

The Beauty and Blessing of Fatherhood

by Paul Lloyd

Fatherhood is a beautiful and blessed thing that is under attack in our society, but it's a major theme in the Bible and is essential for a rich and satisfying life.

Duration: 1:18:58

Scripture: Genesis 5:24, Genesis 6:9, Joshua 24:15, Matthew 6:33, Hebrews 12:5, 1 Peter 2:21

Topics: "Fatherhood"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of being a good father and the effort it takes to become knowledgeable and skilled in this role. He references a study called the Grant study, conducted at Harvard University over 75 years, which aimed to understand the lives of men. The speaker encourages fathers to invest intentionally in the lives of their young children, setting up regular patterns of life that include activities like greetings, reading together, family devotions, and loving interactions with their wives. He highlights that the richness of life comes from the quality of relationships, and being a good father provides an opportunity to create close and rewarding relationships.

Transcript

Well, good morning. Are you glad to be here? Are you expecting something from God today? Why don't we stand together and pray? Just lift up your heart to the Lord and express your love and your desire to hear from Him. Father, we do just love you, Lord, today, and we thank you for your Word.

We thank you for speaking to us already, and we just pray, God, that you would come by your Spirit in a special way to open our eyes to see what your heart is today. We pray, Lord, that you would bless each one that's here. We ask you, O God, to speak to every heart.

Speak to my heart, Lord. And Father, we pray that we would be changed today. We pray that we would be changed into your image and your likeness as our Father.

We ask you, Lord, to push back the enemy and every evil thing that would want to hinder your truth from going forth in power today. And Father, may you take my words and order my thoughts and wing them to many a heart, I pray. Lord, I confess my need of you and my desire to speak the Word of God and not the words of men.

So, Lord, come and thy people bless, and come give thy Word success. Spirit of holiness on us descend, in Jesus' name, amen. All right, you may be seated.

Welcome, everybody. Welcome all the visitors and regulars. As probably most of you know, today is kind of a special day.

Anybody know what day it is? It's Father's Day. And I'd like to speak about fatherhood today, about the beauty and blessing of fatherhood. You know, fatherhood is something that's under attack.

I don't know if you notice that. Fatherhood is under attack in our world. Fatherhood is something that is being maligned, being disrespected, being minimized.

It's not that important, especially in the media and so forth. You can criticize, or let's put it this way, you're not allowed to speak bad about anything in our society except Christians, manhood, fatherhood. It's okay.

On TV and whatever, in public, you're allowed to talk bad about those things. But if you talk about anything else, you're not allowed to speak bad about women. And that's good.

You're not allowed to bash gay people. That's good. We shouldn't be doing that, should we? But it's okay to make dad to be a buffoon.

You know, the TV shows, when I was a boy is when they started, the dads were always a fool. He was always this guy who just really didn't have it together. The sons and the daughters, they were cool.

They had to teach dad how to do it right and so forth. But before, years before I was born, it wasn't that way. The fathers on those shows were presented as wise men and good men, men that you would respect.

And so we've had this thing going on in our society for years, 50, 60 years and probably a lot longer than that really, where fatherhood is something that is disrespected and not honored like it should be. So what I'd like to do today is really lift up the beauty and the blessing of fatherhood. That's what the Bible does.

I looked up, I wondered how many times is father mentioned in the Bible? How many times do you think it's in there? Take a guess. 473. You're close.

I appreciate that. You're willing to give it a shot. 800.

All right, getting closer. A thousand times fatherhood is mentioned. So let's put that in a little context.

How many times do you think forgive is mentioned in the Bible? Pretty close. 56 times. How about believe? How many times do you think that's mentioned? That's not too close.

130. How about love? How many times do you think that's in the Bible? 500? Close, 300. Let's see, how about pray? 300 times.

Heaven, 600 times. The one word that I found that was really, really mentioned a lot was Lord. That was 8,000 times.

So I guess maybe that'll be another sermon some other day, but we're talking about fatherhood today. Fatherhood is mentioned a thousand times. Whether it be God is the father or whether it's talking about earthly fathers.

So it's a major thing in the Bible. It's something mentioned over and over and over, and it's a very important thing. And I would say that the breakdown of honor and esteem for fatherhood is directly tied to the breakdown of society itself.

Do you believe that? The breakdown of honor and esteem for fatherhood is directly tied to the breakdown of society itself. When a society no longer honors the father, no longer lifts up fatherhood as something great, something to be desired for and something to be pursued with all your heart to do it well, that society is headed to the decline. We all have heard the statistics about how many, you know, the prisons are full of people who didn't have a father in their life.

When, you know, when you go to a prison, if you ask somebody about that, almost all the prisoners are men that didn't have a father. They didn't have a dad who was there to show them how to do things, to show them what life was all about, to help them to understand, you know, the way to be a man and the way to be a productive person in society. And that's a major loss.

When men fail to be responsible fathers, it puts a tremendous load on all of society. Isn't that true? I mean, we already mentioned the prisons. That's a huge load.

That's billions and billions of dollars every year that have to be spent to take care of these people whose dads weren't there. So it puts a tremendous load on all of society. Fatherhood is one of the greatest privileges of men.

Do you believe that? I believe it. That's my greatest joy in life, other than knowing the Lord, is being a dad. And our society, though, doesn't celebrate.

Thank God we have a day called Father's Day, right? That's good. But as a whole, our society does not celebrate fatherhood. What are men honored for in our society? What's the thing that's really lifted up? You tell me.

Business. That's right. Being successful.

Making lots of money. What else for men? What are the things that are lifted up real high? Have what? Athletic success. Somebody else? Your position or your rank or your title.

Exactly. And so, that's the thing. What a society lifts up is what people aspire to, right? And, you know, sports is actually a good example of anti-fatherhood.

Because what we do is we pay millions of dollars to these guys who are really good at, you know, shooting a basket, let's say, through the hoop. To pay them to leave their families all the time and go travel all over the country and all over the world to shoot their baskets and neglect their families. Because that's exactly what happens in pro sports.

You can read all about it if you want. And so, we lift up that. We lift up the making the big bucks and we honor those people who can do certain athletic things better than everybody else.

But yet, we're actually setting those men up for failure in the most important thing of life, which is fatherhood. It's pretty sad. Our society celebrates self, not fatherhood.

Fatherhood is not about self, is it? By definition, it's about me serving others. Me laying down my life for these little people that God has given me and who are growing up and getting bigger and bigger. And so,

it's a very opposite thing to what our society... We lift up freedom, right? Freedom to go and do everything we want.

Freedom to pursue your dreams and your hobbies and whatever you like to do. And fatherhood kind of cramps the style of that. Because you can't do everything you want to do if you're a dad, if you're going to be a good dad.

So, I want to really lift that up today. I hope we're more excited about fatherhood after this message today. I hope everybody on this side of the room is more excited about it.

And I hope everybody on this side of the room is more excited about it. Because fatherhood is a beautiful thing. You know, fatherhood is... The attack on fatherhood... Think about it.

Is it not really an attack on God? He's the father of everything. Everything good. Everything.

He made everything. He created. He's the father.

And, you know, let me just look at... I looked up the word father. I mean, we all know what father means, right? But, he who begets a child. Okay, that's what we all think of father.

But it also means, he who creates, invents, makes, or composes anything. We talk about the father of... You know, the Bible talks about the father of musicians, right? Jabal was the father of such who dwell in tents, and Jubal of musicians. Those who found a company or found a movement of some sort or whatever, they're considered the father of that movement.

So, fatherhood is about the ones that come first. The ones who lead out. The ones who found.

Who make. Who create. And, in that respect, I'd like to also just say right now that, you know, some of you on this side, you're not fathers yet.

And, maybe you won't ever be a father of a child, of a son or a daughter, physically. But, I believe all men are called to be fathers. Do you believe that? Every man is called to be a father in the biblical sense.

You know, it says in 1 John, there are little children, there are young men, and then there's fathers. That's not talking about, you know, that's talking spiritual. There's little children spiritually.

Then there's young men who are strong and have overcome the wicked one. Then there's fathers who have known the Father. And I believe that every one of us is called to be a father like that.

And so, you know, you can be a father in someone else's life, men, whether you're ever a father to a child, you know, an earthly child. And God's called you to that. So, as we go through this message, keep that in mind if you're in that place.

I've known a lot of men who never had a child, but I look at them and I say, you know what, that man is a father because of the way they minister to people and the way that they bless people through their life. So, being a father is more than just having a child. Are you excited about being a dad? Or are you more excited about making money? Which gets you more excited? I'm excited about being a dad.

Are you glad you have a dad? As I was getting ready for this message, I was praying, you know, and I was seeing everybody's faces. I was seeing all the men's faces. And, you know, it just brought me so much joy.

As I looked at the men's faces, you know, I kind of went through the pews in my mind and I was just looking at the faces and I was praising, I was thanking God. That's a father. That's a father.

I was thanking God for the older men, you know, whose hands are kind of, you know, gnarly and rough and maybe their faces are more wrinkled and maybe their beard is gray. Thank God. Thank God for that brother.

You know, there's a beautiful thing there. Something that's special. So, I saw some of those older brothers and then I saw some of the younger men, you know, with their little children.

I was thanking God for you all and thanking God that you have a father heart. You have a desire. Not just to have a child, but to be a father.

And so, I just thank God and I'm praying for all of you and thinking about you. I'm so blessed and pleased that this room is filled with fathers. Men who are taking seriously the high calling that God has given us.

That's such a blessing. When we live in a world where so many men, that's an accessory. That's just an extra thing that, you know, just sort of happens in my life, but I don't really put a lot of energy into it.

But no, I'm so blessed that this room and this room, there's many, many a man that you say, you know, I want to be a good father. I embrace fatherhood. It's something important.

And that just gave me such joy. I wrote a letter recently to young fathers and I thought I'd just read a little bit of it. Because it kind of tells my heart.

I said, Dear Brother, I am excited for you as you have become a father now. Your love for your wife has resulted in a new creature of God being formed in her womb that will be in your image and likeness. What a privilege God has given to us.

We get to be someone's hero and role model and source of information about life, purpose, and eternal reality. You're going to learn so much about yourself and about God in the days, months, and years to come, Lord willing, through being a father. Your children will be great mirrors to show you who you are and how you act.

There's many times where I ask, Where did they learn that? Only to shortly thereafter discover that I've been doing that very same thing all along. You're great mirrors. They learned it from me.

The richness of life doesn't come from money or achievements, but it comes through the quality of the relationships that we have. God is enriching your life by adding another relationship where you will have the opportunity to make it one that's good and loving and blessed. Choose to be such a dad that your relationships will be close and rewarding for everyone.

Like you, I'm someone who enjoys teaching. That's one of the things that I've enjoyed most about being a father as well. You get to be the one who sees the lightbulb go off, go on in their hearts and minds.

It sounds like an old, worn cliché, but it's true that they grow up so fast. It seems slow and monotonous at first, but as life gets busier and responsibilities grow, so will your children get busier and grow. Too many fathers wake up too late and realize that they've wasted those earlier years that could have been invested more intentionally in the lives of their young children.

Don't be one of them. Strive to set up regular patterns of life that will be repeated over and over each day and week. Cheerful greetings, book readings together, dates, songs, family devotions, bedtime blessings, loving interactions with your wife.

The small things that are done on a regular basis add up to big outcomes over time. I know you love to be a student, and this is an area worthy of a lifelong pursuit of your master's degree in. Like anything else in life, to become knowledgeable and skilled in being a good dad takes lots of hard work and purpose and vision.

Go for it. Go for it. I wrote a little bit more about Stop at That.

It's so sad, isn't it, that so many of us spend our life for that which satisfies us not. You know, God was so kind of lamenting that in there in Isaiah. Why do you spend your labor for that which is not satisfied? And recently I came across this study.

It was done at Harvard University. It's called the Grant Study. Anybody ever hear of that? 75 years.

This study took place over 75 years. Somebody came up with the idea back in 1940. Wouldn't it be great to study men? Let's take men that are 20 years old in Harvard University right now.

There was 500 of them who agreed to do this study. And they said, we are going to study their entire life. We're going to measure their bodies.

We're going to write down everything about their eye colors and their hair color and this and that. Just all these crazy things. They wrote down everything they could about these men.

They said, we want to find out what makes for a rich, satisfying life. So for 75 years and 20 million dollars later, can you guess what they came up with? What's that? No, they didn't come up with nothing. They came up with what we really know inside all along.

The thing that makes for a rich, a healthy and a satisfying life. Now again, this is a worldly study. So you don't give it so much credit for what it is.

But it is the richness of the relationships in your life. As they studied these men over 75 years. That's what they discovered.

It says, listen to what the people said. When all is said and done, a man's relationship with his father very significantly predicted his overall life satisfaction at age 75. In other words, the young guys at 20 who said, you know what? I've got a good relationship with my dad.

You know, we get along well and I appreciate him. He's a good father. At 75, those were the people.

Not perfectly so, but for the most part, those were the people who at 75 said, you know what? I've had a really blessed life. My life is good. I'm a blessed person.

All those years later, as we shared that last night, as I shared that with my one daughter. She said, well, that sounds like a verse in the Bible. I said, really? Which one are you thinking of? She said, well, honor your father and your mother.

That your days may be long in the land that the Lord giveth you and that you may things may go well for you. And it said in this study, men with poor fathering were much more likely to have poor marriages. I mean, some of those things are kind of, you know, you don't need to spend \$20 million on that.

Right. But, but it's interesting that that's what the world came up with after all this time. And listen to this one.

Men who lacked a positive relationship with their father were much more likely to call themselves pessimists. They're much more likely to say, yeah, you know, I'm a pessimist. I just think that the bad things are going to happen, you know, and everything's, you know, I don't have a positive outlook on life.

And it said they were also too much more likely to report having trouble letting others get close to them. Men who had, did not have a positive relationship with their dad. So this is such a huge thing.

They didn't study women in this. This was just men, but I'm sure it'd be similar. And listen to what the one of the conclusions was.

It said wealth, fame, career success won't bring health or happiness. It was, it's the work that men put into maintaining connections with other human beings, their family and friends. That brings a man to the end of his life saying I've had a good and successful life.

Now that's in the earth. You know, a lot of those men probably were going to die and go to hell. But it's a godly principle, isn't it? Isn't that God's will for every man? It is.

And when they say maintaining connections, they're not talking about Facebook. Those connections do not enrich your life. I'm just going to say it again.

I'm not saying there's no value in it, but those are not the connections they're talking about. They're talking about real people relating personally and maintaining good connections with them. So after all that study, that's what these worldly people came up with.

It's the richness of the relationships in your life. Do you love the people that, you know, do you love your wife? Do you love your children? Do you love your parents? And they cause people actually even to live longer. What are the things that most people think of today when they think I want to live a healthy life so I can live longer? What are the things that people think of? You name them.

Exercise and eating right. Those are the ones I came up with, right? And, you know, there's some value in both of those. But how many people think of, you know, are on this health nut thing that I've got to have good relationships? When in reality, it's the good relationships they found in this study that made people live longer.

That's right. So if you're going to focus on one thing, choose that one. And if you want to get some exercise and eat right, that's good too.

But it's actually the relationships. It was so interesting to me because I'm kind of into health, healthy things. So anyway, that's a little side thing.

That's just a free extra there. But there's a lot more about that study that was very interesting. But I want to say that being a father is the most rewarding thing in my life.

Usually when people ask us who we are, what we do, and we're thinking of our identity, normally what do we say about our job? But is that really, should that be our highest point of identity? First of all, obviously, that I'm a Christian. That's our number one. But isn't fatherhood a better thing? Maybe we should lift that one up a little more when somebody asks us.

What do you do? I'm a father. I'm a dad. Oh really? Okay.

And yeah, I have a job to help me be a dad and help me be a good dad. That's part of my life. But my first thing is I'm a dad.

That's the biggest thing in my life. That's the most important thing that I could give my life for other than serving the Lord and being a Christian. I think that's a good way to think.

Psalms 127 says, Happy is the man that has his quiver full of children. I'm happy. I think mine's full.

And I feel so blessed. The world looks at you like you're crazy. When I tell some of my customers and things, they ask how many children I have and their jaws drop.

And they're like, especially, well, yeah, even the men or the women, they all, they both think like, man, you're crazy. That's insane. I'm crazy blessed.

I'm crazy blessed. So let's think about this manhood, fatherhood. Does God have a standard for that? What would it be? I thought about it.

You know, I thought about God Himself. He is the Father. I mean, isn't that where we get our model, our role model as dads? And so I'd kind of like to look at that.

Joe kind of alluded to that in his, you know, in his worship. This is Father's Day, and he kind of was, I noticed he was picking songs. I don't know if he did that on purpose or not, but just picking songs to honor the Father.

And, you know, shouldn't we honor Him first of all today? He's the greatest daddy, the greatest father there ever will be. And I think he'd appreciate that. Of course, Jesus is our example.

But, you know, Father God, the Father, that's the name He chose for Himself. Above every other name He could have chosen to be identified. He said, I'm Father.

I'm Father. And so what is a dad like? What is a father like? What does a father do? Well, I thought of a few things. Let's just think about it.

We want to lift up today godly fatherhood. A dad, he's a giver, not a taker. Amen? You know, a lot of fathers over the ages have used their position that God gave us as being the head of the house to do what? Take.

Get the best for me. Get what I want. Use the people that I can use.

That's not biblical fatherhood. No, God's a giver. He's a giver.

For God so loved the world that He gave. Every good and perfect gift comes from who? The Father. Cometh down from the Father of lights.

And, you know, if you being evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give good things to them that ask? One of the greatest joys we have as being a father is giving. How many of you love to give a gift to your child? Isn't that a blessing? When dad gives something, it means something. It does.

So God has called us to be givers. Another thing I thought of is encourager and rewarder. You know, Jesus knew that His Father loved Him, didn't He? But do you know the Father chose two times to say with a voice in front of everybody around Jesus and Jesus Himself, This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.

He did it at the beginning of Jesus' ministry and He did it in the middle or maybe more towards the end. He wanted His Son to know, This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. And I want to encourage us in that.

You know, dads and moms, let's be encouragers. That goes so far. We're going to talk a little bit later about correcting and things like that.

That's part of being a dad too. But the encouraging comes first and should come a lot more than the other. If we're always correcting, then we're in a bad mode, aren't we? We're in a wrong rut.

Something that really blessed me to my thinking was when someone mentioned several years ago, they said we should catch our children doing something right and bless them for it. You know, we started to do that a lot more seriously after we heard that. And we actually got a book that we called the Blessing Book.

And we write down whenever we catch them doing something good, we write it in the Blessing Book. And then on their birthday every year, then we pull out the Blessing Book. And it's such a blessing to read.

You know, he made this choice. He blessed his little sister, you know, by doing this. Or he chose to, you know, go out and cut the grass when nobody asked him.

Or this, you know, just whatever it might be. And I want to encourage us all. You don't necessarily have to do that, but I think that's a great thing to do.

Catch them doing something good and bless them. You want to talk about motivation? To do more good things? That'll motivate way better than saying, Why didn't you cut the grass without me asking you? You know what I mean? That just doesn't inspire people, does it? So, but no, God is an encourager and He's a rewarder. It says in the Bible over and over, He is a rewarder of them who diligently seek Him.

When you fast, you know, do it in secret, that your Father who sees in secret may reward you openly. God is a rewarder, so one of the great blessings and one of the attributes of fatherhood is being a rewarder. Reward our children.

And, amen. Some of you, I'm sure, could share a lot of things about this. How about being a leader? Fatherhood is being a leader.

By example, I read this book, this book about John Patton or Peyton, missionary. Anybody ever read that? This guy was a missionary to the headhunters down in Papua New Guinea. What is Papua New Guinea now? It was called something else back then.

And he grew up, you know, this guy didn't just come out of nowhere. Like, he didn't just appear to be this guy who was fearless, who'd go right in the middle of the headhunters and when the first two missionaries that were sent down with, they were killed, cooked and eaten in one day upon their arrival. The first two missionaries that went down there.

And this guy back in England said, God has a claim on those islands because the martyr's blood has been shed. Those islands are for God. And he purposed, I'm going to be someone who goes back there.

And he went to that very same area and led thousands of them to the Lord. But how did this guy, where did this guy come from? How could a man be, how could a man become like that? To have such courage? In our day today, that would be the equivalent of a guy, let's say, going to, going right into the middle of ISIS, let's say. You know, out in the Middle East maybe, something like that.

Or it's like everybody looks on and goes, you know, he's not going to make it back. He's not going to survive. And that's what they said to him.

They said, you're going to die. And he said, well, I'm willing to die. But look at his home life.

They lived in this little cottage. His dad was poor. His dad made socks for his living.

And he learned how to do that. They did it in their own house. They had a small house and they had a little closet that was the prayer room.

Listen to what he wrote about this experience as a man. He said, the closet was a very small apartment, he twixt the other two, having room only for a bed, a little table and a chair, with a small window shedding a little bit of light on the scene. This was the sanctuary of that cottage home.

Dithered daily and oftentimes a day, generally after each meal, we saw our father retire and shut to the door, quote unquote. And we children got to understand by a sort of spiritual instinct, for the thing was too sacred to be talked about, that prayers were being poured out there for us, as of old by the high priest within the veil of the most holy place. We occasionally heard the pathetic echoes of a trembling voice pleading as if for life.

And we learned to slip out and in past that door on tiptoe, not to disturb the holy colloquy. The outside world might not know, but we knew whence came that happy light as of a newborn smile that always was dawning on my father's face. It was a reflection from the divine presence in the consciousness of which he lived.

Never in temple or cathedral, on mountain or in glen, can I hope to feel that the Lord God is more near, more visibly walking and talking with men than under that humble cottage roof of thatch and oaken wattles. And listen to this here. Though everything else in religion were by some unthinkable catastrophe to be swept out of memory or blotted from my understanding, my soul would wander back to those early scenes and shut itself up once again in that sanctuary closet.

And hearing still the echoes of those cries to God would hurl back all doubt with the victorious appeal. He walked with God, why may not I? You know, he said, if everything else was stripped away from me and just a spirit of unbelief would come upon me and I would be questioning the very existence of God, he said, no, I would have to go back to them and I would say, no, there is a God because my dad walked with him. What a testimony.

That's leadership, isn't it? That's part of what produced that fearless young man who was willing to risk his life. He's a leader by example. You know, we think of and many of us have this verse on our house somewhere.

How many of you have the verse of Joshua? As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord somewhere on your house. How many of you? Lots of us, right? Amen, that's a great verse. Well, Joshua was a man who spoke that and he fulfilled that.

It was true. He and his house did serve the Lord. But you know, not everybody who says that, that's what happens, is it? Not everybody that says that, that happens.

So why did that happen with Joshua? I was thinking about that yesterday and I came to that verse, I wanted to find it in the Bible. Where is that? It's back in Exodus 33. And see, Moses and Joshua used to go into the tabernacle together to hear from God and it says here that, let me read that, Exodus 33.11 It came to pass, as Moses entered the tabernacle, the cloudy pillar descended and stood at the door of the tabernacle and the Lord talked with Moses.

And all the people saw the cloudy pillar stand at the tabernacle door and all the people rose up and worshipped every man in his tent door. That's quite a scene. And the Lord spoke to Moses face to face as a man speaks to his friend and he turned again unto the camp but his servant Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man, departed not out of the tabernacle.

I think there's a connection there. He stayed in that tabernacle seeking the face of God. He loved to be there.

And it says he was a young man, he was actually 40. So God says that's young, so that makes me feel pretty good. I'm not too far away from that.

But I believe he could say, as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord with authority because his house knew that he really did serve the Lord. He was a man who heard God's voice. And you don't have to stay in prayer, you know, in your closet eight hours a day, you know, to do that.

But it's rather, it's a habit of life. We go to God regularly. Whether it's five minutes or ten or twenty, you know, we go to God with our problems, we go to God with our children's needs.

So, we're a leader. A father's a leader. And first and foremost a spiritual leader.

The father's connected to God. Here's God's voice. I was so blessed by hearing the testimony of my friend.

His wife was at our picnic on Friday night. This was the man that I've told about before who was my self-appointed accountability partner back when I was a new Christian. He, like, came and said, I'm going to be your accountability partner about this lust problem in your life.

And, okay. You know, he did it in a way that was, you know, not a turn off to me, but he was that man. And he was a hippie.

Him and his wife, they didn't know anything. She was telling me, she was from New York City. She didn't know how to cook.

She didn't know how to, you know, grow anything in the garden. She didn't know anything. Her words was, I didn't know anything about anything except city stuff.

And so, they were in Colorado now, these hippies who got saved and trying to find their way. And Ron is his name. And one of the things that really impressed me about Ron was that he would.

He would hear God's voice. He knew how to pray. He taught his boys that.

And I stayed with him a few times and he would have family devotions before the boys went off to school. And it was, you know, he was real. He was for real.

He'd share what God was speaking to him and he'd teach his boys that. But anyway, his boys now are 30, I think she said 37. 35 or 37.

Maybe they're both of that. They're two boys. So, they're getting older now.

And what blessed me was, you know, Ron, okay, like I said, he's this hippie who didn't have a lot of education. He dropped out of high school, you know, early. And he was on drugs and messed up.

But he raised his boys in a godly way. His boys then, they went to school. They went to college.

They got their degrees in whatever it was. And they're doing these big things, you know, making computer programs for cities and all kinds of stuff. But she shared about the one son who was 35 or 37 that the Lord was kind of reproving him because he was just so poured into his work, you know, 12 hours a day just giving himself.

And that's common to men, isn't it? The temptation is there for all of us. What blessed me was, she said, these boys who are so educated, who, you know, making the big bucks and who are, you might say, way above their dad in certain ways of thinking, they know where to come when they need spiritual guidance. They come back to dad, the hippie, who's not impressive in this world, who's not educated.

They come back to dad. Why? Because they know he hears from God. And then when they ask him for some counsel, he's not just going to give them something off the, shooting from the hip.

He's going to find, he's going to hear from God. He's going to help them to hear from God. So that's fatherhood.

What a testimony of a dad. What a testimony. Well, another thing.

Dad's fatherhood is being involved. Is our Heavenly Father involved? How involved is he? Do you know how many hairs are on your head? He does. He knows every single one.

That's pretty involved, I'd say. I thought of this shooting that took place years ago in Colorado, you know, the awful thing where these boys shot their classmates. And I read from the mother of one of these boys who's just really obviously devastated.

And basically she said, you know, if I could do it over, I'd be so much more involved in my son's life. Here they were making bombs and doing guns and all kinds of things in the basement. And she didn't know about it.

And the dad didn't know about it. They weren't involved. She said, I think about it.

There's not a day that goes by that I don't think about what my son did to those other people. And this is 17 years later. And she said if I could change anything, she said I'd be more involved in his life.

I'd be talking with him. I'd be finding out what's happening. The pain that that woman must be going through in her life.

So God is involved in our life. And fathers, we're so pressured by the world around us to be doing our work and doing our business and doing all these other things that keep us from being more involved with our children. So we want to lift that up.

That's a godly standard. There's a lot of things we could say. Maybe afterwards some of you will want to share some things.

A godly father is a lover. He's a lover. One of the greatest gifts a father can give his children is to really love their mother.

Do you believe that? To really love mom. That's one of the greatest gifts that we can give. And a godly father, that's part of his life.

He loves his wife, the mother. He's a lover. And the children know that and see that somehow.

They see that. A godly father has a vision to see his children find their future in calling. That's what it's about.

It's about this, isn't it? It's not about this. But it's about pulling it back and letting it go. And that's a hard transition to make, I have to confess.

Because I really like this. It's hard to do that. But that's what it's about.

It's not about our kingdom and our world, but it's about the Lord's. A godly father is a gatekeeper. You know, somebody sometimes needs to be the bad guy.

Right? How many of you fathers like being the bad guy? Anybody? There's probably somebody here who would like that. For the most part, we don't like that. I don't want to be the bad guy.

It's not fun being the bad guy. But sometimes we have to be that. Is God ever the bad guy? That's a funny way to say it, but you know what I'm saying.

The one that people look at that way. Sometimes we've got to be a bad guy. Let's make it easy for our dads when that time arrives when they need to be the bad guy.

Don't make it harder for us because it's already hard enough. None of us really like it. So that's a plea for us today.

If we're lifting up fatherhood and godly fatherhood, make it easy for dad to be the bad guy if he needs to. And kind of right along with that, father love is sometimes tough love. Mother love is a little different, isn't it? I think mother love is wonderful.

And father love is wonderful too. It's the blessing that God gave mothers and He gave fathers. The father love is a little more tougher love.

It's more like, okay, it's time to learn how to do some hard things, son. Learn how to have a little pain. You know, learn how to work through things when you don't feel good.

Don't quit right away. We're going to go out there and work today and I guarantee you after five minutes your arm is going to feel like it's going to fall off raking those leaves. Okay? I just want to tell you, it's not going to.

And if you work through it and you just keep on going and you just do it and you go through that pain, you're going to find out the pain goes away. And you won't be feeling it anymore and you're going to get the job done and things are going to go really well. But you've got to learn how to go through that pain.

Don't be a quitter, boy. Come on, get that rake back in your hand. That's father love.

Mother love isn't quite that way. Oh, poor boy, your shoulder hurts. Oh, let me kiss you, you know, let me hug you.

And praise God, you know, that's good. But people who only grow up with that kind of love, they don't do so well, do they? No, we need both. And the father love is a beautiful thing.

It's not a bad thing. And, you know, when the father gave Joseph some tough things to do in his life, he said, OK, boy, it's going to be tough. You're going to feel bad.

You're going to be in jail. Someday you're going to be the ruler. So take heart.

And it seemed like Joseph was able to receive from his father. He was in that jail. He took all that hard stuff, all that mistreatment, all that being wrongly accused, being falsely accused, being mistreated to the max.

And he knew he had a father in heaven. And he knew that, you know, you guys meant it for evil, but God means it for good. And so right there we see the tough love of the father, don't we? I mean, do you think God enjoyed seeing Joseph suffer in prison? I don't think so.

But he knew that he needs that. There's a call on that young boy's life. He's not going to be able to rule if he doesn't know what it's like to suffer.

You know what? That's exactly the way it is for every Christian, isn't it? We're called to rule and reign. If we never suffer, we're not equipped. We're not fit.

It's the suffering that the Bible talks about, you know, through the things that we suffer that prepare us for service to God. That's the father love. And, you know, as dads, as earthly dads, okay, my job is not to make my children suffer.

But there's that tough love aspect where I've got to teach, especially my sons, but my daughters too, to go through the hard things. Don't give up. Keep pressing through.

Let's read a verse of Scripture there. Hebrews 12. It says that you have forgotten in verse 5 the exhortation which speaks to you as unto children, my son, despise not the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when you are rebuked of Him.

For whom the Lord loves, He chastens and scourges every son whom He receives. Did you hear that? Whom He loves, He chastens. Part of being a father is chastening, but it should be out of love, not out of anger or self.

That's the way God does it. If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons. For what son is He whom the Father does not chasten? But if you are without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then you're bastards and not sons.

Furthermore, we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us and we gave them reverence. Shall we not much rather be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? For they barely for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure, but He for our profit that we might be partakers of His holiness. Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous but grievous.

Nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby. Is that a beautiful thing? That Father love? Do we see that as a beautiful thing? In its right exercise? Father love of chastening, of reproving sometimes, giving a rebuke. I think that's a beautiful thing.

That tells me I'm His son. Every dad needs to be allowed to say no sometimes. You know, some dads aren't allowed to say no.

That's a sad thing when that's the case. I hope that's not the case in anybody's life here. Dads need to be allowed to say no.

We're not going to do that. I'm sorry. I know you want to.

I know you have your heart set on that. No. Let your dad, let your father, let your husband be able to say no.

You can make it easier. You can make it hard. Some of us guys are really tough and we won't care and we'll just say it anyway, but I'm not that way.

It really helps me when I know I'm honored and respected and when I'm allowed to say it. And people don't play games with me and don't manipulate me and don't try to emotionally jerk me around so that I won't say it next time or that I'll change my mind. I'm just not that tough.

So I thank God for my family that You let me say no sometimes. That's part of being a dad. Does God ever say no? James 4, you have not because you ask not.

And when you ask, you don't receive it. Why? You ask amiss. In other words, you ask for the wrong thing.

And God says no then. He says, no, I'm not going to give you that. That's the Father's love.

Sometimes it's a no. Ask your dad what he thinks about your clothes or your music. Ask him.

How many dads would like your child to ask you about that? Anybody here like me? Would love it if your children would come to you and say, Dad, what do you think about my dress? What do you think about this music? Do you like this? Is this something okay? I love it. I love it when people ask me. Well, there's a lot of things we could talk about here today.

I hope and I pray that you will celebrate your Father. Celebrate Him. Celebrate fatherhood today.

I think being a dad today is in some ways is harder than it's ever been in history. I think that's true. I mean, I know I'm probably biased, but we talked about being a gatekeeper.

When I came to this church 23 years ago, cell phones were pretty few and far between. I don't think children didn't have them. Youth didn't have them.

Internet was... I don't think there was any internet. Being a gatekeeper meant, you know, I watched what comes through the door or the window in bed situations. It was really a physical thing.

Like something physical had to come or my children had to go, but today it's not that way. Things can come in and out through, I don't know how it works, but through the airwaves right into my home. Social media and all these things.

My child could have a hundred friends from all over the place telling them, sharing all kinds of things with them and I don't even have a clue. You know, when I grew up, we had one phone. It was on the kitchen wall.

It had a cord like 25 feet long that would get all tangled up, you know. And so if somebody was talking on the phone, you knew it. Now sometimes, like in the case of my sisters, you'd see a long cord stretched all the way from the kitchen into the closet when they were talking with their boyfriend or their girlfriend or whatever and you knew what was happening.

But you knew, okay, they're on the phone. No, that's right. We had two phones.

It was one in my parents' room because I would go upstairs and I'd try to pick it up and listen when my sisters were on the phone. And somehow they knew I was on there. But that was it.

There was no cell phones. There was no computers. Being a dad was just more physical.

It was more like right here. I can touch it. I can feel it.

Today, it's not that way. Dads, we've got a harder job. And things are more... They're not so cut and dry.

And so we need to... You know, it's a challenge because our children are better at all that stuff than we are, right? And I remember my dad... We got this ping pong game way back. That was the first game that ever came out that you played on your TV. It was just ping pong.

You hit the ball. It went over there. You remember that.

Okay, well, we were really good at it. My dad would come to play and he couldn't even do it. We always beat him.

Why was that? I don't know. But it seems like children pick up on that technology so fast. And so it's a challenge.

Your dad is facing... It's harder to be a dad today than it's ever been in history, I'm just going to say, for those very reasons. Because there's everything pulling at us and pulling at the family and pulling at Dad. There's so many opportunities for the enemy of our souls to get in.

And so we need to lift up fatherhood. We need to support fathers. We need to bless our fathers.

And we need to let our dads be a gatekeeper. Be someone who's watching out for things. Blessed is the child who allows and welcomes their father to be that in their life.

Dad, what do you think of this? Is this okay? Is it alright with you? And cursed is the child who doesn't want to ask Dad lest Dad would say, I don't think that's good. So we just won't talk about that. We'll just do it anyway.

Alright, well, we're getting to the close here. Dad is a provider. Our Heavenly Father says He's given us all things pertaining to life and godliness through the knowledge of Him.

And one of my great joys as being a father is that I can provide for my children. That brings a lot of joy. I want to close with a story that really touched my heart.

I've probably read it, I don't know how many times I've read it. Last time I read it was after Elijah left. I couldn't even read it because I just broke down.

He had just left to go to Ghana for two years. I thought, you know, I'll just read this to the family. This will be very fitting to read this.

Did I have to ask someone else to read it and finish it? Yeah, I couldn't finish it. It was just too raw, too real. But this man, this John Patton, he wrote about when he went at 18 years of age when he went away to Bible school.

He wrote about his dad. And I want to read this because to me, I guess this is the kind of dad I want to be. Really.

I want to be this kind of dad. This is really beautiful. Alright, it says, he had to go to this town to Glasgow and he had to walk there.

It was like 40 miles, I guess. It says, my dear father walked with me the first six miles of the way. His counsels and tears and heavenly conversation on that parting journey are fresh in my heart as if it had been but yesterday.

And tears are on my cheeks as freely now as then whenever memories steal away to the scene. For the last half mile or so, we walked on together in almost unbroken silence. My father, as was often his custom, carrying hat in hand, his lips kept moving in silent prayers for me and his tears fell fast when our eyes met each other in looks for which all speech was vain.

We halted on reaching the appointed parting place. He grasped my hand firmly for a minute in silence and then solemnly and affectionately said, God bless you, my son. Your father's God prosper you and keep you from all evil.

Unable to say more, his lips kept moving in silent prayer. In tears, we embraced and parted. I ran off as fast as I could and when about to turn a corner on the road where he would lose sight of me, I looked back and saw him standing with head uncovered where I had left him gazing after me.

Waving my hat in adieu, I was round the corner out of sight in an instant, but my heart was too full and sore to carry me further, so I darted into the side of the road and wept for a time. Then rising up cautiously,

I climbed the dike to see if he yet stood where I had left him. And just at that moment, I caught a glimpse of him climbing the dike and looking out for me.

He didn't see me and after he had gazed eagerly in my direction for a while, he got down, set his face toward home and began to return, his head still uncovered and his heart, I felt sure, still rising in prayers for me. I watched through blinding tears till his form faded from my gaze and then hastening on my way, I vowed deeply and oft by the help of God to live and act so as never to grieve or dishonor such a father and mother as he had given me. The appearance of my father when we parted, his advice, his prayers, his tears, the road, the dike, the climbing up on it and then walking away, head uncovered, have often, often, all through life, risen vividly before my mind and do so now while I am writing as if it had been but an hour ago.

In my earlier years, particularly when exposed to many temptations, his parting form rose before me as that of a guardian angel. It is no Phariseeism but deep gratitude which makes me here testify that the memory of that scene not only helped by God's grace to keep me pure from the prevailing sins, but also stimulated me in all my studies that I might not fall short of his hopes and in all my Christian duties that I might faithfully follow his shining example. Isn't that a beautiful testimony? I thought we could end with that being lifted up.

Ultimately, as men, as Christian men, that's really where fatherhood reaches its highest point is dads who know how to pray, dads who know God, dads who can hear God's voice, dads who know how to lift their children up to the throne of grace, and dads whose lives are such that our children would not want to dishonor. So I want to encourage you. Celebrate your father today.

Pray for him. Like we already heard, it's the hardest job. It's harder than it's ever been.

Pray for your dad. Let him know you're praying for him. That blesses me when my children say that to me when I'm going through a hard time.

Purpose to encourage him to be a leader, to walk with God. And dads, embrace your fatherhood. Don't let the world dictate to you what's important.

Don't let this world tell you what you need to do. You do what it takes to be a man of God and a father like our Heavenly Father. So I just pray that as we have a Father's Day today, that we could all be more like our Heavenly Father and lift up the standard.

I hope it's encouraged you and not made you feel like it's too high or too big for you. God bless you all. Thank you for listening.

Thank you, Paul, for that message to us as fathers. Very beautiful. This ain't totally on the subject, but you had made mention about picking up the phone, you know, listening to your sister.

I thought about those days too. That was what we called conference calls back then, right? Listen in. Alright.

Well, what I'd like to do here for just a couple of minutes before we close, maybe just open it up for a few moments. Maybe somebody has a blessing that you would like to speak to fathers in general or maybe a blessing you want to speak specifically. I'm fine with either one.

Something that God has just laid on your heart. A word of life for the dads here. Just feel free.

Raise your hand. We'll get a microphone to you. Also, you alluded to it, Paul, and I kind of grabbed it in my mind here in thinking about this.

You talked about catching the children doing something good. And so often we think of Father's Day as honoring the fathers, honoring who they are and blessing them. But maybe Father's Day is also about fathers blessing their children and honoring their children.

Speaking life to the little ones. So, I'm going to open it up here for a few moments. It can run either way.

Who has a word of life you'd like to share? Either generally or specifically. Just raise your hand. Get it up there where we can see it.

And I'll hand the mic to you. Thank you for sharing that, Tim. As I was thinking, sitting here, listening to Brother Paul, I just realized how blessed I am to be a dad to my children.

Thank you, children, for blessing me and for allowing me to say no when I don't feel like saying no. And I just want to say I'm very, very grateful to have a very supportive wife that loves unconditionally. Thanks.

I have quite a few regrets in my life. One of them being not having a very good relationship with my father. Most of my life with my father was when I was unconverted.

And I did not appreciate the good things he did in life. Most of my memories are from the things that he didn't do good. But in 1988 is when I read the Bible for the first time in my life.

I was 28 years old. And I gave my life to the Lord shortly after that. And one of the goals that I had at that time was to have a relationship with my father.

I really wanted to enjoy him as a father. Anyway, he had gotten into a traffic accident. He hit a telephone pole.

His car burst into flames. But God gave him ten years after that. Ten more years to his life.

He was a land surveyor. And I had bought a house in Connecticut. And I had asked him if he could help me survey the property.

And this was going to be my way of starting a relationship with my father. Working together on doing that. But because of that accident, he was burned in the cold winter air in Connecticut.

It would bother him. And so he postponed doing the survey until the spring when it got warmer. Well, on February 1st, I believe it was, 1st or 2nd, I can't remember now, but he had died of a heart attack.

A massive heart attack. And so I never got to have that time to build a relationship with him the way I had planned at that time. I just want to encourage young men and young ladies if they don't have a good relationship with their father, that they would not wait, but that they would do it today.

We don't know how many days we have left, but that is one thing I want to encourage everyone. And fathers, mothers, same way, relationships are very important. Good word, George.

Anyone else? A hand up. Yes. We do want to encourage you, George Keyes.

For myself, I do have the smile and the blessing of my father and my mother. And it means so much. Coming from where we came from, not all of my friends have that.

And I guess I don't know how I really have it to have my father and mother in words and in deeds speak those words over me, this is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased. I've been thinking about that some and it's been talked about here today. We cannot read that Jesus heard those words from his earthly father or the father that was in his life, but he did hear his heavenly father say that.

And when we have the witness in our heart that our Father in Heaven is saying this is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased will propel us further down in life than almost anything else. For Jesus, these words propelled him right to the cross for you and me. I would just like to encourage us all here today there is a witness that we can have from our heavenly father that he has pleased.

And to go for that, regardless of how our earthly father blesses us, I just thought a young man, a good friend of mine last night, that would like to go to the mission field and is planning on it. But unlike the story that Paul read here, his father does not bless it. I would just like to encourage one another here to encourage one another in this where we can be a father.

More than just being a dad, we can be a father to those around us and the encouragement that we have for those around us can propel them on in the will of the Father. Yeah, I just want to say thanks to dad for everything that you've meant in my life and in all of our lives. I appreciate all the times you've come to me and just wanted to talk and just wanted to hear how I am.

And that means a lot. Thanks. You're the best, dad.

There was a hand up front here. Let's take one or two more here yet. Something that has become very dear to me for a father's perspective is if we look at the last verse in the Old Testament, the last chapter actually in Malachi, it would be good for all of us to read that.

The last two verses says, Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And he says why he's going to do that. And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children.

Notice the order there. The father's heart is going to be turned toward the children. These little innocent children have a heart that is bent toward evil from their youth.

And when a father's heart is turned toward them with compassion like Jesus had compassion on me, when we turn our hearts like that to the children, and then it says, and the heart of the children to the fathers. That's what happens in that sequence. And it says, Lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.

We just heard that the father, the ones that are in prison, maybe didn't have a father in their life or wasn't concerned about them. So it really is a big responsibility for us as fathers that our hearts are turned to those children that are bent in their innocence. Their heart is not, you know, they're innocent, but yet there's that chastisement that needs to take place like we heard.

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