

# The Fatherhood of God

Father's Day; June 19<sup>th</sup>, 2016

If you've been around the church for any amount of time, you may have noticed that hardly a Sunday goes by without me mentioning King David in one way or another.

- Whether it was a time in his life or a passage in Scripture, which he wrote.
- Not only is he one of history's most significant men, but he's clearly one of the most central people in Scripture.
- David, whose name means "beloved", is mentioned 1141 times in the Bible... second only to Jesus who's mentioned 1254x.

But for all that characterizes David's life, what Scripture remembers him most for was his heart for God.

- For me, this heart is best captured in a psalm he wrote, which we looked at last week from **Psalm 27:4**,
- *"One thing I have asked from the Lord that I shall seek: That I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to meditate in His temple."*

In his passion for the Father's presence... in his passion to know God more tomorrow than he did yesterday...

- he **embodies the kind of heart** I believe God wants for us as individuals and as a church.
- We **first meet David in 1 Samuel 16**.
- Israel had been living in the Promise Land under a series of judges like **Joshua**, **Gideon** and **Samson**.

The **last judge that led Israel was a man named Samuel**. But the people wanted a king. And so **God had Samuel anoint one...**

- A powerful and impressive man, Saul, who stood head and shoulders over the people of Israel.
- But Saul became increasingly corrupt and violent... and so, **God announced in 1 Samuel 13:14 that He had appointed another man** to be king... a "Man after his own heart."

So God tells Samuel to *"Go to the town of Bethlehem and anoint a new king from among the sons of Jesse."*

- And **Samuel** says, *"But God, we've already got a king, and he's not going to be too happy about me anointing another one!"*
- But God said, *"Trust me."* So **Samuel heads over to Bethlehem** and invites Jesse's family to meet with him.
- Now, you've got to picture this scene for a moment.

Jesse introduces his first son, his heir. He was a good looking class president-type, the QB of the football team, and an **outstanding young CEO**.

- The kid pulls up in BMW and steps out with this confident, commanding presence.
- He walks into the room with Samuel... Jessie stands up and says, *"This is my son, Eliab!"*
- And I'm sure everyone thought... "Eliab... you the man!"  
**Except, God says, "Nope... he's not the man."**

So Samuel has Jesse bring out son number two, **Abinadab**... but he's not the man. And then son number three, **Shammah**.

- And then **he goes through all seven sons**. They don't all get named, but they all, one by one, are paraded before Samuel.
- **"Nobody's the man!"**
- And so, Samuel is no doubt wondering by this time, *"God, why in the world did you have me come into the middle of nowhere to reject seven sons?"*

So he says to Jesse, *"Are you sure these are the only sons you have?"* And Jesse says, almost as an afterthought, *"Well, there's still the youngest."*

- We don't even get a name yet... for now, he's still *"what's-his-name."*
- Then Samuel says, *"Go send for him. We'll wait."*

When this **teenager finally gets there with his dirty feet**... smelling of sheep, **God says to Samuel**, *"That's the one. That's my man. That's him."*

- I'm sure everyone was shocked... David was so young. Yet we **see God's heart in verse 7** when he says to Samuel,
- *"For God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart."*

Right from the beginning we see that God saw something in David that no one else could see... not even Samuel... not even his own father, Jesse.

- When Samuel announced that one of his sons would be made king, wouldn't you think Jesse would automatically send for David...
- even if he suspected that it would be his first-born who would be made king?
- I mean the second youngest was brought in... and I'm sure he was only a year or two older than David.

Believe me, its not like all the other seven sons were sitting in the living room watching the football game when Samuel came...

- **Jesse had to call for all of them...** but **he didn't call** for David.
- In the next chapter, **1 Samuel 17:20**, when Jesse sends David to the battle-line to bring food to his brothers, it says that David *"left the flock with a helper."*

In other words, there were a number of people around, helpers, that could have watched the flock if Jesse had sent for him right away.

- But it wasn't even on Jesse's mind. It **makes you wonder if there was any kind of rift** between David and his father & brothers...
- Especially in light of other passages in the Bible that speak of David's childhood and his relationship with his father.

For example, David makes a comment in **Psalm 51:5** that he was *"sinful at birth and conceived in sin?"*

- In Psalm 27:10, David grieves over the rejection of his parents, saying *"My father and mother have forsaken me."*

- Because of verses like these, some have suggested that David was born out of wedlock.

But what does seem at least a bit more clear is that his father had a very different kind of relationship with David than his seven other sons.

- **Even his brothers treated him differently.**
- In Psalm 69:8, he wrote, *“Even my own brothers pretend they don’t know me... they treat me like a stranger.”*
- You can see this contempt in 1 Samuel 17:28 when Eliab said to David, *“I know your insolence and the wickedness of your heart.”*

You see, we don’t often realize when considering David’s life that his childhood years may have been marked by **rejection, abandonment, and pain**... stemming ultimately from the absence of his father’s love.

- And yet, there’s no doubt that, **in spite of how this may have impacted David**, God loved him.
- Through the relationship David cultivated with his Heavenly Father, he came to believe, deep within himself, **that God saw in him what no one else could see.**

He learned that God’s love and mercy **allows us to trade in the rags of our polluted pasts**, with all of its rejections, **for the riches** of His magnificent love.

- Out there alone under the stars, David learned what so many of us still need to learn... that God’s love for us is extravagant.
- In 1 John 3:1 we read, *“How great is the love the Father has lavished on us.”*

This has been God’s heart from the moment He created us... to share His love and intimacy with you and me.

- Deuteronomy 7:7-8 caught my attention this week...
- ***“The Lord did not care for you and choose you because there were many of you... you are the smallest nation of all. But the Lord chose you because He loved you.”***

**Charles Stanley**, pastor of First Baptist Church in Atlanta, shared how he came to embrace the reality of the Father's Love.

- At a desperate point in his life, several friends of his began ministering to him. Stanley tells what happened:
- One of these men said, "*Charles, put your head on the table and close your eyes.*" So I did. Then he said to me very kindly, "*Charles, your father just picked you up in his arms and held you. What do you feel?*" I burst out crying. And I cried and I cried, and I couldn't stop crying. Finally, when I stopped, he asked me again, and I said that I felt warm and loved and secure and good, and I started weeping again. For the first time in my life I felt God emotionally loving me. All these years I had preached about trusting God and believing him and obeying him. And I had. But I came back and I looked through my sermon file, and in all of those years I had only preached one sermon on the love of God and it was not worth listening to.

Of course there are a number of reasons why we, like Charles Stanley, find it difficult to receive the extravagant love the Father so desperately desires to lavish on us...

- **For Charles Stanley, the issue related to his father dying at an early age...** and how he grew up so deeply angry that his father would leave him...
- But over time, he came to understand **how this kept him from receiving love** from his Heavenly Father.

Fact is, one of the most common mis-associations we make in life is to **equate the experience of one's earthly father** with our Heavenly Father.

- Ed Piorek says that "*deeply embedded broken images of fatherhood present some of the most serious barriers to the knowledge and experience of the Father's Love.*"
- And so, what I'd like to do for the rest of our time together is look at four expressions of "fathering" and how each of them might impact our perceptions of God as our Heavenly Father.

Keep in mind that while these categories are very general and simplistic, I think they can still be helpful in exposing the root...

- of some of the distortions we might have of our Heavenly Father.
- The first expression of “earthly fathering” represents *the kind of father I believe Jesse was...*

### **THE PASSIVE FATHER:**

The passive father doesn't actively demonstrate love to his child... he doesn't speak words of love... doesn't often offer an affectionate loving touch.

- As a result, the child is deprived of the emotional nourishment that needed, genuine affection brings.
- **Passive fathers typically aren't home very often...** or when they were, they weren't emotionally open and available... or simply never demonstrated their love.
- **The believer with a passive father** may perceive their Heavenly Father as distant, uninvolved, and not very responsive.

People with passive fathers often struggle to experience a tangible touch of the Father's love.

- You see, one of the problems with a father's passivity is that it produces in a child a sense of abandonment...
- and whether it is emotional or physical, abandonment... it causes a young child to feel alone.
- And being alone, separated from a father's love, is a painful experience.

You start to wonder **if they are absent b/c of you...** that “*if somehow you were better than maybe...*”

- And so you conclude that your father's failure to express love is your fault.
- In fact, children of passive fathers often experience a lot of guilt, blaming themselves for so much that goes wrong in their lives.

So, the believers here **not only feels that God is distant**, but that His distance is their fault.

- Because your father may have been passive in his fathering, you may have a hard time turning to God in times of trouble...
- because you've learned to do everything yourself... you've learned to always figure things on your own.

### **THE PERFORMANCE-ORIENTED FATHER:**

The performance-oriented father gives love according to your performance...

- **where acceptance, affirmation, and affection** are always attached to achievement in anything such as chores, report cards, sports, whatever.
- I watched a movie again not long ago that came out in the early 90s called Searching for Bobby Fischer...
- about a young chess prodigy named Josh Waitzkin (*great movie starring Joe Mantegna & Ben Kingsley*)

Yet his parents disagree over how to best encourage his talents. His **father pushes him to succeed** in competition, fearing that his son's gift will be lost.

- His mother **worries that there is far more at stake** than his success at chess.
- Over time through the movie, you can see how **Josh grows more and more despondent** to chess...
- Mostly because it was becoming less of a game and **more of a means to win or lose his father's approval.**

His parents begin arguing... where the dad is sharing how his son is afraid to loose.

- The mother says, "*he's not afraid of losing at chess... he's afraid of losing your love.*"
- With so much at stake, it's **no wonder he was afraid of losing** even a single game...

- **it was the perception, right or wrong**, of losing his father's love.

**Someone who's grown up with a performance-oriented father perceives God** as one who requires a good performance in order to give the reward of love.

- This leads not only to a deep fear of failure... but can often drive you into religious striving...
- desperately trying to earn the Father's approval... making it even more difficult to receive His love.

To get some measure of positive attention, you **had no choice but to achieve...** and so, even today...

- it might be **really hard for you to feel loved...** just for being who God made you to be.
- You may also find that **you struggle coming to God just as you are.**
- There's often an ***"I need to improve on this"*** or ***"I better do that"*** before I can come to God.
- But, because, in your eyes, **you always come up short**, you find it **difficult to find love and peace** in your relationship with God.

### **THE PUNITIVE FATHER:**

Rather than pouring out love, the punitive father inflicts some form of abusive pain ... be it thru verbal or even some level of physical abuse...

- As you can imagine, one of the many effects of this is that **victims of abuse...** often perceive the Father as ***stern, harsh, punitive, unforgiving, and certainly unloving.***
- Children raised in homes with a punitive father tend to **see God as the great "cop"** in the sky who is always ready to blow his whistle whenever they do anything wrong.

**Fear, shame, and anger** become strongholds, which make it difficult to receive God's love ***even though they so desperately need the tenderness of the Father's love to hold them together.***

- You simply **can't draw close to an angry God** whom you perceive is always mad at you...
- and so, you **hide behind "religion"**... the so-called next-best-thing to intimacy with God.

You might be the person who is always hitting themselves over the head with the Bible.

- The believer who has lived with a punitive father will often strive to please Him...
- and **when that ultimately fails** (and it will fail b/c you're never good enough), you are **left with feeling shame and alienation** from God's love.

### **THE PRETTY GOOD FATHER:**

There are no perfect fathers... so, let's just say that "pretty good fathers" are those who regularly express their love to their kids... and **made memorable efforts to participate** in their lives.

- These are dads whose positive qualities far outweigh the bad.
- **Those positive qualities have added to their children's ability to see their Heavenly Father as loving and near.**

But again, there are no perfect fathers...everyone has to deal with some kind of distortion.

- That's why we all need to turn to our Heavenly Father who alone can fill that core of our being with the peace and love we all so desperately need.
- And, while the particular category that you grew up under will offer more challenges than others,
- the fact is, we all need to begin a *process of removing the broken lenses* we have on *in order to see the Father as he truly is*.

But to remove broken lenses you must start by first recognizing its existence in your life.

- Perhaps you need to begin the difficult work of forgiving your fathers. Removal of these faulty lenses requires forgiveness.

- **He will take those distorted glasses from your eyes so you can see Him better... and He will touch your pain and woundedness and bring healing.**

In the story of the Prodigal Son, the father says to the older son, “*You are always with me...*”

- Is that b/c we never turn away from Him? **NO!**
- We are always with Him b/c He, out of His incredible love, has chosen never to turn from us.
- In the book of Hebrews, God makes this promise... He says, “*I will never ever leave you or forsake you.*”

Even though I’m not a big sports guy, I do like the Olympics. Whether it's the summer or winter games... there’s always a great triumph... or an agonizing defeat. **(SHOW VIDEO or TELL the STORY)**

- British runner, **Derek Redmond**, had trained for the Olympic 400-meter race for most of his life.
- After the Seoul Olympics, he needed five operations on his Achilles’ tendon.

Amazingly, after countless hours of training to get himself ready to compete again, he made it into the **1992 Olympics in Barcelona.**

- He got off to a great start and was running the race of his life. With the finish line in sight he felt a sudden stab of pain in his right leg.
- He fell face first to the track with a torn hamstring. His race was over.

Every last runner had passed him by. Yet with tears of pain and discouragement, he limped toward the finish line... determined to finish the race.

- Suddenly a man plowed thru the security guards on the sidelines and ran onto the track. He raced to Derek and hugged him. “*You don’t have to do this*” his father said to him. “*Yes I do*”. “*Well, then, we’ll finish the race together.*”
- Which, they did... with Derek’s face often buried in his father’s shoulder.

**That's the heart of our Father... Paul describes Him in 2 Cor. 1 as the "*Father of compassion and the God of all comfort.*"**

- You see, if your relationship with your dad was one that built you up and blessed you...
- Then you can know the very best of what characterized your dad is just a reflection of who our Heavenly Father is every moment of every given day.

The love of our Heavenly Father is a...

**POWERFUL LOVE:**

- It isn't shallow or weak... it's a stubborn love that just won't quit.
- Paul said in Rom 8:38-39, "*For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*"
- Nothing can separate you from the Father's love... not even YOU!

**PROVEN LOVE:**

- 1 John 4:10 says, "*This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be a propitiation for our sins.*"
- Propitiation: To settle a debt: Example of 2 brothers... one takes the wrap for the other.
- I've heard someone say that the measure of love is how much it gives. God wanted so much for you and I to walk with Him in the garden that He sent His only Son.

**PURE LOVE:**

- The world is filled with love wrecked with hidden motives... but God only wants our love in return.
- Yet, look at that last verse from 1 John... "This is love... not that we loved God, but that he loved us"

- In other words, His loving us was not conditional on our loving Him.
- Eph 4:2 says that it is because of His great love for us that He sent His Son to settle the debt against us so we can have access with Him.

### **PATIENT LOVE:**

- His love is patient... He doesn't turn His back on us b/c of our imperfections...
- Rather, knowing the worst about us, things about us we aren't even aware of, He still loves us.

### **PERFECT LOVE:**

- His love isn't like human love... He's never left your side, He'll never leave you alone.
- Max Lucado wrote, *"If God had a refrigerator, your picture would be one it. If He had a wallet, your photo would be in it. He sends you flowers every spring and a sunrise every morning. Whenever you want to talk with Him, he'll listen. He can live anywhere in the universe, and he chose your heart."*

Some time ago, I read a short story about a nine-year old boy named Mark... His mother received a phone call in the middle of the afternoon... it was his teacher.

- Mrs Smith, something unusual happened today in your son's 3<sup>rd</sup> grade class... Mark did something that really surprised me.
- Of course, by now, his mother was terrified by what she thought she would hear.
- *"This morning I was teaching a lesson on creative writing, and, as I always do, I tell the story of the ant and the grasshopper."*
- *"The ant works hard all summer and stores up plenty of food. But the grasshopper plays all summer and does no work."*
- *Then the winter comes. The grasshopper begins to starve b/c he has no food. So he begs, "Please Mr. Ant, you have so much food. Please let me eat to." Then I say to the kids, "your job is to write the end of the story"*

Your son Mark raised his hand, “Teacher, may I draw a picture?”

- I said he could but that he must first write out the ending.
- “As in all the years past, most of the children said the ant shared his food thru the winter and both the ant and grasshopper lived.
- A few children wrote “No, Mr. Grasshopper, You should have worked in the summer... I only have enough food for myself... so the ant lived and the grasshopper died.
- **BUT, your son ended the story in a way different from any other child...** He wrote, *“So the ant gave all of his food to the grasshopper; the grasshopper lived thru the winter but the ant died.”*
- And, at the bottom of the page, Mark had drawn 3 crosses.

God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

- The Father said to the older son, *“I am always with you... everything I have is yours”*
- He has proven that love and wants you to receive it each and every day.

**Jack Frost** wrote, *“The foundation for intimacy with God is the realization that we are His happy thought and that nothing we will ever say or do could change His mind about us.”*

- You see, David did say in Psalm 27:10 that his father and mother had forsaken him... **but then he adds...** *“but the Lord has taken me in.”*
- And so, **in Psalm 107**, he called us to *“Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good; His love endures forever.”*