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Trinity Presbyterian Church – Pensacola, FL
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LIFE IN THE SPIRIT: 4. “5 P’s for Pater” - Father’s Day
I Corinthians 4:8-17

A doting father used to sing his little children to sleep. He memorized a few lullabies to lend some variety to the task and he was quite proud of this nightly routine until one night he overheard his four-year-old advise her younger sister, “If you pretend you’re asleep,” she said, “he stops.” That was the end of the lullabies.

We joke about dear old Dad, but men have a tremendous effect on their children’s development. We fathers pass on examples, characteristics and experiences that will build a legacy for our children and grandchildren that will bless them for a lifetime.

In I Corinthians, Chapter 4, the Apostle Paul addresses the church at Corinth as a father admonishing his children. He loves them but they are being immature, arrogant, and stubborn. He confronts their offenses and tells them to do what they know is right. In verse 14, he explains “*I am not writing this to make you ashamed, but to admonish you as my beloved children.*” And in verse 16 Paul dares to say, “Imitate me.” “Do as I do, not as I say.” How many of us Dads are ready to say that to our children? In verse 17-18 Paul tempers his discipline with a compliment, an affirmation – implying that their mistakes are not due to deliberate rebellion, but due to their forgetfulness. Is that not true of us too? We don’t so much rebel against Jesus as we just forget that Christ is the center of all things and we employ selective memory – we forget those hard demands that we don’t want to fulfill.

So Paul sent Timothy to remind them of what Paul taught them, and when Paul comes to visit them he will discipline them if need be, because loves them enough to do whatever it takes to help them live obedient to God. What might we Dads do toward fulfilling our calling to nurture our children toward God? I’m indebted to The Rev. David Holwick and his sermon, “The Five P’s of Patering,” for these tips. “Pater” is Greek for father. **The Five P’s For Pater are: PRAY...PURPOSE...PATIENCE...PLAY...PRAISE.**

1. A PRAYING Father contributes greatly to his children’s faith and trust in God.

When you pray you are setting a spiritual example. When your children hear you praying out loud it shows them that you honor God, you need God, you seek God.

- Say Grace before meals. Ask the blessing – learn a repeat blessing or pray spontaneously.
- Pray spontaneously with your children for important matters: school, fears, challenges, ambitions, life direction, their future wife or husband, heartaches, joys.

Your spiritual leadership will produce eternal fruit. When fathers honor God, children and others take note, and Jesus is lifted up for all to see.

2. PURPOSE ... A Dad of Purpose blesses his children. .

You Dads honor God when you participate in your children’s nurture and development. It’s a rare man, a special kind of Dad, who has thought through how he might bless his family and what hands-on activities or priorities might help him accomplish his goals. One man wrote the following note to thank and honor his father at his father’s retirement party: Notice the small things his father did that had such a lasting influence:

THANK YOU DAD

For waking up every morning when it was still dark outside and going to work, while we slept in our warm beds.

For wearing that ugly paper tie I made you in first grade.

For teaching me how to pray.

For coming to all my Little League games and for keeping quiet when other fathers wouldn't.

For loving my mother with all your heart.

For teaching me I can never say "please" and "thank you" too often.

For taking me out for ice cream the night I struck out with the tying run on third.

For giving me a hug when I badly needed one.

For building that voice inside me that said "no" when I was tempted to get in a car after I had been drinking.

For giving me life even after you lost a son.

For helping me buy my first car.

For being a wonderful grandfather.

For telling me it's okay to cry.

For being my hero, for being my friend. (*Top Greetings*. Duncan.)

Several of you Dads have brought your children with you to help us feed the homeless at Loaves and Fishes on Sunday nights. What a profound example you are setting for them. When you let them put your offering envelope in the offering plate on Sunday, you're showing them that it's important to thank God and to share with others. You are showing them that you have a higher goal in life - to honor God in all you do. You honor God by taking our children out for ice cream and laughing with them and when you help build Habitat Houses and when you write checks to charities. Let your children see how you honor God and let them learn from your example.

It's not just at the communion table that we hear Jesus say "Remember me"... we're to take up the cross daily and follow him! What a blessing to have Fathers who show us children daily that we belong to God and that dear old Dad will show us the way to live obedient to God.

PRAYER...PURPOSE....PATIENCE. Children need models, but not critics. Set high expectations for your kids, but don't demand perfection, for neither are you perfect.

The Apostle Paul admonishes the Corinthians to do right, but then he affirms them and expresses his love for them, his confidence in them. You bless your children when you temper your discipline with patience and understanding. That may mean you overlook a lot of foolishness. Proverbs 19:11 says, "*A man's wisdom gives him patience; it is to his glory to overlook an offense.*" A wise family friend once advised us about parenting and discipline, "If it's not a moral issue, don't make it one." Often, our reaction, or over-reaction, is more disturbing than is their infraction!

Rev. Richard Fairchild recalls a story called "Priceless Scribbles" that appeared years ago in the *Christian Reader*. It concerns a father who touched his child's life in an unexpected way.

A young boy watched as his father walked into the living room. The boy noticed that his younger brother, John, began to cower slightly as his father entered. The older brother sensed that John had done something wrong.

Then he saw from a distance what his brother had done. The younger boy had opened his father's brand new hymnal and scribbled all over the first page with a pen.

Staring at their father fearfully, both brothers waited for John's punishment. Their father picked up his prized hymnal, looked at it carefully and then sat down, without saying a word. Books were precious to him; he was a minister with several academic degrees. For him, books were knowledge. What he did next was remarkable. Instead of punishing his brother, instead of scolding, or yelling, his father took the pen from the little boy's hand, and then wrote in the book himself, alongside the scribbles that

John had made. Here is what that father wrote: "John's work, 1959, age 2. How many times have I looked into your beautiful face and into your warm, alert eyes looking up at me and thanked God for the one who has now scribbled in my new hymnal. You have made the book sacred, as have your brother and sister to so much of my life."

"Wow," thought the older brother, "This is punishment?" The author of the story, now an adult, goes on to say how that hymnal became a treasured family possession, how it was tangible proof that their parents loved them, how it taught the lesson that what really matters is people, not objects; patience, not judgment; love, not anger. (Fairchild)

Blessed are you fathers who are showing your children patience!

PRAYER...PURPOSE...PATIENCE...AND PLAY.

You are blessing your kids by having fun with them, laughing with them, playing games with them, being silly. You are teaching them balance in life, you are teaching them humility. Carefree time can be constructive time.

Pity the father who doesn't realize the benefit of playing together. Card games, board games, soccer, riding bikes, swimming, singing songs, making up stories and acting out imaginary tales, dressing in silly costumes and hats and joking around, playing golf together or baseball, shooting hoops at the basketball goal in the driveway, just hanging out and being silly together - aren't those some of your best memories?

A boy was asked by his father what he wanted as a present for his sixth birthday. The boy was usually very specific about the gifts he liked his father to buy him, often giving his father great details about the names of certain toys and their color, size, and location in the toy store. The boy's response surprised the father. He simply said, "I'd like a ball."

"Great," the dad said, "what kind of ball?"

"A football or a soccer ball," the boy answered.

"Which do you want more?" Dad asked.

"Well," the boy said, pausing in thought, "if you have time to play catch with me, then I'd like a football so we could throw it back and forth in the yard. But if you're too busy, then I'd like a soccer ball because I can play soccer with the kids in the neighborhood." The father quickly realized that what the boy *really* wanted was more time with Dad. The ball was just a means to an end. (Mitchell)

By making time to play...you are expanding your legacy and your children will love you for it!

YOU bless your children by your PRAYER...your PURPOSE...your PATIENCE....your PLAY..and by your PRAISE..

Our self esteem balances "I am Loveable" and "I am capable." Almost all children want to please their fathers...and we don't outgrow that even as adults. Our father's validation is so vital, that signs of a father's rejection or hardness can stigmatize us for life. Praising your children validates them, affirms them, instills self-confidence. We're good at saying "No." "Don't" "You can't!" "Stop that!" But how good are we at saying. "Yes!" "I'm proud of you!" "I like what you're becoming!" "Good job" "I knew you could!"?

Compliments energize your kids; criticism stymies them. I don't mean give false, sweet syrupy praise to everything your child does - even they can detect insincere, artificial praise -- but affirm your children as they grow and struggle and discover their abilities and likes.

When Charlie Shedd and his family were packing up their household goods to move from Kansas to Oklahoma, Shedd came across a roll of baler twine that he had saved for some reason but had never used. He told his son, Phillip, "I don't want you to mess with that baler twine. That's special, so don't touch it." According to Shedd, "that must have been like saying 'Sic 'em' to a dog, for almost every day I found that he had been playing with my baler twine." Shedd would lecture him and scold him, "Don't play with that!" but it was like a magnet that kept pulling Phillip back. Then one day Shedd came home from work and found baling twine everywhere – it was stretched and crisscrossed all across the garage door opening.

"As I started cutting my way through just to get my car in the garage," Shedd writes, "I rehearsed what lecture I was going to give (Phillip). But as I cut away I started thinking, 'What am I going to do with this baler twine anyway?'" And then he realized that the baler twine was not nearly that so important.

"So," he writes, "that night when we sat down at supper and said a prayer to thank God for the food, Phillip remained with his head bowed. I said, 'Phillip, about that baler twine.' Phillip's head bowed even lower and you could tell he was really disturbed."

Then Charlie Shedd said, "Phillip, I've decided that baler twine is not worth nearly as much as you are. You're really a special son and I love you a bunch. If you want to play with the baler twine, just help yourself!" And he added, "Phillip never touched the baler twine again.' Now that is a positive influence and that's loving affirmation in action! (Shedd, cited in *Illustrations*, June 2010.)

In the grand scheme of life "stuff" doesn't matter. Our children do! Stuff can get lost or destroyed. A spiritual legacy lasts for generations.

Dad, you are blessing your children when you *praise* them!

And as you *pray* for them and pray *with* them,
as you show them your *purpose* to honor God and
as you show *patience* and
as you *play*!

Thanks be to God for you Dads! I celebrate and honor you!
May God bless you and keep you, and may you enjoy your day!
Amen!

Sources

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