

Fathers ■ Make God Your Example

by Zac Poonen

This sermon emphasizes the importance of being a good father by restoring the hearts of fathers to their children and vice versa. It highlights the need for fathers to take the lead in building strong relationships with their children, teaching them obedience, truthfulness, humility, and contentment. The sermon also stresses the significance of being a good husband first before being a good father, encouraging fathers to prioritize their relationship with their wives. It concludes with a prayer for fathers to be empowered by the Holy Spirit to raise up a generation that glorifies God.

Scripture: Malachi 4:5, John 14:9, Matthew 7:11, Luke 11:9, Isaiah 41:17, Proverbs 22:6, Job 36:5, 1 Timothy 6:6, Ephesians 3:20

Topics: "Fatherhood", "Family Relationships"

Description

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Transcript

Okay, so today is Father's Day, it's being celebrated in many parts of the world. So I thought it was appropriate to share something about that. The first verse I would like to point out in this connection is the last two verses of the Old Testament, Malachi 4, verse 5 and 6. Here, it's referring to the second coming of Christ and it says here, I'm going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord.

He will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers so that I will not come and smite the land with a curse. It's interesting that the Old Testament ends with the word curse, just like the New Testament ends with the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. But why does the Lord threaten to smite the land with a curse? It's because the relationship between fathers and children are not right.

And when we think of this as something relating to the last days, because it speaks about the great and terrible day of the Lord in verse 5, it's a prophecy. And the Elijah spoken of here is the body of Christ. The

last days Elijah.

When Jesus came, they wondered if John the Baptist was Elijah and Jesus said, no, you haven't received him. So that's not the Elijah. It's the body of Christ that's the Elijah and what is the body of Christ going to emphasize and proclaim in the last days that the hearts of the fathers must be restored to the children and the hearts of the children must be restored to the fathers.

But it begins with the fathers. Very often we can blame our children and they're not like this or children are different and our children have a different temperament. Fathers I've heard in my life make all types of excuses why their children are wayward and they blame the temperament, they blame surroundings, they blame the friends, and they blame very often everybody except themselves.

And that's why it doesn't go well. So here it's good for fathers to say, Lord, I see that this ministry has to begin with me. I can't expect the hearts of the children to be restored to the fathers before the hearts of the fathers are in a right way towards their children.

And when we turn to John's Gospel chapter one, we read that one of the main ministries of Jesus Christ, we think of Christ coming to the earth to die for our sins. But here it says, one of the ministries of the Lord Jesus on earth throughout his life, his death on the cross was just for six hours at the end of his life. But something he demonstrated throughout his life is written in John 1, 18, where it says, no one has seen God at any time, but the only begotten God referring to Jesus, who is in the bosom of the father, he has explained the father.

So one of the ministries of Christ on earth was to explain the father, not just with words, but by his life. Towards the end of his life at the Last Supper, we read in John 14, when one of his disciples asked him, Philip said to him, please show us the father, John 14, verse eight. And Jesus said, if you have seen me, you have seen the father.

That's it. Verse nine. And Jesus had just washed the feet of the disciples at that time.

And he was referring to that action as well, as well as to his whole life of serving the poor, helping the needy. And he said, if you have seen me, you have seen the father. The father is one who is willing to be like a slave, to wash the feet of his disciples, of all human beings.

That's how God is. And that's the pattern. And that's the father that Jesus explained by his life.

And my dear brothers, as fathers, our calling is by our life to demonstrate what our heavenly father is like. Just like Jesus demonstrated, not just with words, but by his life, he demonstrated what God the father was like. That is the great calling of fathers.

It's a tremendous responsibility. And it is impossible to fulfill it if you're not filled with the Holy Spirit. If you don't have a daily cry in your heart, Lord, fill me with the Holy Spirit.

Well, this will be just another Father's Day that goes by. And we will never be the type of fathers God wants us to be. Many fathers have failed in the past.

I think of, I've met numerous fathers whose children are grown up, teenagers or in their twenties, and all those children are wayward, not interested in following the Lord, not serious about their Christian life, even though they claim to be Christians. And I tell such fathers, don't get discouraged. God is merciful.

But you have to begin by acknowledging your fault. And if you don't begin by acknowledging our faults, God will not help us. So if you begin by acknowledging our faults, God can do anything.

There's no miracle that God cannot do. So one of the first things I want to say is from Matthew chapter 7 and verse 11. You know, Jesus explained the father like this.

He explained the father by his life, as I said, by his life of service and humility. But in words, he said in Matthew 7, verse 11, he looked at his disciples who were some of the best people on earth at that time. They had forsaken everything to follow Jesus.

And he looked at them. He looked at those disciples who had left their nets and other jobs to follow him. And he said to them, if you, some of them were fathers like Peter, if you, Matthew 7, 11 being evil, he looked at them and said they were evil.

In what way were they evil? They were excellent people, the best on the earth at that time. But compared to their heavenly father, the best of them were evil fathers. That's something for us to recognize.

If you being evil fathers know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your father in heaven give what is good to those who ask him? So that's the first thing all of us fathers need to recognize. I need to recognize, I've tried to recognize it to the best of my ability for many, many years from the first time I got a light on this verse. And what is that? That compared to the goodness of God, the best father on earth is evil.

In other words, God is so good. There's no father that can come anywhere near him in comparison. Some of us think we are good fathers.

You need to humble yourself and say, Lord, I'm not really a good father compared to you. I've got a long way to go. If you keep thinking you're a good father, you'll never be the type of father God wants you to be.

You have to say, Lord God, my father in heaven compared to you, I'm evil. I've said that to the Lord many times from the days when I was a young father. Lord, compared to you, I'm an evil father.

Make me like you, make me like you, make me like you. I'm not a good father compared to you. I want to be like you.

Do you have a cry like that in your heart? It'll go well with you then and with your children. So this is the first verse I want all of us to begin with. And when we realize that our calling is just like Jesus to represent the father to our children, so that as our children grow up and one day they grow up and leave home to go to college or go to work, we should be able to say to them in a limited extent, my dear sons and daughters, if you have seen me, you've seen a little bit of what God the father is like.

The type of father I have been, not perfect, but in my attitude to you and the way I taught you and the way I behaved with you and the way I related to you, you've seen a little bit of what God our heavenly father is like. Take that as a challenge. And if you have failed in that, no problem.

Just go to God and say, Lord, I failed. I'm sorry. I never had light on this.

But I understand today something of what it means to be a father. Please help me. Forgive my times of ignorance.

Acts 17 verse 30. Today I repent. And repent means I turn around.

I want to be able to explain you to my children by my language, by my life, by the way I spend money, by the way I do everything. Help me to explain you to our children. That is one of the main lessons we need to learn on Father's Day.

I would say the main lesson. And if you want to do it, you've got to ask God to fill you with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is called the spirit of the father.

The spirit of the father. And when he fills me, he will make me a good father. So I don't know how many of you fathers see your weakness and cry out to God for the fullness of the Holy Spirit.

Think of a very poor person who has no bank account and who has already got zero in his bank account or very little. And his rent is due. He has to pay his rent and he doesn't have any money.

He cries out for help to God. Oh, God, please provide for me. That's the way we should cry out in helplessness.

Lord, how many times do we cry out to God in helplessness when our children are sick or some problem arises? Well, in the same way, we need to pray, Lord, you may not be facing any sickness problem or financial problem in your family right now. But what about being a good father? Doesn't that bring a sense of need in you that drives you to God? Just like if you were in a financial problem or there was some serious sickness in your house, it should. Lord, I don't have any sickness in my home.

I don't have any financial need in your home, but I'm in desperate need of being a good father. And I want to cry out to you just like if there was a terrible financial need in this house or there was some terrible sickness in this house. I want to be a good father and I cannot do it.

Lord, please fill me with your Holy Spirit. I pray that cry in your heart. I've had that cry in my heart for a long, long time because I knew one thing.

I could never, never be the type of father that God wanted me to be. When I look back at my life, I think of so many mistakes I made, but I always would pray, Lord, help me, help me. And the Bible says, God, here's the cry of the needy.

I want to turn you to a verse which has been a great blessing to me as a Christian and as a father and in my ministry, in preaching the word and in all types of situations, and especially as a father. Isaiah chapter 41. I want you to turn, please, with me to Isaiah 41.

When we are praying to God, crying out to him to help us to become better fathers, to represent him to our children, here is how we should pray. And here is the promise we should claim. In Isaiah 41 and verse 17, the afflicted and needy, the word needy.

This is the word that comes to me here. Those who are needy, when the needy are seeking water, Lord, I'm needy. I have a great need to be a good father and I'm seeking for the power of the Holy Spirit.

And my tongue is parched with thirst. I, the Lord, will answer them myself. As God, I will not forsake them.

Look at that promise. But brother, you've got to be needy. I will open rivers on the bare heights.

I'll tell you something. As I've cried to God for many, many years in my life, and I continue to cry to God even today, not only to be a physical father to my children, to be a good grandfather to my grandchildren, but also to be a spiritual father to so many people in a number of countries who look up to me. I say, Lord, I am needy.

My tongue is parched with thirst, crying out to you and your promise to answer me. I want to believe you. You will not forsake me, it says here.

You will open rivers where there are bare heights now. You will bring springs in the midst of the valley. You'll make a wilderness.

You'll make a wilderness into a pool of water and the dry land will become fountains of water. Think of this as promises God is making to you to make you a better father. I will put a cedar in the wilderness and then, verse 20, they will see and recognize and consider and gain insight that the hand of the Lord has done this.

And so the Lord says, present your case to me. Bring forward your strong arguments. What are our strong arguments? Lord, I'm a needy person.

I don't know what it is to be a good father, to represent you. It's way beyond my ability. So I pray that you will help me because I'm probably the most desperate person in the whole world.

I present my case. I'm more needy, Lord. You got to help me.

That's what it means to be needy. If you think you're a pretty good father and you think you're better than others, well, you may go down to the end of the line. But if you feel a desperate need that you've been a failure so far and you're desperately needy to be a good father, you come to the front of the line and God will answer your prayer first.

I want to be there in the front of the line. And I've discovered through my life and in whatever area I have a need to be in the front of the line to get God's answer quickly is to feel that I am the most needy person of all in whatever area I'm asking. Yeah, that's the secret.

Consider yourself to be the most needy person. Don't compare yourself with others and think you're better. Think you're worse.

Then you'll be in the front of the line. The last shall always be the first. Remember, that's God's law in his kingdom.

So it's just like, you know, a helpless child. Think of a little child who cannot do anything for himself. He cannot even go to the restroom himself.

He doesn't know how to put on his clothes and he's desperately depending on his parents for everything. Jesus said, be like little children. That's the mark of humility, to always have a sense of need.

Or the other picture Jesus used of the branch in the tree. I love to think of these examples. I always think of them myself.

I say, Lord, I'm like a one, two-year-old child. So many things I don't know. And I'm like a branch in a tree, absolutely helpless without the sap coming from the tree.

I believe that's why God's helped me so much in my life, in my ministry, in my home, and my relationship with my wife and my children. I am a needy person. I am the most needy person, Lord, in the world.

I'm not the type of father I should be. I'm the most needy. I'm at the end of the line.

I'm the last. And the Lord says, come up to the front of the line. You're the most needy.

I'll meet your need. And he has met my need again and again and again. And in every area, I've sought to him.

So what is the secret? He meets the poor and the needy first. If anyone thirsts, Jesus said in John 7, 37, let him come to me and drink. And I will make rivers of living water flow from his innermost being.

So I want to ask you, dear brothers, fathers, are you needy today? Are you so thirsty that you come to God and say, Lord, you've got to meet with me? If so, here is a promise for you from Luke chapter 11. Luke chapter 11, this is the parable Jesus said of a person, verse 5, who went to his friend's house. Luke 11, verse 5, he goes to his friend's house at midnight.

This is a picture of a man going to his heavenly father in prayer and saying, please, my friend, lend me three loaves because a friend of mine has come to my at home and I've got nothing to set before him. Read those words. I have nothing to set before him.

Here is a father, picture of the father going to God. That's the explanation of this parable, saying, heavenly father, I have two children at home, four children at home, six children at home, whatever number of children you have, and I provide them food, clothing, shelter, but the most important thing, how they should grow up to be disciples of Jesus, I don't have anything to set before them. I have nothing, Lord, to set before them.

All the things in the world I can give them, but spiritual riches, I don't have it. If you think you have it, you won't pray like that. It's the one who recognizes he's needy and says, father, please give me.

And from inside that, in the parable, the man says, don't bother me. I can't come to you and give you no. And he says, I'm not going to give him.

I'm going to keep on banging the door till you wake up and give it to me. And Jesus said, because of his, verse 8, because of his persistence, he will get up and give him as much as he needs. Now you fathers take that as a promise from God today.

You come to him in your need and say, Lord, I've got children at home. I want to bring them all up to be wholehearted disciples of Jesus when they grow up and leave my home. And I don't have what it takes.

And I don't hear an answer. Well, I don't care. I'm going to keep banging till I get an answer.

I'm going to keep knocking, knocking, knocking, knocking. That's what Jesus said, because of his persistence, verse 8. What will you get? It says here, verse 8, as much as you need to be a good father, as much as you need, he will give it to you because of his persistence. I think all of us have probably prayed once or twice in our life or maybe five or 10 times made me a good father.

But this is not talking about such people who once in a while go and knock at the door, but who keep on knocking and don't give up until they get, until they get and they feed their children and they begin to see

the results in their children. That's when you know God has given you. And so Jesus said, verse 9, Luke 11, 9, ask like this, like this man asked, and it will definitely be given you.

It's a promise. Seek like this and you will definitely find. Knock like this.

Keep on knocking. It will definitely be open to you. What more promise do you want, brother? Everyone who asks like this will receive and everyone who seeks like this will find and everyone who knocks like this, it will be open.

Now, you know, he's talking about fathers. See the next verse. See, for example, you fathers, if your son asked for a fish, will you give him a snake? No, he's talking about fathers.

And if he asked for an egg, will you give him a scorpion? No. If you're being evil, Lord, I'm not a good father, but I know how to give good earthly gifts to my children. How much more will your heavenly father give the Holy Spirit's power to be a good father? To whom? To those who ask like this, to those who seek like this, to those who knock like this, those who wake up in the middle of the night in their beds and cry out and say, oh, God, I've failed as a father.

Please help me. How many of you have done that? Have you ever done that even once? There are many nights in my life where I wake up in the middle of the night and I cry out to God saying, God, help me to be what you want me to be. Many, many nights in my life.

I've seen my need. I see my need day and night. Even to preach the word.

I never get up to preach the word saying, oh, well, I've been preaching for 56 years. I can handle it. No, I can't handle it.

Lord, if you don't give me the words, I'll be dumb. Or whatever I say will be just human cleverness, which won't reach people's hearts. It'll reach their minds, instruct them, and they think they've got something when all they've got was human garbage.

The cleverness of man is all human garbage. Lord, they won't get a word from you. So I want to be always thirsty.

I want to be like that man that I've often spoken of in Proverbs chapter 8 and verse. I'm talking about the type of father who goes to God. Proverbs 8, 34.

Let me read it like this. Blessed is the father, Proverbs 8, 34, who comes to my gate every day, daily, and waits at my door posts, and seeks me for help to be a good father. He will find life.

He'll get an answer. He'll obtain favor from the Lord. So that's where we begin in our relationship with God.

That's our foundation. And then the scripture says with the power that God gives, with the power of the Holy Spirit, Proverbs 22, and verse 6. It's an amazing promise. Amazing promise.

Train up a child, Proverbs 22, verse 6, in the way he should go. And when he's old, he will not. Not he might not.

It depends on your faith. I believe he will not. Why not say what God's word says? If I train up a child in the way God teaches me to train him, when he grows up, he will not go away from that.

I often quote the example of Moses. His mother, his father was a slave working day and night and hardly ever saw the little child because he went to work early morning when little baby Moses was still asleep and came back. By the time he came home, Moses had gone to sleep again.

So it was the mother, Moses' mother, who brought him up and instilled such values into that little boy before she sent him into Pharaoh's palace that 30, 35 years later, when he's 40 years old, he says, I don't want the riches of Egypt. I don't want the honor of Egypt. I don't want the pleasures of Egypt.

Boy, if you can bring up your child like that, the 35 years later, wherever he is, he'll say, I will not seek the honor and the wealth and the pleasure of this world. You've done a great job. Train up a child in the way he should go.

He will not depart from it. So that's a great promise for us to begin. And if we want to do that, you know, all training, you think of people who go to a gym, that word train, train.

It's a word that refers to the gym where people go to exercise to build up their muscles. And training takes time. You can't go for a five-minute visit to a gym every day and expect to build muscles.

You have to take time. Training takes time. So a father who wants to bring up his children in a proper way must say, Lord, I'm willing to spend time.

We all have time. Many of us say, no, no, no, I'm so busy, I don't have time. I've heard people tell me I don't have time to read the Bible.

I'm so busy. No, you're not. Think if your child is suddenly sick and admitted in hospital, you'll suddenly make time to go to the hospital.

Where did you get that extra time from? You made time, even though you were busy. It's like that. You know, if we want to make time for something, we will cut out certain other things in our daily program which are not so essential, and we will spend time with our children.

We will allow our hearts to be drawn to the children so that the children's hearts can be drawn to us. Be careful, dear brothers. In the days in which we live, we are told, warned very clearly in Malachi that fathers and children will drift apart and we need to come together.

Very, very important. So we can take an example from God himself. God is the first father described in the Bible, and he treated Adam like his son.

In fact, in Luke chapter 3, the last verse, Adam is called the son of God. So here was the father that two things I see here where Adam failed. God wanted him to obey.

That's all. He didn't want Adam to be clever or any such thing. He wanted him to obey.

It was obedience which God wanted to teach Adam, and that is why he sent him into a garden. And the obedience was not difficult. There were thousands of trees in that garden, and God did not tell Adam, well, these are the 6,800 trees that you must not touch.

No. He said, there are thousands of trees. I'm asking you, don't touch one tree.

That is not a difficult command, to train up a child with obedience in the little things. We don't give them 10,000 commands in little things. That's the first thing God wanted Adam to learn, obedience.

And that's what we need to teach our children. The first commandment for children is honor your father and mother. Ephesians 6 interprets it as children obey your parents because that is the first commandment that has a promise.

Honor your father and mother, and it will go well with you. Do you want it to go well with your children? Teach them to obey their parents. Teach them to speak respectfully to their parents.

Never take lightly when they speak disrespectfully to father or mother. Immediately pull them up. I would never tolerate my children speaking even for a little while, even with one word, disrespectfully to the parents.

Why? Because I love them so much I want it to go well with them. I would teach them obedience, obey your parents. Even if you can't understand why, you obey your parents.

So that's the first thing, and Adam failed. And the second thing I see here where Adam failed was in speaking the truth. That's the second thing God wants us to teach our children.

I see here in Genesis 3, and yeah, it's here. The Lord God came to him in the garden, we read, and asked him a simple question. Did you eat? This is Genesis 3 in verse 11.

Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat? And he told a lie. This is the man's failure. Disobedience to a clear command of God, and secondly, telling lies.

So I've seen these are the two things we need to teach our children, first of all. That's what I taught my own children when they were small. Most important, mathematics, science, history, all that is secondary.

First of all, obey your parents, and second, always be truthful. Even if you did the worst possible thing, I say, come and tell me the truth. Don't ever try to deceive me.

Don't ever tell me a lie. I will not punish you if you tell me the truth. I can forgive everything, but don't tell me a lie.

Dear fathers, be like this, because these are the two areas where Adam failed as a son of God, and that's what brought all the chaos into the world. And we see the example of Jesus we read in Luke chapter 2. This is the example I always tell little children. I say, if you want to follow Jesus, we teach our children to follow Jesus.

I say, you can follow Jesus. You don't have to be 30 years old. You can follow Jesus even if you are three years old, because it says about Jesus when he was a little boy in Nazareth in Luke chapter 2, verse 51.

Luke chapter 2, verse 51. He was subject to Joseph and Mary all the 30 years he was there. Joseph died, but then he was subject to Mary.

Now, the interesting thing here is Joseph and Mary were imperfect, and yet Jesus submitted to them. So don't get discouraged if you're an imperfect father. It doesn't matter.

I say, I'm an imperfect father like Joseph, but Jesus obeyed Joseph, and I tell my children, you've got to obey me. It's not because I'm a perfect father. No, Joseph was not at all a perfect father, but Jesus, it says here, continued in subjection to him.

Mary was not a perfect mother. I'll tell you why, because there's no one perfect on earth. They were imperfect.

They were under the old covenant. They didn't even have the new covenant of promise of sin shall not have dominion over you. They didn't have the Holy Spirit dwelling within them.

Can you imagine how imperfect they were as parents? Do you think they yelled at each other? I'm sure they did. Did they argue with each other? Sure, and little Jesus saw it, but he did not despise them. He respected them and submitted to them.

What an example. Even if your parents are imperfect, I tell children, you must respect and obey your parents. You must honor your father and mother.

That's the thing that we see here. The other thing I find with children is the disobedience, one. Telling lies, the second thing.

And the third thing I find very often in children is despising others. Children somehow develop the habit of despising and looking down on others, making fun of those who are maybe a little awkward or don't speak properly or have some habit, which is not good. Don't encourage that in your children, please.

And something, they try to make you laugh by making fun of somebody else. Sometimes a trait in another person, which that person cannot change. You know, there are people who have habits and traits in them, which they cannot change.

And don't let your children ever despise them. No, correct them. If you don't correct them or you just join with them and say, ha, ha, ha, yeah, that's funny, your children are going to grow up despising people.

And they think they themselves are very smart and capable, and the other guy is crazy and foolish. And no, teach them humility from a very young age. And one mark of a humble person is he despises nobody.

God is our heavenly father. What does the Bible say? I want you to turn to the book of Job. In the book of Job, we read this, Job chapter 36.

These are the words of Elihu. Elihu was the one person who spoke to Job whom God did not have to correct. The other three friends of Job got corrected.

But Elihu, God did not correct. And one of the good things Elihu said, he really knew God. He says an amazing statement, which is not found anywhere else in the Bible, but which is true.

Job 36.5, we need to teach our children. God is almighty. Yeah, we teach our children that.

But he does not despise anybody. If there was one person who could despise people, it was God. He's perfect and everybody's imperfect.

We are imperfect people. We got the right to despise other imperfect people. But here's a perfect God, almighty, but he does not despise anybody.

And this is the way we could explain it to our children. Here on my right side is God, there so far away, perfect, and never despising anybody. And here on my left side is the other extremist, Satan, imperfect, despising everyone.

That's where the devil is. He despises everyone. And here's God despising no one.

And all of us are in between. How do I know I'm getting closer to God? I despise people less and less and less and less. I come to the place where I don't despise people.

I'm becoming like God, the Father. But if I'm despising people more and more, I'm becoming like the devil. You're going closer to the devil when you despise people, because he despises everyone.

If you want to be like God, press on towards a place where you despise no one. It's very important, because I find that all over the world, children have the habit of despising and making fun and laughing at people's habits and accents and all types of things. We've got to be very, very careful.

See, God was very merciful. He didn't just yell at Adam and Eve and say, get out. No.

One beautiful thing we see here is that he saw their need, this fallen couple. It says here he killed an animal, made a sacrifice for their sin right there, shed blood. Blood was first shed in Eden.

He killed an animal and took the skin of that animal in Genesis 3, verse 21, and made a skin dress for Adam and another one for his wife. What does that show? God's tremendous mercy on somebody who had failed. And that's what people need to see in us.

Our children need to see that we are merciful. We're not judgmental. God's been so merciful to us, and we need to be merciful to our children.

And we cannot correct them if we have not learned to encourage them. I've often used this example that encouragement is the blackboard on which we can take the chalk of correction and write the fault that we see in our children. One characteristic of God is mentioned in Romans 15 and verse 5. Do you know that this is one of the titles of God? There are many titles given to God.

And one of the titles given to God our Father is Romans 15 and verse 5, a God who gives encouragement. Have you seen that title of God? A God who gives encouragement. We all want to be like the Lord, right? I want to be like my Heavenly Father, a God who gives encouragement.

I want my children to grow up and say, my dad encouraged me. When I bungled and made a mistake and failed, my dad encouraged me. I hope your children will say that about you.

He corrected me, sure, because that's the other aspect of God, and that is mentioned in Hebrews and chapter 12, and that is he's a God who disciplines us. He says in Hebrews 12 and verse 7, when God disciplines you, he's dealing with you as a son. He's a father who disciplines.

So here are two titles of God, a father who disciplines, Hebrews 12 and verse 7, and a father who encourages. But we need encouragement more than discipline. If you encourage and encourage, that discipline will take effect.

If you discipline your child and you don't encourage, it's like taking a piece of chalk. There's no blackboard there. You're just writing.

What you're writing is absolutely correct. You did this wrong. You did this wrong.

You should not do this. But you're writing in the air, and the child can't understand it. He can't see it.

He doesn't know what you're saying. But if you build a blackboard of encouragement, that means you have spoken words of encouragement to your child whenever they do something good, when they do well in school or help somebody who's needy. And you say, boy, I'm proud of you the way you did that or the way they gave up some of their toys for somebody to play with or when somebody broke what they constructed of their toys.

You say, okay, I'm so glad that you didn't get upset with that, that you can build it again. Encouragement, encouragement. There's so much opportunity to encourage our children.

Every day there's something we can, if we look for it, we will find it in our children. Dear brothers, please build up a blackboard of encouragement in your home that your children, when they leave your home, will know you as a father who encouraged them. And then on that blackboard you can write words of correction and they will respect you.

That's how God is. Then the other thing I want you to teach, we need to teach our children, is I told you about encouragement and discipline, is frugality. That means being careful with expenditure of money.

It's one of the most important things that they need to learn. Turn with me to 1 Timothy and chapter 6. It says here in the last part of verse 6, Godliness, 1 Timothy 6, 6. Godliness, when it's accompanied by contentment, brings great profit or gain. So godliness, one important aspect of godliness, is being content with what we have.

Be content with what you have. That's a verse found in Hebrews and chapter 12. Be content, sorry, Hebrews 13.

Be content with what you have, Hebrews 13, 5, because the Lord has said, I'll never forsake you. So be content with what you have. And here in 1 Timothy 6, we read, be godliness accompanied by contentment.

Your godliness is fake. If you're not content, if you're not learned to be content, like Paul says, I'm content in whatever state I am. Whether I have much or I'm little, I'm content, he says in Philippians 4. Godliness accompanied by contentment is genuine godliness.

And we got to teach our children to be content. And I've heard one translation of that in one other language, is godliness accompanied by frugality. Frugality means learning to live simply, instead of being wasteful, and unnecessarily spending money on things you don't need.

Why do you need to get 10 types of toys when they've already got the same type already? Yeah, sure. But why waste so much money on things which are unnecessary? I believe that there's a great danger when you get more and more money to waste a lot of unnecessary things. Now, I'm not trying to tell anybody what they should buy and what they shouldn't, because it all depends on our income.

Someone who's got little can only buy less things for their children, and someone who's got more can buy more. So I'm not here to tell you what to do or what not to do. But I'm very thankful in my own life that when we left the Navy, and my wife and I, we had no bank account, and we were trusting the Lord, and we

wouldn't go to rich churches for money.

We never asked anybody. We were in great need for the first few years of our life. When our children grew up, when our babies were born, we didn't have money to buy baby clothes for them.

We would take some cloth, and my wife would stitch up something herself, and that's what we put on. Okay, it was not the grandest dress available, but we decided not to get into debt. Now, I'm not saying you should do that.

If God has provided for you, by all means, go and buy baby dresses for your children. But all I say is don't be wasteful. Wastefulness is a bad habit.

And we decided to live within our income. That's the main thing. Live within your income.

Don't go beyond your income. We could not go to a restaurant. I never took my children to a restaurant.

We couldn't afford it. If you can afford it, by all means, go. What I'm trying to say is live within your income.

We don't regret that we were poor. Our children learned so many lessons because of that. Many, many things.

I don't want to go into those details. Now, the thing is, what about many of you who got plenty of money to buy so many things for your children? How shall you teach your children? Frugality. I'll tell you.

You don't have to be poor to teach your children frugality. If God's given you a good earning, thank God for it. But you can sometimes tell your children when they ask for something in a store, listen, son, you've already got so many of those.

Why do you need one more? Or you already got so many good dresses. Why do you need one more? You got 35 dresses in your cupboard already. So it's not by poverty that people become spiritual because I know thousands of, not know, I've seen thousands of poor people in India and their children are not spiritual.

They are wayward and ungodly. The children who live in the slums, they're not spiritual. Far from it.

And they are the poorest people in India. So I'm not saying poverty brings spirituality. I don't believe in that type of delusion.

I believe teaching children to be frugal and living being frugal, even if you're a rich person, to be frugal, to not buy unnecessary things, to deny yourself. That's the secret of spirituality. That means there's something.

Yeah, I have already plenty of that. Why do I need to get one more? Don't copy others. Oh, everybody's going on a vacation.

So I must also go. No, no, no, no, no. If you can afford it and therefore you have enough funds to go and you feel it's good to go, by all means, go on as many vacations as you like, but not because somebody else is going.

We have to teach our children. Listen, children, daddy can't afford all those things those people can afford, but I can teach you about Jesus. Jesus couldn't afford many things that the rich people in Israel could

afford, but he was happy with what he had.

Frugality, very, very important. Don't compare yourself with others. It's another, I would say this finally, teach our children not to compare themselves with other children or with other families.

Very important. Because if you have more than them, you'll become proud. Your children will become proud.

Ah, I'm like this. That's one danger. And if you have less than them and they have more, your children will become jealous.

Oh, they've got that and I don't have it. There are dangers on each side. There's a cliff on each side of contentment.

Contentment is the narrow way that leads to life. And if you're not content and you're looking at others and you say, oh boy, I've got so much more than they have. You'll be proud.

Or you look at others and say, I've got less than that person. You'll be jealous. Steer clear of those cliffs.

Teach our children to avoid pride and jealousy and to walk the narrow way of contentment. I believe it's a tremendous challenge and wonderful privilege. I call it a privilege that God says, I want you to be like me towards your children.

And I want to say to all of you fathers, especially those who feel you have failed. We've all failed. I know I have failed in so many ways, but I've repented.

But there's one thing I used to do. I used to pray for my children regularly. Lord, I want my children to grow up to be godly.

And despite all my failures and my shortcomings, Lord, please make them godly. I would cry out to God. My wife and I would pray for them and say, Lord, you said if two of you agree concerning anything, it'll be granted.

I'm never asking that my children should be rich or famous or great or any such thing. I never once prayed for all that rubbish. I said, Lord, that's up to you what type of job you give them.

It's up to you what type of income they earn. And I will never ask for anything in that area. I will not even ask that they should come first in their class, in school.

I will ask that they will be disciples of Jesus, that they'll be godly, and will follow you when they grow up. More than anything else, I can stand before God and say, that's the only thing I wanted for my children. And when it came to the time of their marriage, I did not want them to marry from some rich family or some great well-known family.

I wanted them to marry godly girls who would help me to them towards godliness and who together with them could bring up their children in a godly way. I can honestly say that. There's nothing else I was interested in.

I was not interested in community. They must be from my community or any such thing. They must be godly.

They must be believers who want to follow Jesus. They shouldn't be a drag on my sons. Dear brothers, I want to encourage you fathers today.

Forget the past. Say, Lord, I'm sorry where I failed. The Lord will cleanse you in his blood.

But say, Lord, in the days to come, I want to be a good father. I want my heart to be restored to my children. And thereby children's hearts will be restored to me.

And I believe we will prepare a generation that will be ready for the coming of the Lord. Let's do that. That's our challenge.

And one final word to all of you fathers. This is very, very important. To be a good father, you must be a good husband first.

Don't ignore your wife and think you can be a good father. Impossible. You were first a husband before you became a father.

So be a good husband first. Work on your relationship with your wife. And Lord, let me be a good husband to her.

Let me be one who encourages my wife. Then I can encourage my children too. So don't neglect your wife.

There are many, many parents in India, the fathers in India, who completely ignore their wives and just taking over their children. Oh, my children, my children, my children. Well, they're not good fathers.

Now, begin with the first person God brought into your life. Just not your children, your wife. So before becoming a good father, we got to become good husbands.

So I trust that I've shared something which will encourage you. I want you to believe that God can do for you that lovely verse which says, unto him who's able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think. It's one of my favorite verses in Ephesians chapter three where the Holy Spirit says through Paul, Ephesians 3.20, beautiful verse.

Now to him, let's conclude with this, Ephesians 3.20. Now to him, God the Father, who's able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask. You ask to be a good father. God's able to do far more than you ask or even think according to the power of the Holy Spirit that will work within you for his glory in Christ Jesus forever and ever.

So take those closing words in Ephesians 3.20 and 21 and say, Lord, I believe it's gonna be true in my life in the days to come. I believe I will be a completely different father from today to my children. And the result is gonna be seen in my children in the days and in the years to come.

The times of ignorance, God overlooks. Have you failed? Acts 17.30, God overlooks. Now he commands you to repent.

Repent means turn around and say, Lord, I wanna be the type of father you want me to be. And I believe God will help you. I want you to bow your heads with me now for prayer as we pray for ourselves, fathers.

And you dear sisters, pray for your husband that they'll be good fathers and that you'll be a good wife and a good mother to support your husband as I pray for them. Heavenly Father, I pray for all of us who are fathers. Please help us to be the type of fathers towards our children.

Restore our hearts to our children. Knit our hearts to our children's hearts and our children's hearts to ours so that we can raise up another generation that will live for you and glorify you. And that when they get married and have children, they will raise up a third generation which will also live for you and glorify you.

Lord, this is our heart's desire and we say to you in Jesus' name, we are willing to pay any price for it. Yes, Lord, we are willing to pay any price. We want to raise up another generation and a third generation that will glorify God on this sin-cursed earth, that will be a light shining for you, that will glorify you and confound the powers of darkness where our children will be like arrows to be fired at the devil.

Thank you, Father, that you hear us as we pray and you do exceeding abundantly beyond what we ask or think because we pray in the name and for the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. Thank you, brothers.

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