

Fathers, Bless Your Children

by

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"Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord." Ephesians 6:4

I'm burdened this morning as I think about a young girl who is a friend of one of my daughters. She shared with my daughter how she has been depressed and troubled to the point of despair. As my daughter told me about this conversation, it really struck me when she told me that the girl said, "I don't feel like my Dad loves me." Once again, the truth hit home again to me that the Dad's role in the family is SO IMPORTANT! I know I am writing to many Dads out there who receive these devotionals, so I ask you to take some time for self-examination as you read this. Are you blessing and nurturing your children?

We've all sat in community groups or attended men's retreats where we hear men talk about their "father wounds." *My Dad never told me he loved me. I was never good enough to please my Father. My Dad was never there for me. My Dad left when I was young, so I never had a Dad.* Many of you relate to one of these statements. Grown men, years later, still feel the pain from their fathers who did not bless them. And now, as fathers ourselves, we have a chance to do things different, but instead, we somehow fall into the same rut as our fathers and repeat the cycle.

Jack Frost, author of "Experiencing the Father's Embrace", talks of his experience. His father was a Tennis Pro who could never be pleased, so Jack left home when he was around 17 years old. He became a commercial fisherman in Florida and was determined to prove something. Whereas his father made him feel like a failure constantly, Jack was going to succeed in his new job. He was a fierce competitor on the seas, sometimes keeping his crew on the ocean in dangerous situations, all in a quest to be "Top Hook" amongst his peers. Later, Jack found the Lord and began to pour himself into Christian service. However, he brought that same competitive attitude into his ministry and into his home. He was relentless and never satisfied with those around him, including his own children. It wasn't until Jack realized how much his Heavenly Father loved him so deeply, and so unconditionally, that he was able to extend the Father's heart to his own children.

This is the heartbeat of The Journey. We take men on a Journey to Intimacy with Christ so they can learn how much He loves them. Then, as they abide in that love, it pours out of them into their spheres of influence. The first place this should be expressed is to his wife, if he is married, and the second place is to his children. Guys, our kids are longing for our love. Just as much as God's love transforms us and strengthens us, our love for our children will equip our children for their futures.

If you read the Old Testament, you know the importance of the "Father's Blessing." When a Father blessed his children, it was a transference of power, property, anointing and responsibility. You remember the famous story of Jacob so clamoring for his father Isaac's blessing that he deceived his brother Esau (Genesis 27). Even today in the Jewish culture, the Father's blessing is still considered a precious practice. It is a simple exercise where a man brings his children to himself, touches them on the face, looks them in the eye and says words of blessing to them. When is the last time you did something like that with your children? I'm convicted myself as I write this.

I heard a storyteller describe a Father's blessing in this way. Every night, he would gather his children in front of him, he would look them in the eye and he would say,

"You are a reflection of the face of God, and the world shines brighter for the joy you give me this day. I bless you, my child."

You may think this sounds corny or unnecessary, but I challenge you to try it. I have said these words many times to my daughters at bedtime, and I can tell you that as awkward as it may seem for both of us, these words sink deep into their very hearts.

Every year, I get to give a talk to a group of fifth grade boys and their Dads. A doctor comes in to talk to them about puberty, and then, I get to give them a talk about spiritual growth. A few years ago, the Spirit prompted me to have the boys come to the front of the room. I asked each boy to come forward, and I asked their Dad to come and bless them and anoint them with oil. I wasn't sure how the boys or Dads would react to this exercise, but what I discovered was amazing. The boys were fighting for their turn to receive their blessing. They stood there, anxiously awaiting Dad to come up, look them in the eye, touch their forehead with oil and say a word of blessing to them. It was more uncomfortable for the Dads than the boys. I saw a powerful exchange right before my eyes, and I don't think those boys will ever forget it.

Dads, you are to be the spiritual leaders of your families. Your children need your strength, your love and your blessing. They need you to press the pause button of life long enough to bless them. They need you to leave work, they need you to turn off the

football game, they need you to put down the beer, they need to know how much you love them and value them. Don't let those father wounds of our past be transferred to our children. Spend time with the Lord, letting Him love you the way He wants to love you, and then Go, and pour His love out on your children. They are waiting on the Father's Blessing.