

Father's Day Message  
Matthew 5:48, Ephesians 5:1, 6:4, Colossians 3:21  
June 18, 2023  
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There is something fascinating about fatherhood.

One author called fatherhood mysterious. Years ago, a friend recommended a great book by Kent Hughes who wrote the book "Disciplines of a Godly Man". Kent quotes author Lance Morrow about fatherhood this way.

*"From time to time I have felt for my father a longing that was almost physical, something passionate, something infantile, profound... It is mysterious what it is I wanted from my father. I have seen this longing in other men – and now see it in my own sons, their longing for me. I think I have glimpsed it once or twice in my father's feelings about his father. Perhaps it is the urge of Telemachus, the residual infant in the man wistful for the father heroic protection. One seeks to return not to the womb..but to a different thing, father's sponsorship in the world. A boy wants the aura and the armament of his father. It is a deep yearning, but sometimes a little sad – a common enough masculine trait that is also vaguely unmanly". – Lance Morrow*

I realize that not everyone is a father in a physical sense. Some men are called to singleness for the glory of God. But God calls men to spiritual fatherhood too. You see the life of Paul. He calls Timothy and Titus his beloved children in the faith.

A recent survey said that fatherlessness and collapsed marriages are a huge problem in America. Sadly, some fathers have abandoned their families for their own desires. Some fathers have been abusive. Some fathers struggle for many different reasons – personalities, family backgrounds and what have you.

Some children have grown up without a father in the home. Some children cannot celebrate Father's Day today. I personally know some who have lost their father a few months ago. I also know fathers who have done tremendous sacrifices for their families. And there are fathers who have even burned at the stake for the sake of upholding God's truth. John Rogers was one such man. He was burned in front of his wife and ten children in 1555 under Queen Mary. That is a courageous and noble father.

I believe the father is the man who God has called to lead the family. The Bible has a lot to say about fathers but for our time today, I want to share three areas that a Christian father ought to be and lead.

### 1. *Imitate Christ.*

Just as God has called mothers are to be the chief nurturers in the home, God has called fathers to be chief imitators of Christ at home. God has given the mother a unique capacity to nurture the father does not have. While both can nurture, God calls the father the leader in imitating Christ. Now, imitating Christ is not exclusive to fathers only but all disciples of Jesus are to imitate Christ. As we go through the Sermon on the Mount, in the last verse of Matthew chapter five, our Lord commands his disciples to be *perfect*. Verse forty-eight “*You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect*”. Another translation says “you must be *complete* or *whole* or *blameless* like your heavenly Father”. Some say this is the most *important* verse in the Sermon on the Mount. Martyn-Lloyd Jones says in his *Studies on the Sermon on the Mount* that you are special if God is your Father. If God has put his divine nature in you through the Holy Spirit, you must be *different*. Now, no one is perfect *by* themselves and *in* themselves. So how are you to be *perfect*? *Three* ways – First, you have been made *whole* or *perfect* in Christ. You know what Jesus said before he gave up his spirit. He said, “*It is finished*” (John 19:30). This is the same word Jesus uses in Matthew chapter five. You made been made perfect in Christ. Meaning you are forgiven and made righteous in Christ alone. Second, you are being *perfected* in Christ as you *imitate* Christ. The Apostle Paul writing to the Ephesians instructs the church this way in chapter five verse one – “*Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children*”. Imitation of Christ is both caught and taught at the home.

If I remember one thing vividly etched into my memory growing up, it is seeing my dad praying every morning. He would go away into another area of the house to pray. Fathers, you must be men of prayer. Not fast-food type prayer but intentional pleading with the Lord. It is said that Martin Luther prayed a couple of hours every day. No wonder he was called a very bold man when he opposed the Catholic church in his day. The prime example of prayer is our Lord Jesus Christ himself. Early in the morning while it was still dark, Jesus withdrew himself to pray. Men, who do you want to transact with first thing in the morning? A lot of things demand your attention. Family, business, school, kids and what have you. Jesus disciplined himself to commune with his Father. So must we. Thirdly, you will made perfect when you get to heaven and receive a resurrected body.

### 2. *Encourage in Christ.*

Fathers are to be the CEO’s of the home. By CEO, I mean the Chief Encouragement Officer not the domineering executive tyrant at home.

Here is why this is so crucial for a home.

A recent report made this statement about the crisis in America about fatherlessness - "*I think it shouldn't surprise us that when the human analog of marriage and the family breaks down, it's a lot harder for a young person to understand that there's a Father in Heaven*".

Paul specifically addresses Christian fathers in his letter to the Ephesian church.

The *first* thing Paul tells fathers is something they are *not* to do.

Fathers do not provoke do not exasperate your children. Another way to translate this verse is to say fathers are not to needlessly inflame their children. A parallel version of this instruction is in Colossians 3:21. Paul says "*Fathers, do not antagonize your children, so that they will not become discouraged.*"

The idea here is to not be overly critical of them so that they become discouraged and lose their spirit. Paul Tripp who has helped thousands of parents says that a parent is vehicle of grace at home. He says "*If you see failure and brokenness in your child fifty times a day, it reveals grace*".

### 3. *Instruct in Christ.*

So the father is to be chief imitator of Christ at home, the chief encourager at home. And the third thing the father is to be is the chief instructor at the home.

Paul writes to the Ephesian church telling fathers not to discourage but instead to *nourish* and *train*. One is not to be overly harsh or overly strict. That's from a negative standpoint. But from a positive standpoint, the father is not to completely ignore or be derelict. In our culture we see many sad stories of young children so confused about their identity. Of course, children will be confused. And the parents affirming their confusion only aggravates their confusion.

One author said raising children is holding a wet bar of soap. You hold it too firm and it ejects from your hand, you hold it too loose, it slips away.

Let's see the positive side of the Paul's instruction.

*"Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord"*. Ephesians 6:4

You see *three* specific words or phrases in the latter part of this verse.

- The first phrase is "*bring them up*".

This means to nourish them and feed them. Another translator says that fathers are to "*kindly cherish*". It is not unmanly to be affectionate to your children even when they are adults. In the culture I grew up, it was not customary to hug or kiss adult sons. So a handshake would be a sign of affection but I have heard of grown men giving their adult sons a kiss. Paul instructs at least three churches to greet one another with a holy kiss.

(Romans 16:16, 1 Corinthians 16:20, 2 Corinthians 13:12, 1 Thessalonians 5:26). The idea is to tenderness and love in relationship. The idea is to raise them in a way that is profitable for their future.

- The second word is *discipline*.

This is rather a strong word Paul uses in the original language. It means to train even if punishment is necessary. In our day and age, any kind of discipline is frowned upon but in Proverbs 22:6, we see words of wisdom. *“Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it”*. Verse fifteen – *“Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; The rod of discipline will remove it far from him”*. Proverbs 29:15 – *“The rod and a rebuke give wisdom, But a child who gets his own way brings shame to his mother”*. Now, great discretion and care is needed in discipline. Paul Tripp again is helpful. He says, *“to exercise authority in angry ways is a distortion of ways of God”*. Excessive anger and harshness must be avoided. It’s one thing to be over-strict but it’s another thing to not discipline at all. Both are to be avoided.

- The third word is *instruction*.

This means to give verbal warning. The word literally means to *“place before the mind”*. To restrain. To rebuke. To confront. How many sons and daughters have taken the highway to destruction when the father has not done what needs to be done. Allow me to share two illustrations:

- i. Eli was a priest of God. His sons were cutting in line, disrespecting, stealing and committing adultery. Eli warns his sons but fails to restrain them. And it cost Eli and his sons dearly. No father wants to see the life of his son or daughter wrecked. Moses instructs ancient Israel this way *“You shall teach them to your children, talking of them when you are sitting in your house, and when you are walking by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise”* Deuteronomy 11:19
- ii. King David is known as the greatest king of Israel. But as king he failed to exercise discretion and failed to restrain his son. His son Amnon violates his sister and what does David do? Nothing. And in doing nothing, you see the tragic outcome. Another son Absalom kills the brother and turns against the father. However, David learns from his mistakes. Before he dies, David instructs his Solomon to be careful and to be strong. (1 Chronicles 28:10).

Fathers, be imitators of Christ, be motivators, be instructors in Christ.

Sadly, in our society today, we have many sons and daughters who have never experienced the *affection*, *encouragement* and *instruction* of a father. So what do they do? They look to distorted and slanted affections in all the wrong places.

Fathers, you have been given the power to be a positive influence not just seeing children grow up but until you die.

Be an ambassador of Jesus Christ as a parent – represent the message, the methods and character of Jesus Christ. - Paul Tripp

----- Discipleship Questions-----

MESSAGE SUMMARY: Father's Day. Matthew 5:48, Ephesians 5:1, 6:4, Colossians 3:21

HEAD: These questions help you examine the truth of God's Word.

1. Go around and share some attributes of your Heavenly Father? Which of these should you imitate as an earthly father or as a disciple of Jesus Christ?

HEART: These questions help you wrestle with what you believe.

2. In what ways should you practice the Father's qualities in your life and in those in your care? Go around and share?
3. What is God convicting you of and to believe in light of this message?

HANDS/HABITS: These questions help you bring the truth into your everyday life and develop behaviors that change your habits.

1. For personal reflection: How did the priest Eli and king David fail in relation to their sons? What can we learn and how can we do better? 1 Samuel 2:12-17, 22-25, 3:11-13, 2 Samuel 13:21-22