

Introduction

I'll admit this is the first "Father's Day" service I've ever done. There are a few reasons for that:

1. It's not a religious holiday.
2. Father's Day tends not to be as significant as Mother's Day
3. More examples and direct words to mothers in the Bible

But I decided to have a Father's day service *this* year for the following reasons:

1. We had a Mother's Day service, so I have to be fair.
2. Fathers play a vital role in our families, church and society. God would surely be pleased if we take a day to acknowledge that role and encourage fathers.
3. It is a religious holiday in the sense that an earthly father derives his position, authority and qualities from our heavenly Father. As God is the encourager and role model for fathers, our attention will ultimately be focused on our Father in Heaven... certainly an appropriate focus for Sunday worship. And finally,

At first had trouble - many of the examples I came up with were negative ones

Then realized that "Father's Day" urged us to talk about our Heavenly Father

He is the greatest encourager and role model for fathers

Today look at five qualities of Christian fathers. In reality we'll be looking at our Heavenly Father's description of an ideal father

1. Fathers are firm

Bible Reading: 2 Samuel 13:20-22; 14:21-24; Proverbs 3:11-12

While King David is highly revered as a great King, believer and a man after God's own heart, he had his share of family troubles. While far from a perfect father, David certainly did love his children greatly. Because he loved them so much, sometimes he needed to be firm with them.

[Tamar's] brother Absalom said to her, "Has that Amnon, your brother, been with you? Be quiet now, my sister; he is your brother. Don't take this thing to heart." And Tamar lived in her brother Absalom's house, a desolate woman. When King David heard all this, he was furious. Absalom never said a word to Amnon, either good or bad; he hated Amnon because he had disgraced his sister Tamar. [When Absalom got the chance, he eventually

killed his half-brother Amnon. Absalom ran away. David loved Absalom greatly. But he exiled his own son for a time because of this murder. Finally, he was convinced by Joab, the commander of his armies and good friend, to restore Absalom.] **The king said to Joab, “Very well, ... Go, bring back the young man Absalom.” Joab fell with his face to the ground to pay him honor, and he blessed the king. Joab said, “Today your servant knows that he has found favor in your eyes, my lord the king, because the king has granted his servant’s request.” Then Joab went to Geshur and brought Absalom back to Jerusalem. But the king said, “He must go to his own house; he must not see my face.” So Absalom went to his own house and did not see the face of the king.**

And in Proverbs we read: **“My son, do not despise the LORD’s discipline and do not resent his rebuke, because the LORD disciplines those he loves, as a father the son he delights in.”**

Again, David a great king. But in many ways a lousy father. Absalom would later revolt against David and almost cost him the throne

Proverbs says that God disciplines and rebukes us. God does this through his Word when a particular passage or story really convicts us. He does this through Christian friends that lovingly point out our wrong actions, attitudes or words. He also does this through pastors or other church leaders. While none of us likes being held accountable for our wrongs, truth is it’s a huge blessing to have someone to call you back to the Lord

Fathers need to take responsibility as the leader in the home. Society has moved away from discipline ... with disastrous results. Where there is not a father who firmly and fairly rebukes and corrects, we see children who grow up to lack self-discipline. And I believe that is one of the measures of a person... to have the ability to do what you don’t want to do. A person may not want to spend within their means, eat a balanced and healthy diet, exercise regularly, not waste too much time on video games, internet or TV. We don’t want to do these things, but we know we should. And we’re blessed when we do. This self-discipline must be learned from childhood. Fathers, you must be firm and fair or develop this important quality in your children.

Loving authority (never cruel or destructive) is critical in a home. The Lord disciplines those He loves; Fathers discipline those that they love

HYMN: Come, Oh, Come, Life-giving Spirit (CW 181)

2. Fathers are compassionate

Bible Reading: Luke 15:11-32; Psalm 103:13

Jesus continued: “There was a man who had two sons. The younger one said to his father, ‘Father, give me my share of the estate.’ So he divided his property between them. “Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. He longed to

fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything. “When he came to his senses, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired men have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men.’ So he got up and went to his father. “But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him. “The son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ “But the father said to his servants, ‘Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let’s have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ So they began to celebrate. “Meanwhile, the older son... called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. The older brother became angry and refused to go in.

Psalm 103:13 As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him;

Some people have in their minds that it’s mom who shows compassion. The father is only a harsh disciplinarian. That’s not what the Bible says! Bible talks about God’s compassion!

What could that father have said to his son?

- Told you that’s what would happen
- Three years in the servants quarters ought to teach you
- I was right about you

The response of the other son is typical - what is going on here? Compassion is going on here!

Why didn’t the father discipline him? We just said that discipline was important. God had already done that! This was a repentant person! Goal of discipline is to create sorrow over sin. That was done. The situation called for forgiveness.

Fathers, it’s important for children to see and experience your anger over sin. Just as important to feel and know your compassion. To hear the words “God forgives you. I forgive you.” They need to feel *your* warm embrace of love.

Society portrays fathers as rather one-dimensional (disciplinarians) - the Bible doesn’t. Fathers, have compassion on your children just as our heavenly Father has compassion on us.

Hymn: Dear Christians, One And All, Rejoice (CW 377)

3. Fathers are comforting

Bible Reading: Colossians 3:21; 2 Corinthians 1:3-4

Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged.

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in

any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God.

Do not embitter your children. Greek word means to “to cause someone to react in a way that suggests acceptance of a challenge; to arouse, to provoke.”

What embitters children?

- Fathers who are never around
- Fathers who don't pay attention to them
- Fathers who don't demonstrate concern

Every father feels twinge of guilt. Forgiven. Now be a comforter!

Comfort: “to instill someone with courage or cheer” and “to call to one's side”

Fathers, call your children to your side - dry their tears, listen to problems, be involved in lives.

Hymn: Love Divine, All Love Excelling (CW 365)

4. Fathers are teachers of the Word

Bible Reading: Ephesians 6:4; Proverbs 4:1

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

Listen, my sons, to a father's instruction; pay attention and gain understanding.

Fathers, do you know that God holds you primarily responsible for the spiritual training of your children?

He holds you primarily responsible for the devotional life of your family.

He holds you primarily responsible for choosing which Bible study material is good

Just like he holds me primarily responsible at church

Doesn't mean that you necessarily do all the teaching.

“Father knows best.” Human fathers... not always. We make mistakes. But our Heavenly Father knows best. He wants earthly fathers to make that known.

Fathers, if you're going to go share God's Word with your children, you first have to know God's Word, don't you? Listen to God faithfully and regularly... through Bible study, church, Bible class. Then your children can know God as well.

Hymn: How Shall The Young Secure Their Hearts (CW 509)

5. Fathers are loving

Bible Reading: John 3:16, 35

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

The Father loves the Son and has placed everything in his hands.

Fathers, love your children.

Seems simple - buy them a lot of nice things, take them on vacation, make them happy

That's not what love is

Society teaches love is making happy, being nice

Love means doing what is best for someone

Sometimes showing anger against sin, warning someone

Sometimes declaring forgiveness

Sometimes taking on vacation

Means studying a situation, knowing a person, and applying God's Word

Fathers (and mothers, and all of us) have a profound, important job: to love others.

Takes on many different forms, springs from the Word.

Finally, what we heard today may spark guilt. Turn to Jesus. Be forgiven.

This will motivate us to be the very best fathers we can be. This will result in stronger families. A stronger church. A stronger society. But by far most importantly, it will honor and glorify our great and perfect Father in heaven. Our life will be one of thanksgiving to him for his great gift of sacrificing his own son for our sins. Happy Father's Day!

Hymn: Love Is The Gracious Gift (CW 505)

Special thanks go to Pastor Brian Kom who wrote the service from which this service was adapted.