

What a Father is Supposed to Do

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[0 : 00] Father's Day. Recently I came across this statement that was written on a flyer advertising a Father's Day event.! It read, Mother's Day is always a big thing, and rightfully so.

! Where would our world be without faithful moms? But then Father's Day for many is a big nothing. And a number of years ago I heard a gentleman who was a part of our church lamenting about the difference between Mother's Day and Father's Day as we tend to celebrate it locally.

And he said, for Mother's Day the streets are lined with people selling nice baskets for moms. But for Father's Day the only thing that's lining the street is people selling crabs.

I mean it's true. You lick on the streets and that's what people are doing at the moment. But you know what? For obvious reasons, fathers are not to be celebrated, and really should not be celebrated, to the same extent that mothers are.

And that's for obvious reasons. I mean very, very obvious reasons. So obvious I won't even mention those reasons this morning. But I believe that generally speaking, fathers are wrongly marginalized.

[1 : 28] And I don't think fathers are sufficiently celebrated. This is certainly true in our nation. And I say this because I think an honest assessment of the problems we face in the church and in our nation will show that they are really the result of problems that flow from the homes.

And fathers are both primarily the cause and the key to fixing these problems. When the nation of Israel was backslidden and unfaithful to God and steeped in idolatry, the Lord did not commission a study or appoint a committee.

Instead, He spoke a word to the nation. And the very last thing that God spoke to the nation of Israel is found in the closing words of the book of Malachi.

And what we see is that God said that He would send a prophet. He said He would send a prophet who would turn hearts of fathers back to their children and the hearts of children back to their fathers.

This was God's solution for a backslidden nation that was steeped in idolatry. And for more than 400 years, those words comprised the last word that Israel recalled God speaking to them.

[2 : 55] And there is no doubt that the fear of God and the service of God that generally marked our nation back in 1973 when we were founded as a nation, they have significantly decreased.

And today I believe that part of our solution as a nation is the same solution that the Lord spoke to the nation of Israel when they were in similar straits as we are.

We need to have the hearts of fathers turned back to children and the hearts of children turned to their fathers.

And I believe that we especially need to have the hearts of fathers turned to their teen children and the hearts of teens turned to their fathers.

I think younger children generally are more closely supervised by both father and mother. But when they grow up and they move into the teen years, fathers and mothers tend to withdraw and tend to allow them to just grow.

[4 : 09] And as they say, spread their wings and experience life. And this is so regrettable because the teen years are the years when peer pressure is really at its greatest.

Many teens begin to face worldly temptations like premarital sex and drug abuse or drug use and the lure of the world.

A world that lies about the good life while withholding information about addiction and shipwrecked lives. They don't share the stories of the young girl who gets pregnant or was had to have an abortion.

Or the young man who is now an unmarried father and has to go off to work. Or worse, has contracted AIDS. During the teen years, a lot of our teens are beginning to turn their hearts and

minds to big decisions like career.

And some are turning their minds as well to boyfriends and girlfriends and dating. And this is the time when so many fathers in particular are withdrawing.

[5 : 21] A time when they are so needed, they are exiting from their children's lives and assuming that they will make the right decisions or hoping they will make the right decisions.

By God's grace, I would want our experience to be different here at Kingdom Life Church. And by God's grace, I believe that we can have a different experience if we would look to God and trust His ways and obey His ways.

Our desire is to see fathers truly sit in the gates of their children's lives. And especially during the teen years when they are so vulnerable. And as I was preparing this message, I recognized that it would be falling on the ears of some single mothers.

Some who have to do double duty. Some who have to be both mother and father where fathers are absent. And though I will address fathers primarily this morning, I want to say to you single mothers and really to all of us, that we can benefit from this message this morning if we would tune our ears to hear what the Lord would say.

We can receive and we can heed these words this morning. So please follow along as I read from Deuteronomy chapter 6. We'll be reading the first nine verses of Deuteronomy 6.

[6 : 59] Now this is the commandment, the statutes and the rules. The Lord your God commanded me to teach you. That you may do them in the land to which you are going over to possess it.

That you may fear the Lord your God, you and your son and your son's son, by keeping all His statutes and His commandments, which I command you all the days of your life.

And that your days may be long. Hear therefore, O Israel, and be careful to do them. That it may go well with you.

And that you may multiply greatly as the Lord, the God of your fathers, has promised you. And a land flowing with milk and honey.

Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.

[8 : 10] And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children.

And shall talk of them when you sit in your house. And when you walk by the way. And when you lie down. And when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand.

And they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

Let's pray together. Father, we are so grateful this morning to be able to gather in this place. Lord, we thank you for the saving work of Jesus Christ that we sang about this morning.

Lord, we thank you, Lord, that anyone who calls upon his name will be saved. And Lord, we thank you, those of us who have trusted in Christ that you have indeed saved us.

[9 : 20] And we thank you for the privilege of being able to gather in this place and to sit under the authority and instruction of your word. Lord, I pray that you would speak to all of our hearts.

I pray that you would speak to the hearts of fathers in particular. And Lord, for some of us, we will be hearing again what we have heard before. Would you cause us to hear fresh?

And Lord, those of us who will be hearing these words for the first time. Would you cause us to posture our hearts and to receive them as your very word?

Father, we pray that you would build this church. We pray that you would build families. We pray, Lord, that the full effect of your word will come to bear on the fathers and in the families of this local church.

Father, we pause to pray this morning because we know that only you can do this. And we ask and trust that you will do it. In Jesus' name. Amen.

[10 : 30] The background to the text that we just read is that Israel was redeemed out of Egypt. And they had wandered some 40 years in the desert.

And God had it so that they would wander for 40 years because he wanted the unfaithful generation that came out of Egypt to die in the wilderness. And here in Deuteronomy 6, what we have is we have the nation of Israel standing on the doorstep.

They're standing on the threshold of the promised land. And what Moses is doing in the book of Deuteronomy is he is reciting again for them. He is repeating the law. That's what it literally means

in Deuteronomy.

To repeat the law. He is repeating the law to them again. God's laws and God's commandments to remind them how they are to live when they get into the promised land.

When God will constitute them as a nation. It's a kind of review before the test. That's what is happening here in Deuteronomy.

[11 : 36] Now when we consider this passage this morning, in addition to considering the content of it, we also need to consider who the primary audience is because that is instructive for us.

When we consider the individuals to whom these words were primarily directed. And here's what we see when we look at these nine verses in particular.

We see that although the Lord directs these words to the entire nation of Israel. As seen in these words, hear O Israel. Repeated two times in verses three and four.

The charge really focuses on fathers. And it's very clear that he has fathers primarily in view. And the way we know this is in verse two.

It says that you may fear the Lord your God. You and your son and your son's sons. And then in verse three, he talks about them inheriting the land that was promised to their fathers.

[12 : 40] The land that the Lord promised to their fathers. And so when we see this word you in the passage, it clearly is referring to the fathers.

And I think as we bear this in mind, as we believe that these words are as true today as they were on the day that they were first spoken.

Here's the enduring truth that these verses convey to us today. Here's what these verses say to us today.

God calls fathers to wholeheartedly love him and to raise their children to do the same. That's what Moses was saying to the fathers who were assembled before him on that day as they were preparing to go into the promised land.

And that's what God is saying to us this morning. That he calls fathers, primarily fathers, to wholeheartedly love him and to raise their children to do the same.

[13 : 51] And again, although this word comes to all of us as it came to all of Israel, it primarily comes to those of us who are fathers. God has primarily called us to model wholehearted love for him and then to raise our children to do the same.

This truth about the primary responsibility of fathers sounds simple, but really it is quite a profound truth. It is profound because God hinged Israel's realization of the good promises upon the faithfulness of fathers.

Their faithfulness to love him and to be fully devoted to him and to raise their children to do the same. It sounds simple, but it is very profound because the Lord says, if you will do this, if you will wholeheartedly love me, if you will raise your children to do the same, then you will experience these many blessings, these good promises.

You will inherit this land that is productive and this land that is figuratively flowing with milk and honey.

Just a sign of agricultural abundance and provision for the nation. In verses 1 through 3, the Lord says, you will experience long life and prosperity in the land, but it depends on you obeying and doing what I say.

[15 : 31] Now this morning, I want us to consider these verses and I want to identify from this passage three responsibilities that fathers are primarily called to.

And I want to commend them to all fathers. I commend them to myself this morning as well. The responsibility of fathers is seen in three particular ways, I would say, in these verses.

The first one is to love God wholeheartedly. To love God wholeheartedly. That's the first responsibility that God calls fathers to. To love God wholeheartedly.

And we consider verses 4 and 5 in this passage. In light of verses 1 through 3, in a sense they seem illogical. They don't seem like they naturally should follow.

Notice again what Moses says in verses 1 through 3. He says, He says, Now this is the commandment, the statutes and the rules that the Lord your God commanded me to teach you.

[16 : 44] That you may do them in the land to which you are going over to possess it. That you may fear the Lord your God, you and your son and your son's son, by keeping all his statutes and his commandments, which I command you all the days of your life.

And that your days may be long. Hear therefore, O Israel, and be careful to do them, that it may go well with you, and that you may multiply greatly, as the Lord, the God of your fathers, has promised you in a land flowing with milk and honey.

Now when you read words like that, it seems normal that a list of observances would follow. The do's and the don'ts.

When he says, here's the commandment, here are the statutes, here's what I want you to do. It seems like, okay, he's preparing us for a list, but we don't find a list.

He doesn't tell us, do this and do this and lay out all these do's and don'ts for us. Instead, what we find in verses 4 and 5 is the Lord addresses our hearts.

[17 : 56] He addresses the heart and he says, I am the one true God, so love me with all your heart and soul and might.

In other words, love me with your whole being, with every aspect of your person. I think that's instructive for us. That we don't find a list after he says, here are the commandments.

What we find is God says, I want all of you. I want your full devotion, I want your full heart. Verses 4 and 5 are what have come to be known as the Shema.

S-H-E-M-A. Because that's the first Hebrew word in that sentence. It's the word here.

We would say here and they in Hebrew would say Shema and it became known as the Shema. And it's the confession that God is one, that he is the only true God.

[18 : 59] And logically, if God is the only true God, then the heart of his people should be fully devoted to him and not be like other nations who would share their affections and share their worship between multiple gods whom they acknowledge and whom they served.

But for us, if the God of the universe is one and he is, then logically, he alone deserves the affections and worship of our heart.

So again, we see that the Lord begins with not external duties and commands, but he begins with our heart. During his early ministry, Jesus was confronted by a Pharisee and asked this question, what is the greatest commandment in the law?

And Jesus answered, this is found in Matthew 22, 37 and 38. Jesus said to him, you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.

This is the great and first commandment. Now it's important to note that what Jesus did there is Jesus recited Deuteronomy 6 and verse 5.

[20 : 20] To this Pharisee who said, I want to know the greatest commandment in the law, Jesus recited Deuteronomy 6 and 5.

Now the reason this should be important for us is that these words, Deuteronomy 6 and 5, were spoken by Moses some 40 years after the Ten Commandments.

And when asked this question, Jesus did not go to any of the Ten Commandments to answer.

Jesus goes to these words of Moses and he says, You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.

And Jesus goes on to explain why Deuteronomy 6 and 5 is the greatest and first commandment. He continues in verse 39, he says, And the second is like it.

You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets. And for the second greatest commandment, Jesus quotes Leviticus 19 verse 18.

[21 : 33] So when Jesus is addressing this man and answering his question, what he helps us to see is that these two are the two greatest commandments because all of the duties towards God and man, or God and neighbor, hang on those two.

And therefore this is the first responsibility of fathers that the Lord lays upon them to obey the first and greatest commandment to love God with their entire being.

And again, this is the only logical and worthy response to the God of the universe who has no equals. Now when we think about it, this is really a most interesting commandment.

And it's a most difficult commandment because it is a command to love. And I believe if you consider it, you would agree.

See, it is because God is not demanding mere obedience to the law from us. See, we could do that. We could manage to do that. Once he tells us the things that we could kind of like go and do those things.

[22 : 55] But God wants our hearts. And the truth is, if he truly has our hearts in full devotion, then we will obey what he calls us to do.

And this is why he addresses our hearts first. He says, give me your heart wholeheartedly. Before he tells us, these are the things I want you to do.

And let me try to explain it this way. As a husband, it is far easier for me to simply do things for my wife.

I can do them and I can be begrudging. I can be even complaining. But I still go through the motions and I do them.

But when I love her, the way I should love her as a husband, when I truly do that, it's easier to do those things that I'm called to do.

[23 : 56] I do those things without complaint. I would do those things without begrudging. I would do those things joyfully because I truly love her. And the same is true with the Lord.

When God has our hearts in a wholehearted way, then his commandments aren't grievous. His commandments are desirable to us.

And so this first commandment is very different from the ten commandments. Don't make graven images.

Don't murder. Don't steal. Don't break the Sabbath. There are many people who do those things today. But they can do those things without truly loving God with their whole hearts.

Because that is more just outward conformity. And so let me ask you this morning, do you love the Lord, fathers, with your whole heart?

[25 : 05] God calls us to obey him from a heart that loves him fully. And this morning we want to consider, how are we doing? How are we doing, fathers, in loving the Lord with our whole hearts?

What other passions are you aware of that divide your affections for the Lord?

Often times we divide our passions and affections in pursuit of the very things that God has told us will only truly come to us when we fully love him.

And we need to consider, is that true of me this morning? You may wonder, as I do at times, why would God call us to love him with our whole hearts?

And I say this because if we're honest, we'll all say, I don't do that fully. But yet he calls us to love him with our whole hearts.

[26 : 17] He calls us to wholehearted devotion. And yet, if we are honest, we will acknowledge, I don't do that. And I think if we're even more honest, we would even go further and say, I don't even expect and hope that in this lifetime, I will be able to do that.

So why does God call us to that? Why does he even call us to that? I think God calls us to that because he wants us to see our neediness.

He wants us to see our absolute hopelessness in and of ourselves to do what he has called us to do. But that's not to cause us to then resign and say, well, okay, I can't do it.

And therefore, you know, I will just check out and say, Jesus not only paid it all, but Jesus did it all. No, that's not what he is calling us to do. He's calling us to recognize that.

But he's also calling us to make grace-motivated efforts to grow as we recognize that we're not fully loving the Lord as we should.

[27 : 36] We can make that a matter of prayer. We can cry out to God, God help me to grow in my affection, grow in my love for you. We can begin to use the various means that God has given to us to cause us to grow in our affection for him.

And you know, one of the ways that we can grow in our affections, practically speaking, for a person, we grow in our love for people when we consider their love for us.

You know, Scripture says that we know love because God first loved us. And so, when we consider growing in our love for the Lord, the logical thing for us to do is to consider God's love for us.

Consider God's love for us displayed on Calvary's cross, sending his son, living a life we could never live, perfectly before him, and dying a death we deserve to die.

And as a result, God is able to forgive repenting sinners and treat them the way they don't deserve to be treated, giving them grace and giving them mercy.

[28 : 58] And as we meditate on that, as we grow in our understanding and conviction of that, our heart's devotion for the Lord is going to increase. And so I encourage us this morning, as we desire to grow in our affections for the Lord, let us reflect on Calvary.

Let us reflect on what God did for us through Jesus Christ. So the first call, the first responsibility to fathers is to love God wholeheartedly.

But what Jewish history has shown us is that it will take more than writing these verses out. It will take more than placing scripture and religious artifacts all around our children.

Wearing them on our bodies or putting them in our homes it takes more than that. Instead what it takes is it takes wholehearted devotion it takes meditating on God's words consistently it takes modeling it before our children so that we are positioned to teach them diligently.

And again this may seem fanatical but this is a natural outflow of a wholly devoted life and a heart that meditates on God's word. And so fathers this morning these words these instructions for us to teach our children they call for sober reflection and honest assessment in our lives.

And I want to ask this morning in what ways are we diligently teaching our children? And see this is not just teaching them but diligently teaching them in what ways are we diligently teaching our children?

[41 : 28] Are we seizing the moments of everyday life? Driving in the car? Going to school coming from school going to church walking in the mall shopping in the food store walking in the yard whatever activity whether at home or away from home are we seizing these moments and even asking the Lord to help us to see the teaching moment in the moment that we are able to impress upon our children what it means to have wholehearted devotion to God.

Last week as we dedicated a baby one of the things that I said and I say it to parents each time our children will learn more from our examples than they will from our words.

they will learn far more from our examples than from our words. Our words really are to confirm the example that we have already modeled before them.

They should not see a disconnect between what we say and what we do what we say and how we live they are to see consistency between them. Our words are to be a reinforcement of this teaching by modeling that we live before our children and so we need to consider this morning whether our lives are a consistent example of teaching and modeling for our children.

Are we building a home a home environment that is marked by devotion for God? What do the environments of our homes say fathers about a wholehearted devotion to God and a commitment to diligently teach our children?

[43 : 36] What were the TV programs and the movies that we watch and the books and the magazines that we read and the music that we enjoy and the places that we go on the internet?

What would they say about what we are teaching our children? What we are modeling for our children? How we engage this life?

How we hold on to this life? Are we communicating to our children that this is it and that we have to make the most of this or are we helping them to see that this world and this life will soon pass and only what is done for Christ will last?

sadly some men and this is an increasing problem today some men including Christian men who have this primary responsibility of marking their homes as being devoted to God are actively viewing and engaging in pornography and engaging in other inappropriate material and some in the very confines of their homes and that's not to say that it's okay to do it elsewhere it's wrong on all scores but it's doubly wrong in this environment where the Lord says we have to be instructing these children we have to be teaching these children where he's saying to us you are to be having a heart not just for your son but for your son's son so that it may go well with you and yet there are some who are engaged in this sinful practice that degrades women and degrades sexuality both of which God has given to us as gifts and this morning if it happens to be you you need to cry out to almighty

God and ask him to grant you repentance to grant you conviction and to grant you grace to change to grant you grace that you would have the resolve that anything that you would do you would want your children to do nothing less and nothing more that you would live your life in a consistent way whether in their presence or out of their presence that if you're out of their presence and they show up there's nothing that you need to adjust nothing that you need to change this is how we teach our children fathers are called not just to do it but they're called to do it diligently be so how did Israel do how did

[46 : 52] Israel do with these instructions that God gave them well most of us know Israel failed Israel continues to live under the effects of that failure to this very day though they repeated the shema two times a day though they wore phylacteries and even added things that God didn't tell them to do they still failed and why did they fail they failed because they did not love God wholeheartedly and they did not have his word on their hearts and they did not teach his word to

their children and their failures and disobedience caused them to be expelled out of the land the land that God gave them because he expelled other people out of it because their sin as scripture says had come up to him God expelled them and exiled them from the land because they failed let's turn with me to the book of

Malachi the very last book in the Old Testament Malachi chapter 4 chapter very short book and it details how Israel miserably failed the priests weren't faithful and the people weren't faithful over successive!

generations fathers failed to love God and to teach their children to do the same and we read these three verses which conclude the book starting in verse 4 Malachi 4 and verse 4 remember the law of my servant Moses the statutes and the rules that I commanded him at Horeb for all Israel behold I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes and he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers lest I come and strike the land with the decree of utter destruction in other translations like the NIV and the King James version and the New American Standard version the last word in Malachi and essentially the last word of the

Old Testament is the word curse it is the word curse it's very instructive when you consider starting in Genesis what God intended I think what God is saying is that that is where things will end up if he does not send Elijah the prophet at the very beginning of the gospel of Luke Luke identifies John as the Elijah who was to come in fulfillment of Malachi 4 4 through 5 and here's what Luke writes in verses 16 and 17 and he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God and he will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah to turn the hearts of fathers to the children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just to make ready for the

Lord a people prepared as the preparer of the way John the Baptist came to point to Christ he pointed to Christ as the lamb who takes away the sin of the world and Christ came and he lived a perfect life obeying the law to every degree obeying this word that we read in Deuteronomy chapter 6 where he loved the Lord with his whole heart where he did not fall short to the smallest degree lived a perfect life pleased the Lord the Lord affirmed this is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased and then he died a substitutionary death on the cross for sinners didn't die his own death he had no sin to die for but he died on the behalf of sinners to enable them to be reconciled to [51 : 35] God and to each other and to be forgiven and when fathers while fathers remain the critical component of the healing of nations as they turn their hearts to their children and as children turn their hearts to them without Christ it would be the same for us as it was for Israel without Christ we will fall short every single time and without Christ there will be that looming curse that hangs over us because of our disobedience but Jesus Christ has come and his blessings now can flow as far as the curse is found and this morning he is our only hope fathers to fulfill these words that we find in Deuteronomy 6 Jesus is the only hope that we have to fulfill words not that we will in and of ourselves fulfill those words but he is our only hope that he has fulfilled them and

God has credited that fulfillment to our account that's how we fulfill it we don't fulfill it because there's this promise that he will give us all the grace to do it knowing in and of ourselves we can do it but he has done it where we fall short he has succeeded!

we can say to them humbly and honestly I have failed I have fallen short in this call to love the Lord with my whole heart and you will too you will too and we have the same hope together our only hope is in Jesus Christ but it is a good hope it is a hope that we all have who put our trust in him Jesus is the only one who was faithful to do what we could never do and that is to love the Lord with all of our beings perfectly and brothers and sisters this is the hope for our families this is the hope for our churches this is the hope for our nation men and women who recognize their absolute inability to fulfill what God has called them to in a way that is acceptable to him because with God 99% is not good enough 99.999% is not good enough the only thing that's good enough for him is perfection and that's found in only one person that is in Jesus Christ and a vital personal relationship with him and so that's our hope this morning I know a lot of fathers today will be encouraged but there will be many as they hear what fathers are called to do and be and they recognize honestly that they fall short well see our hope is renewed in Jesus Christ where though we have fallen short he has succeeded let's pray together