and the places round about My hill a blessing; and I will cause the shower to come down in his season; there shall be showers of blessing. And the tree of the field shall yield her fruit, and the earth shall yield her increase, and they shall be safe in the land, and shall know that I am Yahweh, when I have broken the bands of their yoke and delivered them out of the hand of those that served themselves of them. And they shall no more be a prey to the heathen, neither shall the beasts of the land devour them, but they shall dwell safely, and none shall make them afraid. And I will raise up for them a plant of renown, and they shall be no more consumed with hunger in the land, neither bear the shame of the heathen anymore. Thus shall they know that I Yahweh their Elohim am with them, and that they, even the house of Israel, are My people, saith the Master Yahweh. And ye My flock of My pasture are men, and I am your Elohim, saith the Master Yahweh." (Ezekiel 34:22-31)

In summary, a righteous leader does not shirk his duties, but nor does he assume an air of pride and superiority. He leads because he loves. His leadership is a very real and daily way that he shows his love. He protects and nurtures his flock. He seeks peace and blessing for his family. Under his leadership, the sheep of his flock experience liberty and security. They are glad to take on his identity and to recognize him as their shepherd.

This is the kind of leader I want each of you to be, my

be drawn to want to respect me and to want to submit to my leadership. I am giving them instruction because I want what is best for them. I want to be a good example for them to follow. I am willing to sacrifice and give of myself to ensure that they have enough and that they are spiritually and physically protected, nurtured, and taken care of."

Selfishness, laziness, and pride are all enemies to the leadership that Yahweh desires you to exercise. "My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and upon every high hill; yea, My flock was scattered upon the face of the earth, and none did search or seek after them." (Ezekiel 34:6) "Seemeth it a small thing unto you to have eaten up the good pasture, but ye must tread down with your feet the residue of your pastures? And to have drunk of the deep waters, but ye must foul the residue with your feet? And as for My flock, they eat that which ye have trodden with your feet: and they drink that which ye have fouled with your feet." (Ezekiel 34:18-19) "Because ye have thrust with side and with shoulder, and pushed all the diseased with your horns, till ye have scattered them abroad" (Ezekiel 34:21)

Do not allow pride or selfishness or laziness to ever have dominion over you, my sons. Take dominion over the enemies that would wreck your leadership, and be a leader like Yahweh. He has set a perfect example for you of what a leader can and should be. "Therefore will I save My flock, and they shall no more be a prey.... And I will set up one shepherd over them, and He shall feed them, even My servant David: He shall feed them, and He shall be their shepherd. And I Yahweh will be their Elohim, and My servant David a prince among them; I Yahweh have

namely with a murderer (Gen 4:19-23)

The practice was NEVER condoned by Yahweh or spoken favorably of (see Lev 18:18, 19:29, 20:14, Deut 17:16,17, Lev 18:18, 2 Sam 12:10-12, etc.)

"It is a faithful saying that if a man desires the eldership, he desires a good work. And an elder must be such that no blame can be found in him; and he must be the husband of [only] one wife, with a vigilant mind and sober and reliable (in his behaviors), and affectionate to strangers, and instructive, and not a transgressor in regard to wine, and whose hand is not swift to strike; but he should be humble and not contentious, nor a lover of money; and one who guides well his own house and holds his children in subjection with all purity. For if he knows not how to guide his own house well, how can he guide the assembly of Elohim? (1 Timothy 3:1-5)

"If any be blameless, the husband of ONE WIFE, having children who KEEP FAITH...for an elder must be BLAMELESS as the steward of Elohim; not self-willed...but sober, just, holy, temperate — holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught that he may be able by SOUND DOCTRINE both to exhort and to convince those teaching otherwise." (Titus 1:6-9)

As clearly seen in Abraham's relations with Hagar, Yahweh states that he "Gave them up unto their own hearts' lust, and they walked in their own counsels. Oh that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways!" (Psa 31:12,13)

Polygamy was practiced only by SOME patriarchs, and that for a very limited time in Israel's history, namely from Abraham up until the end of the Babylonian captivity). In fact, from Genesis through Revelation there are only 20-30 recorded accounts of polygamy in 4,000 years of history,

and these include Lamech the cold blooded killer, the pagan kings of Babylon and Syria, Jacob who married sisters (breaking Torah), David who killed Bathsheba's husband and married her to cover up his adultery (breaking Torah), Solomon and Rehoboam who multiplied wives which turned their hearts from Yahweh (as forbidden by Torah), and the pagan kings of Israel such as Yehoiachin, Zedekiah, and Ahab the husband of Jezebel, which led the people away from the law and worship of Yahweh. Likewise, in neither of the accounts of Livirate marriage (either Tamar, Yahudah's daughter in law; or Ruth the wife of Boaz) is a polygamous relationship even indicated, although repeatedly cited by pro-polygamists as supposed "proof" of their position. To the contrary, we find that the closest living relative in the book of Ruth (and therefore by theory, the most obliged) adamantly opposed any implications of matrimony, as to do so would "ruin his own inheritance"; i.e. he had already promised himself to one wife (cf. Ruth 4:6).

"And on the twentieth day of the ninth month, all the people were sitting in the square before the house of Elohim, greatly distressed by the occasion and because of the rain. Then Ezra the priest stood up and said to them, 'You have been unfaithful; you have married strange women, adding to Israel's guilt. Now make confession to Yahweh, the Elohim of your fathers, and do his desire. Separate yourselves from the peoples around you and from your strange wives.' The whole assembly responded with a loud voice: 'You are right! We must do as you say. But there are many people here and it is the rainy season; so we cannot stand outside. Besides, this matter cannot be taken care of in a day or two, because we have sinned greatly in this thing. Let our officials act for the whole assembly. Then let everyone in our towns who has married a strange woman come at a set time, along with the elders and judges of each town, until the fierce anger of our Elohim in this matter is turned away

Ezekiel 34 continues, describing Yahweh's kind of leadership. "Therefore, O ye shepherds, hear the word of Yahweh. Thus saith the Master Yahweh, 'Behold, I am against the shepherds, and I will require My flock at their hand, and cause them to cease from feeding the flock, neither shall the shepherds feed themselves anymore: for I will deliver my flock from their mouth, that they may not be meat for them. For thus saith the Master Yahweh: Behold, I, even I will both search My sheep, and seek them out. As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered, so will I seek out My sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day. And I will bring them out from the people, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land, and feed them upon the mountains of Israel by the rivers, and in all the inhabited places of the country. I will feed them in a good pasture, and upon the high mountains of Israel shall their fold be: there shall they lie in a good fold, and in a fat pasture shall they feed upon the mountains of Israel. I will feed My flock, and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Master Yahweh. I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick: but I will destroy the fat and the strong; I will feed them with judgment.' " (verses 7-16)

Yahweh leads because He loves. A true leader ~ someone who desires to emulate Yahweh's leadership qualities ~ has an attitude of, "I am responsible for caring for those under my authority, for looking out for their well being, and for protecting them. I want to earn their respect. I want to lead them in such a way that they will

A desire for superiority is not a Scriptural motivation for leadership. Yahweh did not make anyone to be any better than anyone else. A man is not better than the woman just because he is the leader. He is not more important to Yahweh, and he is certainly not permitted to just do whatever he pleases. He is accountable to Yahweh, and as a leader, he actually stands in danger of greater judgment if he acts corruptly. "My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation." (James 5:1)

What, then, should be a man's drive to lead? Bob Schultz, in "Boyhood And Beyond", says, "Every true leader has the vision for serving." Yahweh condemns the shepherds of Israel for not feeding the flocks, not strengthening the diseased, not healing the sick, not binding up the broken, not bringing back those who are driven away, and not seeking that which was lost. What Yahweh is saying here is that a true leader has a desire and commitment to protect, preserve, and look out for his flock. He wants to be a leader because he wants to do his part in making life better for whoever he can. He wants to be a leader because he cares. He wants to be a leader because he desires to make a positive difference in the world. He wants to be a leader, not for personal recognition and clout, but because he is humble and compassionate.

This is the kind of leader that Yahweh is. He is the Ruler of the whole earth, and if anyone had the power to abuse their authority, He certainly does. But He doesn't choose to, because He is a just leader, a true leader, the kind of leader that I desire for you to be.

from us... And they gave their hand in pledge to put away their strange wives" (Ezra 10:9-14,19)

"Have we not all one Father? Did not one Elohim create us? Why do we profane the covenant of our fathers by breaking faith with one another? Judah has broken faith. A detestable thing has been committed in Israel and in Jerusalem: Judah has desecrated the sanctuary YHWH loves, by MARRYING THE DAUGHTER OF A FOREIGN GOD. As for the man who does this, whoever he may be, may YHWH cut him off from the tents of Jacob — even though he brings offerings to YHWH Almighty.... You ask, "Why?" It is because YHWH is acting as the witness between you and the WIFE OF YOUR YOUTH, because YOU HAVE BROKEN FAITH WITH HER, THOUGH SHE IS YOUR PARTNER, THE WIFE OF YOUR MARRIAGE COVENANT. Has not YHWH made you one? In flesh and spirit you are his. And why one? Because he was seeking UNDEFILED SEED. So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith with the wife of your youth." (Malachi 2:10-17)

"Discretion would guard you; understanding would watch over you, to deliver you from the evil way, from the man who speaks perversities, those who leave the paths of straightness to walk in the ways of darkness; who rejoice to do evil; they delight in the perversities of evil; whose paths are crooked, they are perverted in their ways; to deliver you from the strange woman, from the foreigner who flatters with her words, who forsakes the companion of her youth and has forgotten the covenant of her Elohim. (Prov 2:11-17)

"For the lips of a strange woman drip honey, and her mouth is smoother than oil; but in the end she is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword" (Pr 5:3,4) "Do not desire her body in your heart, neither let her captivate you with her eyelids" (Pr 6:25) "Drink water from your own cistern, and running water from your own well. Should your springs (semen) be scattered abroad as rivers of waters in the streets?

Let them be only your own and not for strangers with you. Let your fountain be blessed and REJOICE WITH THE WIFE OF YOUR YOUTH — a loving deer and a pleasant doe! LET HER BREASTS SATISFY YOU AT ALL TIMES and be CAPTIVATED BY HER LOVE ALWAYS. For why should you, my son, be captivated by a strange woman, and embrace the breasts of a stranger? (Prov 5:15-20)

"From the beginning Elohim made them '[one] male and [one] female'. For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife, and those two shall become one flesh so that they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what Elohim has joined together, no one must separate." (Mark 10:6-9, cf. Gen 2:24)

Any other sexual companion (whether called a "wife", "concubine", "girlfriend", "fiancé", etc. and whether engaging in actual intercourse or not, can neither physically nor Scripturally unite with a husband's first wife (Lev 20:13; 2 Tim 3:3; Rom 1:24-27; 1 Cor 6:9,10) and thereby divides the "one flesh" which Yahweh created when joining a man with the "wife of his youth" asunder. Additionally, according to Yahshua, any man who even looks at a woman other than his wife, with thoughts of a second female companion, sexual intentions, or physical desire, has already committed adultery against his wife in his heart. (Matthew 5:28)

"Concerning the things of which you wrote to me, it is praiseworthy for a man not to approach a woman. But, on account of sexual temptation, let each have his own wife and let a woman have her own husband." (1 Cor. 7:1-2)

The wording "his own" and "her own", derived in the Peshitta from the Aramaic word "khad", clearly refer to an exclusivity of sexual access between only husband and wife.

"And let the man render to his wife the kindness which is due; and so also the woman to her husband. The woman is not the

to be leaders, and they misuse their leadership. They view leadership more as a means of getting their own way than as a means of blessing, protecting, and rightly directing their flock.

Ezekiel 34 describes this kind of a leader: "And the word of Yahweh came unto me, saying, 'Son of man, prophecy against the shepherds of Israel, prophecy and say unto them: Thus saith the Master Yahweh unto the shepherds, Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves; should not the shepherds feed the flocks? Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill them that are fed: but ye feed not the flock. The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost; but with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them.' " (verses 1-4)

Yahweh presents in these verses two motivating factors for leadership. The one that these corrupt shepherds are driven by is the desire to be exalted to a place of superiority. Then enjoy the power they have. They misuse it, and thus, misuse the people who are subject to that power. They care most about themselves. The feelings and needs of others are not really that important to them, maybe not even important at all. Their attitude is, "I'm the boss. I can do whatever I want. Nobody can tell me what to do. Don't attempt to challenge my authority. I'm in charge here whether anyone likes it or not. You'd better show me respect and do what I say."

The one cliff over which you could fall is the side on which men do not even try to take leadership. We see a lot of men in our culture who have fallen over this cliff. So many men do not know how to be leaders, or else do not want to take leadership, or perhaps do not feel that it would be acceptable for them to try to be a leader. Whatever their motives or reasoning, our culture is full of men who fail to take the leadership in their homes and families that Yahweh so deeply desires men to take.

I recently saw an advertisement for a CD entitled "The Visionary Father's Role In Home Education". The advertisement reads that this CD covers the seven components of a father's role in home education, being: 1) vision communicator; 2) Hebrew discipler; 3) defender of the realm; 4) household manager; 5) discipline enforcer; 6) the family's resident historian; and 7) the leader of family worship. I thought this was a pretty good breakdown of a man's tasks in regard to domestic leadership. All of this, my sons, involves key elements without which one can never be a good leader: commitment, sincerity, conviction, and more concern for others than for oneself. Without these, one will go over the first cliff along that trail.

But then there is the other cliff which is just as dangerous. This cliff is fallen over by men who perhaps are just selfish, or perhaps are bitter, or perhaps are insecure and feel they need to prove their leadership, or perhaps are not humble and dedicated enough to embrace true leadership and choose instead to go with this counterfeit. I am sure there are various stumbling blocks that cause men to go over this precipice, but the results are the same: these men understand that they are

sovereign over her body, but her husband: so also the man is not the sovereign over his body, but the wife. Therefore, deprive not one another, except when you both consent at the time you devote yourselves to fasting and prayer; and return again to the same disposition that Satan does not tempt you because of the passions of your body." (1 Corinthians 7:3-5)

The simple fact that the wife is queen of her husband's physical body tacitly implies that she has direct say over what he physically does and doesn't do with it.

"It is fitting for men so to love their wives as (they do) their own bodies. For he that loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own body; but nourishes it and provides for it... For this reason, a man should leave his father and his mother and cling to his wife; and the two should be one flesh." (Ephesians 5:28-32)

Quite clearly, a man "clings to his wife" by keeping the covenant of his heart and eyes which he made the day he married her (Exodus 20:16), and not running around after others! Marriage, as instituted by Yahweh and enhanced by the gift of physical intimacy, is one of the Creator's courses in temperance and true spirituality and an earthly analogy of Yahweh's love-relationship with Israel — his only wife. "Hear this word that Yahweh has spoken against you, O children of Israel, against the whole family which I brought up from the land of Egypt saying, 'YOU ONLY HAVE I KNOWN OF ALL THE FAMILIES OF THE EARTH: therefore I will punish you for your iniquities.' (Amos 3:1,2) Adultery, polygamy, homosexuality, beastiality, and all other deviations from Yahweh's plan are focused entirely on sensuality, perverted sexuality, and the attempt to feed mankind's sinful ego as he endeavors to set the rules.

"Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of Elohim? Be not deceived. Neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor male prostitutes (men who mate

with multiple women), nor homosexuals...will inherit the kingdom of Elohim. Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body... YOU ARE NOT YOUR OWN, you were bought at a price. Therefore honor Elohim with your body. (1 Cor 6:9-10,18-20)

Defiant (un-turned / un-repent, or repeated) adultery, polygamy, homosexuality, etc. leaves no option other than "purging the evil from Israel" (Deut 13:5, 17:7,12) by disassociation and removal of that immoral individual from fellowship among the assembly of the Mashiach (1 Cor 5:11-13, Rom 16:17, Titus 3:10,11). "Therefore put away from among yourselves that immoral person." (1 Cor 5:13)

Blessed are all who fear YHWH, who walk in His ways. You will eat the fruit of your labor; blessings and prosperity will be yours. Your wife will be like a fruitful vine within your house; your sons will be like olive shoots around your table. Thus is the man blessed who fears YHWH. May YHWH bless you from Zion all the days of your life; may you see the prosperity of Jerusalem, and may you live to see your children's children. (Psalm 128:1-6)

HALLELUYAH!

actually, though most of the actual cultivation towards manhood and leadership has occurred after you were born. Yahweh has given you parental guidance, life situations and experiences, and most importantly, the treasures found in His Word – all intended to shape you into the leader that He wants you to be. It is your calling. Yahweh made men to be leaders. This is why He said in Genesis 2:18 that he would make a help meet for the man. The man is the leader; the woman is the follower. She supports his vision, encourages him in his calling, and comes along with him wherever Yahweh leads him. This is not degrading to the woman. It is a beautiful blessing to be under the protection and guidance of a man of Yahweh, and to be his help meet. However, it can be extremely difficult to submit to and be a good helper for a man if he misuses his leadership. I wish to direct you, my sons, towards Yahweh's kind of leadership, that way your sisters and younger siblings (and someday your wife and children, Yahweh willing) will be able to find the joy and protection that Yahweh planned for your leadership to afford to them.

Let's imagine that we're walking down a trail through the woods. This is not just a pleasure walk though; this is a walk on which you must be very careful. For on either side of the trail there are steep precipices. You must be certain to stay right on the straight and narrow, or you will be over the edge.

I want to compare this path to your leadership. Staying on the straight and narrow we will compare to embracing leadership as Yahweh intends it to be, and being a leader who brings honor to Him.

A Voice To The Young

Letter From A Mother

-Name Withheld

I will feed My flock, and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Master Yahweh. I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick; but I will destroy the fat and the strong, I will feed them with judgment. (Ezekiel 34:15-16)

Dearest sons and daughters of mine,

This letter is specifically for you boys, but I certainly do not want you girls to disregard it and skip over it. This letter is important for you too. You girls need to know the things in this letter to be able to help direct your little brothers aright, and someday (if Yahweh wills for you to marry) to be able to direct your sons aright. And speaking along the lines of marriage, this letter will aid in giving you direction towards forming Scriptural ideals regarding the kind of man you should marry too. So read along, daughters of mine, as I write to your brothers.

Turning to you boys now.....

Yahweh created you to be a leader. From the time you have been born, you have been a leader in the making.... from the time you have been conceived

The Poem Page

I HAVE A CHARGE TO KEEP

Rivqah Coover

I have a charge to keep,
A calling to be true,
To faithfully perform
All I am called to do.

I have a charge to keep,
A calling to be just,
Noble, pure, and honest
As Yahweh said I must.

I have a charge to keep,
A calling to be real,
To do what Yah desires
No matter how I feel.

I have a charge to keep,
A calling to be kind,
To show love and
mercy,
And give of what is
mine.

I have a charge to keep,
A charge to really care,
Preferring others most,
And choosing to share.

I have a charge to keep,
A calling to be brave,
To give back to the One
Who so selflessly gave.

I have a charge to keep,
A calling to be strong
Enough to do what's
right
When others do what's
wrong.

I have a charge to keep.
To others I will show
The colors of my
Captain:
He gave me my charge
you know.

The Children's Page

Fill In The Blanks

by Lydiyah Coover

A=♪	H=▣	O=☒	V=📎
B=☺	I=♯	P=⊖	W=●
C=☻	J=‿	Q=▣	X=✓
D=♪	K=☼	R=☒	Y=♦
E=■	L=♣	S=☒	Z=♣
F=△	M=◊	T=✈	
G=↑	N=✳	U=✉	

Fill in the missing blanks below by following the code above.

Let your _____ so
♣ ♯ ↑ □ ✈
_____ before men, so
☒ ♡ ♯ ✳ ■

8. Why do you think Yahweh allows suffering and injustices on this earth? What good results can you see from Aksionov's unjust imprisonment? Consider Romans 8:28.

9. Even when no one sees the truth but Yahweh, is truth non-existent? Does Yahweh forsake His children in times like this? Consider Romans 8:31-39.



Thoughts For Family Discussion (by the Coover Family):

1. How do you think Aksionov's sentence might have been affected by a different lifestyle in his youth? (Refer to paragraphs 2 and 20.) If he had never been given to drinking and rioting, do you think he would have been less likely to be condemned? Is it wise for young people to "sow their wild oats" in their youth, waiting to settle down to responsible living until they "grow up"? Consider Ecclesiastes 11:9 - 12:1.
2. Do you believe that Yahweh sometimes speaks through dreams? (Refer to paragraphs 3 and 5.)
3. What are your thoughts on Aksionov's response to his wife's concern? (Refer to paragraphs 4, 6, and 7.) As a leader, should a man have consideration for the thoughts and concerns of his wife? Is he wise to operate independent of her counsel and insensitive to her concerns? Consider 1 Peter 3:7, 1 Corinthians 11:11-12, and 1 Corinthians 7:4.
4. Do you think that Aksionov's careless attitude, and his flippant joking about serious matters (Refer to paragraph 4), had any bearing on his wife's fears voiced in paragraph 25?
5. How would you have responded to Makar Semyonich's presence in the camp? Would you have suspected him? What would your reaction have been? (Refer to paragraphs 50-52.)
6. How would you have handled the situation in paragraphs 56-61? Do you think Aksionov's choice was noble? Do you think he would have been wiser to tell on Semyonich?
7. What bondage was Aksionov suffering which was much greater than his bondage in the prison labor camp? When did he find freedom of heart? (Refer to paragraph 71.)

see _____
good works and _____ your
who is in the _____.
_____.

_____.

Matthew 5:16



Thoughts To Ponder

That Sacrifice

Rivqah Coover

Have you thought of that extraordinary sacrifice that One made expressly for you? Thousands of years before you were born, His heart was filled with so much love for you that He sacrificed all for your well being.

Have you thought of the tremendous sacrifice of the Son of royalty, One who has everything He could ever have, One who is sinless and spotless and will always be so, One who is surrounded by His Father and the messengers who love Him so... but is not content to stay there, for He wants to bring you to mansions of light too?

You. And what are you in comparison to all that splendor of His home? Filthy... ragged... dirty... poor... unkempt... inadequate... Yes, all of this you and I and all of us are without Him. And He could not bear to leave it that way.

Have you thought of the tremendous offering He gave in leaving behind all that splendor, all that constant bliss, because He could not be content that you were not dwelling with Him in that perfect peace? If you were to leave behind every bliss you have ever been surrounded with, you would no doubt feel that you were leaving behind a great deal. And yet everything you could ever leave behind doubled and tripled and doubled again would not even amount to a fraction of all that He left behind.

Have you thought of what all He bore once He came here for you? Buffeted and scorned and hated and ill-spoken of by

heart grew light, and the longing for home left him. He no longer had any desire to leave the prison, but only hoped for his last hour to come.

72. In spite of what Aksionov had said, Makar Semyonich confessed his guilt. But when the order for his release came, Aksionov was already dead.

64. Makar Semyonich was silent. So Aksionov sat up and said, "What do you want? Go away, or I will call the guard!"

65. Makar Semyonich bent close over Aksionov, and whispered, "Ivan Dmitrich, forgive me!"

66. "What for?" asked Aksionov.

67. "It was I who killed the merchant and hid the knife among your things. I meant to kill you too, but I heard a noise outside, so I hid the knife in your bag and escaped out of the window."

68. Aksionov was silent, and did not know what to say. Makar Semyonich slid off the bed-shelf and knelt upon the ground. "Ivan Dmitrich," said he, "forgive me! For the love of Yahweh, forgive me! I will confess that it was I who killed the merchant, and you will be released and can go to your home."

69. "It is easy for you to talk," said Aksionov, "but I have suffered for you these twenty-six years. Where could I go to now?... My wife is dead, and my children have forgotten me. I have nowhere to go..."

70. Makar Semyonich did not rise, but beat his head on the floor. "Ivan Dmitrich, forgive me!" he cried. "When they flogged me with the knot it was not so hard to bear as it is to see you now ... yet you had pity on me, and did not tell. For Messiah's sake forgive me, wretch that I am!" And he began to sob.

71. When Aksionov heard him sobbing he, too, began to weep. "Yahweh will forgive you!" said he. "Maybe I am a hundred times worse than you." And at these words his

whom? Evil dragons of no relation to him? Foreigners who had never heard of him? Innocent people who were mislead and thought He was not real? NO! Buffeted and scorned and hated and ill-spoken of by those of His very own nation, His own kindred, His own blood, His own creation, those who read from the Book of His Father and knew full well who He was, but did not care.

And we have to ask ourselves: Do we care? Do you care? Have you truly thought of all He sacrificed? Have you truly laid it to heart? Do you walk joyfully along day by day proclaiming His Name, but forgetting what He did for you? Have you read of His death so often that the words no longer touch your heart? Do you sing of the saving fountain of His blood without even thinking about what you are singing?

How could we forget? How could we cease to feel? And yet it is often the cruel things that others have done to us that remain the deepest in our hearts, and about which we feel the most passionately, while the greatest act of sacrifice and love slips our minds most of the time.

How could we let it slip our minds? It must remain first and foremost there, governing every thought and motive and word and action ~ for this is the very purpose for which He died: to make Himself King of your heart, and to govern you completely, that He might deliver you and ransom you and welcome you into His Kingdom.

Have you thought of that sacrifice? Have you laid it to heart? Have you truly considered what it means? Does your heart beat with passionate love for and gratitude to Him who sacrificed all... for you?

Family Story Time

Yahweh Sees The Truth, But Waits

by Leo Tolstoy

<http://www.readbookonline.net/readOnLine/5322/>

1. In the town of Vladimir lived a young merchant named Ivan Dmitrich Aksionov. He had two shops and a house of his own.

2. Aksionov was a handsome, fair-haired, curly-headed fellow, full of fun, and very fond of singing. When quite a young man he had been given to drink, and was riotous when he had had too much; but after he married he gave up drinking, except now and then.

3. One summer Aksionov was going to the Nizhny Fair, and as he bade good-bye to his family, his wife said to him, "Ivan Dmitrich, do not start to-day; I have had a bad dream about you."

4. Aksionov laughed, and said, "You are afraid that when I get to the fair I shall go on a spree."

5. His wife replied: "I do not know what I am afraid of; all I know is that I had a bad dream. I dreamt you returned from the town, and when you took off your cap I saw that your hair was quite grey."

6. Aksionov laughed. "That's a lucky sign," said he. "See if I don't sell out all my goods, and bring you some presents from the fair."

hole. They all denied any knowledge of it. Those who knew would not betray Makar Semyonich, knowing he would be flogged almost to death. At last the Governor turned to Aksionov whom he knew to be a just man, and said:

57. "You are a truthful old man; tell me, before Yahweh, who dug the hole?"

58. Makar Semyonich stood as if he were quite unconcerned, looking at the Governor and not so much as glancing at Aksionov. Aksionov's lips and hands trembled, and for a long time he could not utter a word. He thought, "Why should I screen him who ruined my life? Let him pay for what I have suffered. But if I tell, they will probably flog the life out of him, and maybe I suspect him wrongly. And, after all, what good would it be to me?"

59. "Well, old man," repeated the Governor, "tell me the truth: who has been digging under the wall?"

60. Aksionov glanced at Makar Semyonich, and said, "I cannot say, your honour. It is not Yahweh's will that I should tell! Do what you like with me; I am in your hands."

61. However much the Governor tried, Aksionov would say no more, and so the matter had to be left.

62. That night, when Aksionov was lying on his bed and just beginning to doze, some one came quietly and sat down on his bed. He peered through the darkness and recognised Makar.

63. "What more do you want of me?" asked Aksionov. "Why have you come here?"

his anger was so great against Makar Semyonich that he longed for vengeance, even if he himself should perish for it. He kept repeating prayers all night, but could get no peace. During the day he did not go near Makar Semyonich, nor even look at him.

52. A fortnight passed in this way. Aksionov could not sleep at night, and was so miserable that he did not know what to do.

53. One night as he was walking about the prison he noticed some earth that came rolling out from under one of the shelves on which the prisoners slept. He stopped to see what it was. Suddenly Makar Semyonich crept out from under the shelf, and looked up at Aksionov with a frightened face. Aksionov tried to pass without looking at him, but Makar seized his hand and told him that he had dug a hole under the wall, getting rid of the earth by putting it into his high-boots, and emptying it out every day on the road when the prisoners were driven to their work.

54. "Just you keep quiet, old man, and you shall get out too. If you blab, they'll flog the life out of me, but I will kill you first."

55. Aksionov trembled with anger as he looked at his enemy. He drew his hand away, saying, "I have no wish to escape, and you have no need to kill me; you killed me long ago! As to telling of you--I may do so or not, as Yahweh shall direct."

56. Next day, when the convicts were led out to work, the convoy soldiers noticed that one or other of the prisoners emptied some earth out of his boots. The prison was searched and the tunnel found. The Governor came and questioned all the prisoners to find out who had dug the

7. So he said good-bye to his family, and drove away.

8. When he had traveled half-way, he met a merchant whom he knew, and they put up at the same inn for the night. They had some tea together, and then went to bed in adjoining rooms.

9. It was not Aksionov's habit to sleep late, and, wishing to travel while it was still cool, he aroused his driver before dawn, and told him to put in the horses.

10. Then he made his way across to the landlord of the inn (who lived in a cottage at the back), paid his bill, and continued his journey.

11. When he had gone about twenty-five miles, he stopped for the horses to be fed. Aksionov rested awhile in the passage of the inn, then he stepped out into the porch, and, ordering a samovar to be heated, got out his guitar and began to play.

12. Suddenly a troika drove up with tinkling bells and an official alighted, followed by two soldiers. He came to Aksionov and began to question him, asking him who he was and whence he came. Aksionov answered him fully, and said, "Won't you have some tea with me?" But the official went on cross-questioning him and asking him. "Where did you spend last night? Were you alone, or with a fellow-merchant? Did you see the other merchant this morning? Why did you leave the inn before dawn?"

13. Aksionov wondered why he was asked all these questions, but he described all that had happened, and then added, "Why do you cross-question me as if I were a

thief or a robber? I am traveling on business of my own, and there is no need to question me."

14. Then the official, calling the soldiers, said, "I am the police-officer of this district, and I question you because the merchant with whom you spent last night has been found with his throat cut. We must search your things."

15. They entered the house. The soldiers and the police-officer unstrapped Aksionov's luggage and searched it. Suddenly the officer drew a knife out of a bag, crying, "Whose knife is this?"

16. Aksionov looked, and seeing a blood-stained knife taken from his bag, he was frightened.

17. "How is it there is blood on this knife?"

18. Aksionov tried to answer, but could hardly utter a word, and only stammered: "I--don't know--it's not mine." Then the police-officer said: "This morning the merchant was found in bed with his throat cut. You are the only person who could have done it. The house was locked from inside, and no one else was there. Here is this blood-stained knife in your bag and your face and manner betray you! Tell me how you killed him, and how much money you stole?"

19. Aksionov swore he had not done it; that he had not seen the merchant after they had had tea together; that he had no money except eight thousand rubles of his own, and that the knife was not his. But his voice was broken, his face pale, and he trembled with fear as though he were guilty.

20. The police-officer ordered the soldiers to bind Aksionov

Semyonich, you have heard of that affair, or maybe you've seen me before?"

47. "How could I help hearing? The world's full of rumours. But it's a long time ago, and I've forgotten what I heard."

48. "Perhaps you heard who killed the merchant?" asked Aksionov.

49. Makar Semyonich laughed, and replied: "It must have been him in whose bag the knife was found! If some one else hid the knife there, 'He's not a thief till he's caught,' as the saying is. How could any one put a knife into your bag while it was under your head? It would surely have woke you up."

50. When Aksionov heard these words, he felt sure this was the man who had killed the merchant. He rose and went away. All that night Aksionov lay awake. He felt terribly unhappy, and all sorts of images rose in his mind. There was the image of his wife as she was when he parted from her to go to the fair. He saw her as if she were present; her face and her eyes rose before him; he heard her speak and laugh. Then he saw his children, quite little, as they were at that time: one with a little cloak on, another at his mother's breast. And then he remembered himself as he used to be-young and merry. He remembered how he sat playing the guitar in the porch of the inn where he was arrested, and how free from care he had been. He saw, in his mind, the place where he was flogged, the executioner, and the people standing around; the chains, the convicts, all the twenty-six years of his prison life, and his premature old age. The thought of it all made him so wretched that he was ready to kill himself.

51. "And it's all that villain's doing!" thought Aksionov. And

Makar, and they also call me Semyonich."

39. Aksionov raised his head and said: "Tell me, Semyonich, do you know anything of the merchants Aksionov of Vladimir? Are they still alive?"

40. "Know them? Of course I do. The Aksionovs are rich, though their father is in Siberia: a sinner like ourselves, it seems! As for you, Gran'dad, how did you come here?"

41. Aksionov did not like to speak of his misfortune. He only sighed, and said, "For my sins I have been in prison these twenty-six years."

42. "What sins?" asked Makar Semyonich.

43. But Aksionov only said, "Well, well--I must have deserved it!" He would have said no more, but his companions told the newcomers how Aksionov came to be in Siberia; how some one had killed a merchant, and had put the knife among Aksionov's things, and Aksionov had been unjustly condemned.

44. When Makar Semyonich heard this, he looked at Aksionov, slapped his own knee, and exclaimed, "Well, this is wonderful! Really wonderful! But how old you've grown, Gran'dad!"

45. The others asked him why he was so surprised, and where he had seen Aksionov before; but Makar Semyonich did not reply. He only said: "It's wonderful that we should meet here, lads!"

46. These words made Aksionov wonder whether this man knew who had killed the merchant; so he said, "Perhaps,

and to put him in the cart. As they tied his feet together and flung him into the cart, Aksionov wept. His money and goods were taken from him, and he was sent to the nearest town and imprisoned there. Enquiries as to his character were made in Vladimir. The merchants and other inhabitants of that town said that in former days he used to drink and waste his time, but that he was a good man. Then the trial came on: he was charged with murdering a merchant from Ryazan, and robbing him of twenty thousand rubles.

21. His wife was in despair, and did not know what to believe. Her children were all quite small; one was a baby at her breast. Taking them all with her, she went to the town where her husband was in jail. At first she was not allowed to see him; but after much begging, she obtained permission from the officials, and was taken to him. When she saw her husband in prison-dress and in chains, shut up with thieves and criminals, she fell down, and did not come to her senses for a long time. Then she drew her children to her, and sat down near him. She told him of things at home, and asked about what had happened to him. He told her all, and she asked, "What can we do now?"

22. "We must petition the Czar not to let an innocent man perish."

23. His wife told him that she had sent a petition to the Czar, but it had not been accepted.

24. Aksionov did not reply, but only looked downcast.

25. Then his wife said, "It was not for nothing I dreamt your hair had turned grey. You remember? You should not have started that day." And passing her fingers through his hair,

she said: "Vanya dearest, tell your wife the truth; was it not you who did it?"

26. "So you, too, suspect me!" said Aksionov, and, hiding his face in his hands, he began to weep. Then a soldier came to say that the wife and children must go away; and Aksionov said good-bye to his family for the last time.

27. When they were gone, Aksionov recalled what had been said, and when he remembered that his wife also had suspected him, he said to himself, "It seems that only Yahweh can know the truth; it is to Him alone we must appeal, and from Him alone expect mercy."

28. And Aksionov wrote no more petitions, gave up all hope, and only prayed to Yahweh.

29. Aksionov was condemned to be flogged and sent to the mines. So he was flogged with a knot, and when the wounds made by the knot were healed, he was driven to Siberia with other convicts.

30. For twenty-six years Aksionov lived as a convict in Siberia. His hair turned white as snow, and his beard grew long, thin, and grey. All his mirth went; he stooped; he walked slowly, spoke little, and never laughed, but he often prayed.

31. In prison Aksionov learnt to make boots, and earned a little money, with which he bought "The Lives of the Saints". He read this book when there was light enough in the prison; and every week in the prison-church he read the lessons and sang in the choir, for his voice was still good.

32. The prison authorities liked Aksionov for his meekness,

and his fellow-prisoners respected him: they called him "Grandfather," and "The Saint." When they wanted to petition the prison authorities about anything, they always made Aksionov their spokesman, and when there were quarrels among the prisoners they came to him to put things right, and to judge the matter.

33. No news reached Aksionov from his home, and he did not even know if his wife and children were still alive.

34. One day a fresh gang of convicts came to the prison. In the evening the old prisoners collected round the new ones and asked them what towns or villages they came from, and what they were sentenced for. Among the rest Aksionov sat down near the newcomers, and listened with downcast air to what was said.

35. One of the new convicts, a tall, strong man of sixty, with a closely-cropped grey beard, was telling the others what he had been arrested for.

36. "Well, friends," he said, "I only took a horse that was tied to a sledge, and I was arrested and accused of stealing. I said I had only taken it to get home quicker, and had then let it go; besides, the driver was a personal friend of mine. So I said, 'It's all right.' 'No,' said they, 'you stole it.' But how or where I stole it they could not say. I once really did something wrong, and ought by rights to have come here long ago, but that time I was not found out. Now I have been sent here for nothing at all... Eh, but it's lies I'm telling you; I've been to Siberia before, but I did not stay long."

37. "Where are you from?" asked some one.

38. "From Vladimir. My family are of that town. My name is