

Father's Day 2024
Fathering like the Father

Main verse: Proverbs 14:26 "Whoever fears the Lord has a secure fortress, and for their children it will be a refuge." NIV

Welcome to church! Do we have any new people? If we do, welcome. I pray that you will find NewSong a place to continue attending. If you go somewhere else. Hello! To the people online... Welcome. So we finished an awesome series last week. Christ only. Soli Deo Gloria. What an awesome series. So let's give him the praise that is His alone.

(Pray)

What's the first thing that comes to mind when I say "Father"? I bet that there is a wide variety of ideas. Some are fond, some are... um what's the opposite of fond? Asking for a friend. What are some of the things that you know about your father? I personally can tell you that... ok nevermind, I am apparently trying to skip a bunch of information that you may need first. Let me show you a couple pictures of when I was younger...

First picture (my sister and I)

This is my sister and myself. She is 18 months older than I am.

Second picture (Little blonde chunky kid)

This is me at about 17 months. See the father in the picture?

Third picture (Superman stripped shirt.)

Here I am at about 3... no I didn't get to choose my hairstyle. See the father in the picture?

Fourth picture (me and a dog)

I am about 15. That's my dog Zimbabwe. See the father in the picture?

Last picture (My mom, sister, and biological father.)

So this is the last picture of my completed family. This is the only picture I have with my biological father and I in the same picture... I guess I am in the picture. This is about 6 months before I was born.

I think there are three types of fathers.

There are fathers that are present and good, there are fathers that are present and not good, and if you can't tell I stem from the last one... a father that wasn't present at all. And according to all kinds of statistics I am supposed to be a failure. But God tells me that success is what God says, not what the world says. That's what is most important to me.

So I enjoy walking in the park... On Monday I met a guy that I will call "Hendo". That's not his real name just to make sure that you don't know who I am talking about. So let me set it up... I

was walking in the park. I was on one of the smallest walking trails... you know the ones I am talking about... the ones that are 3-4 feet wide. So a NYPD small SUV almost runs over me while I am on one of these paths. He was less than 2 feet away from hitting me. GRRRR!!! So I am looking around to see if anyone else saw what had happened. A guy on a different but close path looks at me shakes his head and starts walking over. I assumed that he was coming to check on me. He gets to about 20 feet away and I want to tell him to not come over. I could smell the booze on him. I started to pray. It went something like this, "God, why?" isn't that enough? But he kept coming over, so I prayed even more diligently, "God, why is he coming over here?" And he kept coming... and I could smell the alcohol even better. So I prayed a different prayer. This was much more proper. I have no problem blowing up my own spot if you can't tell. So this prayer went something like this, "God, if this guy really is coming over please let me know what I need to say to him." So he gets in my bubble. You all have a bubble also. I mean I could count his facial hair if he was able to stand straight... that close. "Lord, give me the words to say." So he makes some kind of comment about and I quote, "He is a Mexican." Not my words. I gave the side eye look and said I see the Puerto Rican flag tattoo. Then he admitted to being from Puerto Rico. So you all know... "Me No Pablo Espanyo!" I know very very little. And "Hendo" starts talking to me in Spanish. I was like... huh???? Then he would translate to the best of his ability. Needless to say 45 minutes later. Yes, I like to talk. So in that 45 minutes we had him go through the deepest of emotions that people have. I started off as a rando that would give an ear. Then I became his best friend... That's what he told me. Then he started talking about PR. I asked a question about the location of San Juan. I still would have to look at a map to be able to answer that question by the way. So he got mad that I didn't know where it was. Then we were no longer friends. He threatened to kill me. Pray again... "God???? I am so confused. Why am I going for a walk to get possibly jumped by a drunk guy? What are you trying to do?" Then he calmed down. PG!!! Then I was like his big brother! How? This guy even said what year he was born... he is much older than I am. Normal conversation. He talked about his wife and kids. None of them wanted to talk with him. "Hendo", why not? He tells me that it's because he is an alcoholic. Then the threats again because "I am looking down on him." I wasn't. So God led me to ask a simple question. "Would you be willing to quit drinking to have a relationship with your kids? He grabs my shirt. (I was preparing to get a massive black eye.) While holding onto my shirt he turned his head. "God, is this what you really want?????" Then his grip loosened and he started sobbing. I am not a great person to soothe someone else. He cries for a couple minutes and I could tell that was causing him to sober up. I asked again. This time he lets go of my shirt and says that he would rather die alone and drunk than give up the booze for his kids. More prayer. I did ask him to come to church. "Lord, touch "Hendo" wherever he is right now!" Then we departed. That was a very disheartening walk.

It reminds me of the Fresh Prince episode where Will met his father. Probably the most heart wrenching episode there was. At the end, Will's father left again. His father said, "It was good to see you son." Will responded, "You too, Lou." Will was crushed. After that he was talking about all the good things that he did without his father being there... me too. Then Uncle Phil was trying to get Will to admit that he was upset... Then Will yells, "Why don't he want me?" I can't answer why Will's father, both on the show and real life, left him. I do know why my father left though. There was a 2 month old baby crying.

There is a song that asks “Who taught you how to hate?” Well sin... sin taught people how to hate. Sin. When you live a life of hate you will be spiritually dead to other people.

Point 1: Earthly father- we need to forgive them.

As a kid, I thought that I was the only one that was without a father. Let me give you information. Nationwide, single parent families are about 25-30% of every family. I am not alone. You are not alone. That is double what it was in 1968. How about in NYC, there are 250,000 single parent families. For 580,000 kids. That's here in NYC. How about closer to home? In the Bronx we are at 59.11% of the population of the Bronx that are in single parent families. In 2022 there were 1.443 million people here. How about Coop City? In 2022, there was a population of 44, 509. And all 44, 509 need one thing. A living and holy Father. We need Jesus. Our earthly father needs to be forgiven. If your father was there or not. Forgive. Forgive. I have tried to break the chain in my kids' lives.

Proverbs 23:24, “The father of a righteous child has great joy: a man who fathers a wise son rejoices in him.”

It works both ways though.

Colossians 3:21 says, “Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged.” There are versions of the Bible that say “Parents” not just fathers.

And you know what? Some situations are a little different.

Luke 15:20 So he got up and went to his father. “But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

And that is the exact way that God is with us.

Point 2: Heavenly Father- we need forgiven by Him.

See God is always present. God is always good. God will never let us down. Earthly father... not so much.

Jacob please show the pictures again except the last one. See I want you to understand that even as a kid, God was looking out for me. So look in the eyes of that kid and see that God had that kid. Look in the background. God was there keeping him safe. Look at your history. When times were tough God was helping you out also. Yeah, the struggle was real... it was really in God's

hands not mine. See, the Bible says that we are to work out our salvation with fear and trembling. That means that if an earthly father was there or not... but God! Say it... But God.

2 Corinthians 6:18 And, "I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty."

John 14:6 "Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

My earthly father may have not been the best, but I have a Father that is the Best!

Hebrews 12:7 Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as his children. For what children are not disciplined by their father?

I was a knucklehead... sometimes I still am. God will test me to make me better. He will keep me from going down paths that include hate. God the Father will let me forgive my earthly father.

But a verse that sticks out John 10:25-29, Jesus answered, "I did tell you, but you do not believe. The works I do in my Father's name testify about me, **26** but you do not believe because you are not my sheep. **27** My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. **28** I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand. **29** My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand.

All we have to do is believe in Jesus. We will be saved. But the awesome thing is if we follow Christ and our kids see the relationship between us and Christ then there will be a connection for them also.

Proverbs 14:26 Whoever fears the LORD has a secure fortress, and for their children it will be a refuge.

It's so crazy that our kids will have a secure place not just in us but in Christ. Don't forget that they will need to make the choice to follow, but they will have a safe place. A place will always be open and ready for them. Christ will always have his shoulder for us to lean on. When we need to cry like "Hendo" did then Christ will be ready for us to approach Him. But the thing is we at some point will need to determine what kind of father we will be.

The earthly father is a father that we need to forgive.

The heavenly Father is a Father that we need to ask for forgiveness.

Well we need to be both. Christ will forgive us. We will do things that we will need to ask our kids to forgive us for. Don't let your pride keep you from the blessings of being forgiven by your kids. Don't let your pride keep you from the blessings of forgiving your kids also. For in the measure that you forgive God will forgive you. I didn't have an earthly father in the same sense that most people think. My first interaction with a "father figure" was with my father in law. Oh man... I remember walking in the house to pick up DeLeassa for our first date. (It was a movie for all you people that want to know and I was wearing striped blue jean shorts... It was cool then.) I sat on a couch with him on an adjacent couch and he was polishing a handgun. He would only stop polishing it to ask a question. When he asked a question he would point it at me and look down at the sights. He would then start polishing and not wait for an answer. But I also had a spiritual father that helped. His name is Lonnie. He saw the struggle that I was dealing with. He helped me develop a relationship with God. I watched him grow up and be a father while helping me. He had his own kids and was ministering to a really messed up kid. Without both of those men I would be nowhere close to being a good father.

So I decided to ask some people (that will remain anonymous), "If you could say or ask your father one thing without any repercussions what would it be?" I had so many different answers. This is a sampling of their responses. "Why don't you let me be a kid, like you were?" "Get out of your comfort zone. Get on a roller coaster." "Come pick me up." "Why did you divorce my mom?" "Can I have wisdom?" Let's be honest... Some of these are humorous. Come pick me up? LOL!!! Get on a roller coaster!!! Funny stuff. Now here is the funniest part. The first one was asking for his father, who is in a different country to come and pick him up. That was a plea for time. Now it doesn't sound as funny. Get on a roller coaster! The story behind that is the father is a step father. That person had every chance to say something to their biological father but instead chose to say something to the person that has raised them. To me that's a real father.

John 6:37-39 All those the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away. **38** For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me. **39** And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all those he has given me, but raise them up at the last day.

Father's have the ability to become fathers through a variety of means. And that leads me to the third point.

Point 3: **Who will we be like?**

A father that fathers like "The Father" will live according to John 6. All those the Father gives me I will never drive away. Yes, that's talking about Jesus. Aren't we supposed to be like Christ.

1 John 2:6 ESV

Whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.

1 Peter 2:21 ESV

For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps.

Wow! God's word really calls us to act like him! Walk like him. Talk like him. Raise kids that aren't your own like him... oh that may be harder???

1 Corinthians 11:1 ESV

Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.

Ephesians 5:1-2 ESV

Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

Interesting... be imitators! Walk in love!

John 13:13-17 ESV

You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you. Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.

Another verse telling us to do as Jesus has done!

Proverbs 3:5-6 ESV

Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.

Sometimes I don't know why things happen. Why did my biological father leave? Oh that's not that bad, many of us are in that boat. What about when he looked me in my eyes and said that I was the reason that he left. Hopefully that hasn't happened to you. Man that anger... but God. Amen?

Romans 12:2 ESV

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Even with problems God will renew our minds.

2 Corinthians 5:17 ESV

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

It doesn't matter how you arrived at this point in your life. God has made each and every person that has accepted him a new creation. The old earthly family may have let you down but your heavenly father never will.