

Essential Duties of a Father

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Date: 15 June 2014

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[0 : 00] I have to tell you that when I put my message together this morning, one of the things I always do is I tuck the text into where I'm going to be preaching.

And this is Father's Day, and I happened to look down later and realize that I'd put it into Ephesians chapter 6. And if you are thinking we're going to be in Ephesians chapter 6 this morning, there's a high probability that unless I default to that, we won't get near it.

I want you to turn your Bibles this morning to Deuteronomy chapter 6. And I want you to join me in prayer.

Father God, we pray this morning to ask that the Holy Spirit, who our Savior told us, would be given to us as a gift, as an enabler, to abide with us, to help us comprehend the beauty of the Scriptures, to help us grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus, to help us sing, to help us be godly fathers and mothers and godly young people and godly witnesses in a wicked and perverse world. Lord, we pray this morning that our helper would do just that and help us to perceive beautiful things in the Word that we might delight in your wisdom, that we might have a reverence and fear for your person, that we might have a humble desire to grow to be more like the Lord Jesus, and that each of us, recognizing that you have appointed specific tasks, would be humble to receive the direction that you have for us in the arena of life that you've placed us.

[2 : 57] and Lord, I do pray that at the conclusion of our time of studying the Word together, that the thing that would be recognized is the evidence of the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

and I ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. As I take up Father's Day this morning, I think of the fact that it's a day that's important.

It's a day that really has far more significance and weight than you may realize, and I have to confess that I remember when I first discovered that I was a father, I really had not given much thought to the responsibilities that went along with it.

Judith and I got married June 27th, and three months later she came to me and she says, Honey, guess what? And I had no idea that what she was going to tell me is that I was going to be a father in nine months or so.

In fact, Heather, my oldest daughter, was born on our first anniversary. anniversary. And I had to learn very quickly to keep a year's gap between Heather's birth and our anniversary because I remember at one point actually going to preach at a youth conference and I ended up getting the dates rather mixed up and it caused a lot of anxiety.

[4 : 34] But my wife came to my aid and she let everybody know publicly that we had a full year of marriage behind us before Heather had been born. I had no idea what went into being a father and the truth of the matter is that I really only afterwards began to think seriously of what God had to say about the responsibilities and studying and it was an arduous and has been an arduous journey.

I can tell you that I am not done being a father. I am father to four children. I am grandfather to I think am I right thirteen Heather Todd I don't know I've got plenty of them out there so it's like but we are very thankful for the blessing of taking the word of God this morning and opening it up and looking and I want to tell you up front that what I'm going to talk about this morning is not new to any of you.

Well I hope not new to any of you but I have no apology for the fact that we're going to be reviewing something that is foundational. I know that those of our congregation that are officers are responsible for carrying a firearm.

It's part of their life and their duty but whether you realize it or not they have to re-qualify with that firearm at least three times a year. My son who is in the army has to pass a physical test every year.

In fact as a captain in the battery command that he has he had the unfortunate responsibility of dismissing two soldiers who after repeated efforts at trying to pass their physical PT skills never did it and they kept on being just kind of shuffled off shuffled off and he eventually had to say you know what the army as much as it dearly loves you is not willing to let you continue being a slug and you're dismissed.

[6 : 48] So this business of re-qualifying is important. I know that those who are involved in medicine cannot kind of rest on their laurels and say well hey what I have a degree that was minted in 1994 and that's the way it is.

They have to continue to re-qualify and to review and to remind themselves of the essential duties that go with the discharge of their office and so it is today that as we look at the subject of fatherhood we're going to look at basic passages that talk about some of the absolutely foundational issues to being a father.

I confess there's much more that the scriptures have to say about the role of a father and I'm not going to talk about the fact that a dad is supposed to be the breadwinner. I'm not going to talk about the fact that he is to be the model of loving for his wife and his family.

I'm not going to talk about the fact that he's the family protector. But I am going to concentrate this morning on just two simple principles and we're going to rely on those two principles for foundational direction in the duty and the obligation that a man has when he is a father.

So what are those two? Number one, God calls the man to be the spiritual leader in his home and number two, God calls the man to be the spiritual intercessor in his home.

[8 : 14] Dad is to be the spiritual leader. I want you to look in your Bible over the passage that I referenced early in Deuteronomy chapter 6. Do you know why we turn in our Bibles?

Does anybody know why? It is so that you yourself, where you sit, can look at the Scriptures yourself and be fully persuaded that what you are hearing is not what I think.

It is what the Bible says. And my obligation and my responsibility is to open it up and make it clear and make it plain and help you understand, thus saith the Lord.

And we are looking at a passage that is fundamental to the responsibility of being a father. Picking up there in verse 4, mark what it says, Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one.

Now, I want to take a second and have you think with me that as this great passage begins, incidentally, if you were a Jew and you were a Jew who was trying to get extra points, you would say this passage in the morning when the first break of dawn and you got out of bed.

[9 : 32] You would say, it was called the Shema, hear. That's the word in Hebrew, Shema. It would be, hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Incidentally, if you really wanted to get extra, extra points, the last thing out of your mouth as you were dying would be, hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one.

This passage was so foundational to the nation of Israel and to their walk with God that they valued it supremely. And here we have a passage in which God speaks to fathers in particular and he says, first of all, you listen to me.

Hear, O Israel. By the way, who's talking? The Lord our God. Then he makes a foundational theological statement, the Lord is one. And in that, we have the uniqueness of God, we have the exceptional characteristic of him.

Remember, he says, I am who I am, foundational in that little statement, the Lord is one. But then behind that, we have a very interesting statement. Often when we think about our walk with God, we tend to break it down into a matter of the do's and don'ts.

Would you recognize that? This morning as I was having my devotional life, I was reading in the book of Exodus and I happened to be in Exodus chapter 20. Does anybody know what Exodus 20 is about?

[11 : 01] Anybody tell me, what is Exodus 20 about? It's the Ten Commandments. How many of you could recite them with one hand behind your back? You should be able to, right? And I want you to think with me this morning of the fact that tendency is for us to think about our relationship with God as being a matter of the do's and don'ts.

That's not the way it is. God wants us to understand first of all that we are to be in a relationship with him that is governed and controlled and colored and influenced by our love for him.

Here in the passage in verse five it says, you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might. How many of you are doing well at loving him?

Don't raise your hand and wait, I am. That's not what I'm looking for. Truth of the matter is, is that on our own we do not love anyone very well except who?

Who do you love well? You're a little bit like that wicked witch, remember? Mirror, mirror on the wall, who's the fairest of the... Are you guys into Disney or not?

[12 : 11] What's the deal with you? You know, it's like, hello, go home, forget Frozen, go back to the classics. You know, it's like, okay. We're a little bit like that wicked witch.

Now I give my age away, I suppose. And, you know, here it's all about me. God says you're to love me. And incidentally, the thing that brings us into a loving relationship with God is not our own volition but the grace of God that, first of all, reveals his love to us by telling us the truth about our nature and how desperately lost we are and then drawing us to the cross and helping us see at the cross the unconditional, unchanging love of God in Christ Jesus.

And we, having been saved by his grace and having our hearts changed, then have the ability to love him. And we grow in our love, in particular, in proportion to our understanding of his love for us. In this passage, it says there, you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And as you look at this passage, I want you to understand that out of that then is to flow in verse six, and these words that I command you shall be in your heart.

You know what? Listen to me. If you really don't have an intimate and affectionate relationship with the Lord of this universe, what he has to say is not that important.

[13 : 50] Agreed? Several years ago, my wife said to me, at one moment in our morning conversations, she said to me, honey, I'm concerned.

Now, that's always a warning for me that something is coming of significance. Because Judith is not a chatty individual, and when she says I'm concerned and then paused, I knew that I ought to pick up on the lead and show some concern.

What are you concerned about? She says, well, I don't know if you're getting the early signals of Alzheimer's or you're not listening to me.

Now, the choices were pretty brutal. I have an exceptionally intelligent wife, and she had me cornered with that statement. I chose to confess that I wasn't listening.

I think that was a fair admission. And what it reminded me of, in part, was that, you know what? When we really care, we really listen.

[14 : 56] Would you agree with that statement? When we really care, we really listen. Why is it that mothers are the first ones to interpret their children's babblings?

You say to a mom, what did he say? Oh, well, she understands, and it's not just because she gave birth to him, it's because she cares and loves that kid, and she can understand because her heart's in it.

And God says, listen, you've got to love me. And then the words that I command you shall be in your heart. You see, as we look at this passage, the thing I want you to understand is that dad is to be the spiritual leader, and in order to be the leader, he has to have an interest and an affection in the Lord, but also an understanding of his word.

Here's what God makes clear. He says that the dad must know and care deeply about what he's expected to teach. The remainder of this text really deals with the responsibility that dad has of being the spiritual teacher in his home.

But the starting place to what you teach is not just acquiring the information. It is having a relationship with the foundational person of the universe and having an affection for that person and having a heart that wants to hear what he has to say.

[16 : 21] We live in a wicked and perverse world, don't we? I remember earlier this week just being both frightened and sobered.

When I stopped at one point in doing some research and I was on the computer and I stopped and realized that it is so easy to access things on the web that are just absolutely perverse and wicked. Do you understand that? I went to YouTube and I have no idea what, here I am telling you what I was doing on YouTube, but spending time as I'm sitting there with my father sleeping, I thought I would kind of find out long range rifle shots at deer.

You know, important things. And so I clicked on that and I'm scrolling down and right there on the right side are pictures that are absolutely wicked and perverse.

Now, thankfully, they're in these microscopic little things, but it's like, whoa, you know. You Google something. Out of sincere interest to discover, and there in the Google string, there are things that

you, I don't want to click on that.

[17 : 38] Am I right? You go to Fox News, you go to MSN, wherever you go, the world is a wicked place. But I want you to understand that the greatest challenge to fatherhood today is not the wicked and perverse culture we live in.

Listen to me. The greatest challenge comes from fathers who are not deeply committed and enthralled with God. The greatest challenge to fathers today is fathers that are not deeply committed and enthralled with God.

A father that is actually more engaged in baseball than he is with his own devotional life, or a father that is more passionate about boating on the weekend than he is in helping his children grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, should not be surprised if at the end of the day he sees his children go further into idolatry than he has.

And so as you look at this passage, let me help you understand that the first thing that the Bible says to us is, Dads, you are the spiritual teachers of your home, and you're responsible to teach, but things come first in order, and before you teach, you have to know, and you have to have the right relationship with the Lord Jesus.

You have to have the right passion for the things of God. And so ask yourself the question, what does your devotional life look like? Now, do devotions make men automatic saints?

[19 : 13] What's the answer? Get this, no. But I will tell you something. A daily devotional life is protective in a profound way.

Mothers, wives, if you see your husband's devotional life beginning to fall off, guess what you know is beginning to take place in their life? They're an accident waiting for a place to happen.

Now, what should you do when you see that happening? Should you pick up the Bible and slam it on their chest in the morning? You know, it's like, bang, get this done.

No, that's not my suggestion to you. But try with prayer and a godly life to be an encouragement and expect the Spirit of God to respond accordingly. You look at that passage there in Deuteronomy, it says, hey, you've got to know the Lord, you've got to love the Lord, you've got to know the Word.

And so if you're going to be effective in being the spiritual leader in your home, your children should know about your devotional life. They should know about it.

[20 : 23] Let me have you turn to a passage that several months ago the Lord just really tagged me with. In fact, if you were to go into my office this morning or tonight or this afternoon, you would see it on the wall.

When I sit there and prepare week by week and spend time in the office, there are actually three different things that are set on the wall across from me so I can see them and they're reminding me of my responsibilities.

One is from John chapter 5 verse 39, and it says this, how does this sermon testify to Christ? Second thing is Isaiah chapter 50 verse 4.

Let me read it to you. The Lord has given me the tongue of those who are taught. Incidentally, this passage is a reference. It is messianic. It is a reference to the Lord Jesus.

The Lord has given me the tongue of those who are taught that I may know how to sustain with the Word him who is weary. Do you want, Dad, to be able to encourage, to sustain, to counsel, to direct your son in the moments that are important?

[21 : 32] Yes. How will you do that? Morning by morning he awakens. I like that. Morning by morning he awakens.

He awakens my ear to hear as those who are taught. Dad, I don't think it would be a bad idea for you to take that verse and write it out with your own hand and post it on the mirror and ask the Lord to do what needs to be done to help your devotional life begin to take upon the characteristics of this passage.

Will your children need your advice? What's the answer? Yeah. Will they need your counsel and your encouragement? Yes. And so what are you going to give them?

Your rehashed experiences, many of which you wish you didn't have anyway? Or would you rather that out of a heart that is enriched by the Spirit of God and by the Word of God, you may bring forth the sweetness of the Spirit of God and the wisdom that is from above that your children may know how to walk uprightly?

Let me explain also that your children should see you frame life's challenges in the Scriptures. Let me say that slowly so you can follow me.

[22 : 58] Your children, we're talking about being the spiritual leader, your children should see you frame life's challenges in the Scriptures. In other words, when you yourself are challenged, when things aren't going your way, when there's a struggle and turmoil in your own life, they should see you go to the resource that is eternally valuable, prized, and reliable.

I have to think about the passage in Galatians that I've recited so many times, Nevertheless, what saith the Scriptures? Paul, as he was arguing in the book of Galatians about the issue of the difference between law and grace, when he wants to hammer it, he recites something said by the Supreme Court, God.

Nevertheless, what do the Scriptures say? And so when you have opportunity to face the challenges of life, what your children should see is that the authority you rely upon is God's Word. And by the way, do we always know what's in God's Word? And the answer is what? Come on, help me here. No. So what's wrong when you're not sure to say, give me a minute, I want to think this through and pray about it and find out what God's Word has to say about it.

Third, your children should know that your genuine affection for the Lord and His people is at the very heart of your being in existence.

[24 : 37] Your children should know that your genuine affection for the Lord and His people is at the very heart of your existence. Is that what your kids know?

Is that what they respect about you? Is that the thing that when it's all said and done, when their last memories of you are pushed together in a very small pile, will they say, the thing I remember about my dad is that he loved Christ.

He loved Christ's people. I hate to use him as an example, but he's the best one I know. My dad is in a nursing home.

He has Alzheimer's. There are days he's with us, and there are days that he is not. But several weeks ago, stopped in to see him on Sunday morning, and he said, when do I get to go to church? Do you follow that? Let me tell you something. That kind of heart doesn't happen by accident. It happens out of a relentless pursuit of the things of God.

[26 : 07] And so, Father, I want you to understand that your love will play out, and your kids will know it. Let me see one more thing in this passage before we move to the issue of intercession.

Look at verse 7. It says, You shall teach them diligently. Diligently. Dad is to be persistent in his teaching.

Persistent in his teaching. The Hebrew word actually means to say it twice. I know Pastor Andrew was kind of gathering from our young people.

I'm going to tell a story here and be embarrassed, or have you embarrassed? I don't know how it'll work out. But anyway, here I am doing ministry, so I'd like to kind of find out what some of the concerns and questions are that our young people have.

And he sent out a survey and got all these different answers, and then one of our youth leaders said, Well, I thought we covered that this last year. Well, yeah.

[27 : 13] Truth of the matter is, it's probably every one of those things I've covered from the pulpit as well. I'll never forget what Alistair Begg said when I was at one of his preaching conferences. He said, Never underestimate the ability of your people to forget some of the important things you've said.

And, you know, it's given me great comfort. You probably don't remember that I preached this sermon back in 05. Now, I want you to know it's not the same sermon.

Because preaching relies upon the ministry of the Holy Spirit, and His ministry through me to you and in you is different today than in 05.

Same spirit, same word, but different need today. So, I want you to understand, Dad, that if you're going to be effective in this responsibility being the family teacher of spiritual, be repetitious!

Now, am I saying just be redundant to the point of ad nauseum? How many of you know that when we sing a song that we like, we really get into it?

[28 : 27] Do you understand that? But how many of you also know if we sang the same song for about 30 weeks in a row, I don't care how wonderful it was, the first or second or third or fourth time, eventually, guess what you would do?

You would tune out. And, Dad, you have to have a little bit of variety in the way you approach the business of being repetitious in your teaching. Pretend that it's a brand new thought, because the truth of the matter is, is your child, your young boy, or your girl has probably completely forgotten what you had to say, but bring it up again.

Again, things that are important are often said over and over again.

And I've got to tell you that the business of being repetitious with an inventive and creative spirit with an affection for the outcome is profoundly effective.

Well, let me come to the second thing. Dad is to be the family intercessor. Dad is to be the family intercessor. Here I am.

[29 : 42] I am... I'm an empty nester. I've got to tell you, it's a wonderful thing. Judith and I enjoy one another's company in the morning. And here's the deal. We don't have to worry about whether anybody forgot their barrettes or, you know, whether their hair or teeth are cared for.

We're just together. Let's have coffee. Let's sit there. Let's pray. Let's chatter a little bit. It's fun, fun, fun. But that doesn't mean that I'm done being a daddy.

This morning as I was finishing up my devotional time, first thing I do is I spend time praying and thanking the Lord for the blessing of knowing Him and who He is.

and I pray for my children. And then I take out and if you were to look at where I have things together, there is a watch care list.

How many of you understand what a watch care list is? I use the watch care list to kind of govern my prayers for you. This morning it was Gibbs. Actually, it's Limkill now since, Nathan, you've taken over that office.

[30 : 56] I'm going to have to change that on my list. But I'm praying through the list and praying for each of the individuals and intercession is very, very important. I want you to look at a passage that kind of amplifies the importance of this and turn back if you would.

Well, turn forward. You're in the book of Deuteronomy. Go to Job chapter 1. Job chapter 1. Job is a very interesting book that has a lot to say about suffering.

And what it has to say about suffering is that sometimes we don't know. But what we do know is who God is. Anyway, in that context, as the book introduces Job, you look there in verse 1, chapter 1, it says, there was a man in the land of Uz.

Can you think of any place like Uz? You know, anyway, there was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job, and that man was blameless and upright, one who feared God and turned away from evil.

that is a fairly good picture of a godly man. Would you agree with me? The next little piece we find out about this godly man is given to us in verse 5.

[32 : 32] And when the days of the feast had run their course, Job would send and consecrate them, and he would rise early in the morning and offer burnt offerings according to the number of them all.

For Job said, it may be that my children have sinned and cursed God in their hearts. Thus Job did continually. Do you know what he was doing?

He was praying for his children. My wife and I were, I don't know why, but yesterday we were talking about my childhood.

It was very checkered. I won't give you the checkering of it, but I will tell you I made a comment to Judith that if it had not been for the prayers of my parents, I have no doubt that I would be dead. Job prayed for his children every day. Look at the passage. It says that he got up early in the morning.

[33 : 37] And as we look at this text, we find out that the one illustration that Scripture gives us of Job's character revolves around his prayer life.

Listen to me. Everybody look up, please. Your prayer life says it all about where you are spiritually. Do you understand that?

your prayer life says it all about where you are spiritually. And as we look at this passage, we see here a father who is interceding for his children.

So what we take from that is that a father is to pray consistently for his kids. You know, we're not consistent about things we don't care about.

Would you agree with that? How many of you have said on many occasions I should clean the garage? Or your car has become kind of a rolling disaster and you have seen all kinds of things in

the cup holders and in the back seat and you've thought to yourself, I should clean the car.

[35 : 03] You know, here's the fact. If it's important, what? We do it. And so as we think about this matter, I want you to understand that intercessory prayer is essential.

It's essential. Well, let's see some illustrations of just how important prayer is. I'll recite one I've referred to a number of different times, but just to kind of set the frame, in Exodus chapter 17 verse 9 through 13, we have Moses and he takes the nation of Israel, some of the select soldiers and says, hey, go whoop on those people.

He says, I'm not going to be there. I'm going to be on top of the hill. And what does he do on top of the hill? He holds up his arms. He's praying. Every time his arms fall down, his troops suffer.

They end up where Moses sits on a stone and Aaron and Hur, I believe, are on one side and the other and they hold his arms up and the battle comes to their favor. I want you to look at another illustration of the significance and the kind of passion that should be in your intercessory prayer for your children.

Turn, if you would, you're in Job, but go back to Exodus chapter 32. Exodus chapter 32. By the way, how many of you realize that the nation of Israel was a pretty perverse and painful group of people to lead?

[36 : 28] They just loved on Moses all the time. You know, it's like, Moses, whatever you say, we're with you, we love you, we appreciate the fact that we've not had water for three days, but we know God's helping us and he'll care for us.

No, that's not the way they were. And when he goes off to get the law, one of the passages I don't understand was that when Moses was gone, remember they came to Aaron and says, hey, we need gods to take us back, and he says, well, give me your rings and your earrings and stuff, and he makes a golden calf.

Well, then when Moses shows up on the scene, I don't know how Aaron got away with this, and I'm not sure I'll ask when I get to heaven either. But here's the deal.

He says, I threw it into the fire and this came out. Anyway, God says, Moses, let me deal with these people.

I'm going to destroy them. And here is Moses. Exodus 32, verse 31. So Moses returned to the Lord and said, alas, this people has sinned a great sin.

[37 : 36] they've made for themselves gods of gold. But now, if you will forgive their sins, now look, how many of you have a little hyphen and a space in your translation of the scriptures?

Raise your hand if you have a hyphen and a space. Okay? Do you know why that's there? that is an indication of the extreme respect that the ancient Hebrews had for every letter and space in the Old Testament.

And in the original manuscript, there was a space. space. I don't know what is in that space other than probably a little bit of speculation.

How many of you have been praying passionately for something and been overwhelmed?

Remember what it says in the passage in Romans? It says that sometimes there are things that the Holy Spirit prays with groanings that cannot be uttered, right?

Our heart is so caught up in the depths and the passion of our concern for someone that we love that we're choked off. here's Moses pleading for the nation of Israel that they not be destroyed for their perverse and wicked heart.

[39 : 11] And he comes to this point and he says, listen, if you forgive their sin, they can't say anything. But if not, listen to this, please blot me out of your book.

I've got to tell you, intercession is a deep, burdensome plea for those that you love.

And as we read this passage, it reminds us that intercession is something that's profound. Well, one other passage, and we'll close with this issue of intercession and remind ourselves that it's what Jesus is doing for us today.

Do you know that? I love, I love, I do. I love Hebrews chapter 7, verse 25. It says, he ever liveth to do what?

What's he doing for Tim Kenoyer this morning? He is interceding before the Father on my behalf. He's interceding on your behalf. Does he know how weak and frail?

[40 : 43] Does he know where your mind has been today? Does he know the struggle you have with idolatry? He does know all those things. And what is he doing? He is there before the Father's throne today, and he is pleading your case.

So here's what I want you to do, dads. Remember? The purpose of preaching is to tell you what God has to say.

Isn't that right? My responsibility is to open up the Word of God and say, here's what the Bible has to say, and this morning I speak to you who are fathers.

And I say, you've got two responsibilities that I want you to think about this morning. Number one is the responsibility of being the family instructor and teacher in the matters of righteousness. Number two, you are to be the intercessor before the throne of God on behalf of your children.

So it's a practical question to say, how are you doing at both those things? It's a fair question. And this morning as we think clearly of what God has to say, it really comes down to those who are fathers saying, yes, God, I hear what you say and I want to be sincere and righteous.

[42 : 23] I want to do what you've called me to do and I'm willing to go on notice. how many of you realize it's one thing to make private decisions that nobody else knows about?

Do you follow that? Oh, we've all done that. Yeah, yeah, if it works out, I think I'll be a little better at my devotions next day.

I want to challenge you this morning, fathers. God being my helper, I'm going to be the spiritual leader in my home.

God being my helper, I'm going to be the family intercessor in my home. Let's close in prayer.