

Father's Day 2006.....Eph. 5:22-23; Eph. 6:1-4

Paul Harvey read the following on his program:

A father is a creature that is forced to endure childbirth without an anesthetic. A father growls when he feels good and laughs when scared half to death.

A father never feels worthy of the worship in a child's eyes. He's never quite the hero his daughter thinks; never quite the man his son believes him to be, and this worries him—sometimes. So he works too hard to try to smooth the rough places in the road for those of his own who will follow him.

A father gets very angry when the school grades aren't as good as he thinks they should be. So he scolds his son—though he knows it's the teacher's fault. A father gives his daughter away to another man who is not nearly good enough—so he can have grandchildren who are smarter than anybody's. A father makes bets with insurance companies about who will live the longest. One day, he loses—and the bet is paid off to those he leaves behind.

J. Oswald Chambers writes about...

Two families from the state of New York were studied very carefully. One was the Max Jukes family and the other was the Jonathan Edwards family. The thing that they discovered in this study is remarkable: like begets like.

Max Jukes was an unbelieving man and he married a woman of like character who lacked principle. And among the known descendants, over 1,200 were studied. Three hundred and ten became professional vagrants; 440 physically wrecked their lives by a debauched lifestyle; 130 were sent to the pen for an average of thirteen years each, 7 of them for murder. There were over 100 who became alcoholics; 60 became habitual thieves; 190 public prostitutes. Of the 20 who learned a trade, 10 of them learned the trade in a state prison. It cost the state about \$1,500,000 and they made no contribution whatever to society.

In about the same era the family of Jonathan Edwards came on the scene. And Jonathan Edwards, a man of God, married a woman of like character. And their family began and they became a part of this study that was made. Three

hundred became clergymen, missionaries, and theological professors; over 100 became college profs; over 100 became attorneys, 30 of them judges; 60 of them became physicians; over 60 became authors of good classics, good books; 14 became presidents of universities. There were numerous giants in American industry that emerged from this family. Three became United States congressmen and one became the vice president of the United States.

People who study people tell us that many times our concept of our Heavenly Father is in large part shaped by our relationship with our earthly father.

During my work at the mission I noticed that almost without exception the men who were there or who passed through were the product of a dysfunctional relationship with their fathers.

Often as I counseled with them they would express anger or hatred toward their father. Many times they behaved in bizarre ways. Often they had chips on their shoulders. They were enslaved with various habits and addictions.

Often they practiced lying as a way of life. A young man was absent without permission. When I asked him about it he said, "Oh, my grandmother died. I attended the funeral." I asked him to get me a memorial folder. He said he couldn't get one. Then I asked him for the name of the church.

He said very matter of factly, "Oh, I lied. She didn't die."

Often as I probed for reasons for these kinds of behaviors the discussion would go to his relationship with his dad. Often he would express his feelings for his dad with great emotion. Many times these men had trouble worshipping God or maintaining a life of devotion to Him because they thought of God through the grid of the hostility to their dads.

Several years ago I read of a chaplain in a federal prison. The inmates were hardened criminals. Many of them were serving life sentences or were on death row waiting execution. The chaplain decided to get stamps, cards and envelopes and allow the inmates to write cards to their moms for Mother's Day. It was a great success. They ran out of cards. Since it went so well they decided to do it for Father's Day. Not one man came forward to write a card for his father!

As we commemorate this Father's Day I'd like to share briefly about how we can be the kinds of fathers that will allow our children to develop healthy concepts of their Heavenly Father.

Dads, you have the awesome privilege and responsibility of shaping the God-consciousness of your children and grandchildren.

Think with me quickly today about some ways we can improve our children's image of God our Heavenly Father.

First, think with me about seeking after God.

A.W. Tozer wrote about the man who follows hard after God. Dads, to be the kind of father God wants us to be we need to seek God in our lives.

Our S.S. lesson several weeks ago talked about seeking after wisdom. There is only one place where we can ultimately go to learn about God and godly wisdom.

That place is God's Word.

Men, we will not become godly dads by reading the newspaper or the sports pages. We will not become godly dads by practicing our hobbies and playing with our toys.

We will become more godly by saturating ourselves with God's Word.

We live in a busy world today.

Many of us are faced with enormous time challenges from trying to balance God, jobs and family.

Often when we get out of balance it is the God part of our lives that suffers.

I'm not an expert at this. I suppose all of us would desire to do better than we do.

Let me share some tips I have found helpful or gleaned from others.

I think the most important thing each of us dads can decide to do is to have a quiet time in God's Word. This should be daily if possible.

Find a time that works for you and be sure to do it.

Satan realizes how important this is to our Christian lives. He will exert a maximum effort to entangle our schedules with good things that will interfere with our time with God.

Allowing God to speak to us through His Word, listening to him and talking to Him in prayer will develop our relationship with Him as nothing else can.

Regular times spent in communion with God should be our basic foundation in seeking after God.

There are some ways to get more of God's Word into our lives.

Scripture memorization and meditation can be done while we are waiting, driving or sometimes working.

Sticking a card in our pocket and reviewing it when we can is a way to keep God's Word before us.

Those Scriptures already memorized can be reviewed in our minds at any time.

The psalmist tells us, "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed *thereto* according to thy word.¹

Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.²

Moses tells Israel in Deuteronomy 6, w 4-7...

4 "Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one!

5 "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.

6 "These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart.

7 You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up.³

Deuteronomy 11:18 says, "Therefore shall ye lay up these my words in your heart and in your soul⁴..."

Listening to tapes or CDs of Scripture can allow us to hear God's Word while driving, working or playing. God's Word is so much better than the regular programming on radio or TV.

Reading godly books can increase our godliness. There are so many good books I hesitate to be specific lest I leave out so many good ones.

Richard J. Foster's

¹*The King James Version*, (Cambridge: Cambridge) 1769.

²*The King James Version*, (Cambridge: Cambridge) 1769.

³*The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update*, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

⁴*The King James Version*, (Cambridge: Cambridge) 1769.

Celebration of Discipline is a classic. His Prayer and Freedom of Simplicity are good choices.

Lee Strobel's
Case for Christ
Case for Faith
Case for a Creator
...are excellent.

Experiencing God by Blackaby and King
Pursuit of Holiness
Pursuit of Godliness by Jerry Bridges
...are wonderful spiritual muscle builders.

Writers like A.W. Tozer, Max Lucado and Chuck Swindoll will help you grow spiritually.

Dads, we need to seek after God.

Second, Dads, we need to model humility, forgiveness and transparency before our children.

It is so tempting to be dictatorial and bossy. "I'm the man of the house. The children and their mother are my servants."

Dads, if you feel that way, you are exactly 180° out of sync.

Dads, we need to take our model from Christ...

6 who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God
a thing to be grasped,
7 but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant...
8 ...He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death
on a cross.⁵

What an example. Dads, when our children see us modeling Christ-like servanthood and humility it will be easier for them to see God like that.

⁵*The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update*, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1996.

We need to be quick to ask their forgiveness when we sin against them or offend them. This will teach them to quickly admit their failings to their Heavenly Father.

We can show them a God who is merciful and forgiving when we model forgiveness to them.

It is so important that we are transparent and real to our children. Don't try to trick them. They will see through your inconsistencies very quickly. It is important that they see us living out our faith each day of the week.

It is important that as much as possible we be consistent and transparent in our relationships with them.

It is very difficult for a child to form a proper concept of God when Dad is inconsistent, dictatorial, selfish and unforgiving.

Edgar Guest has written, "It is vain to preach the truth to the eager ears of a trusting youth if, whenever the lad is standing by he sees you cheat and he hears you lie."

Ronald Reagan's attitude after the 1982 attempt on his life made an impression on his daughter, Patti Davis. She writes:

The following day my father said he knew his physical healing was dependent on his ability to forgive John Hinckley. By showing me that forgiveness is the key to everything, including physical health and healing, he gave me an example of Christ-like thinking.

A Third way we can show them a proper concept of God it to love their mother.

God is a loving God. He loves us so much that even when we were His enemies. He allowed His precious only Son to be sacrificed on Calvary for us.

We see His love for us all through the Scriptures. One of the ways we can model that love is to love their mother.

This will also teach boys how to treat women. It will give girls standards of how they should be treated by other men.

Dads, remember how it was when we were courting? How is it now?

Do you treat your wife like a special person or like someone who is for your benefit only?

Do you hold the door?...the hand?

Are there special notes, flowers, gifts?

Do your children see and hear you being affectionate to her?

Howard Hendricks tells how he was kissing his wife in their living room when his son and a friend came through the house. His son was embarrassed and mentioned it to his friend. The friend wistfully said, "I don't even know who my daddy is."

Dads, let your children see you showing affection to their mother. It will build their feelings of safety and security. It will model a loving Heavenly Father to them.

Children learn very quickly when we are harsh and unloving. They build their concept of God by observing your treatment of their mother.

Let's resolve to treat her with love, respect and affection.

No pursuit is more important than the cultivation of a godly family. Christian Barnard tells his sad story in his book *One Life*.

It was a bright April morning when I drove out of Minneapolis. It seemed a century since I had first arrived there, a time longer than all the years before it. In New York I put the car in a boat and caught a plane for Cape Town. A northwest wind was blowing when we came over the sea with the waves close below.

My wife was there with the children. I had not written much in the last two months, yet I was unprepared for her greeting. "Why did you come back?" There was no longer a smile in her eyes. Oh God, I thought, I've made the most terrible mistake of my life. "Don't look so surprised," she said. "We gave you up. We decided you were never coming back." I responded, "It was only a little delay. I wrote you about it." "No, you wrote once to say you weren't coming home." "We were building valves, aortic valves," he answered. "No, you were building a family. That is, you were until you dumped it into my lap," she said bitterly. "We have ceased to exist for you." I wanted to say I'd come home because I love my children and I believed I loved her. I wanted to because I felt it, but what could I say now that would not sound meaningless.

A Fourth way we can build our children's positive concept of God is to love them.

Sometimes it is easy for us to forget that those little people have feelings and hearts that crave our love.

We show them our love by paying attention to them. Listen to them when they talk. Ask them about their day and their feelings. Use teachable moments to show them your and God's love.

Don't be too busy or preoccupied to hear them.

Put down the newspaper. Focus on the child. Show them your love by being available for them.

When they are young read to them. Play with them. Take them for walks. Spend time with them.

Do things as a family and also have special times with each child.

Your child will sense your love as you do these things. It is also important for them to hear you verbalize that love.

Some of us aren't too good at this. We need to work at verbalizing and showing our love through hugging and holding our children.

The story comes from a Sunday school ministry in the part of New York City that has been rated the "most likely place to get killed." Pastor Bill Wilson has been stabbed twice, shot at, and had a member of his team killed:

One Puerto Rican lady, after getting saved in church, came to me with an urgent request. She didn't speak a word of English, so she told me through an interpreter, "I want to do something for God, please."

"I don't know what you can do," I answered.

"Please, let me do something," she said in Spanish.

"Okay. I'll put you on a bus. Ride a different bus every week and just love the kids."

So every week she rode a different bus—we have fifty of them—and loved the children. She would find the worst-looking kid on a bus, put him on her lap, and whisper over and over the only words she had learned in English: "I love you. Jesus loves you."

After several months, she became attached to one little boy in particular. "I don't want to change busses anymore. I want to stay on this one bus," she said.

The boy didn't speak. He came to Sunday school every week with his sister and sat on the woman's lap, but he never made a sound. Each week she would

tell him all the way to Sunday school and all the way home, "I love you and Jesus loves you."

One day, to her amazement, the little boy turned around and stammered, "I—I love you, too." Then he put his arms around her and gave her a big hug.

That was 2:30 on a Saturday afternoon. At 6:30 that night, the boy was found dead in a garbage bag under a fire escape. His mother had beaten him to death and thrown his body in the trash.

"I love you and Jesus loves you." Those were some of the last words he heard in his short life—from the lips of a Puerto Rican woman who could barely speak English.

A fifth way to reinforce a positive concept of God is to Teach them who they are in Christ.

Show them by word and example that they are very special in God's sight. God loved each one of them enough to send His Son to die for them.

Dads, tell your daughters they are beautiful. They need to know that. If they know that you know they are beautiful they won't fall for the first guy that comes along and tells them they are beautiful so he can get what he wants.

There is a time and a place when a special guy will be sincere when he tells her she is beautiful. But your daughter needs to know who she is in Christ so she doesn't fall for the guy who says all the right words for selfish reasons. Your sons and daughters need to know that the Christ who loves them so wants them to build godly standards into their lives.

They will look for love in all the wrong places if they don't know you love them and who they are in Christ.

When they know who they are in Christ, they will build their moral choices and actions upon God's Word. They will be much better prepared to withstand the world's peer pressure to make wrong choices.

Dads, we have looked at...

Seeking after God...

Modeling humility, forgiveness and transparency...

Loving their mother...

Loving them...

Teaching them who they are in Christ.

Dads, these are only a few of the chores we have as we try to model Christ-like fatherhood to our children.

None of us can do it without a humble, servant heart.

We need to look to God and ask Him to help us to be the kind of dad that will teach our children a positive concept of their Heavenly Father.

At a 1994 Promise Keepers' conference in Denton, Texas, pastor James Ryle told his story:

When he was 2 years old, his father was sent to prison. When he was 7, authorities placed him in an orphanage. At 19, he had a car wreck that killed a friend. He sold drugs to raise money for his legal fee, and the law caught up to him. He was arrested, charged with a felony, and sent to prison.

While in prison James accepted Christ, and after he served his time, he eventually went into the ministry. Years later he sought out his father to reconcile with him. When they got together, the conversation turned to prison life.

James's father asked, "Which prison were you in?"

James told him, and his father was taken aback. "I helped build that prison," he said, "He had been a welder who went from place to place building penitentiaries."

Pastor Ryle concluded, "I was in the prison my father built."

[Dads,] A father's example builds a place to live for his children. Will it be a house, or a prison?