The Importance of Fatherhood

*Ephesians 6:1-4*

Within many churches across our country the usually pattern is to praise moms and motherhood on Mother’s Day and to beat up or criticize Fathers on Father’s Day.

This morning, I’d like to do things a bit different, break the norm if you would. First, I’m going to speak about the critical importance of Fathers and fatherhood and the unfortunate realization that the increase of Fatherhood Failure is threatening our nation. Second, I’m actually going to praise the Dads who have stepped-up and understand that being a Christian Father is one of the highest callings any man can ever achieve in his life. And finally, on behalf our church I’m going to recognize the Fathers in our congregation.

Before I begin, I want to acknowledge and ask God to bless every single parent Father and every single parent Mother who have had and continue to assume the roles of both Mother and Father to their children. I know there are several within our congregation who have accepted this responsibility and have and continue to rise to the occasion each and every day. God bless each of you.

Let’s look at today’s text: *Ephesians Ch. 6, Verses 1-4*. You can follow in your Bible or in today’s bulletin as the apostle Paul says: “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. “Honor your father and mother”—which is the first commandment with a promise— “so that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.” Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.

In examining this morning’s text let me just say that there is difference between obeying and honoring. To obey means to do as one is told, while to honor means to love and respect. Children while under their parent’s care are to obey their parents. However, the responsibility to honor one’s parents is for life.

In this morning’s text, Paul continues in speaking to Fathers about discipline and its purpose to help children grow and learn. He warns not to exasperate or provoke our children to anger or discouragement. It takes a lot of patience to raise children in a loving, Christ honoring manner, treating and loving our children as Jesus treats the people He loves. But this is what we as Christian Fathers are called to do.

Professor Gregory Slayton recently wrote an outstanding book: *Be a Better Dad Today! Ten Tools Every Father Needs* that just recently became a #1 Christian best-seller. 100% of Gregory’s book royalties are being donated to Christian family charities, and in an effort to further his commitment to fatherhood. Gregory and his wife, Marina founded the *Fellowship of Fathers Foundation*, a Christian non-profit based organization with a mission to “To Restore Fatherhood throughout America”.

Professor Slayton is an honors graduate of Dartmouth College and the Harvard Business School and was a Silicon Valley venture capitalist for 10 years. He has lived more than half of his adult life in Asia, Africa, South America and Europe, where he studied effective and ineffective Fatherhood practices while...
Father's Day Sermon from: Be a Better Dad Today! Ten Tools Every Father Needs

studying as a Fulbright Scholar and then working for World Vision, McKinsey and Company, and the State Department. Slayton was named the US Chief of Mission (Ambassador) to Bermuda and was the only US Ambassador extended twice by the Obama Administration. He is also the only Republican Ambassador in US History to receive the Distinguished Foreign Service Award from members of the Congressional Black Caucus. I mention this because within his book: Be a Better Dad Today! Gregory shares some startling observations & facts that I’d like to share with you this morning.

First, respect for Fatherhood and the percentage of men who are actively involved Dads has declined steadily in the US over the past 50 years. Our society now constantly celebrates the rich, the powerful, the famous and the infamous... but no longer celebrates good fathers. Much of popular media minimizes or actively puts down Fatherhood (for example, the preponderance of “Doofus Dads” like Homer Simpson, Home Improvement and Everybody Loves Raymond” on TV these days). Whatever happened to the TV Dads on Leave it to Beaver; Father Knows Best; Little House on the Prairie: The Brady Bunch or my favorite, The Walton’s”?

Regarding fatherhood, our country is increasingly divided into two very different camps. And the dividing line is not race or creed or national origin...it is a simple question: “Was your father involved in a positive way in your life growing up?” Today, over 15% of American fathers report having no significant contact with their children in the past six months (I can tell you that number would be much higher if it were the children reporting on their dads). In addition, another 10% of American dads report having limited contact with their kids in that period. So at a very minimum, one quarter of American dads are essentially uninvolved with their children.

Unfortunately, children who grow up essentially without a father are at least two to three times more likely to suffer from the worst social ills that now threaten our society. From teen suicide to drug abuse to incarceration to illiteracy – the presence (or absence) of an active dad at home is a leading indicator (in many cases it is the leading indicator). And the problem is growing larger very quickly. As a direct result of this, over half of the American children born today will live some or most of their lives as minors without their fathers. America is quickly becoming a two tier society, with over 1/3 of our children consigned to almost third world status in terms of mental and physical health, academic attainment, and income.

Fatherhood Failure is also personally devastating to men. With reduced accountability from their families, men who have failed as fathers are less likely to hold down a long-term job, complete re-training programs when they lose a job, and are much more likely to join the ranks of the long-term unemployed. In addition, men who have failed as fathers are also much more likely to abuse drugs and/or alcohol, and report feelings of low self-esteem, low self-confidence and low social skills.

On the other hand, for the first time in US history, we see a small but identifiable percentage of dads who are taking the lead role in parenting. And a much larger group of dads are what we call “very actively involved” in their children’s lives...approximately one out of three dads. Another 20% of so rank themselves as “involved” Not surprisingly, children who have the benefit of a actively involved father to
teach them self-discipline, self-respect, social skills, and other basic life skills are much more likely to graduate from college, hold down a full time job, have a strong family themselves and as a result be productive members of society in the future.

But here is the best news of all: “**Good dads are made, not born**”. While it is true that fatherhood failure is frequently a “generation curse” – in every generation there are men who manage to break the cycle of fatherhood failure. Frequently these men have a strong faith component in their lives –and in most cases they have the benefit of an intact, long-term marriage in which their wife has helped them master the art of fatherhood. Despite their upbringing these men have developed fatherhood skills their biological fathers did **not** have – and have and continue to pass them onto their children.

This is the fundamental reason the **Fellowship of Fathers** was founded and the book **Be a Better Dad Today! Ten Tools Every Father Needs** was written.

General Douglas MacArthur once wrote **A Father’s Prayer** which I’d like to dedicate to all Father’s today.

*Build me a son, O Lord, who will be strong enough to know when he is weak, and brave enough to face himself when he is afraid; one who will be proud and unbending in honest defeat, and humble and gentle in victory.*

*Build me a son whose wishbone will not be where his backbone should be; a son who will know Thee and that to know himself is the foundation stone of knowledge.*

*Lead him, I pray, not in the path of ease & comfort, but under the stress & spur of difficulties and challenge. Here let him learn to stand up in the storm; here let him learn compassion for those who fail.*

*Build me a son whose heart will be clean, whose goal will be high; a son who will master himself before he seeks to master other men; one who will learn to laugh, yet never forget how to weep; one who will reach into the future, yet never forge the past.*

*And after all these things are his, add, I pray, enough of a sense of humor, so that he may always be serious, yet never take himself too seriously. Give him humility, so that he may always remember the simplicity of greatness, the open mind of true wisdom, the meekness of true strength.*

*Then I, his father, will dare to whisper, “I have not lived in vain.”*

Good fatherhood is a cornerstone of any happy family and happy families are the cornerstone of our civilization. So I trust you’re with me on the critical importance of fatherhood, because I’m convinced without question that fatherhood is the most important job a man will ever have. I don’t care if you are the President of the United States, the CEO of a Fortune 500 company or employed in any other job, your job as “father to your children” is the most important job you will ever have.

If you not convinced, think about this: whatever job you have now will end, probably in a matter of years, or perhaps months. Furthermore, none of us are irreplaceable in our jobs and no matter what job we have now; there will always be someone else who could do it.
Now, think about your job as a father: it is the only job which you will never lose – unless you quit. It’s the only job in the world that promises lifelong benefits – as well as eternal blessings. And it’s the only job in the world for which you are uniquely qualified. That’s right; no one else in the world has the emotional, spiritual and physical qualifications that you bring to your job as the father of your children. You are, literally, irreplaceable in your children’s lives. Finally, it is the only job we will ever have that will absolutely and without question, impact generations of our family and Americans yet to be born including not only our children, grandchildren, great grandchildren, and all generations that follow.

Proverbs 22:6 “Train a child in the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not depart from it”.

John McCain, United States Senator and War Hero said: “I learned about life and honor from my father and grandfather, who were my heroes as Naval officers and, most importantly, fathers. Earning their respect was the most lasting ambition of my life, and even though they are no longer with us, I continue to live my life according to the terms of their approval. Their courage and faith were an inspiration to me and a key to my survival in some of my most difficult times”.

Bill Cosby, Actor and Legendary Comedian once said: “Nothing I’ve ever done has given me more joys and rewards than being a father to my children...”

So let’s talk about Fatherhood, specifically about how we can become better fathers, better husbands and yes, better men. First, we need to recognize that Fatherhood is a lifetime journey - perhaps the most important journey that any of us will ever take. And like any journey, we will need three things to be successful.

First, we will need a good map with good directions so we can establish a good plan for our journey.

Second, we will need reliable tools. It turns out that there are Ten Tools that good fathers all over the world use, even though we use them differently. Not surprisingly each of us is better with some tools than others and none of us have perfected the use of all tools. As a result, each us has room for improvement.

And finally, like any significant journey, we are going to need some true allies for the road ahead to help us when times get tough. And the first and most important ally you need is the mother of your children. Hopefully that fine woman is your wife – if so you have a real head start on our Fatherhood Journey. But you need other allies too, men who can hold you accountable and help you get back up with you stumble (and friends, we all stumble).

Yes, the Fatherhood Journey is the journey of a lifetime. It’s a journey that is filled with many ups and downs. But it’s the most important journey any father can ever take. For on this journey, we not only grow to be better fathers and better husbands...we grow to be the men that God intended us to be.

At this time I would ask that all Fathers stand and come forward to be honored and receive a gift on behalf of our church. Each Father is given a copy of Be a Better Dad Today!
Prayer for Fathers:

Almighty Father, we pray in gratitude for these loving fathers of our church along with all the loving fathers and grandfathers who are no longer with us that you have welcomed into Your Kingdom.

LORD, please enable each father to understand:

- That how much time we spend with our family is more important than how much money we spend on them.
- That in a difficult time, the best thing we can do is just be there.
- That our children grow up faster than we realize; so we need to spend time with them now and cherish every moment.
- That it’s more important to know how to fix a child’s broken heart than anything around the house.
- That what we do as a father today will be with our children for the rest of their lives.

Dear God, may this book help each father to Be a Better Dad! Enable your Holy Spirit to instill in each father the guidance, tools, patience and compassion that we each so desperately need. Give these men the strength to live, love and be loved in return. Give them the faithful support of wife, family and friends as they care for the physical and spiritual growth of their children. Give them joy and delight in their children to sustain them through the trials of fatherhood. And most of all dear, loving Father, give them the wisdom to turn to you for help when they need it most. In Jesus’ name we pray, AMEN.