

Announcements: Day at the lake; all parents of THIRST to Demeyer

PPT Israel!

Intro

It is my last time up here, so I did think a bit on what the Lord would have me share this morning. This whole theme that Jason's been talking about in our study in 1 Corinthians has been about submitting our desires to Christ, and using whatever situation we are in as a platform for the outworking of the gospel in our lives. The context has been various forms of marriage relationships. But, I want to use that same theme in a different relationship. It's one that I love dearly, that I would gladly dedicate my last speaking opportunity. The relationship we'll look at is that of a father to his children, and children to their father. This is a *very* special relationship, one with huge potential for joy, but huge potential for hurt.

This relationship is like a megaphone for the gospel. It's built-in with huge difficulty and huge reward. At least with marriage you can say you had some choice in choosing the relationship (even if you start to double guess yourself), but in this one you don't get any choice, and it's cemented for life in the blood that runs through both of your veins. There's a lot of people you'll never see again, but the relationship between a child and a father always trickles in the background. If any of us (child or father) think, "I just have to make it to 18..." there's a surprise waiting – it keeps going for 50 more years.

- 1) Young men, teenagers, I know you're miles away from this, but I'd love for you to perk up your ears and I just want to ask you to pray a simple prayer at this age, "Lord would you be pleased to start preparing certain aspects of me right now should you call me someday into that role?"
- 2) Fathers in the thick of it right now who are pursuing the Lord, trying their best, and your first thought is great – he's going to wail on me! This is a motivational message of encouragement, but I would ask that God stir one small action as a result. I've been encouraged by many of you, and that's what I want to do today. There might be someone who needs to make a major course correction because the path you're currently on is going to backfire. But for the most part, my only hopes would be a single little nudge of encouragement.
- 3) Father's that are beyond me, I'm not there yet and wouldn't dare think I had anything profound to say, but I would only suggest this: your job is not done yet. I'm your 30 year old daughter, your 40 year old son - I need you in my life. I might not even admit it, but the truth is that I absolutely need you. I'm in a career now and busy, I'm married now and my interests are divided and full, I have kids now... but we still have a role in each other's life. Nothing speaks to my heart louder than giving my kids some of your personal time. And BTW, let's still do something together every once in a while.
- 4) But there's one more group here – children (and I'm not talking about an age here). There's a two-way responsibility, and as best as it depends on you, are you making that easy and enjoyable?

Let's just state the problem as soon as possible. It's inevitable, we are bound to hurt each other, bound beyond a shadow of a doubt to be disappointed in something, and scars will start to form in what once was the softest little heart of love. But I have a redeemed version that is possible, that magnifies the name of Jesus, and they are built on two pillars called humility and forgiveness. **Pray**

What's that one thing you would save out of your burning house? Once all the humans escape in tattered clothes, what is that one thing you would want to run back in and grab before the "beams of that Victorian house" come crashing down. For me it's this box! **[Prop]** Everything can be replaced except for what's in this cardboard box.

This box reminds me of a day when I was the most important thing in the world! There was a day (which just seems like a fleeting glimpse now), when I was *actually* the smartest guy in the world, I was *actually* the strongest guy in the world, and I could climb any mountain and carry everyone's gear, and save the family from any danger (like a mean squirrel in camp). I use to have this power - I could *actually* light up faces and get bodies running full speed, just by pulling in the driveway, "Daddy's home!" ...Those days are gone! ☹️

But that's ok, it has to change! And it would be a delusional lie if the reality didn't set in that dad's actually pretty average. He's not that big, he's only 5'11" (in fact he's smaller than Wyatt in 10th grade), and now that we're all watching THOR, he's not nearly as strong as Chris Hemsworth, and (as it turns out again) he can't do anything cool or even come close to anything you can watch on a Redbull commercial. I use to show off by doing a wheelie on a mountain bike, when they were on training wheels, until I was eclipsed by Danny MacKaskil's mountain bike backflip off a roof onto a railroad track, spread between two rocks over a cliff with rocks below! I don't stand a chance. I'll just go outside! But that's ok too! It has to be that way, because that's reality. But I can be in the crowd when you cross that finish line and you meet my shining eyes. And I can say I love you and mean it!

But there's a deep problem, and no one can escape unscathed. Human failures, disappointments, tongue lashings, arguments, and differing opinions, failed children, failed fathers, will across the board (in every one of these relationships), leave wounds and scars. Some will leave terribly disfiguring scars. Others might be smaller and lighter, but in either case, no one can escape it. Fathers we will all in some ways wound our own children. And, those wounds because of the way God has set up this nurturing relationship could leave some big scars that hang on for a long time. Sometimes they stay open wounds. But children will also return the deed and leave wounds and scars that will be shouldered and carried by the parents, for years, decades, or an entire life!

The reason that I'm so excited about this message is because I truly believe, and I know from experience, that there is a redemption story that is available to this sin-plagued story. **Eph 6:1-4**

Fathers

Of all the things the Bible could say to fathers, it only says this – what an interesting choice!

The number one "sin" that surfaces in our family – would undoubtedly be anger. There's too many competing motives and un-surrendered desires. Do I even need to illustrate it? Anger shows up everywhere, even on a birthday and on the way to church. I find anger in my own heart, it's in my wife's heart, and it's all too obvious in our children's heart. It's not there all the time, but it flares at any moment, and it seems there are some days when the battle is actually lost!

Notice the singling out of fathers in this respect. In verse 1, "Children obey your parents, and honor your father and your mother!" They both serve in roles of authority and direction, and love and nurturing. Why isn't the combined subject continued in vs 4? Paul singles out the fathers. Is it because mothers would never provoke the children – no! It's because even though the man and woman are

working together, laboring side by side in parenting, inherent in God's structure is a leadership structure that He places on the man. And this structure is very important because it's an image that represents a heavenly reality. **V.23 "The husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church..."** And when he loves her and serves her, he is picturing in life form what Jesus is doing spiritually in the church. In the train of the passage, v.25, "Husbands love and guide your wives, and fathers, continue in that headship by leading in the child upbringing!" We might be tempted to think that he leads the wife and she leads the children, but his leadership extends to the upbringing of the children.

Men, we don't have the sole job, but we do have a leadership role. In our family Michelle has by far more time with the kids than I do, but if my family is out of control, or the relationships in the home are out of balance, then accept responsibility Christ would have to lead in a proper correction. That's scary! I'd much prefer to put the pressure on her and say, "get the kids in order!" But that's not the way I see God has set it up. In fact, that's a qualification of being an elder? 1 Tim 3:4-5 "He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, 5 for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church?" [and BTW, I'll just admit that I don't totally know how to do this, and I need desperate help! Hopefully that's a little comforting for you as well.]

Lead your children steadily over time

One of the first inconsistencies is to be totally out of the picture, and then blow in like a nuclear bomb in the heat of a crisis! I'm sympathetic to your plight. It's hard to be gone all day and then come home and face a ton of problems. So often the man starts to check out, or turn his attention. It's so easy to do, let someone else figure it out. The more he's out of the picture the more marginalized he becomes in the discussion, and before you even know it he's just a spectator with the power of a nuclear bomb. That's exasperating.

Take responsibility

Just recognizing that God has called us men to lead our families is the first step. That means get out in front let's work together with our wives. We can sub out tasks to teachers, coaches, leaders, but does the father ever rise to the occasion? I'll use a single illustration. If you see your daughter wearing a skirt that's too short, or some type of revealing top, God has given you a voice to lead in that discussion. I chose that illustration because it's easy to think, "I guess if mom's ok with it, what can I say? They buy the clothes." But, here's the rub. It's easier to grunt, "don't wear that" with power, then to discuss it with mom, then talk through a plan? Tiny little adjustment, huge difference in outcome.

Let's alleviate some pressure. Taking responsibility doesn't mean the sins and struggles of our kids are on us or are our fault. They are fully responsible for their own actions. It's being attuned to family dynamics, it's seeking solutions and helpful answers to problems. That's leading. Often the woman feels alone. One action item is simply the question, "can we talk about the kids?" I'll speak to myself first as this is not my first inclination.

Be around

The art of fatherhood can't be done in absentia! Have you noticed the built in tension that exists between the need to produce money, and the need to be at home. They are linear and grow proportionally. As the toddler years give way to the teenage years, there is an equal transition from

entry-level wage-earning years, to the pressures of career advancement. This is a balance that every man will have to look at closely and weigh the cost - knowing that the answer is never one or the other. It's bringing work pressure and homelife into balance... we need to be home. Sadly, as the pressure grows, some of us fall off the family wagon... I am personally saddened for kids whose dads don't give their time.

1) Take responsibility, 2) be around, and remember that slow and steady is more effective than hot and heavy. It's a long haul, and there's no quick shortcut.

Work on your own anger

"Fathers do not provoke your children to anger..." Let's take a step back. I'm going to take a wild stab and say, probably the hardest thing to control as a parent, as a father – is personal anger! Why? Because two wills are colliding. Unmet expectations and disappointments are experienced so many times. It's really hard to not flare up the 100th time you ask someone to pick up their stuff. What about 101? Last week we were in the car, it was 9:30am [I usually get to church much earlier, but Michelle was out of town and I was watching the kids] and I like to get here on time... and I just blew up. I was so sick of the bickering and we marched back up inside for a 25 minute talk where the situation needed to be talked about, and I needed to apologize. That discussion was the most important thing. I needed to apologize to both my sons. I responded so harshly, I was wrong! I feel like they were wrong, but at least I owned up to my side. The story is not about perfect success, but Jesus breaking me, breaking you, shaping me, shaping you. That's our redemption story.

Let's read 4:31, "**Fathers** Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice." We set the example in the home.

Leverage your power cautiously in tough situations

I already mentioned how easy it is for us to come in with too much force. This works for a very short time in the early years, but if it doesn't change over time, with discussions of increasing maturity (including increasing levels of give and take) – it's a guaranteed backfire. What provokes anger in children? The colossal smashing of wills. And this we can't escape it. I've already heard it, "I guess I just see it differently than you do." That probably makes me the saddest. It's not about being right, I really do want what's best.

The shaping of hearts, the disappointments and failures are all part and parcel of the journey the Lord needs to take us on. It's all part of the process, and it will blow up with the use of excessive power. Every once in a while I think the right answer is, "because I said so... and you need to obey your parents... (go in your room and memorize Eph 6:1)." But for the rest of the time, that will provoke our children to anger. Power will soon lose its effectiveness, and it will frustrate, and it will drive a wedge, and stir up resentment. Learn to read the eyes. There is a saturation point.

Strive for consistency

I actually think this is the number one provoker of anger. I'm guilty, but I try hard more than anything not to be. There's nothing more unfair than letting something slide two, three, four times, and then coming down hard. It's lazy, it's a poor example, and it's frustrating. **Example [Is it or is it not a big deal to make your bed? Is it or is it not important to be home on time? I always wear this or watch this... why now?]** Back peddling is hard!

Inconsistency between siblings? I can't help but see this in the story of Joseph. Who wouldn't be jealous that he got a fancy coat and was told to "supervise" them. I'm not changing the story, they were still wrong, there just might be a lesson for fathers. But notice it was a generational problem, as his own mother Rebekah favored him over Esau. There's a big difference between giving different kids earned privileges based on merit, trust, and maturity, and comparison or favoritism in each other's presence. There are so many way to

It's all about the heart, not winning an argument or losing face

It's easy to become embroiled in something that has no value. Suddenly the thing on the line is whether or not you can go to the dance, or have a boyfriend. That's not the issue. The issue is way down.

Unfortunately all the time is wasted trying to figure out who is going to win. And I'll be very candid that as a man, a father, the pressure of responsibility - that's a pretty tough place to be. If you lose you look weak, and out of control. What is the heart issue that's going on in this scenario?

Example – It's so hard to say, "I don't want you to watch that show or listen to that kind of music." The only way to truly have any measure of success is by saying these words, "I know you don't think those innuendos are that bad, and I know you think it's funny or neat. I'll be honest, it makes me chuckle to, but then I catch myself, that can't be right. It devalues God's word and His standards..."

Lengthen your patience continually

"Fathers do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up..." The Greek word here is *ektrephete auta*. I looked it up in my dictionary and there are two meanings of that same word. 1) It means to *nourish*, and that word is translated as such in Eph 5:29. I think it's easy for fathers to see that as the end of their job, I'm providing for you. But it also means more specifically to 2) rear and bring up. And this second use of the word is used here in our text. How often is that job relegated to the woman, but it couldn't be any more clearly used here with *to the father*! As the father brings instruction and discipline, he's doing it as a duty to his role, but there's clearly a softness of love because who would nourish someone roughly!

The hardest things to talk about as a dad are the things that actually matter. I struggle with it – it's hard! The kids get shy and want to move on to something fun. The hardest part is that it's not always an immediate reward to actually step out of our comfort zone. Our attempts might be rebuffed, the eyes might roll, the look of obvious exasperation. There needs to be a conviction that this is right, because if we're getting our strength based on results – we're done.

Men, we need to lead and at least have some discussions about sex. [I was hoping I wouldn't have to say that!]. It's hard but it's worth it! How in the world do we think we can escape it! Please just hear my voice, it's only meant to be an encouragement, not a guilt trip. I think it's necessary. I'm sitting down there listening to it.

How can we escape discussions about pornography from dad? How can we escape discussions about the perils of getting into an intimate relationship before you're ready to marry? Fathers to sons, and fathers to daughters. I want to do a better job at that! Don't miss Dennis Rainey's [Passport to Purity](#).

Don't be afraid of tough questions, "Do you believe in our Lord? Are you struggling with believing in Jesus?" Not in an accusatory way, but in an honest way, like you really want to know. AND are you ok

with the answer – I’m not sure, I’m doubting, I don’t think I do! Some of our kids are there right now! Have we tried to listen?

I read a little book a few years ago called *StickyFaith*. It gave a lot of statistics of how often HS kids “lost their faith” when they went to college. It mentioned some 40%. “Here’s another alarming statistic: only 20 percent of college students who leave the church planned to do so during high school. The remaining 80 percent intended to stick with their faith – but didn’t. As has been rightly pointed out, college is often a season of experimentation for teenagers who were raised in the church and are learning to truly own their faith. That hunch is in some ways supported by the encouraging statistic that somewhere between 30 and 60 percent of YG graduates who abandon their faith and the church return to both in their late 20s. Yet those young adults have already faced significant forks in the road regarding friendships, marriage, vocation, worldview, and lifestyle, all while their faith has been pushed to the backseat (p.15).”

I don’t care about stats, I generally doubt them anyways. The point is this. Starting at 10 years old, the mountain of discussion points and opportunities for true dialogue shoot to the moon. But at that same age, the fork in the relationship begins. We care, and we love, but we will try things that won’t work. Failures and defunct attempts are littered on the road of everyone who wants to lead on a heart-changing, Christ exalting, spirit-rejuvenating path.

So I have a solution. I said earlier that every father will wound their children, and every child will be wounded. I believe that. We’re fallen and broken, and we’re trying our best. However, Jesus provides the only thing in this world that can truly change that. He provides **the power** to *be humble and seek forgiveness, give forgiveness, and receive forgiveness!*

Lean on Jesus relentlessly

Look at Eph 6:18 Find corners, find time alone. Pray for help! Fathers we can model this leaning on Jesus. We *have* to model this! When you blow it, state it, and ask for forgiveness. That’s what we want our family to do. That doesn’t diminish anything about our leadership, our role, or our ability to be honored. All throughout the child rearing years, this has to be a pillar in the home that is striving for Jesus.

To those fathers in the second category, with kids out of the house. Don’t stop reaching out! And even now, after years, there’s still plenty of power in Jesus for heart change and healing and giving.

I know of a father who just this week (completely unrelated to this message) wrote a handwritten letter to his grown child. I asked him how long it took to write it? He said, “Forever! I thought about every word and changed all kinds of things.” Even though I didn’t personally read it I know the contents. “My child, I just want you to know that I’ve changed a lot over the past 10 years, and I imagine you have as well. Can we work on rebuilding something that has fallen to the wayside?” That’s a platform to see Jesus continually work. That letter will be read over many times I guarantee it. But, even if that effort is rebuffed, it showed humility, and it offered forgiveness. Here’s the lesson – don’t give up!

You know our heavenly father reaches out to us all the time. He’s continually extending his hand of compassion and forgiveness to us, despite the fact that we rebuff Him, and we hurt Him, and we stray from Him. “As a father shows compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear Him (PS 103:13)!”

The sister passage is found in Colossians 3:21, "Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged." You don't have to carry the responsibility of their choices and their hearts. But the Lord does ask us as believing fathers to lead in the redemption story. Don't drive them to discouragement. Instead lead them to a path of joy. Show them where true joy is found. It is only found in a living and vibrant relationship with Jesus Christ. **Read 1 Peter 1:8-9.** The opposite of discouragement is to be hopeful in something. Are we sowing seeds of hope? **Read Ps 3:3-6.** It's also powerful and full of strength and courage. Let's give the positive side of the equation instead of just the negative, "don't do this, don't do that..." Let's be chivalrous...

Fathers you have a tremendous role. I really hope that's the only thing that comes through. All this stuff was just thoughts, ideas, and suggestions. Just tune in to the Lord's quiet directives.

Children

There's every shade of parenting under the sun, but it isn't qualified, to whether they are good or not, when it says, "Honor your father and mother..." When you live in the home, that means obedience to the house rules (at every age). You don't talk to them in a way that makes them look foolish, or like they're another kid. It's submitting to the wishes and desires of your parents. Don't lie to them, don't even try to sneak or keep things away from them. As soon as you're looking over your shoulder, there's dishonor lurking around the corner. That is God's will for you.

Treating them with great respect is inviting God's favor into your life. Yes, that means asking permission to go out, asking what time they would like you to be home... doing life their way! That is super hard when your own desires start to change and you begin to think, "I'm going to do that differently!" Yes, you have that permission, and so you should! But right now, if you want to take a pulse in your life on following Jesus, you need to submit your will and desires to your parents. That is so hard, I know I struggled really hard with that as well. Make their job a joy!

When you're out of the house, it still means respect and deference.

But, at some point you will feel slighted, hurt, and wounded. And because you're a sinner you will blow it, and you just might blow it huge and plunge a dagger into your parent's heart. Humility and seeking forgiveness is the same answer going up the line as it is going down the line. When it goes both ways, the megaphone is declaring the power of Jesus, and rekindled love is the outflow.

Children, sometimes you've been the cause of more scares on your parents than you know. An unprompted request for forgiveness is the biggest gift you can give. Sometimes, children exceed their parents in spiritual maturity and knowledge. Sometimes, children, you have to make efforts that are not reciprocated and that's hard. Why do I need to make the first effort? Because God is whispering to you. To whom more is given, more is required.

Conclusion

None of this is a recipe for outcome based success. Never forget that only God controls hearts. We can't control a single person's heart besides our own, and even that one God had to do the life-changing work. There is so much built-in power in a relationship that seeks to put Jesus Christ at the center.

When accounts are kept short, and people try to talk things out, hurt will not be completely avoided, but it will slide off easier. The majority of scars, bathed in the poultice of forgiveness, will be healed completely, and even some might become the object of funny reflection. Every time true forgiveness is found it's like a fresh start.

Being a father is actually the best job in the world. It's way harder than being successful at some Redbull stunt. It has so much reward, and is so full of lessons for me. Girls when you're looking for a man, you're looking for a good father? If he's a stud, that's just an added bonus.

As we transition into communion – I want to have a time of reflection on this subject:

1. Fathers: sit for a brief moment of silence and just listen to what God might be saying
2. Children: I want to extend the same opportunity to think about these words before God