

Father's Day

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[0:00] On this day, I realise that it's a tough call for many. Taking the football analogy, it's maybe like a game of two halves, really. Because on one side, it's deeply, deeply painful.

And maybe that's for a variety of reasons for people that are here and people listening on this podcast. Because it's full of memories of a dad. And it's full of a memory of a dad that might not be here.

It's full of memories of a dad that we may have been separated from. It may be a father figure who has gone home to be with the Lord.

Or maybe just left. For those, it's painful because of a father maybe that wasn't there for us. He was absent. A father who has maybe seemed to be uncaring.

For some of us, for wanting a dad. You know, wanting a dad figure in our lives. But that didn't happen. And then there's the other side of celebrating.

[1:04] There's celebrating what it is to be a dad. To be a granddad. Of all the joy that that is. Of being a parent. Of what that actually means. To be a bloke. To be raising a family.

And the joy that is. And today, we think especially of dads in whatever sense. It's a stepdad. Maybe you're an adoptive dad. A foster dad.

Whatever that is. Whatever shape that looks. Maybe you're a grandparent that's bringing up your grandchild. Whatever shape. It's worth celebrating. So today, we hold that intention.

And we hold that intention today as we focus on our Heavenly Father. Father. And I hear you say, how does that work? How can it be our Heavenly Father?

He's too remote. Not true. Not true. Because he's there to teach us. To show us. To support us. To encourage us.

[2:01] And we have so much to learn from our Heavenly Father. I was really fortunate. I had a dad that was very practical and hands-on.

If you remember, if you're old enough to remember what 100E Anglia looked like. There are some people here nodding. At the age of nine, I could take a carburettor off 100E Anglia.

I could strip it down. I could clean it. I could recalibrate it. I could put it back on. And the car would run like a dream. I had a dad that taught me how to wallpaper.

I had a dad that taught me how to do gardening. I learned so much from my dad. And we often think, what is there for us that our Heavenly Father, being created by our earthly fathers, how much more is there for our Heavenly Father?

The good thing about my dad is he was always there for advice. And you just pick up the phone.

You know, how much water do I put in to mix with wallpaper paste?

[3:12] That was always the one. How deep do I actually put these potatoes in? What is the distance that you put in your onion sets? You know, there's all those practical questions that you need a dad around, really, to ask.

And I miss that now. But the beauty is, with our Heavenly Father, is that he is accessible for every question that we have, to connect and be there for us.

Things that I need to know. And maybe when that relationship broke down, maybe at times, I was thinking about my rebellious nature.

Because I don't know about you, maybe you can think back to the time that you were a teenager, when that moment that we had all the answers, didn't we? We knew everything. We had it all sorted.

Let's be honest. And yet, sometimes there comes that rebellion then, where we separate ourselves from God, our Heavenly Father, because we think that we've got it sorted.

[4 : 17] And then, that drifts into that sense of, we think we can do without him. And that's not true. Perhaps I didn't want to hear what my Heavenly Father had to say to me.

Because all I wanted to hear was yes. But sometimes, what I knew is, many of us here are fathers, and we've known as fathers here, that sometimes the hardest but best thing we can say to our kids is, no, it's not the way.

It's time to wait. Don't do that now. It's not the best way forward. And as we listen to that reading from the touchline this morning, Paul is writing to the Ephesians, and he said, it wasn't so long ago you were mired in that old stagnant life of sin.

You let the world which doesn't know the first thing about living tell you how to live. And isn't that true? That suddenly we have been conformed by what the world tells us we should be doing, and how we should think, instead of going back to the advice giver, which is the Heavenly Father, and says, how do we do this?

Because this isn't working out for me. This thing, this life thing that's teaching me, I want some really good, solid advice, Dad. Tell me how it works. And it says, you let the world which doesn't know the first thing about living tell you how to live.

[5 : 45] You filled your lungs with polluted unbelief, and then exhaled disobedience. And maybe that's an issue that's hard-hitting for us this morning, because disobedience is tough.

It breaks down relationship. We all did it. All of us doing what we felt like doing, when we felt like doing it, all of us in the same boat.

And you see, that is so true, isn't it? If we're taught by the world, we get those lines, and you hear it as well as I do, and in fact, I'm in danger of hearing myself again and again, look after yourself.

It's all about you. Go out and make loads of money, and then you'll be okay. Be secure. Don't be generous. Do you want, get what you want, when you want it.

It's your right. It's my rights. That's what takes precedent. Express yourself however and wherever you want, and never mind anybody else.

[6 : 57] That's what the world says. And yet our Heavenly Father says, it's a wonder God didn't lose his temper. It is a wonder.

And if we're his fathers, we know how close that gets on occasions, when our kids rebel against us, when we can't see a way through, when they're not listening. And we stand this morning as children of God, and it's a wonder that God doesn't lose his temper, and do away with the whole lot of us. Instead, immense in mercy, and with an incredible love, it says here in Scripture, he embraced us. He took our sin, dead lives, and made us alive in Christ.

He did all of this on his own, with no help from us. Isn't that what a loving father looks like? A caring father? A father that wants best for us?

You see, we talk about our Heavenly Father, and as if it's somewhere out there. But in Scripture, it says this morning, that God has us where he wants us, with all the time in the world, and the next, to shower grace and kindness upon us, in Jesus Christ.

[8 : 11] And I read that, and I thought, he's got all the time. And I think for me, and I don't know whether it was for you, on those times that I've said, God's not listening, God doesn't hear me, whatever, I think it's an issue of communication on my part, because I think I've been so preoccupied.

What is the times when I've had to stop and listen to God, to my Heavenly Father? It's always been in the crisis times. It's when there's a crisis with the kids, there's a crisis with this, there's a crisis at work, something's gone wrong, something's happened.

That's the time I turn and say, Dad, I need some advice. And he's patiently waiting there for us. Wouldn't it be great, if we did that 24-7, and not just in the crisis times?

Show me how this works, Lord. Show me how this works in my everyday life. It's God's gift from start to finish. We don't play the major role.

Are we ready to join in with the good works that he has gotten ready for us? You see, we need to acknowledge, we need to respond, we need to listen. I hate that word.

[9 : 27] We do it as humans about submit, but sometimes we submit to what our dad wants, because he wants what's best for us. Not an earthly dad. He wants what's best for us as well, I pray.

I pray we've had that relationship. If we haven't, but get rid of our heavenly father, wants what's best for us. And all we have to do is ask, and make that relationship. You know, some of the best things I

did with my dad, because it equipped me to help others.

I don't always get it right, but my dad told me how to use the tools. And my sense is for Christians sometimes, that we want to use the tools, but we never got past the Fisher-Price stuff.

You know, it's that little plastic saw that we take out, and that little plastic screwdriver. And actually, God wants to say, our heavenly father says, actually, I want you to use the power tools.

I want you to use the big stuff. I want you to use the stuff that really makes a difference. But I can't teach you unless you listen, and you learn, and you walk closely with me.

[10:40] And I love the power tools. I think as guys we do, we love to use the adventure of doing that. And it amazes me, in this series about freedom, I want to learn everything that my heavenly father has to teach me.

But it's about relationships. And so that comes back to us. And I've got to ask you this morning, what is your character like? Because a lot of part of relationships, if we have an all-loving father, what is our relationship like to make this work?

It's not a one-way ticket. And some of the times that I have disconnected with my heavenly father is the times that I have been stubborn, the times that I've been suspicious, the times that I've been self-conscious, the times that I've been dismissive.

You may have a few problems with relationship. In the reading from Zephaniah, it says, don't be afraid, dear Zion. Don't despair.

Your God is present among you, a strong warrior to save you, happy to lead you back, happy to lead you back.

[11:55] You see, the picture I have is I don't have God chasing after me. He wants to come. He wants me to come back.

It's my choice to come back to him in relationship. He's not chasing after us all the way. He's always there. He's the constant. And yet, so often we lose the relationship.

I don't know about you as parents. Friends, what was the day when your child stopped hugging you outside of the school gates? What was the day that your child stopped kissing you and saying goodbye, Dad, in front of their mates?

What was the day when you didn't get that turning around and going, I love you, as they went into school? You know, because I know that so often we see, don't we, the door gets slammed, you get a grunt and that's what you get.

And many of us were there. Do you know what? I may be unfortunate, but, you know, my son never stops telling me how much he loves me.

[13:10] Even at the school gates, even in front of his mates, even at university, you know, even in front of our dad, dad is cool. Breaks me every time. Isn't that a relationship we want with our heavenly father?

That we're not afraid? I'm so lucky. Those of us, those who wait on the Lord, those who are there with him, will renew their strength.

That they will rise up with wings like eagles. They run, they won't be weary. They shall walk, they shall not faint. As a father, I knew what it would be like.

What's it like when your kids stop telling you things? What's it like when they stop communicating?

What is it like when they stop asking for stuff? It's painful. Father God knows that and he longs to be in relationship.

But there's one thing that I sense as a dad that I know I want to keep my kids in relationship with me.

[14:14] and I find one of the easiest things is yeah, let's just hit that is are you okay team?

Thanks. I find the one thing is to embarrass your kids is dad dancing.

Here's the music and you're there. You're out for the evening and the music comes on. Guys, and we're there, aren't we? We're there with the flares.

We're there with the teardrop colors and we're in that place. And have you noticed? The thumbs come up. You're there?

You can almost smell the high karate. We're there. And your eyes are closed. And you're back there, aren't you? You're back there in 1977.

You were 15 and you had the world at your feet. Yes. And then you open an eye and you see your children.

[15 : 22] It's dad dancing. And worse still, you see your wife or your carer or your husband who is going.

You're our native New Yorker. Thank you team. Dad dancing. Dad dancing. The thing is, I want to assure you, is that our Heavenly Father will never, ever embarrass you.

He won't get onto the dance floor. He won't do the stupid thing. In fact, if anything, our Heavenly Father is the one where our kids say, it's really cool to have a dad like that.

It's really cool to do the stuff. It's really cool to be the Jesus people who want to party, who want to know what the presence of God actually looks like.

You know, I am not ashamed. There's a thing, I think, Delirious, I am not ashamed of the gospel. I am not ashamed of the one I love. You know, and maybe this morning, just as I come into land, we're going to think a little bit.

[16 : 38] If you haven't asked him, if you've maybe stopped telling him, thank you, if maybe we've stopped telling our Heavenly Father that we want him to be part of every part of our day, maybe if we've stopped asking him in the everyday to say, can you give me some advice on this, Dad?

Can you help me with what I'm doing? Can you help me to reach the thousands of people that we're called to reach? Can you help me share my faith? Can you help me be a witness to you in what I do in the everyday?

Can you do that? Because I know that you won't embarrass me and I know what you've shown me will be cool. Perhaps this morning, maybe it's been a long time since you said to God, I missed you.

Maybe it's been a long time since you've said, I've actually listened to you and I want to know.

Maybe it's a bit of a time since you've said, actually I want you to advise me, Dad, into what part I do in my life and how I run my life and how I lead my life.

Maybe I haven't trusted but I'm open to hear. And most importantly, Dad, I want to say thank you. I want to say thank you for every part that you've done in my life.

[17 : 49] It's my Heavenly Father and I want more. The thing is, I can't find a better clip than Mr Tesco from last year. Mr Tesco did a brilliant clip and what they did is they recorded people saying thank you to their dads.

While we watch this clip, let's just think about maybe a fresh saying thank you to our Heavenly Father. How we say thank you and why we're saying thank you.

Can we just run the clip, get your tissues ready. Thank you.