

Sermon outline and notes:

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John 5:16-20, 23, 30 “The Best Example of a Father/Son Relationship”

Intro. Today is Father’s Day. So I wanted to share with you a Father’s Day message this morning. I am speaking to many Fathers and mothers today. I am speaking to sons and daughters.

Preaching about family relationships is very important, not only because the family is the foundation of church and society, but also because the divine norms for the family have been under assault by the devil, especially during the past 50 years. I must say that the family in general, and even Christian families in particular, have not fared very well. The impact of the deterioration of the family is quite evident in many of the children and youth in our schools. So I hope we will pay special attention to what God has to say to us today from His Word. If we do so, we can be better parents for our children and better children for our parents.

Today we need good role models for both fathers and sons. And there is no better role model than God the Father, and God the Son. That is why I am preaching this text. If you want an example of a good father, look to God the Father. If you want an example of a good son, look to God the Son. In my text today, we have an excellent example of the roles of fathers and sons. So I am especially speaking today to both fathers and sons, but much of what I say will have application for mothers and daughters.

Now in the context Jesus has just healed a man who had not been able to walk for 38 years! Jesus told him, “Rise, take up your bed and walk.” Miraculously, he did just that! But the religious leaders were upset that Jesus healed the man on the Sabbath day, as v.16 indicates. So beginning in v.17 Jesus explains why He healed on the Sabbath. He did so, not only as an act of mercy, but also because His heavenly Father works, even on the Sabbath, and He was simply following the actions of His heavenly Father. So Jesus was justified in healing on the Sabbath because of His unique relationship with God the Father. This provides the background for our Scripture focus today.

Now I want you to see in our text first of all:

I. THE FATHER/CHILD RELATIONSHIP SHOULD BE AFFIRMED

Note in v.17 that Jesus said, “My Father has been working until now, and I have been working.” His authority for doing what He did was based on following His Father’s example. John reports in the last of v.18 that His Jewish audience understood that Jesus “said that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God.” They immediately understood that Jesus claimed for Himself deity in the highest possible sense of that term. They were right in their interpretation of His words. In fact, Jesus calls God “My Father” 34 times in the Gospel of John! He said in John 10:30, “I and My Father are one.” So Jesus was conscious of the fact that God was His Father in a unique way. Jesus could not have accomplished what He did without recognizing and affirming that God was His Father. So the point I want to make is that Jesus had no problem clearly affirming who His Father really was. It was not Joseph (cf. 6:42), but God the Father.

I want to suggest to you that children need to have a sense of identity. They need to know who their father is. And children need a father who affirms that relationship by being involved in their children's lives. There was a time in America that just about everyone knew who their father was or is. Yet that has changed since the sexual revolution. Feminists are wrong when they say that children do not really need a father, that a mother/child relationship is sufficient. A child's sense of who they are is derived largely from their father.

So we must not underestimate the influence and impact of a father on a child's life, especially those who are highly involved in their children's lives. To be a real father to a child takes sacrifice, commitment, and love. Such fathers are to be honored on Father's Day, and every other day as well. Such fathers need to be honored by their children, and honored by the mothers as well. Every father needs to affirm that he accepts the responsibilities of being a father to his children. Your children need that.

What about those who do not know who their birth father is, or whose birth father has not been involved in their lives? That has become much more common since the sexual revolution began. For some, there was a man who did little more than contribute 1/2 of a child's genetic code. The sad reality is that just to become a biological father requires no commitment, no love, and no sacrifice, and it's a sad commentary on a person's character if they contribute to the support of a child only under court order. It's a sad reality that 40% of divorced fathers have not seen their children in the past year. A child that has that kind of father can indeed be painful. But God wants to help you overcome the effects of sin. For many, God has provided *another* earthly father for you, such as an adoptive father. There are some step-fathers that have gladly accepted the role of father. God may have given you a father-figure, such as a grandfather or uncle. Even Jesus had Joseph as an earthly father, who was not his biological father. I believe that Jesus fully accepted Joseph as His earthly father, and submitted to him, and loved him. There may be some here today who need to get past your hurt, and accept that stepfather as your "real" earthly father. There may be some here today who need to accept your grandfather as God's provision of an earthly father. There may be some here today who need to accept your adoptive father as your earthly father. If you fully accept the earthly father God has given you, then he can fulfill that valuable role in your life. But if you do not accept him, then no matter how hard he tries, he is going to be very limited in what fulfilling that vital fatherly role.

There are some who have no earthly father at all. But the God of all creation wants to be a Father to the fatherless, as Psa. 68:5 says. And we all need to accept and affirm God as our Heavenly Father. And if you accept and recognize God as your Father, it can make a tremendous difference in your life as well. When you truly view yourself as a child of God, it will affect how you live.

But I must point out that God is not automatically your Heavenly Father by virtue of physical creation. Look over at John 8:42, 44, "If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and came from God.... You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do...." How can God become our Heavenly Father? Jesus said in John 3:3, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." By repentance of sin, and faith in Jesus Christ, you can be born again. You can experience the new birth, and become a child of God.

So it is important for your well-being to have a good father. I'm happy to say that I have a good earthly father and a great Heavenly Father. Now since being a good, involved father is so important, I want to encourage all present and future fathers to be the kind of father your

children need. So let's see what our text reveals about being a good father, based on what we read here about God the Father. Here we see that:

II. THE FATHER'S EXAMPLE IS VITAL

The fact is children will tend to watch what their fathers do, and follow their example. That's what Jesus did. He said in v.19, "Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner." Jesus was explaining His action of healing on the Sabbath. He was just following the lead of His Heavenly Father.

Even so, you can be sure that your children are watching you, and they will tend to follow your example. This is especially true of our young children. They want to be and do just like daddy. Therefore, based on this reality:

A. Fathers, Set a *Good* Example - One vital role of a father is to set a good example. What we see makes a greater impact upon us than what we hear. We must not be like some parents who say, "Do as I say, not as I do." That will not work. Your child is born with a sin nature, and if you are setting a bad example, they will very likely follow your bad example in spite of your exhortations not to do so. On the other hand, when you set a good example, your children will more than likely follow your example.

Jesus Himself understood the power of example. Look over to John 13:12-15, "So when He had washed their feet, taken His garments, and sat down again, He said to them, 'Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you.'"

So we fathers need to set an example for our children the way Paul describes in the last of 1 Tim. 4:12, "in word, in conduct, in love, ... in faith, in purity." We should treat our spouses in an exemplary way. We should set an example in following the Golden Rule of our Lord.

Some time ago a study was conducted regarding the impact of fathers on the long-term church attendance of their children. In short, if a father does not go to church, no matter how faithful his wife's devotions, only one child in 50 will become a regular worshipper as an adult. If a father does go regularly, regardless of the practice of the mother, between two-thirds and three-quarters of their children will become churchgoers, at least to some degree. If a father goes even irregularly to church, regardless of his wife's devotion, between a half and two-thirds of their offspring will find themselves coming to church regularly or occasionally.¹ I found another study that also showed that only 2% of children whose fathers did not attend church services continued to attend in adulthood. When it comes to long-term church attendance, it is amazing how much greater the impact of a father's example is compared to the mother!

Now knowing this reality, what would the devil's strategy be for keeping the next generation from attending our churches? Either remove the father from the home & marriage, or keep the father from attending church.

So fathers, your children are watching you, and your example is very important in molding and shaping their lives.

¹ <https://blogs.thegospelcoalition.org/thabitianyabwile/2010/12/16/fathers-and-church-attendance/>

B. Children, Follow Good Examples – Jesus followed the example of His Heavenly Father. He is not self-willed. Jesus never acted independently of the Father. He only did what He saw His Father do. He was always in perfect subjection to the Father’s will.

Even so, we should certainly follow the example of our Heavenly Father. Jesus said in Matthew 5:48, “Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.” We should strive to be like God, even toward moral perfection! Paul said in Ephesians 5:1-2, “Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God....” So look to your Heavenly Father. Learn more about Him from His Word, the Bible. Follow His example at all times.

Next, I would say that we should follow our earthly fathers with discernment. Young children will just blindly follow what their parents do. But as we get older, we are responsible to follow the example of our parents to the degree that they are following Christ. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 11:1, “Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.” Those who are maturing in the Lord should follow our earthly father’s example only if they are following God. If so, then reject sin and self-will, and follow his godly example.

Yet what if you have a godly earthly father who is setting a good example for you, and yet you are not following that example? That does happen sometimes. As far as we can tell from the story of the prodigal son, the earthly father was a good man, yet he had one son who lived a prodigal life, and another son who was self-righteous! If you are not following a godly father who is setting a good example for you, you need to repent and stop following the devil’s crowd!

And fathers, if we catch our children doing some other wrong, we should be able to say, “You didn’t learn that behavior from me. You are to follow my example.” If you catch your children cursing, you should be able to say, “I’m not having that in my house. You have *never* heard me curse, and I am not allowing you to do so.” Yes, we fathers ought to live in such a way that we can hold our children accountable when they do not follow our good example.

III. FATHERS, LOVE YOUR CHILDREN

Jesus says in v.20, “For the Father loves the Son” Jesus confidently expressed His Father’s love for Him. Here again, God the Father sets a good example for us.

Even so, earthly fathers ought to follow the example of our Heavenly Father, and love our children, and make sure they know that we love them. We should love our children just as God loves His Son, as well as all His children. Our children ought to be confident of our love for them.

How will our children know of our love with confidence? I want to share two ways:

A. By Expressing Your Love Verbally - When Jesus was baptized, His Heavenly Father spoke these words, “This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased” (Matt. 3:17). There was a time in America when the typical macho father did not verbally express love for their children, especially their sons. That was left for mothers to do. I am glad that fathers today are more likely to express love to their children verbally, and with hugs and kisses. It is important that children receive affirmations of love from their fathers.

B. By Spending Time with Your Children – Jesus says in the middle of v.20, “For the Father ... shows Him all things that He Himself does....” The verb translated “show” (*deiknuo*) means “to show, expose to the eyes.”

Fathers, it is so important that you follow God’s example here. You need to spend time with your children, not just *telling* them what to do, but *showing* them what they should be doing. Let them come with you in your activities that are appropriate for their age. I know they can get in the way, slow you down, and make things harder at times, but they need your involvement in their lives. We show our love for our children, not by going home and shutting them out of our lives, but by involving them in our lives and activities. Show them by example how they are to live and treat other people right. Show them what obedience to God looks like. Let them know of your plans, hopes, and dreams.

IV. HONOR FATHERS AND SONS

Home ought to be a place of honor. When Cheryl and I got married we both vowed to “honor” one another. We taught our children the 5th Commandment, “Honor your father and your mother...” (Ex. 20:12). And yes, we should desire honor for our children. Jesus said in v.23, “that all should honor the Son just as they honor the Father...” By our words and by our actions we are to honor one another, and insist that others honor the members of our family. Before I get into the details here, I want to make sure you understand the meaning of the word “honor.” It literally means “to place a [high] value upon” (Gk. *timao*). For example, when we honor our fathers, we recognize their value, and treat them appropriately. On Father’s Day, we should recognize and express how valuable our fathers are to us. Family members should honor one another, not cut each other down.

Now let’s see what Jesus says here about honor. First of all, we should:

A. Seek Honor for Your Children – Again, Jesus said in v.23, “that all should honor the Son just as they honor the Father...” In fact, God so desires that His Son be honored that He made Him the only way of salvation. Jesus said in John 14:6, “No one comes to the Father except through Me.” When we get to the book of Revelation, we read of the saints in heaven proclaiming, “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honor...” (5:12).

As God the Father wanted His Son to receive honor, even so we should desire honor for our children. We should so guide, teach, and discipline our children, that they grow up to live honorable lives.

Now most parents want their children to receive honors, partly because of a principle found in the last part of this verse. And that principle is this:

B. Fathers Receive Honor When Their Children Are Honored – Jesus said in the last of v.23, “He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him.” In other words, you honor the father by honoring the son. There is an unbreakable link between God the Father and God the Son. You cannot honor God the Father unless you honor His Son. That is one reason why you cannot be saved unless you trust in Jesus as Savior and Lord. God insists that we honor His Son, because when the Son is honored, the Father is honored.

We are in the season for graduations. Many students are honored for their achievements. You can be sure that when the son or daughter is honored, the parents who raised them also received honor. That is one reason why parents are often mentioned when we honor graduates.

If you want to honor parents, show honor to their children. It touches their heart when you do so. On the other hand, if you dishonor their children, you dishonor them.

Sons and daughters, I want to challenge you to live honorable lives, not only for yourself, but also to the honor and glory of your God, and to honor your parents and your family. And I want you to know how you live an honorable life. It is as you do those things that please your parents. They have your best interest at heart. Jesus said at the last of v.30, "I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me." In John 8:29 Jesus said, "The Father has not left Me alone, for I always do those things that please Him." Jesus said in John 15:10, "I have kept My Father's commandments..." What an example Jesus was for all sons and daughters.

But what happens when we fall short in raising honorable children? Or what happens when our children refuse to follow our godly example? Proverbs 29:15 says, "The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself brings his mother to shame." Likewise, Prov. 17:25 says, "A foolish son is a grief to his father, and bitterness to her who bore him." So don't be a child that brings shame. Be a child that brings honor to your parents.

Conclusion: One way we give honor to God the Father and God the Son is to confess Christ as Savior. If you have not done so, will you come forward and do that today?

Sources: William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary: John* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1955); Alexander Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture*, Vol. 11 (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977 reprint); Arthur W. Pink, *Exposition of the Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975); Larry Pierce, *Online Bible* [Ver. 4:23] (Ontario: onlinebible.net, 2012). Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from *The New King James Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1982). The following sources were read in preparation for this message, but no notes were directly added: James Dobson and Gary L. Bauer, *Children at Risk: The Battle for the Hearts and Minds of Our Kids* (Dallas, TX: Word Publishing, 1990), 165-170; John MacArthur, *Successful Christian Parenting: Raising Your Child with Care, Compassion, and Common Sense* (Nashville: Word Publishing, 1998), 159-161; Dorothy Kelley Patterson, *The Family: Unchanging Principles for Changing Times* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2002), 71-80.

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