

Father's Day

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Date: 15 June 2025

Preacher: Matthew Garrett

[0 : 00] So, so good to see everybody. Welcome to all of our regular folks and the visitors we had. What a great day to be together. It's Father's Day. Happy Father's Day to all the dads here.

And we've been studying straight through 1 and 2 Peter, but decided we'd take a break from that today and just kind of think some about Father's Day.

What does that mean? The Bible has much to say about that. And of course, God himself is the original Father and he's our only true Father. The scripture says, though my family abandons me, my mother and my father abandon me, you will not.

And so he is our great Father. Let's take a moment to pray and then we'll dive into our sermon. Lord, it's a blessing to be together, to worship you together.

And so we come here on this Father's Day thanking you that you are the great Father. Thank you, God. And then, Lord, we want today to honor our fathers and give you thanks and worship.

[1 : 11] And so guide us in our conversation, in our thoughts about your word. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Well, next slide, please. Recently, I think those pictures kind of summarize, you know, the difference between Father's Day and Mother's Day.

So, recently, I heard some kids say, the only difference between Father's Day and Mother's Day is that on Father's Day, you don't have to spend as much money on the gift.

And I thought, what Father's Day gift, right? So, anyway, there certainly aren't differences there. And I also read this some time ago.

This is a true thing. I don't remember where I read it. But there's this big prison in California. And there's a ministry near that, that works for that prison, that if the prisoners request a greeting card, like at Christmas or whatever, the ministry tries to provide greeting cards that they can send.

[2 : 25] So this, it's a huge prison. So on a particular Mother's Day, they requested 1,000 Mother's Day cards in this prison. And they were provided.

That same year, Father's Day came. They requested six Father's Day cards. Now, I think there's two ways to understand that.

One way is, maybe we all know that Mama is the glue that holds the family together. Mama is the one who is kind and listens, and she's there, and you can cry on her shoulder, and she'll nurse you. I mean, Mom has put a lot in us. And so, you know, that's a part of it. But then maybe it is more evidence of this. Most guys who end up in prison didn't have a father in their life.

Estimates are somewhere between 70 to 90 percent of convicted felons in prison had no father figure. So, I look at it that way, and I say, see guys, it shows how important that there were only six men that had a father image, and all those other guys didn't have a father.

[3 : 42] So, dads, what you're doing, whether you realize it or not, it's really important, and it's making a lasting difference. I had to think a lot about my own dad as I was preparing today's comments, and I thought back to Mr. Tightwad, and I thought about when I was a kid, and I'd go to him, and now, you young kids won't believe how much you could buy for 50 cents back in the day when I was young, but I'd go to my father sometimes, something I really wanted, and I'd say, Dad, can I have 50 cents?

And he would launch into a story. And the story would be something about when I was your age, I got up before it was daylight.

I had to walk out, didn't matter if it was cold, whatever, had to walk out to the barn with a lantern, had to milk the cow, and then split some firewood and bring it in for my mama to start a fire in the wood stove, and finally, I could have a little breakfast.

And so if you want some money, you need to get a job. Now, I'm seven years old, right? You need to get a job, son. And at the end of that story, I would have almost forgotten I even asked for money, and he'd walk on out of the room.

So, then a strange thing happened. I started having children, and this man that I've never known before was a grandfather. I was like, who is this man?

[5 : 15] Because Christmas would come, and he would ask Becky and me, what do you think your kids want for Christmas? You know, I'd like to get them something nice. And I'd think, why don't you give them the speech?

And then, finally, when each of my three children were able to buy a home, he gave each of them a pretty nice monetary gift to help them with the down payment and reduce their monthly payments and all.

And I wanted to snatch that money out of their hands. I'm going to say, that is my money. That is all of my 50 cents I never got.

But, you know, times have really changed. I mean, it's amazing how they've changed. Now, again, kids, I'm not making this up, but when I was in high school, in my whole high school, there were only three kids who drove themselves to school.

All the rest of us rode the school bus. All of us. I mean, can you imagine my last day of my senior year, I'm riding on a nasty old school bus with a bunch of little kids all around me and stuff, but we did that.

[6 : 28] I wasn't the only high school kid on there. Times have changed so much that I heard about a father that went to his teenage son and said, son, you think I could borrow your car Friday night?

I said, I want to take my boss out to dinner and I really like to impress him. So, things really have changed a lot in finances and kids and money and so forth.

But today, we're going to thank God for our fathers and we're going to honor God. And I hope to do two things in this sermon. One, if you are a dad, I'd like to encourage you to do your best to be the best father you can be.

And that would include if you're a grandfather. So, I'm also preaching to myself. And then, for all of us, I'd like to say, we need to say thank you to our fathers.

And we'll talk about why that is. Now, I got to thinking that maybe there's, I don't know how many categories you could come up with, but I thought of like four categories of fathers that you might have one of these four.

[7 : 43] One would be the absent father. It's amazing in our society and in the world how many kids never even know their father.

Or they might know him, but they never see him. They grow up in a single parent home or they grow up really with almost no one. And, you know, that's a very tough situation.

An absent father. But another category is to have a father that's there, but he's a terrible father. That might be worse than having an absent father.

A terrible father who is abusive and mean and alcoholic. I have a good friend who lives in Sanford and he doesn't tell everybody these stories, but we've been friends a long time and he told me, he's told me stories of seeing his father when he was a little boy standing on his mother in the kitchen and slapping her in the face while he was crazy drunk.

And he's told me stories of hiding in the woods all night until his father sobered up. And, I mean, so a terrible father is probably worse than not even having a father around.

[8 : 55] But then, most of us, our fathers are in one of these two categories, I think. Your average Joe, good enough dad. I think that's where I am as a father.

I think that's where my father was. Kind of the average okay father. And then there's a few of the super fathers that, I mean, they just, they were born to be a dad and they just really, as much as humanly possible, they seemed to do things just right.

I don't know which of those you had. But today, I'm going to give you, if I can have the next slide, I'm going to give you three reasons why you should say thank you no matter which of these fathers. Now, I'm also going to say that for some of you, you may never have known your real dad or he died when you were very young or he left when you were very young, whatever it is.

And in that case, if another man filled that role in your life, that's the one you maybe need to say thank you to. If another, maybe it was an uncle, maybe it was a stepfather, maybe whatever.

[10:07] If another man filled that role, that's probably the one that you need to say thank you to. But we need to say thank you and I think we need to do it for three reasons.

Let's look at the first reason. Next slide. The first reason would be just simply to say, Dad, I thank you because you worked hard and you provided. And the Bible has something to say about that in 1 Timothy 5, 8.

If anyone does not provide for his relatives and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

Wow, that's pretty strong words. If you won't provide for the members of your family, you shouldn't even call yourself a follower of Jesus.

He says, that'd be worse than an unbeliever. Why? Because unbelievers probably will provide for their family. And what do I mean by provide? I don't mean you have to, you know, get them a Corvette when they're 16.

[11:11] I'm meaning that we're talking a roof over the head, food on the table, some clothes on their back, some medical care when they need it, and, you know, that is the thing that fathers especially are tasked with.

Mothers, of course, especially in modern society, are very much involved also in helping that happen, but mothers have always worked side by side with fathers to make sure the family's taken care of.

Now, I've got to say a thank you for my father. He was really good in this category. My dad died two years ago. He was 97. And so, I got to spend a lot of years with him and talk to him many, many times, more than most people get to hang out with their dad.

And, boy, all those teenage years until I was about 25, I didn't even like him. I avoided him. But after about 25, we got to be better and better friends.

And he would tell me stories other than the big story about no money. But I can tell you that when he was young, he served in World War II in the Army.

[12:27] And he got out of there and for a little while he was, I'm talking about him being a hard worker to provide. He worked as a farmer and like Mike Douglas back there, he raised cows.

He also raised pigs. And then he worked some as a fireman. We have some folks here who have been volunteer firemen. And then he worked some as a truck driver. We've got some truck drivers in the church.

And then he worked some as a logger harvesting timber. And then he and his father went in together and started a little country store. And he was doing that okay.

And then I was born and a little kid and used to love to go in the store. And he still wouldn't let me have any of the candy or anything. Anyway, then he became a believer.

He got saved. He started being a follower of Jesus and God started working in his heart and he felt called to ministry. So after all those things and here he was, I guess, early 30s, he left everything, sold the store, everything, to go to Bible college to become a pastor.

[13:33] Now, as a minister, he never made much money. But somehow, he worked hard and God provided and we always had a roof over our heads, food on the table, I had some clothes.

Kids still won't believe it, I don't believe it when I look at my closet. I always had two pairs of shoes. One was Sunday shoes. That's the only time you wore those. And the rest was your everyday, go to school, play, everything else.

And then the ones I had outgrown, the old tennis shoes with the holes in them, that was my play in the yard and run through the woods. I guess I had three pairs. Okay. So the old ones that were falling apart, that was my play hard shoes.

But he provided those. How did he make ends meet? Well, could I, my dad would do anything to save a penny because he didn't have any money. And he always cut, I have three brothers, four boys, every Saturday night was haircutting night and he cut all of our hair himself.

Saved a little barbershop money. Anything in the house broke, dad could fix it. I don't know how or why. Anything. I've helped him before when I was a kid. I can remember pulling engines out of cars and completely disassembling them all the way down to the pistons, putting new piston rings on.

[14:55] I don't know how he knew, you know, some of those trucking days or something, he picked up some of that. This one was crazy. I remember once we were the last people I knew to get a color TV. But we finally got one from somewhere.

Maybe somebody in the church had to use one they wanted to get rid of. I don't remember, but wow, a color TV. And it quit working. My father went in and disassembled that color TV. Now, in the old days, if you looked in the back of a television, there were like 75 tubes in there, all different sizes and shapes and wires and all these little soldering connections. I mean, it was a confusing mess.

I don't know how he did it. He took that thing all apart, figured out what to replace, put it back together and it worked. I watched him when I was a kid build his brother's house from scratch, from an empty lot.

I watched him and I was a little kid and I would stand there handing him a hammer occasionally or mostly try to stay out of the way. And he did all of these things as ways to provide for his family. [16:01] He would do whatever he had to do. So I've got to say thank you to my father today for all of that. And I think the most amazing thing, he did all those things before there was YouTube.

If I need to know how to do anything, if you do, if you're like me, I go look it up on YouTube and there's 20 people showing you how to do it. And he, I don't know how he knew, but he would figure it out.

So you should be thankful if your father provided and I'm really thankful that God gave me a father who provided. Well, here's the next reason for saying thank you to your dad.

And that is if he gave you faithful instruction, a lot of advice. Now the scripture talks about that some, Ephesians 6, 4, fathers, do not exasperate your children.

That means don't drive your kids nuts. Don't be always nagging on them, fussing at them, constantly keeping them tense and upset. And don't be that way with them. And he says, instead, bring them up in the training and the instruction of the Lord.

[17:07] Now it's especially meaning you train them in a godly way. You introduce them to Christ. It's especially meaning that. But I think it means all kinds of instruction.

And fathers are constantly, and mothers, we're constantly teaching our kids. And in my mind, I've got all these little tape recordings of my dad telling me stuff.

And I'm sure I have repeated it to my children. And Steve, you're probably repeating this to your kids. Here's some of them. You've heard them before. They're the standard parent talk.

Okay? Here was a good one. I know I've said this. I don't care if everybody else is doing it. You're not going to do it. I don't know how many times I've said this one, or that my daddy said to me, don't forget to check the oil.

Really good advice. Here's one that I wore out. My kids would want to buy something.

[18:11] They've worked a little mowing grass, whatever, and they've earned a little money. And they're going to buy something, and I know it's a ridiculous, stupid expense. So mine is finally, after trying to talk them out of it, I finally say, well, it's your money which means I'm trying to throw a guilt trip on you for going and spending it, but you go ahead, it's your money.

I got that from my father. It works sometimes. Here was a good one. My dad would say, I don't know if I ever said this to my kids, but he would say, well, if you break your leg doing that, don't come running to me.

And I would think, Dad, if I break my leg, how am I going to come running? So anyway, that was one of his standards. Now here was another one. As a preacher's kid, we got invited to so many things that a kid did not want to go to.

We got invited to every church meeting, not only in our church, but in other churches, all kinds of revival meetings, all kinds of family reunions.

If a family in the church was having a family reunion, they often invited the preacher and his family. And this just went on and on. And so often, I just didn't want to go.

[19:29] And my father had this standard line. If I started objecting too much, he would say, let's get this straight. You are going to go to this and you are going to enjoy it.

Do I make myself clear? And he was famous for the, if you ever said why, and he didn't have a good reason, he would say, because I said so.

And, you know, so dad used all of these and he threw in a lot of other stuff with it, like, don't, you know, keep your elbows on the table. Take your elbows off the table.

Don't be leaning over your food like an animal. Wash your face. You haven't combed your hair. Go brush your teeth. I mean, he had a long list.

Back in those days, again, I told you about having Sunday shoes every Saturday night. Go shine your shoes. Go shine your shoes. Today, I guess the shoe polish companies went out of business. [20 : 30] You know, when's the last time anybody polished a pair of shoes? So, anyhow, that was one of his standard things. And so, all of these things, they kind of ring in my mind. And, you know, fathers give a lot of advice.

I think the last ultimate one that my dad would say, and I'm sure I've said it, is, well, you just wait until you have children of your own. It's like, okay, I've said enough here.

You just wait. You're going to find out. Well, fathers give a lot of instruction. They give instruction about relationships and school and work and how to work and dating.

I mean, it just goes on and on. Lots of instruction day after day. How to drive a car. How to do this. How to borrow money. How to, how not to borrow money. Whatever. And for all of this faithful instruction, the scripture adds the phrase, don't exasperate your children.

Now, what I really think that means is don't be overly critical. Dads, it's so easy to criticize. It's really important to praise. To praise.

[21 : 41] To give them a pat on the back. It's just so important. You'll get a lot more, you know the old saying, you'll catch more flies with honey than you do the vinegar. Kids respond a lot more to a pat on the back and encouragement than to always telling them what they're doing wrong.

And don't end up like this. Don't end up like this. I can imagine for some people when they face God one day, some fathers will have to have a confession like I'm going to share with you now.

I took my children to school but I didn't take them to church. I taught them to drink but not to drink living water.

I taught them how to play ball, made sure they were the best. I never taught them how to serve the Lord. I taught them how to fish. I didn't teach them how to be fishers of men.

I made the Lord's Day a family holiday but it was never a holy day. By my example, I taught them that video screens were more important than pages of the Bible.

[22 : 58] I taught them how to text their friends but not how to talk to Jesus who wanted to be their best friend. I handed them the keys to the car but never gave them the keys to the kingdom of God.

I taught them how to make a living but I didn't teach them that Christ makes a life that's worth living. We don't want to end like that.

But today, if your father gave you some good advice at times, you can thank him for that and thank God for that. And then, the last, third reason would be to thank your father if he gave you a godly example.

Now, the number of parents or fathers who did that, you know, obviously as we go through this list, it's getting smaller and smaller. But some of you were blessed like me. Your father gave you a godly example.

What did Paul say to the Corinthians? You know, he had led them to Christ. He had taught them. He had trained them. He had established the church. So for him, they were like spiritual children.

[24 : 06] So Paul said to them in 1 Corinthians 11, 1, follow my example as I follow the example of Christ. I remember about the first time I read that, I thought, Paul, that's awfully arrogant.

How can you say follow your example? But then I realized that's not really what he said. He said, follow my example when you see me doing what Jesus would do.

Isn't that what he's saying? As I follow the example of Christ. I can say that to you and you can say that to me. Follow my example when you see me doing what Jesus would do.

But otherwise, I'm not a good example. So, what does this mean for us? This means that all of us, including me, fathers, we've done some things that we don't want our kids to do.

We don't want them to imitate everything we've done. And I've praised my dad, but I'm also going to tell you that he was far from perfect. He could be moody.

[25 : 11] He could have a quick temper. He was often rather self-centered. He was overly critical.

He was hard to please. But I still thank God for him and why he did all those other things so well.

And then I'm going to add, he did this well too.

He was not a Sunday only Christian. All during the week, he would speak of God. I would see him pray. I would see him read his Bible.

I could see that he was seeking to know this God that he really believed in. So I knew he loved God. And I loved him for this. I knew he loved my mama.

I didn't always think he treated me right. There were times I didn't think he treated her right. But he still, it was obvious he loved her and tried to keep her happy. And then I really knew he loved me as aggravating as we, as I could be, I guess.

[26 : 14] I knew he still loved me. And so I've got to say that I just loved and appreciated him. And my father was one of these guys. He was not one to say, I love you.

I doubt his daddy ever told him the words, I love you. But finally, in his 90s, I'm glad he lived long enough. Somewhere in his 90s, he finally told me he loved me, said those words.

He didn't say a lot. But the day before he died, two years ago, they had called the family together. And I was sitting by his bed, and he's in a coma.

And he kind of woke up for a minute or two, and I leaned over the bed, and I said, hey dad, it's Matthew. I just came to see you. And he opened his eyes, and he looked at me, and he whispered, I love you.

He went back to sleep. He died the next morning. It's the last thing my father ever said to me. I'm going to hold on to that. I'm going to hang on to that. I mean, that was worth a lot.

[27 : 24] So you can thank your father, especially if they gave you a godly example, but also for providing for you, for anything they did for you, and for giving you some worthwhile instruction, along with all the other nonsense.

Some worthwhile instruction. Let's end then with a scripture. And you can follow along as I read from Psalm 127, starting with verse 1.

Unless the Lord builds the house, the builders labor in vain. Children are a heritage from the Lord. Offspring are a reward from him.

Like arrows in the hands of a warrior are children born in one's youth. Blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them. So children, fathers, your children are a great blessing.

You're blessed if you got a quiver full. I don't know how many that is, but it means kids are a good thing. They're a blessing from God. I feel sorry when I hear folks say, I would not bring a child in this world.

[28 : 31] I know what they mean. The world's kind of a mess, but please bring kids in the world. That might be the solution to some of our problems. The child that someone will bring into the world.

They're a blessing. But then dads, I love that first verse. Unless the Lord builds the house, you're laboring in vain.

Dads, you can't be a super dad on your own strength. You're going to fail. You're human. You're going to fail. All you can really do is get on your knees and say, God, help me build this home. Help me build this home, God. And he'll come in and labor with you. Then you do your best. And God will make it all work out. You don't have to be the perfect father.

Praise God. You don't have to be the perfect father. He'll come in there and the Lord will build your home if you want him to help you with that. If your father's still alive, be sure to thank him today.

[29 : 33] Or, if he's not your father, that man who did the father job in your life, be sure to thank him. But not just today. Do it from time to time.

Let him know you appreciate what he did for you. Let's pray. Thank you, Lord, for our fathers.

Thank you for the encouragement of scripture. Dear God, the fathers that are here and the grandfathers, help us all, Lord.

Help us. We ask you to help us build the house. Build our homes. And we trust you to do it. In the name of Jesus. Amen.