

Words of Wisdom From Two Fathers

As most of you know, my Father passed away on March 31st of this year, so this is my first Father's Day in 56 years to not have my Father present. Although he is physically absent today his godly influence and example continues to bless and guide my life in so many different ways. With that said, I want to do something a little different. Some of you may not know that my Dad was a wonderful preacher. On Father's Day of 1990 I asked Dad to share some words of advice for young fathers here at Carbondale. I found his sermon outline from that message as well as another message he preached here on raising children in a Christian home. So this morning, I want to share my dad's sermon for father's day and hopefully impart some of his wisdom. And then I want to share some wisdom from another Father - our Heavenly Father. The wisdom that follows is from my dad's sermon with a little editing here and there.

“Raising children to serve the Lord is the biggest job or responsibility you’re assigned in this life. Lord, if I fail at everything else, don’t let me fail at this.” The question is asked, “why do your boys serve the Lord, giving you no trouble, and others don’t?” I can’t tell you the difference. No doubt there are a majority of parents that are better and more worthy than we are. I can only tell you some of my story or ideas and offer some comment from the Bible on the subject.

To raise children for the Lord, one must get an early start and the right start. A mother brought a five year old to her minister and asked, “when should I start teaching him about the Lord?” The minister said, ‘Lady, hurry home, you’ve just missed the five most important years of his life.’”

[It actually starts earlier than that.] Choosing the right husband or wife may be the most important factor in raising godly children. So many young couples don’t think about that. The bible says be not unequally yoked together with an unbeliever and yet everyday couples ignore that Scripture. [Think about that - the most important decision you’ll make in parenting may have to do with choosing the right spouse!]

To be a good father you have to be a good team player and you and the mother are the team. And keep in mind, besides serving the Lord, the next most important thing you can do to be a good father is to love your children’s mother - your wife.

Both parents need to have the same desire for their children - that is that God would be at

the center of their lives. Both parents need to recognize the importance of placing God in the central, pre-eminent place in the home. He needs to be at the heart of every family relationship.

You begin praying for your children before they are born and you never stop. Right or wrong, I prayed, “Lord don’t let them live, don’t let them reach the age of accountability and then reject God and be lost.” We had both of our boys dedicated to the Lord, but in our hearts, we had made that dedication long before. Our prayer was, **“Lord don’t let education or any material thing interfere with their spiritual well being. We would much prefer seeing them serve You than become President of the USA and lose their relationship with God.”**

[Read this passage] In Mark 10:13 concerned parents brought some young children to the Lord. They felt the need to bring them to Jesus. Today children are taken everywhere except to Christ or to a place where they could find him. They saw the need too of bringing their children to Jesus while they were young. Experts suggest that much of a child’s character has been molded by their sixth birthday. Someone said, “the young twig must be early bent.” **“What youth learns age does not forget.”**

These parents brought their children to Jesus in order that Jesus could touch them. There is such a need for all of us to receive the Master’s touch. That’s our reason for bringing our children to a full gospel church. They need more than what any of us can ever give them on our own. It’s why some have left the faith and fallen away, because there was no touch from the master’s hand.

Suppose these parents had neglected to bring their children to Jesus. Who would have brought them? What would have happened to them? Who would have gathered them into their arms and influenced them if Jesus hadn’t? [I recall just last year a missionary trying to raise his final support to go to the Philippines to work with children - another missionary stood and told us pastors - don’t worry about sending these folks - some one will reach those children - it won’t be Christian missionaries - it will be some cult, or muslims, or child traffickers, but someone will reach them. Friends if we don’t bring our children to Jesus, who will influence them and who will touch their lives?]

Some use the excuse they are too busy to bring their children to church. It’s actually a selfish decision, putting yourself and your needs before the spiritual needs of your children.

[Nothing is more important than seeing that your children know the Lord and make heaven their

eternal destination.] Some say they love their children and they love the Lord, but their actions don't exactly prove that claim.

Jesus was never too busy for the children. [Dad said] better to neglect the older than the young. You had better not forbid them or stand in their way. You had better not offend a little one. Parents, Jesus said, "suffer them to come" or permit them to come. He is telling you to enable them to come to Jesus by your example and your life and your teaching and your effort.

Bear in mind, an object lesson is the most effective way to teach – be one! Advice chills but example inspires. Many parents have the misconception that children will be what they are not. [Friends you are sowing into the lives of your children. You can't harvest tomatoes when you are sowing onions. You can't expect your children to be godly and loving and sincere and authentic and honest and kind when you are a hypocrite and living an ungodly life. Hear my dad's advice this morning!] **Parents cast the longest shadow over a child's life. There is simply no substitute for godly parents!** Dad, are you willing for your children to follow you? Mom, is it safe if they follow your example? Will you be proud if they follow your footsteps?

The disciples in Mark 10 rebuked the parents for bringing their children to the Lord. Many today have the same attitude, "They're only children." Spiritual neglect is worse than physical neglect. Many are ready to fight to defend their children from physical harm but what about spiritual neglect and spiritual harm? [You'll fight to protect them from physical or sexual predators, but will you fight to protect them from spiritual predators? From the violent and sinful influences of the culture and the world?] Some say, "I'll leave them at home until they are older and they can get more out of the service." Some say, 'I've turned them over to the Lord' and then they've taken their hands off – uninvolved in their spiritual life. Try turning the steering wheel of your car over to the Lord while you are driving. He requires your help. Parents you can't remain uninvolved in the spiritual life of your children. He wants your involvement.

These parents in Mark 10 didn't just turn their children over to him. They brought them to him so that he could touch them and bless them but they recognized their responsibility. Notice, **These parents brought their children to Jesus rather than sent them to Jesus.** It was not, "do as I say" it was "do as I do." We are going to see Jesus. We all, children and teens and parents and grandparents, we all need his touch. Don't send your children to church, bring them to church. Come with them and together seek the Lord.

Jesus took the children in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them. These were fortunate children. And he will do the same for ours if we bring them to Him. With Christ they found safety, fellowship, sufficiency. This was their inheritance. Recognize that God has a purpose for every child's life and to find it and live it will mean success. If the child misses it, or ignores it, then failure will result. **Help your child find God's plan and purpose and then help them live it.**

Some parents talk about and criticize the church, the preachers, the brothers and sisters in the church and the children become suspicious of everyone. Some parents keep moving from one church to another and never have a church home. **We must give our children enough to counteract what the world forces upon them later.**

Understand that the family is not a man-made idea. It is a divine institution ordained of God. It was meant to be a place of harmony, affection, unity and peace. Children are a heritage of the Lord committed by Him to parents for care, protection and training. Parents must have wisdom, patience, devotion, and God has a rich supply of each.

[Listen to these nuggets of wisdom from my Dad]. Parents - do your job inconspicuously. Don't be over protective. Don't be reluctant to turn them loose as they grow older. Some parents are too anxious to show they are the boss. As much as possible, let them make their own decisions and then override when necessary. Be more concerned about their spiritual experience than the do's and don'ts of life. Never tell your children you don't believe them or you don't trust them. Even if you doubt, don't tell it. You have to earn the love and respect of your children, it doesn't just happen. In the will of every child there is a power which cannot be forced, it can only be won. Command and persuasion are the two weapons parental wisdom will do its best to wield. There is only one gate of entrance into life - you can lead your child up to it, but he must pass through it of his own accord. **Love your children as Christ loved the church then all you do to them or for them will be motivated by an unselfish love.** [And finally,] **In raising them, try as though everything depended on you and pray and trust the Lord as though everything depended on Him.**

That's the wisdom of my earthly Father. Let me share in conclusion the wisdom of our Heavenly Father. I just felt I was to wrap this up with this thought. As I was praying I heard the Holy Spirit speaking into my heart about the Father heart of God. I know some of you may have

not been as fortunate as I, to have had a godly and loving father. But regardless of your relationship with your earthly or biological father, let me tell you about the incredible love of your heavenly Father. Consider these three things:

The Love of the Father. He loved you so much that he gave his only Son, his perfect and sinless and holy Son, to die for you when you were lost and rebellious and dead in your own selfishness and sin. He gave so you could have life. The apostle John said it like this: **“How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And this is what we are!” 1 John 3:1**

How incredible. We were rebellious, illegitimate, you can add whatever word you want here. We were not legitimate heirs but he chose to love us. He didn't just choose to accept us, to allow us to be around but have nothing to do with us. He didn't decide to let us stay in the guest house but he really had no place in his heart for us. He chose to love us! Notice what he said: he chose to lavish his love upon us. He didn't just like us or love us a little. He lavished his love upon us and called us his children – his sons and daughters. He made us his very own, through his own extraordinary sacrifice, through his blood, by his mercy, we are his own. He gave us his name! What incredible love the father has for you. Can you grasp it today? Can you start to see how much he loves you? Because when you start to realize how much your heavenly Father loves you and the amazing effort he went to in order to save you out of your sin and filth and clean you up and make you whole and make you his own, then you will want to serve him and love him and please him and live for him and be with him forever.

John has so much to say about the love of God in this letter. He tells us in chapter 4 that God is love and that God showed his love for us by sending his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. “This is love”, he writes, “Not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.” The definition of love is not found in us loving him. That is to be expected. He is God. But real love is defined by the love he has for us, that he would love us like he does, dying for us, lavishing his love upon us and making us his own children when we were still sinners. This is love.

I like this verse in 1 John 4:16 – **“And so we know and rely on the love God has for us.”** To know his love is to rely upon his love. I am relying upon that fact, that wonderful realization that God loves me and that changes everything for me. How great is the love the

Father has lavished on ME, that I should be called a child of God!

The Affirmation of the Father. Remember when Jesus was baptized by John in Mark 1? They heard a voice out of heaven saying of Jesus, **“You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.” Mark 1:11** What a word of affirmation. Dads, your sons and daughters need to hear you say that to them. They need to hear you say, “you are my son whom I love. I am pleased with you, proud of you.” Your daughters need to hear you say, “You are my daughter whom I love. I am pleased with you and proud of you.” Our heavenly Father has given us such a wonderful example.

But beyond that today, I think there are some Dad’s here who need to hear their heavenly Father say it to them this morning. God loves you. You are his Son and he loves you. He is pleased with you. If you are in Christ, the Father is pleased with you. Hear his affirmation today. Accept his love and live in his affirming mercy and grace. Finally, consider...

The Promise of the Father. What joy we find, to know the love of the father that he lavishes upon us. What peace and confidence we find as we experience the affirmation of the Father, that he loves us as we follow Christ. And what hope we find as we rest in the promise of the Father. You see, John tells us in the gospel that we aren’t to be afraid, but to trust in God and in Jesus because Jesus would never leave us or forsake us. Instead he was going to go and prepare a place for us and then he was going to come back and take us to be with him forever. Jesus said we could come home to the Father and be with him forever. He promised us eternal life and a home in heaven and this is one Father that always keeps his word.

John says it like this in 1 John 3, after he affirms that the Father has lavished his love upon us and made us his own, then John reminds us of the future that has been promised to us by our Heavenly Father. **“Dear friends, now we are children of God and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure.” 1 John 3:2-3**

You’ve got a Heavenly Father that loves you, that affirms your value and worth and that has promised you a heavenly home and he will keep his word. I hope you are that same kind of father, that you love your children, you affirm their value and that you always keep your word.

Two Fathers giving us a lot of wisdom today. Let’s purpose in our heart to be the kind of father that will make the difference in the lives of our sons and daughters.