

Fathers and Sons

Another Father's Day is upon us, and, honestly, I am not sure what else can be said on the subject. Many books have been written and sermons preached. Having grown up in the church, I have literally heard them all my life. With multiple teaching times just ahead, I had no intention of adding more to that. My journal is full of other thoughts and verses written down believing one day they will encourage and equip men in our walks with the Lord. But today my focus was turned to this timely subject—fathers and sons.

I have been a son since the day I was born and a father more than thirty years. I recently became a “grand”-father. Being a father is a great honor and privilege, yet our high office is not without trials and tribulations. The responsibilities can be intimidating—sometimes overwhelming. Most of us men do not want to let cracks in the armor of our manhood become exposed. But at some point in our lives as fathers, they are.

The Bible contains many examples of fathers and sons. My mind was taken to three that give us much to read, chew on, and digest as we consider them in the context of our own experiences as fathers and sons.

Abraham and Isaac. The faith of a father—the love and trust of a son.

The story of Abraham spans Genesis 12 – 25. Much of that covers the twenty-five years from God's promise he would have an heir and descendants “as numerous as the stars”. Abram was 75 when he received the promise—100 when he received his son, Isaac.

While his age is a great conversation among biblical apologists, Isaac was young man when God gave his father the

most incredible order in biblical history. God commanded Abraham to “take his son, his only son whom you love (and had waited on for 25 years) and sacrifice him” (Genesis 22:2) – a burnt offering at that!

In the next verse we read the most amazing act of obedience in all of Scripture apart from Jesus Himself. Abraham packed up what he needed, got Isaac, and headed for Mount Moriah to sacrifice his son. The most incredible thing that is easy to miss (because it is not there) is this—no argument from Abraham. As fathers, we would have been screaming, crying, and begging God to relent on such a ridiculous command.

It is probably safe to say no father ever loved his son more than Abraham loved Isaac. Yet in complete and swift obedience, he prepared to kill him. But do not forget about Isaac. We know he questioned his father about where the sacrifice was. Abraham simply told him God would provide (Jehovah Jireh). The love and trust of Isaac for his father is obvious in his obedience. He was old enough to have resisted being placed on a pile of wood to be the sacrifice. Abraham was old. Isaac probably could have taken away the knife. But he did not.

We know how the story turned out. God stayed the hand of Abraham, sparing the life of Isaac and immeasurable grief for his father. What did we learn?

- *As fathers, we must also be men of faith, believing God, taking Him at His word, communicating (ongoing process) that to our sons in words and actions.*

David and Solomon. A Portrait of Contradiction and Consistency

That is an odd way to position this part of our lesson. But the Bible clearly teaches that David was indeed both. He was an amazing young man who began writing worship songs

watching sheep and continued throughout his life. He believed God completely and stepped in to kill a giant who defied Him as the 'real' Israeli soldiers cowered in fear. He loved His Lord God with all his heart. He is the only man in the Bible that God Himself called, "*a man after My own Heart*". (1 Samuel 13:14; Acts 13:22)

But O did David have issues!!! Lust surrendered to that led to adultery and murder. That followed by the death of his child. Too many wives and too many dysfunctional sons. One who raped his sister. Another killed him for that. Later he led a rebellion against his father.

Much of what befell David were consequences of his sin. Yet we know from the most powerful Psalm of all (Psalm 51), David was broken and repentant before the Lord in all of this. When confronted by the prophet of God attending him, he was accountable for his sins.

And who grew up in all of this? Solomon. Solomon was not in line to be David's heir, but God selected him, and David honored that despite major ramifications from the "rightful heir" son.

David wanted most of all to build God a house – temple – worthy of His magnificence and made all the plans and preparations to do so. But God halted that; instead giving that honor to Solomon. Once again, as with Abraham, we do not read that David complained. Instead he wrote a psalm of praise to God.

When David was about to go Home to be with His Lord, he called Solomon to him and spoke these words.

"So be strong, act like a man, and observe what the Lord your God requires: Walk in obedience to Him, and keep His decrees and commands, His laws and regulations, as written in the Law of Moses. Do this so that you may

prosper in all you do and wherever you go..." 1 Kings 2:
2-3

What do we learn from such a relationship filled with contradiction on one hand and consistency on the other?

- As fathers, our lives mirror David's more than we readily admit—as least in public. **We all fail miserably and often.** The question is what do you do when confronted with your sin? Get defensive and deny it? Or get humble and confess it, accepting responsibilities for your sins against your Creator and our Lord Jesus Christ?
- Despite his failures as a father, David's lasting impression on Solomon was he chose the latter. And for that he is hailed by His Father God as "a man after My own heart". **As fathers, let us strive to be known, like David, as "forgiven failures"** who model the same humble and contrite hearts to our sons. That is a legacy worth leaving!

The Father and the Son

God the Father and Jesus the Son. This might seem the more challenging and unusual of the three parts of this lesson. It turned out to be the easiest to write, but perhaps the most difficult for us fathers to apply. In the three examples that follow, it is not His Son that benefits. It is you and me! Consider,

– **Sacrificial love.** Most of the time when we think of this concept, the sacrificial love of Christ, the Son, for us comes to mind. That is supported by many scriptures. But in the best-known verse in the Bible, John 3: 16, Jesus speaks of the sacrificial love of God. He gave His Son to die as a sacrifice.

– **Tough love.** This concept was introduced to me through a

book on parenting by James Dobson, PhD. It has since been applied to other areas of life including marriage. Reduced to a sentence,

Tough love means holding firm to (biblical) truths and convictions in relationships even when the impact on others may be painful and not seem "loving" in the cultural sense.

It was "tough love" of God that stayed His hand from bringing His Son down from that cross because it should have been you and me there. What He should have done was brought on mankind the judgement due after thousands of years of second chances and failed covenant relationships (on man's part).

But He did not. Instead He listened as His Son cried out, "My God, My God why have you forsaken Me?" (Matthew 27: 46) That, my dear brothers, is the toughest love ever applied which brings us to the third love that is the result of the first two.

– **Saving love.** Every Christian knows what this means. It is the saving love of God that the Apostle Paul talked about in Romans 5: 8.

"...God demonstrates His own love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

It is the saving love of Jesus that Paul again described in Galatians 2: 20

*"...but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in **the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.**"*

As fathers, lovers of our children (and their mothers), let us strongly take to heart these examples.

▪ *Sacrificial Love – when it costs me something or I do*

not benefit from its expression.

- *Tough Love – when it hurts me and the one on the other end of this biblical love.*
- *Saving love – we cannot offer, but one of the greatest demonstrations of our love for others is when we point them to the only One Who can save them – Christ our Risen Savior.*

Yours for Christ's sake,

Walter