

For Fathers (And Others)

by George Verwer

A sermon on the importance of being a godly father, covering seven types of fathers and how to live out a life of forgiveness, passion, prayer, discipline, vision, and generosity.

Duration: 24:24

Scripture: Matthew 9:38, Romans 12:1, Romans 12:3

Topics: "Fatherhood", "Missions"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares his struggle to determine what to speak about, ultimately feeling led by God to address fathers. He emphasizes that the message is applicable to all, even young children. The speaker discusses seven types of fathers, including the faithful father, the forgiving father, the father who walks in the light, the self-controlled father, the visionary father, and the father who prays for workers in the harvest. He encourages fathers to be involved in missions and to be dynamic senders if they cannot go themselves. The sermon references Romans 12:1 and Matthew 9 as the basis for the message.

Transcript

It's a great, uh, struggle to determine what I, uh, should speak about this morning as my heart is very, very full. And I wrestled and I thought, and I know, um, probably when you heard I was coming you thought I would mainly speak about missions and talk about the 1040 window and unreached people. But somehow God put all that aside as I was praying and I need to do what he tells me to do and told me to speak to the fathers.

Now the rest of you can all listen in and the message is pretty generic, so even if you're a future father at only five years of age, I believe God has something for you. God wants to bless us. And fathers, God wants to especially bless you.

What do you even believe in fathers day? We have a God who works through our culture. Some of our culture is ugly and yet God seems to work in the midst of it. Some of it is neutral, it doesn't really matter.

So God can work through that as well. And some of our culture is good. Some of our culture has roots in the word of God and the heart of God.

And so in God's providence, it's father's day. I got up very early and so I called an Australian friend, wished him happy father's day. He said it wasn't father's day, that's in September.

So then I phoned South Africa to try then, it was father's day there. Then I got on to England, it was not father's day there. So obviously we haven't got this global village quite organized yet.

God wants to bless you as a father. God wants to minister to you. Otherwise why would he cause me to lay aside my missionary message to share this message? And God put it on my heart to talk about seven kinds of fathers.

I don't know if I'll get to them all in the first service. I want to talk about seven kinds of fathers. The scripture is Romans chapter 12, very basic scripture.

Romans 12, verse 1. Therefore I urge you brothers, this is the NIV, in view of God's mercy. Oh, I love to hear the pages of the Bible go. That's so exciting.

In view of God's mercy to offer your body as a living sacrifice only in pleasing to God. This is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

That you will be able to test and approve what God's will is, his good, pleasing and perfect will. For by the grace given to me, I say to every one of you, do not think of yourselves more highly than you are. But rather think of yourself with sober judgment and according to the measure of faith that God has given you.

Then it talks about one body. Seven special fathers, seven kinds of fathers. I like to motivate people to take notes.

I appreciated that little mention about notes. The first father I've listed on my list is the forgiving father. And the moment we think of our heavenly father, we think of his forgiveness toward us.

Some of our fathers may not have been so forgiving, but if that's the case, then you as a father today should want to make sure you don't make the same mistake. You want to be a forgiving father. I was privileged to be taught through the radio broadcast of Billy Graham and Donald Gray Barnhouse and others.

I was privileged to read great books and get into the word of God and memorize much of scripture. So that even before I was 20 years of age, when I became a father at 21, maybe it was 22, I had received so much. And I just want to urge you young people, especially going on this summer campaign, let no man despise your youth, but be thou an example of a believer.

We learn by doing. And God, trust me, at 17 years of age, in the leadership in my high school where I was president of the student council, where I was a leader in the YMCA, where I was a leader in the Boy Scouts, where I was a leader in my community, where I became chaplain of the New Jersey government for one day. And, you know, I had to learn fast because people were looking at me.

People were judging me. I was in a non-Christian high school where sometimes one third of all the students were drunk. And so I learned how to forgive.

And by the time I became a father, I knew that great truth and I could practice it as a father, not saying that I was perfect. But by the grace of God, I've never gone to sleep as far back as I can remember. So when I was 17, with anything against anybody, including my own wife, sometimes we may think we've forgiven our wife in some area where she has really hurt us or vice versa.

And yet, if we examine our hearts, we're holding something there. And I just urge any father here that has any unforgiveness toward your wife, toward your children. Your children can so easily hurt you.

I've been hurt many times by my children, many times by my wife. How do we live on planet Earth without being hurt? That's what it's all about. It's God's great testing ground for producing some eternal, beautiful creature operating by love and grace for all of eternity.

So if you don't want to get hurt, you're on the wrong planet. Righteous Weedon, I think they have space trip holidays being booked for the year 2010. The second father is the passionate father.

Now I don't want you to confuse passion with loudness. I'm loud. I'm also supposedly passionate.

I believe I am passionate. But a lot of the great people I know who are passionate are rather quiet. Peter Maiden, the man who will take over my wonderful job in two years' time, is a more quiet person.

But he's passionate. And it's exciting to work with someone like that. He has already carried 50% of the leadership load.

And, O.M., it's all delegated out to the fields anyway for the past 20 years. God wants us to be passionate. Fathers, of course, mothers.

In fact, the inspiration for this morning's message was when I was in Malaysia a few weeks ago. And last minute, in a big, huge Methodist church, I discovered it was Mother's Day. So I threw away this missions message.

And God gave me these seven words for mothers. And I just couldn't even believe what I was saying. The Spirit of God just roared through that meeting.

And all kinds of things happened that I'm not able to take time to talk about this morning. We are to be God's passionate people. How can it be that at least 70% of all Christians are basically non-creative, boring, reactionary type of people? That someone who's really creative and dynamic doesn't even really want to fellowship with, unless he wants to repent, get broken, and learn how to fellowship with anything, even if it doesn't move.

We should stop giving our excuses for our lukewarmness. We should stop giving our excuses for our lack of creativity. I even meet Christians who think there's such a thing as retirement for Christians.

I don't know where they get this baloney in their heads. You don't find it in the Bible. Changing jobs, no problem.

Doing less, no problem. But not winning people to Christ anymore? Not praying anymore? Don't go to church anymore? Spend most of the time just in self-indulgent practicing? There's a place for all these beautiful things that people do when they're retired. But our priority will always be to win men and women for Christ, to evangelize the world.

I'm looking forward to my change of job after doing the same thing for 40 years. I'm getting almost hilarious just thinking about it. It will include more time for the grandchildren.

Praise God for grandchildren. I now have five of them. Three in Idaho, two in London.

That gives me lots of excuse for travel. My wife doesn't like to travel at all, but I use the Idaho thing. We've gone around the world twice.

Well, once next month and just last month. And I used Idaho. I showed her on the globe how Idaho is in the center.

So we just go around now. And she never did that before. So hallelujah, my son's in Idaho.

I think when I was here last time, I had already some grandchildren. One of them's 12, and I was here five years ago. And I probably quoted Tony Campala.

You remember Tony Campala's quote about grandchildren? That's God's prize for you for not killing your own kids. One of the things that stuns me about our amazing American culture, and I'm still a full-blooded American born in New Jersey with an American passport, you think a character like me can be accepted as British, you must be drunk. We're so passionate about sports.

We're so passionate about music. We're so passionate sometimes about the arts. We're a nation that's so passionate at times about politics.

And I'm not saying all that's wrong. I think it gets out of balance often. We should be passionate about Jesus.

We should be passionate about world missions. We should not think that somebody comes along with a big world globe and a global jacket is some kind of a fanatic. I'm normal.

You're off course. Hey, I've never said that before. I better think it through.

But anyway, my third kind of father is the Grace Awakened father. Some of you know that probably the most favorite book in OM worldwide is a book called Grace Awakening by Charles Swindoll. I probably think we're all sold out.

We had the big book display at one fest. So some of our favorite books we don't have. But how God has used that book.

Get it from your Christian bookstore. They need your encouragement anyway. Grace Awakening.

Some of you don't have much time, so don't bother with the first few chapters. They're a little old-fashioned and dull. Get right into the middle of the book.

I started in the middle, read both directions. It was a tremendous blessing. It's a little confusing.

But that's what Grace is all about anyway. The Grace Awakened father. What is the Grace Awakened father? He's patient.

How are you doing on that score? He's big-hearted. He's forgiving. He's flexible.

I have to confess that as a father I failed. I was young. I was extreme.

I didn't understand grace. I was into prayer, world missions, soul winning, giving all money to the poor and for world evangelism. And you don't even want to hear about the first couple of years.

And I had three children by the time five years had slipped by. And I'm not going to go into that. But I thank God that he had mercy on me in the midst of my failings and the midst of my insensitivity.

I thank the living God that he uses us even when we don't have our act together, even when we don't really grasp what this grace thing is about. We're locked into the legalistic baggage that back in my day the Bible colleges laid on us in a pretty heavy way. Moody Bible Institute, which used to be the Vatican of Phariseism, Moody Bible Institute has just produced a book called Extreme Righteousness.

Extreme Righteousness. It's a Bible study on the Pharisees, and it shows that often as evangelicals we have a Pharisee streak. God wants to set us fathers free from legalism.

Judgmentalism. God wants to set us free so that we're bigger-hearted in the way that he works. Don't pressure your children into being the same as you were, or as you dreamt you would be.

Let the different flowers bloom. If some like this kind of wonderful music, hallelujah. But if some have snuck out to get rock and roll over at the farm, hallelujah for that as well.

God is working in different people in different ways. And the reason many young people rebel against Christianity, it's too narrow. They can't handle it mentally.

They can't handle it emotionally. And we're talking of hundreds of thousands of young people who have thrown the whole thing down the river and are just following New Age or their own ideas. A grace-awakened home with a grace-awakened father who's also taking the right balanced place of leadership is a place where there's a higher chance that children will grow up and become balanced and committed, and they themselves great fathers and mothers.

And then fourthly, there's the praying father. Oh man, praying father, forget it. We know fathers don't pray.

It's the women who pray. Prayer is a feminine thing. The little lady's prayer circle.

The big lady's prayer circle. All the different women's prayer circles. That can be a distortion, and I thank God for praying woman.

I was prayed into the kingdom by the praying woman. But we don't want to leave the men out. Prayer is just as masculine as feminine.

Prayer is dynamic. Prayer will stretch you just as much as going to the gym like a fanatic seven times a week, lifting weights that are way too heavy for you. We need men and women, but I especially this morning want to beseech you as men to become a praying man.

Make a commitment. No prayer, no breakfast. That might change your life in more ways than one.

We see the word of God not only teaches prayer, personal prayer, individual prayer, which is so important in my own life and I think the life of any person of God, but also corporate prayer. Peter was in prison in Acts 12. The church was gathered together praying.

It wasn't just women. The next chapter, five men were praying and Paul and Barnabas were called into missionary work at that prayer meeting. I think some of you have heard me preach on Acts 13.

So my fourth father is a praying father. The fifth father is a disciplined father. Some of you were worried that word might slip in.

Not really your favorite word. It is interesting, and this is true of my own life, how you can be so disciplined in certain areas and yet have an area of weakness. And I would urge you not to worry so much about your strong points.

Bless the Lord for your strong points. All of you men, I'm sure, have strong points, and women and children and everyone else. But I remember learning from Tim LaHaye, I think it was Tim, years and years ago as a baby Christian, work on your weak points.

The greatest struggle in my life has been the struggle against lust. Some of you who know me know that I was hooked on pornography at 16 years of age and started to distribute to my high school. I was on my 32nd different girlfriend.

Praise God, that was the age of romance, kissing and A-wagons, not the age of the bedroom, which was more or less starting then and is full-blown in our day with immorality sweeping the country and all the pregnancies and abortions and everything that goes with it, how our hearts grieve and break over a nation which is even largely in many places among many people turning away from marriage completely and just only engaging in cohabitation. Whatever amount of grace we have if we don't have discipline it will soon lead to disgrace. And God has especially put this on my heart to say to you because I believe someone here is to be helped by this.

You must not excuse serious areas of indiscipline. If you are into pornography, you must not excuse that. You must turn from it.

If I hadn't turned from that specifically, I'd be through today. I had a letter this week from a Christian worker who's been into pornography for years secretly. He finally shared it with his wife because he finally fell into prostitutes.

Many into pornography go for years and would never touch a prostitute. But eventually they're worn down. And so he went with prostitutes and finally he felt he must share this with his wife.

He's had to leave the ministry. His whole life is completely turned upside down. His family's turned upside down.

His parents are turned upside down. Who in the world knows what will happen? Some Christians when they go into this kind of deep sin, they go into depression and then they take their own lives. I want to urge any man who's here today playing with pornography, not to tolerate it anymore.

To make sure you're walking in the light. To make sure whatever the cost, you become a disciplined person. To turn away from nonsense things like, Oh Lord, deliver me.

And then when he doesn't deliver you, quote, quote, quote, quote, quote, you blame it on God. This is your responsibility. The Holy Spirit lives in you.

The fruit of the Spirit, love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control is yours through the work of the Holy Spirit. But you have to act. And Jesus said, If any person come after me, let them deny self, take up the cross, and follow me.

My testimony about my struggle with pornography was recently published nationwide. A little scary. I didn't want to do it.

I did it for Jesus. And Leadership Magazine told my story of how God has kept me and preserved me every single day for 46 years. Yes, I've had some failure with my eyes, especially once when I found a magazine hanging in a tree in the woods.

But because I kept short accounts with God, walked in the light, and knew what it was to immediately repent and claim the blood of Christ, within minutes I was back in the battle and back winning men and women to Jesus. If God can take a needy, loud-mouthed, son of a Dutch immigrant, pornoholic bit of a liar from New Jersey and use him for the kingdom, just imagine what God can do with a good, steady, self-controlled southerner. Oh, hallelujah.

And then my fifth father is the visionary father. Ah, you knew that was coming. I didn't bring my globe for nothing.

Oftentimes, it's the women who are committed to world missions. Again, we got the Women's Missionary Blanket-Making Circle. By the way, they don't need any more blankets in Bangladesh.

But praise God for women who are proactive about world missions. But we need men. We need men to take ownership.

I think, together with the word visionary father, I'd love to just add a word, and that's the generous father. I know many of you in this church are generous, or you'll never be able to give all this money away around the globe. I'd urge you, if you're a father, to search your own heart.

Are you a generous father? Are you a visionary father? The Bible says it's more blessed to give than receive. Are you experiencing that? We need to have a combination of vision and generosity. If we can get that combination, we will be able to somehow reach the entire world with the gospel.

Remember, despite phenomenal work in certain parts of the world, about 20% of all the people on the planet have still never even once heard. That's why the ON now is very holistic and ministering of people's physical needs and everything you can imagine. We still want to continue that original focus of reaching the masses.

We believe we can do both. And the personal work in church planting and discipling that's involved in that. 20% have never heard.

Well, we need to thank God for that. When I went into missions down in Mexico at 19 years of age, 50% of the world had not heard. So we made a lot of progress, but guess what? We got a problem.

It's called population explosion. So the 20% of today's world population is a very similar number. Try to catch this.

A very similar number to the 50% of the world population in 1957 when I went to Mexico. Brothers and sisters, we have an enormous job. We have an enormous job.

I know from experience that when there's a church dynamically committed to our fellowship, OM, oftentimes the young people are not interested. We were born as sort of a radical cutting-edge movement. Your church is among the top 10 churches in the nation in terms of churches in partnership with us.

But I know that doesn't automatically mean I'm going to get a dozen recruits for the ships or India or the Middle East or anywhere else. It doesn't work that way with young people. And probably we've even made some mistakes that maybe at times have hindered some people from getting involved with us.

Forgive us for that. Fathers, would you pray a visionary prayer from Matthew chapter 9 that the Lord of the harvest would send forth workers? Would you be willing to go yourself? Or if you can't go, would you be a more dynamic sender? Read Neil Pirolo's book, *Serving as Senders*. We distributed many copies of that here in the past.

Go through my website. I'll be happy to send you one free. We need to understand, fathers, that the ministry of sending, which involves prayer and giving and enthusiasm and passion, is just as important as the ministry of going.

In fact, in our 40-some years of experience, we found it much harder to find the money than it is to find the people. That's why a huge block of my time after 2003, I'm going to be out there trying to find the funds through prayer and communication to keep all these workers, 3,000 on OM right now, a couple thousand extra in the summer, moving forward for King Jesus. We need visionary fathers.

And I tell you, when you're a visionary, you won't get bored much anymore. You won't have those weird times. Hey, I don't know what to do.

Because you will be transformed by God's grace through the vision and the focus of Jesus himself and the task that he has given. And then my last father is really my favorite father because it's me. I lack in all those areas and struggle and have failed.

And so my last father is me. We call him the ragamuffin father. This book that some people feel is overdosing people on grace has one or two funny things in it that are a little controversial.

I can't remember much of what I read in it. I just know it's so great, certain chapters. I don't read the book like a scientist.

He's a converted Jesuit priest. He got married, got born again, then he got to be an alcoholic. It doesn't work so well in that order.

He loves Jesus and for a while was one of the greatest speakers to university students in America, Brennan Manning. This book is entitled *The Ragamuffin Gospel* and when it came into my life just to cover, it was like a prophecy because this is such a description of me. I'm a ragamuffin.

I don't have it all together. I failed as a father. I failed as a husband.

I failed as a leader of this movement. No, not in the big ways that I'd have to be removed and have my name on the front page of the *Gospel Gazette*, but little things count with King Jesus. And even to this day, I often feel very weak.

I feel overwhelmed with doubt. And with fear. And I wanted to get out of my leadership role for many, many years.

And yet somehow, by God's grace, because that's what it's all about. He's just somehow picked me up after I failed and kept me going. This is what it's about.

And if you feel you've failed, I pray that you may reach out to the grace of God. I have two out of three of my kids who are in their mid-twenties after being baptized and going on for Jesus through the pressure of the British culture as it is now and European culture where the church is going backward. They lost, more or less, their faith.

I only have one that's going on for God. They'd never, ever blame me in any way. But I know, I know I could have been a better father.

I know I could have been more sensitive. I wasn't a very good listener. I read a great thing about listening, but it was a little bit late.

I think it was from this guy, Stephen Covey. And characters like me were not good listeners. So even when my children were trying to tell me something, I'd listen to a few sentences and then I'd answer them.

I was a debater. I was a preacher 800 times a year. Think I'm going to listen to you for more than a few minutes? Boom! And Stephen Covey, in one of his tapes, pointed out how we tend to answer people subjectively, biographically, and too quickly, and so we never actually hear what's on their hearts.

And often, I never heard what was on the hearts of my own kids. But you know, if you think I've ever gone to bed feeling guilty about that, then you don't understand grace. God is a God who forgives.

God is a God who gives us a second chance. And maybe you've had a lot of failure in your life. You're not on plan A or B or C or D or E. You've made wrong turns.

You're on your third wife. You know what I say? Even for some of you on plan H, praise God for a big alphabet. Press on, in the name of Jesus Christ.

Amen.

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