



FAITH
FAMILY
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"The Gift That Keeps on Giving" A Father's Day Special

By Pastor Kevin

In my humble opinion, Father's Day should be the "manliest" day on the calendar. There should be no doubt that when that particular Sunday in June rolls around, men all around the globe will unite through the common language of grunting. On this day, dad's everywhere could cash in their ticket to a disruption-free zone that is sectioned off by every remote control they can get their hands on. Moreover, it only seems appropriate that there be some sort of Father's Day event on TV that includes tackling, grilling, or at the very least, some serious demolition.

I find it interesting to consider how society sometimes determines what makes a real man. Like our ability to handle power tools without sacrificing any of our limbs. Or opening a jar of pickles without popping some blood vessels. Or even the creativity that oozes out of us when we combine any kind of raw meat, propane, and a flame.

Fortunately, the Bible teaches men two important lessons in this regard: what makes a real man and what that real man needs from his family. The good news is that being a real man of God doesn't mean you have to stop and ask for directions when it's obvious to everyone but you that you're lost. Of course, there are many qualities that make a real man of God, but here are three to focus on this Father's Day. A real man of God *mentors* his family, *leads* his family, and *teaches* his family.

What's a family to do?

Father's Day may be the one day of the year on which the most BBQ's occur. Grease, blood, and sodium-enriched BBQ sauce blend perfectly together to satisfy our taste buds and clog our arteries. If this is true, my simple advice to you is to be ready to give your dad the most important gift out there: CPR. It really is the gift that keeps on giving. Let me explain.

Your Dad as Mentor

The focus of Titus 2 is clear: a right understanding of God leads to right living. But the way we learn this right understanding of God is from older men and women who model what it means to weave faith into life. Paul's instruction to Titus begins with the men: "be sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, love, and steadfastness ... be a model of good works ... show integrity, dignity, and sound speech" (Titus 2:2, 7-8, ESV). In other words, a real man of God has an obvious and vibrant relationship with Jesus Christ and you can tell by the way he lives.

Now kids, how many of you have ever thought of your dad as a model? Like the "walking down a runway with a bit of a constipated look on his face" kind of model? Ya, me neither. But a dad who loves God is to model these characteristics in Titus 2. He is to show you—to mentor you in—the value of what it means to live for the God he loves.

So, as you celebrate your dad again this year, *consider his ways*. Don't just take note of his obvious relationship with Christ; thank him for it. Don't just tell him he's a great dad; tell him why he's a great dad. And perhaps the greatest compliment you can pay your dad is to follow his example of "integrity, dignity, and sound speech" (v7-8). You can never say these sorts of things too much, and when you do, he'll be glad you did.

Your Dad as Leader

It has been said that it's much easier to follow than to lead. Kids, your dad has the most important leadership role that God has created: leading your family. It's more important than leading a country, a team, or even a church. Your father has a task given to him by God, namely, to lead your family.

Paul explains well the truth of this principle: "...the head (authority) of every man is Christ, the head (authority) of a wife is her husband, and the head (authority) of Christ is God" (1 Corinthians 11:3). Later in Ephesians, Paul expands on this to say that "the husband is the head (authority) of the wife as Christ is the head (authority) of the church" (Ephesians 5:23). Then, only a few verses later, fathers everywhere are given clear instructions to raise their children "in the discipline and instruction of the Lord" (6:4).

The bottom-line is this: your dad is the leader of your family. Outside of his own relationship with Jesus Christ, God has given him no greater responsibility than this. And to be truthful, this responsibility is rarely easy.

So, as you celebrate your dad again this year, *pray for him*. Don't just thank God for him; pray that God would give him wisdom and grace to lead your family well. Pray that your dad would take his responsibility seriously and that, when he does, he would find joy in the family God has given him. Pray that God would help you make wise decisions in your own life that will give him delight in his role as your father.

Your Dad as Teacher

The primary way your dad mentors and leads is by teaching. I think Ephesians 6:4 (quoted above) summarizes what Moses taught many years before. He said to the men in his congregation, "You shall teach [God's commands] to your children, talking of them when you are sitting in your house, and when you are walking by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise" (Deuteronomy 11:19).

Translation for young men? Being a dad is about helping us answer the difficult questions in life. Like when that special young lady looks you in the eye and asks the one question that makes you doubt your purpose in life: "Does this dress make me look fat?"

Translation for young women? Again, dad is there to help search out life's deepest challenges. Like when that special young man in whom you have invested so much, and with whom you desire to share your feelings and thoughts about something important, says without looking directly at you: "Let's talk about this at halftime."

More important than either of these scenarios, however, is dad's special responsibility to put God first in your family. Weaving faith into life is every family's first priority, and dad teaches us how to do that as he weaves faith into his own life. Not to mention that dad helps us understand what makes that young lady or young man so special in the first place.

So, as you celebrate your dad again this year, *reward him*. Reward him for all those deeply personal moments the two of you have shared; the moments from which you have walked away not only feeling closer to your dad, but feeling closer to your God. Remind him of the times you remember him making a difference in your life because of something he said or did. How you reward your dad is up to you, but few things in life bring a dad greater joy than to know he's made a difference in the lives of his children.

On a Personal Note

I know Mother's Day or Father's Day can be difficult for some of you. Maybe your relationship with your mom or dad isn't what you would like it to be. Maybe, in God's timing, he has taken your mom or dad sooner than you expected. Maybe some of what I've described above is not even close to the experience you've had with your father, but you wish it was.

When I was three months old, my father died. I've spent the better part of my life without my dad, someone with whom I could share some of these things I've just shared with you. When I was younger, Father's Day's were sometimes difficult, but thanks in large part to a great mom and some special uncles, I found a way to get through it.

But as I've grown and have now become a father myself, I often catch myself thinking that I want nothing more than to be a great dad—or, at the very least, a good dad—to my little girl. I feel as if writing this short article has raised the bar of expectation for me and every other father, and sometimes these expectations feel desperately overwhelming. But I know that if I do this, the little one in my house who calls me "daddy" can grow up to live for the God I love.

So, if these days are difficult for you, I know where you're coming from. More importantly, so does God. Cast your cares upon him because he cares for you. He cares for you like no other Father ever could.

The Bible says your dad is to be a mentor, a leader, and a teacher. And the greatest gift you could give him this Father's Day is CPR: Consider his ways, Pray for him, and Reward him. This is what every dad needs from his family. And as time goes on, you'll find that this really is the gift that keeps on giving.