

THE FATHERS EXAMPLE

Key Verse: Matthew 3:13-17

Key Thought: Modeling After Our Heavenly Father

As soon as the baptism of Christ is finished, the Father speaks from Heaven. God chose that exact moment to verbally associate Himself with his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. In the words which the Father spoke that day, we are given an example of how a Godly father deals with his children. In this passage we can see an example that every dad needs to follow.

Why is this so important? Because the way our children see us is often the way they will see God. Ken Canfield tells about a theology class at a certain seminary years ago: "On the first day of the semester, the professor handed out a personal questionnaire. Many of the questions on the survey had to do with the student's perceptions of his father and the relationship he had with him. The surveys were collected and no more was said of it. The students forgot all about them during the rigorous months of studying about the First Person of the Trinity, His attributes, His work, and His words. At the end of the course, the professor handed out a second survey. This time the students were supposed to honestly record their perceptions of God and feelings about their relationship with Him. The questions, in fact, were the same as on the first survey they took, but redirected toward the heavenly Father, not their earthly ones. When the professor returned both sets of surveys, including the previously forgotten one, the students were astounded that even after a whole semester of studying about God, they still had trouble differentiating Him relationally from their earthly dads."

God is not merely *like* a father; He is a Father.

Now, don't misunderstand me, just because you aren't a father does not mean that the Lord doesn't have a word for you as well. I believe that there will be truths, which we all can gain from this message. You may have never thought about it this way before, but today, I want us to look together at The Heavenly Father: Every Dad's Example.

I. THE FATHER IS NOT ASHAMED OF THE SON

Hebrews 2:11

"My Son." What this statement tells is that God is not ashamed of the Lord Jesus. In fact, He is not ashamed of any of His children! **(Hebrews 11:16)**

What an example to parents. Our children need to know that we are proud of them and that we are not ashamed to claim them as our own.

Several years ago, in Canada, a motorist saw something hanging from a tree. When he stopped to investigate, he found that it was the body of a young teenaged boy. There was no identification on the body. There was nothing but a note that said, in part, "Dear Mom and Dad, I am sorry I was an embarrassment to you."

Children need constant affirmation from their parents and will usually live up to your estimate of their worth! Therefore, be very careful how you treat your children. Be quick to let them know that you are proud of them, just like the Heavenly Father!

II. THE FATHER ADORES THE SON

John 5:20

Notice that the Father calls the Son, "Beloved." This means One who is dearly loved.

Children can live without many things, but love is not one of them! Perhaps the greatest gift a parent can give a child, besides the knowledge of the Lord, is the knowledge that they are loved unconditionally. Now, it is easy for us to say that we love that way, but I am afraid that it is much harder to demonstrate!

One of the best ways for you to demonstrate godliness to your children is for you to love them unconditionally. That is, we need to love them like God the Father loves us - Jeremiah 31:3; Romans 8:38-39. Nothing should ever be allowed to cause a rift in our relationship with our children! We all know of parents and children who do not get along. That is never right and is a mockery of what God intends the family and the home to be!

By the way, genuine love is not afraid to express itself! Tell them you love them and tell them often. They need to hear those three powerful words: "I love you!" How often does God remind us of His love towards us? Let us aim to do the same towards our children! Not just our children, but in all our family relationships!

Never be too stuffy and unemotional to respond to your children in a genuine display of love. An author writes, "I remember when I was five or six years old having a big writing tablet on which I could do block printing. One day I took a sheet of tablet paper, folded it in half, and wrote 'I love you' on the inside. I put my dad's name on the outside, covered the sheet with hearts, and set it on his dresser. I had made a valentine for him, and it wasn't even Valentine's Day!

Eagerly I anticipated what I thought would be an enthusiastic response. It never came. The next afternoon I discovered the valentine in the wastebasket. 'This has to be a mistake,' I thought. 'He must not have seen it.' I lifted the valentine from the trash and carefully stood it up in the center of his dresser. My heart was pounding the next day when I checked the wastebasket. It was there again! Only this time it was crumpled with some other papers. "He must not have liked it!" I thought. "Or maybe he didn't see it." I smoothed out the creases as best I could and placed the valentine on his dresser once more. I made sure that it was very conspicuous so that this time he would see it. The next day Dad called me to him. I remember feeling very shy. 'Will you quit putting that note on my dresser?' he demanded. 'I already know that you love me!' When I became a Christian, I thought about finding that valentine in the trash and about how hurt and angry I had felt. Why hadn't my dad reached out in love to me? Then I thought about Jesus. Jesus had put a valentine on my dresser. It had my name on the outside, and on the inside, it said, 'I love you.' The lettering was not with a pencil; it was written with blood. It cost Jesus His life to send me His valentine. I'm glad that I didn't crumple it and throw it away."

III. THE FATHER ACCEPTS THE SON

James 1:27

Next, the Father says that He is "well pleased" with the Son. These words mean "to approve of." God the Father looked at the man Jesus Christ had become and said, "I approve of you, my Son!"

Now, we all know that our children might not turn out exactly like we expect them to. After all, who doesn't live in a fantasy world when it comes to their own children? Our kids may make mistakes and they may get into trouble, they may not be as successful as you think they could be. They may not dress right or look like you think they should, or any of 10 million other things could go wrong with our ideals for their lives. However, if they are seeking to please the Lord, as Jesus was, then we need to accept them as they are and love them unconditionally.

We should never hold up our children's past before their eyes, neither should we have unrealistic expectations of them. We are to love them and accept them as they are. In contrast to God, we are often half-hearted in our acceptance of people by either directly or indirectly reminding them of their past. This makes them feel that they don't quite belong.

For example, a minister was visiting a rich man who had adopted a 12-year-old boy he had taken in from the streets. While the two men were talking, the boy, now 15, came into the room. After a casual greeting, the father went to the closet, pulled out a pair of tattered old shoes, and said, "Fred was wearing these when I found him." The minister saw that the teenager was embarrassed and deeply hurt. But the father went on, "I think it's good for him to be reminded every once in a while, of his condition when I took him in." Silently the Pastor prayed, "Thank You, Lord, for accepting me fully. Thank You for not dragging out my old shoes!"

There is a word here for our children. If you are going to live like the devil, please do not expect your parents to place their seal of approval upon your life. It is unfair to expect it and a Godly parent cannot give it. There will be love, but sometimes, love must be tough!

Parents: You do your children no favors when you offer blanket approval to their sinful ways. Perhaps your disapproval is just the wakeup call they need!

IV. THE FATHER TEACHES THE SON

2 Timothy 2:1-2

Jesus is telling those listening that since the Father loves Him, the Father includes the Son in His work and allows Him to be a part of His life. Jesus is merely saying that when the Father is working, He loves the Son and shows Him what He is doing. When He shows the Son His work, that is the Father's invitation for the Son to join Him in His activity. (By the way, that will still work today!)

Rusty Stephens of the Navigators tells a story about the day he was frantically pushing the lawn mower around the yard, trying to get finished before supper. His six-year-old son came up and, without even asking, grabbed the mower handle. He wanted to help. So, Stephens quit pushing, and the mower soon came to a stop. Laughing to himself at the boy's futile attempt to push it by himself, Stephens wanted to say, "Hey, kid, get out of my way" but instead he offered, "Here, son, I'll help you." Together they started pushing. The dad had to bend over and walk spread-legged to keep from bumping into the son. The grass got cut, but a whole lot less efficiently than before--because the boy was "helping." Suddenly it dawned on Stephens. "This is the way my heavenly Father allows me to 'help' Him build His kingdom," he thought. "I pictured my heavenly Father at work seeking, saving, and transforming the lost, and there I was, with my weak hands 'helping.'" God could do the work Himself a lot more efficiently, but He condescends to allow us to work with Him. What a privilege it is to minister with Him!"

The Godly father takes the time to include his children in his life. He models appropriate behavior before them, and often, they will follow his example.

Our time with our children is essential.

A young man was to be sentenced to the penitentiary for committing forgery. The judge had known him from childhood, for he was well acquainted with his father, a famous legal scholar and the author of an exhaustive study entitled The Law of Trusts. "Do you remember your father?" asked the Judge. "I remember him well, your honor," came the reply. Then trying to probe the offender's conscience, the judge said, "As you are about to be sentenced, and as you think of your wonderful dad, what do you remember most clearly about him?" There was a pause; then the judge received an answer he had not expected.

"I remember, sir, when I went to him for advice, he looked up at me from the book he was writing and said, 'Run along, boy, I'm busy!' When I went to him for companionship, he turned me away, saying, 'Run along, son; this book must be finished!' Your honor, you remember him as a great lawyer; I remember him as a lost friend." The Judge muttered to himself, "Alas! Finished the book but lost the boy!"

Time spent with our children is never wasted.

Charles Adams, the son of President John Adams, wrote in his diary one day: "Went fishing with my son today--a day wasted." The boy, however, had a different perspective on the day. The entry in his diary for that date reads: "Went fishing with my father--the most wonderful day of my life."

The greatest truth or lifestyle we can show our children is to point them to the Lord Jesus Christ. Dads, have you made sure that your children are saved? Are they sure about you?

In closing, I do not think for a minute that any of us earthly dads will ever reach the level of love that the Heavenly Father exhibits for His Son. However, I think we could all do a better job of modeling the Heavenly Father than we do.

For Instance, did you know that a recent survey of 5-year-olds found that they would rather give up their father than their iPhone or iPad? Did you know that more collect calls are made on Father's Day than on any other day of the year?

I finish with this interesting story. A nun who worked in a men's prison was asked by one of the inmates if she would buy him a Mother's Day card to send to his mom. "She agreed, and word traveled fast; soon hundreds of inmates were asking for cards. Resourcefully, the nun contacted a greeting card manufacturer, who obliged with crates of Mother's Day cards, all of which she passed out. Soon afterward, she realized that Father's Day was approaching and, thinking ahead, she again called the card manufacturer, who responded quickly with crates of Father's Day cards. Years later, the nun said she still had every one of those cards. Not one prisoner requested a card for his father. Clearly, men in prison lack fathers.

Perhaps as you have listened to this message, you have realized that there is room for improvement in your life as a parent, whether you are a mom or dad. Maybe you have lost children and you haven't lived for the Lord as you should have before them, and you want to pray for them today.

Maybe you have never been saved. I want you to know that you can never be the kind of parent that you should be until you first come to know the Lord. I want to invite you to come and receive Him into your life. Whatever you need, I want you to know that the Heavenly Father is there to help you and make whatever is wrong right again! Will you come to Him this morning?

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Date: Father's Day June 19, 2022

Place: FCA

Time: 10:30am

After Service Song: Good Good Father