

Message Title: Father's Day 2010

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(Drama) Mini Van Family

Wasn't that a great drama? Dads – can you relate? I think all of us parents can. Well, good morning and happy Father's Day to you dads here. As we think about fathers and fatherhood this weekend here's a few things that you will never hear dads say. Well, how about that. I'm lost. Looks like we're going to have to stop and ask for directions. Not going to happen. How about this. You know, pumpkin, you're thirteen now. I think it's time you go on un-chaperoned dates. Won't that be fun? Not going to happen. No. How about, hey son, mom and I are going away for the weekend. Why don't you plan on having a party while we're gone? That's probably not likely to happen either. Well, how about this. Father's Day, it's no big deal. Don't worry about it. Well, that's not true either, is it? It is a big deal. Remember, us fathers gave up that red convertible mustang for the fuchsia minivan. That is a huge deal. In fact, I do think if we realize in advance all of the decisions as fathers and parents that we had to make children would be at great risk of becoming extinct. But, today is Father's Day weekend. It's a time when we have a chance to remember our fathers and honor our fathers. There's no program notes at all. The questions are going to come up on the screen as we work our way through this material together.

The first question is – Father's Day was created by Hallmark to sell cards, true or false. Well, that would be false. I do think it possible might have been created by the phone company, however because it is a fact that the most collect phone calls occur on Father's Day than any other day of the year. But, I'm not complaining. Father's Day is a good thing. It's much easier to get into a restaurant on Father's Day than it is on Mother's Day because us guys are at home barbecuing, right? We're not going to the restaurant. We do get treated special. We get gifts too although spending on Father's Day is six billion dollars less than it is on Mother's Day but there is something that is bought for us. Never the less, Father's Day is a good thing. It's a day to celebrate and honor and remember our fathers. I realize that not all of us are fathers but certainly all of us have had or have a father and the Ten Commandments commanded us to honor our fathers. In fact, in Exodus where we see one recording of the Ten Commandments it says honor your father and mother that your days may be long in the land and that the Lord your God is giving you. In fact, in the New Testament Paul restated or reiterated this as he was writing to the new church in Ephesus. In Ephesians 6:1 he begins with, children, obey your parents in the Lord for this is right. You know, that's one of my favorite verses I had my kids memorize as children. But it goes on and it says, honor your father and mother. This is the first commandment with a promise that it may go well with you and that you may live a long life in the land.

Now, notice what this scripture does not say. It does not say to honor only perfect fathers and perfect mothers. God is very aware of the frailties and short-comings of all mankind; of our earthly fathers and earthly mothers. Scripture teaches us that all of us have sinned;

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that all of us fall short of the glory. And so our fathers have fallen short as well. They have sinned and they are not perfect. They are imperfect. You didn't have or don't have a perfect father and neither did I. But, we also need to remember that our imperfect fathers didn't have perfect children either. That would be you and me. We are imperfect as well. So, in spite of that God's commandment still says to honor our fathers in spite of their shortcomings and in spite of our shortcomings. The text says that there is an honor that is due our parents. They gave us life. They protected us when we were young. They may have messed up but there is something along the way that deserves honor and God's commandment tells us to honor them.

Now, Garry Smalley and John Trent wrote a book a few years ago titled *The Gift of Honor* and in that book they wrote honor is a decision that we make to place high value, worth and importance on another person by viewing him as a priceless gift and granting him a position in our lives; a position worthy of great respect and love, and that's a capital L as the authors are writing this, Love involves putting that decision into action. The Holy Spirit that's in our hearts as believers, as Christ followers, that love of God compels us to honor our parents. So, how do we go about doing this? How do we go about honoring our fathers?

Well, there are a number of ways to do this, no doubt. But the wisdom writing of scripture, the book of Proverbs in particular offers a number of very practical suggestions in how to honor our parents. One way is that it honors our parents to listen carefully to their counsel. And that's true irrespective of age, from the littlest ones to the adolescents, to the older children to even as adults as we listen to the counsel of our parents it brings them honor.

As some of you know we have a couple of grandkids that are living with us now and a great-grandchild – a little sixteen month old and just recently we were realizing that the most often heard words in our household in the last few months have been no Blake because he's always getting into things as toddlers tend to do and yet when he responds to that no obviously it brings honor and pleasure to both mom as well as to grandma and grandpa as well when that happens. Certainly we know that that's true as parents. We know that's true when we see our adolescents or teenagers as they respond and follow our counsel and listen carefully to that; that that brings us joy; that that brings us honor. But that's also true as we are adults and we listen to our parents.

Well, it also honors our parents to see our children acting wisely. When our parents see us making wise choices, that brings them honor also. Very practical suggestions.

Another way to honor them is to share good news with our parents. In Proverbs 15:30 we can see that it brings health to their bones. And I recall over the past hearing, when I'd

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have conversations with my dad or my mom over the past that I would share things with them and then later on I would have conversations with my brother or my sister and they would tell me how proud mom and dad were of things that they had heard going on in my life and then they would be sharing with me things that were going on in my brothers' and sisters' lives as well. So, they were proud of the things that were going on. It brought honor to my parents as I shared with them things that would bring them pleasure; things were going on in my life.

And of course, praising our parents brings light to our lives but as we speak bad of them or ill of them that's snuffs out our life and the brightness and the vitality of our life also.

Well, Smalley and Trent continue in their book and they write, many of us do not realize that when we dishonor our parents or our fathers in this case, we not only hurt them but we also rob ourselves of a sense of value and we fail to pass down value and acceptance to our own children. Not only that, but we give our children a model and an excuse for dishonoring us and repeating a negative cycle generation after generation. Now, you may have all kinds of reasons or excuses for not honoring your parents or your father and some of them might even have merit but God's Word, God's commandment instructs us to honor our father. It will bless our father. It will bless us and it will also bless our children as well.

Well, let's continue with this true/false quiz. Question number two – fathering skills just come naturally. Just make a few babies and all will be well. True or false? Yes, that would be false also. You know, fathering skills do not come naturally and sometimes if we would follow our intuition that would become down right disastrous. I mean, in many cases if we had an imperfect father and we saw that modeled that might be our intuition or inclination to follow that model as well. So, as a general rule the best dads are the ones that admit that they don't know it all and they embark on trying to be a better father, to be the best dad that they can be. They become students of parenting. They read about parenting. They ask other dads and get input in decisions so that they can become the best dad and continue to improve. So, I encourage each of us, each of you to read books about being a parent, being a grandparent as well. You can get books at the library that can help. You can get them on CD so that you can listen to them while you're driving around in your minivan. You can make it easy for you to get that input. There's great radio programs like Focus on the Family that you can either listen to or you can download a podcast and listen to it. And if you don't know how to download a podcast just ask your kids and they can explain that to you as well. Or ask other dads or in recent months with a teenage grandson living with us I've asked Pastor Jesse and Allison, our Senior and Jr. High leaders for some input on just some ideas as we're raising our grandchildren and having input into their life and getting ideas.

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Like all of us experience, my parents weren't perfect so I tried to study as I became a new dad and learned where I could improve on that. And yet, we all make our own mistakes and I've made my own mistakes and now my children are trying to make better there. So, they're studying to be the best parents that they can be.

Question number three – fathers play a more important role in the lives of their sons than they do in the lives of their daughters – true or false? Well, this is really kind of a trick question but my perception is biased here. God gave me two daughters, Tara and Lisa. I'm very thankful for them and they still bring me joy. Dr. James Dobson, the founder of Focus on the Family writes in his website. He says, fathers have an incalculable impact on their daughters. Most psychologists believe, and I am one of them, that all future romantic relationships to occur in a girls life will be influenced positively or negatively by the way she perceives and interacts with her dad. If he rejects and ignores her she will spend her life trying to replace him in her heart. If he is warm and nurturing she will look for a lover to equal him. If he thinks she is beautiful, worthy and feminine she will be inclined to see herself that way also. But if he thinks she is unattractive and uninteresting she is likely to carry self-esteem problems into her adult years.

Dr. Dobson continues. He says, I have also observed that a woman's respect for her husband is significantly influenced by the way she is perceived by her father. If he was overbearing, uncaring and capricious during her developmental years she may disrespect her husband and question his judgment. But if dad blended love and leadership in a way that conveyed strength she will be more likely to live harmoniously with her husband. Now, none of these tendencies or trends are absolute of course. Individual differences can always produce exceptions and contradictions. But, this statement is hard to refute. A good father will live his imprint on his daughter for the rest of her life.

Now, of course the same can be said for fathers and sons. Fathers play a very significant role in the lives of their sons, teaching their boys that there's more to masculinity than just bravado or drinking beer and doing things like that. If a dad and his son can develop hobbies together and other common interests the rebellious years can pass in often relative tranquility and these common interests, these common bonds can be with them for a lifetime. So, obviously this is a trick question. Dads have a massive impact on both sons and daughters. Fathers we need to engage in the raising of both.

Question number four – stepfathers have a less impact than biological fathers, true or false? Well, you know which male has the greatest impact on the children while they're growing up? It's the male who is there whether that's a stepfather, a biological father or someone else. It's the male who engages with the children that has the impact with them. It's the one who listens and loves them. That could be a stepfather. It could be the biological father. It can be a grandfather. It can be a coach. It could be a youth pastor. It

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could be in any one of us as well. Don't underestimate your opportunities to significantly impact the children in your life. The key to having that impact to having positive influence, life-lasting influence on a young person is engagement. It's listening to them, something us guys aren't usually too good at. We have to work at it. It's doing things together with them and it's being there with them.

Question number five – a father's attitude towards morality, work, play and money have a lifelong effect on a child, true or false? Well, that's true also. It's not just conversations and teachings but it's a father's attitudes and behaviors. It's what we do and how we do it. Our attitudes have an effect on us, on our children and our father's do on us for much longer than we might imagine. Now, I could tell you that I've read research on this and learned about this but just stop and think for a moment. As parents we take it very seriously who are children associate with. We know that their friends influence them. We influence our children also so we need to take it very seriously how we are influencing them. When we display constructive attitudes about work, about play, about morality and money those things get caught as well. But, it's a two edged sword. It goes the other way as well. When we demonstrate attitudes that are negative they get picked up by the kids as well.

Question number six – if a father raises children consistent with the teaching of scripture all will be well, true or false? The bible teaches that if a father raises his children according to scripture and models the character of Christ the likelihood of the kids turning out well goes up significantly. Proverbs 22:6 says train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it. That's a principle but not a promise. There's nothing that's a one-hundred percent sure deal. It's not a guarantee, why? Because our sons and our daughters are autonomous beings. They have the ability to make choices. They have the ability to enter into what the bible refers to as folly – to make stupid choices. These foolish adventures, these stupid choices that happen, as parents sometimes we can see, well, it's just the kid trying to step out and exert his or her independence or it might be the influences that other kids have upon our child or it might be the influence that our kids are trying to demonstrate or impress other children as well. Or, it may just be stupid. We do stupid things. We do stupid things as adults as well. We all have stories of folly that we could tell and share but we won't go into all of those today while we're here because that could take all day long. But we realize this – that our children, in fact are susceptible to making error, zig-zagging and to have times of folly. So, what do we do? Well, we provide spiritual training and we model for them to improve those chances of success.

Here at Crossroads we attempt to support you in that training aspect from the youngest ages all the way through for your children. We have classes in preschool and elementary and middle school, in Jr. High and in Sr. High and we encourage you to have your

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children available in those. And we also encourage to model as well. Psalm 122:1 says I rejoiced with those who said to me let us go to the house of the Lord. Model coming to church regularly as a family. I have to tell you that this is an area that has increasingly bugged me because I know that in our society that there have become more and more and more activities that compete with a family getting to church together and ultimately it's the fathers' choice to lead the family spiritually and to model that for his family as well. So, I encourage you dads that are here and I encourage you to continue to be here to make it a priority to have your family here. Our kids are watching. You know, the old saying that you may have heard or you may even have said before – do what I say not what I do. That is not a healthy practice for parenting. Our children, in fact, are listening sometimes but they're watching all of the time and they can see if Christ is in fact number one in our lives. So, we need to model for them that He is number one in our lives; He's number one in our relationships and He's number one in our households. So, we train them, we model for them and thirdly we pray for our children as well. We pray for our kids and for their safety and for their protection as they zig-zag and do stupid things.

Question number seven – dads who make an investment in their marriage are simultaneously making a positive investment in their children. True or false? Well that's true. When children see a playful, romantic side of their parents, even though they might act all grossed out about it, that kind of interaction makes them feel a little more secure. It models something very important to your son and your daughter, dad, every time that they see you kiss your wife or do some other investment in that relationship. It builds into their hearts security and know that there is a loving father there. It's something good.

Question number eight – a fathers' provision for his children is more important than his affection. True or false? Well, they both are important. Provision is certainly very important and the scriptures that it's a fathers responsibility to be a bread winner, to bring home, to work hard and to do everything that he can to provide for his family. But the bible also exhorts fathers to pour out love and affection for their sons and their daughters. You know, if I had to rank order the priority of the two, provision and affection I'd put affection first all day long. The power of a father's affection is just unbelievable. Ask any kid what he would rather to have and kids hearts are starved for affection, whatever their age. And dad, it's never too late to improve on your ability to take a little risk and try to convey your love and affection to your kids and your grandkids. They'll eat it up. Give them a huge, give them a kiss. If they're teenage guys, maybe on the cheek but give them a kiss and tell them that you love them.

You know, my parents came from a generation that was very emotionally reserved and did not express openly their love. They didn't say that they loved me. Now, I knew that they loved me but I have to tell you that it was very precious in my dad's last weeks of life when he responded to me and said love you. We remember those things, all of us no

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matter what our age, from young children to adults we desire our fathers to love us and to express that. So, dads – if that's not something that normal or natural or comfortable for you change it. Start practicing it. Tell your children and your grandchildren that you love them.

Question number eight – wounds from a father can never be overcome, true or false? Well, that's false. In 2 Corinthians 5:17 Paul writes and he says, therefore if anyone is in Christ he is a new creation. The old has gone, the new has come. As we become Christ followers we spiritually become new creations in Christ. Just like caterpillars transforming into butterflies we become brand new and our heavenly father who transforms our hearts and makes it new is greater than the wounding power of our earthly father. So, Christ followers – you are a new creation in Christ. That healing power of our heavenly Father is in your heart, made you a new man, a new woman and now as you raise your kids you can pass on that new hope and that new love for your children.

Now, in some cases it's a real tough thing and you may need to seek out some additional assistance here. Don't hesitate to contact a Christian counselor or bring this up as an item for prayer and support in your Small Group to ask for assistance to get healing in your life in this area.

Question number ten, our last question – as children reach adulthood the father's affection and approval are no longer critical, true or false? Well, yes, that's false. You might be familiar with a quote from Mark Twain when he wrote when I was a boy of fourteen my father was so ignorant I could hardly stand to have the old man around but when I got to be twenty-one I was astonished at how much he had learned in seven years. Well, you know, I am thankful that I've gotten smarter in my daughter's eyes as well over the years.

You know, we don't stop being dads at some point. As our children reach adulthood we have the opportunity to invest in the spiritual legacy of our children and our grandchildren. It's rewarding to have that opportunity and influence and really, especially rewarding when it's appreciated.

So, we need to have the wisdom. That's really the secret. The wisdom is how do we pass that on? How do we continue to give that counsel? And generally as our children are adults we give that counsel when it's asked for, not when it's not asked for.

Well, we began with a humorous skit this morning. And fatherhood certainly has it's humorous moments and joy. It's joy particularly for new fathers like Pastor Jesse who is a new father and this is his very first Father's Day that he'll be celebrating. But it's not happy for everyone. Some of you, like myself may have lost your father in the last weeks or the last year so it's not quite as happy but I encourage each one of us to remember and honor your father this day and to strive to be the best father that you can be.

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Now, let me conclude with an illustration. I heard this illustration a few years ago and it uses the pentathlon – an Olympic event and I think it can apply to fatherhood as well. The pentathlon is an event that combines five diverse events into an overall event and the person that scores the best total score wins the gold medal. These five different events require different skills, different abilities. They're not complimentary at all. There is fencing. There is swimming. There is horseback riding, shooting and running – five different events and to win that gold medal you have to have the best overall score. You can't just bomb on any one thing and win. And medal winning dads do well in many events also. They may not be the best in any one of them but they strive to improve and do well in all of them. They strive to provide for their families, they love their spouses and their children, they lead their families spiritually and many, many, many other things. They might even clean the bathroom sometimes and on Father's Day we get to man the barbeque guys.

I'm going to pray and we're going to have a special song before we are dismissed this morning. It is a beautiful song called How Deep is the Father's Love. It will give an opportunity to reflect on God's love for us and reflect on how we can honor our fathers.