

A FATHER'S DAY WORK-OUT

Adapted from Ted Cunningham - "Teach Us To Pray" (p.p. 28 – 32); John Trent - "The Gift Of Blessing" (p.p. 46 – 48); and John Fuller - "Tug Of Work" (p. 64); in *Focus On The Family Thriving Family*. Summer 2011.

Text: Deuteronomy 6.1 - 9 (in pew Bible p. 178 / in large print Bible p. 277)

Intro: -illust. Churchill

-today's text outline's Moses' instruction for parents to:

- whole-heartedly love God (v. 5).
- internalize God's commands (v. 6).
- repeatedly impress God's commands upon your children at home & away (v. 7).
- tie God's commands as symbols on your hands and foreheads (v. 8).
- write God's commands on the doorposts of your house and on your gates (v. 9)

-this is quite a regimented work-out for fathers to follow in respect to God's commands:

- whole heartedly love, internalize, repeatedly impress, tie as symbols, and write.
- not easy or brief – life long process.

-the reason for Moses instructions (v. v. 2, 3):

- so children / grandchildren may reverence & obey the LORD as long as we live.
- so you will enjoy a long life in the Promised Land.

Take Home Point:

-our challenge is to lead our family to love and obey God.

- here are three exercises that you as a father can practice in family circle.

GIFT OF PRAYER

-kids are big on communication – *e-mail & texting*.

- ask your children who their closest friends are & what makes their relationship so positive.
 - I can be real with them / I can tell them anything.
- bridge into an application with God.
 - do your children know *God wants to have a relationship with them?*
 - **ask them:** If you could send a text message to God, what would you say?
 - **assignment:** ask God two questions – do you love me & why?
 - find scriptures that help answer these questions.

-couples can enhance their intimacy and spiritual bond through prayer.

- break routine – don't only pray @ mealtime.
 - pray @ beginning / end of the day.
 - hard to stay upset with your spouse.
- be real - confess wrongs to each other & pray.
 - keep prayers fresh.
 - before you fall asleep, reach for your spouse's hand and pray & offer a gentle kiss.
 - invite your spouse into your personal conversations with the Lord.

GIFT OF BLESSING

-illust. Greedy Dad

-children need to be / feel affirmed – *can be done thru blessing*.

- meaningful touch like people in the Bible – *placed their hands on children*.
- Jesus took children in his arms & put his hands on them to bless them (Mark 10.16).

-words of love & acceptance.

- help children to feel & hear they are loved.
- blessings communicate love & acceptance.

-sing to your young children even if they don't understand.

- words of praise & honour convey a beautiful picture of parents love for children.

-acknowledge a special feature.

- pick a character trait you feel God could use or affirm in the future.
- encourages your child to have a positive self image backed by your belief in them.
 - illust. a D Grade

GIFT OF TIME

-illust. I Know You're All Mine.

-I'm not trying to guilt you *but I do want to counsel you*.

-sometimes children exhibit troubling behavior – *anxiety / short fuse*.

- can be caused because Dad is too busy – *even with legitimate pursuits*.
- this causes kids to pay a huge price.
 - always verbalize your love & be available until bed time.

-great challenge to balance work & home.

- tough to build a career & build a family.
- great pressure to perform on the job – *over & above others*.
 - too often work wins out over the children.
- **illust.** C.S. Lewis

-often dads trade time with their kids for time at work, *for fear of being demoted*.

- on-the-job activity can be measured = *feeling significant*.
- on the other hand, fatherhood rarely offers measurable results *in the short run*.
 - pay off does not come for many years.

-fight the irresistible pull to work – *take the long view of being a parent*.

- results may not be immediate but they are more profound & lasting than anything we can accomplish on our jobs.

-**illust.** I'm Their Only Father

Conclusion:

1. Know what God wants you to do.

-challenge for fathers & grandfathers is to lead their families to love and obey God.

- whole-heartedly love God (v. 5).
- internalize God's commands (v. 6).
- repeatedly impress God's commands upon your children at home & away (v. 7).
- tie God's commands as symbols on your hands and foreheads (v. 8).
- write God's commands on the doorposts of your house and on your gates (v. 9)

-practice the three exercises in your family circle.

- Gift of Prayer, Gift of Blessing, & *Gift of Time*.

2. Know what God wants to do for you.

-bless your family circle:

- For the joy of human love, Brother sister parent, child.
Friends on earth and friends above; For all gentle thoughts and mild.
(Folliott S. Pierpont)

-restore and enrich your family circle.

-Responsive Reading: Deuteronomy 30.1 – 10 / p. 200

¹ When all these blessings and curses I have set before you come upon you and you take them to heart wherever the LORD your God disperses you among the nations,

² and when you and your children return to the LORD your God and obey him with all your heart and with all your soul according to everything I command you today,

³ then the LORD your God will restore your fortunes and have compassion on you and gather you again from all the nations where he scattered you.

⁴ Even if you have been banished to the most distant land under the heavens, from there the LORD your God will gather you and bring you back.

⁵ He will bring you to the land that belonged to your fathers, and you will take possession of it. He will make you more prosperous and numerous than your fathers.

⁶ The LORD your God will circumcise your hearts and the hearts of your descendants, so that you may love him with all your heart and with all your soul, and live.

⁷ The LORD your God will put all these curses on your enemies who hate and persecute you.

⁸ You will again obey the LORD and follow all his commands I am giving you today.

⁹ Then the LORD your God will make you most prosperous in all the work of your hands and in the fruit of your womb, the young of your livestock and the crops of your land. The LORD will again delight in you and make you prosperous, just as he delighted in your fathers,

¹⁰ if you obey the LORD your God and keep his commands and decrees that are written in this Book of the Law and turn to the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.

3. Know that God will do it.

-Final Hymn: #560 For The Beauty Of The Earth.

Benediction:

(based on Romans 8:15-16)

As you go from here, remember this:
Because of the work of the Holy Spirit within us,
we are sons and daughters of God.
We have been adopted into his family;
God is truly our Father.
And if we are God's children,
we are His heirs, and fellow heirs with Christ.

So go in peace and confidence,
knowing that the love of God, our Father,
the grace of Jesus Christ,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit
goes with us.

(based on Romans 8:15-16)

Churchill

The story is told that an acquaintance of Winston Churchill once said to him, “Mr. Churchill, I haven’t told you about my grandchildren, have I?”

Churchill responded by saying, “No, and I want you to know how much I appreciate it.”

Greedy Dad

Dear Annie: My father is a dentist and earns a good living, but he is going after my money. When I graduated from high school, he took the money relatives and friends sent me and kept it for himself. A year later, he and mom were going through a divorce, and he subpoenaed my work records to find out what I was earning. Their divorce was finally settled, but when dad found out I was awarded a partial college scholarship of \$980, he wanted “his share.”

Mom and dad both paid for my college tuition, but I worked hard to earn that small scholarship so I could stand on my own two feet. I am frustrated and a little disgusted with my father’s greed. Shouldn’t he feel proud of his daughter’s accomplishment instead of trying to steal it? His true colours came out during the divorce, and I took my mother’s side. Now he apparently has divorced me, as well. I support myself and don’t believe he is entitled to my money. What should I do? — Spurned Daughter

Dear Daughter: Unless dad is planning to take you to court for that money, we think you should ignore his demand. It is mean-spirited and punitive. Some disturbed and misguided parents try to hurt the ex-spouse by going after the children. We hope dad will calm down, and while you’re waiting, please consider both legal and emotional counsel. Your college counselling department should be able to help (*StarPhoenix* C4 June 17 / 11).

Relationship obviously died many years ago. Stinginess kills a relationship. Marriage and family life are based upon unselfish giving. If you stop giving you destroy love.

a D Grade

For older children, the blessing is specially powerful when you use these elements. Dr. John Trent notes that is what his mother did for him when he was a high school senior.

“I’ll never forget sitting at her old kitchen table with my head down, waiting for what I expected would come next: She would echo the words of others: “Why can’t you do as well as your brother? You’re twins, right?” That day, my teacher said even more than that with his actions.

He had held my senior term paper as if it were covered in mould. Then he had rolled his eyes before handing it back to me. The rest of the class smirked and hooted. On it was a large D, underlined in red pen.

That wasn’t my first D, but I’d worked really hard on that paper. And while I did skip my teacher’s instruction to include footnotes, he made it clear that I was a loser. I waited for my mom to finish reading my paper.

Finally she spoke. “John, look at me.”

I raised my head, just enough for my eyes to meet hers. When I did, she reached across the table and took my hand. My mother was a rheumatoid arthritic, and her hands were twisted and bent. Her grip was incredibly soft, but one she held my hand, I couldn’t pull away without hurting her and making her cry. I was stuck.

I felt broken and ashamed.

She said, “John, you should have woken me up, and I could have helped you with the footnotes.” When I dropped my head again, she continued, “I don’t care what your teacher said or wrote. You do such a good job of using words when you write that I wouldn’t be surprised if God used your words someday to help people.”

At that moment, she gave me a gift that continues to shape my life today. She used the various elements of biblical blessing to let me know I had worth (John Trent - “The Gift Of Blessing” in *Focus On The Family Thriving Family*. Summer 2011. p.p. 48).

I Know You're All Mine

In an interview for *Today's Christian Woman*, writer and speaker Carol Kent says:

One day when [my son] Jason was young, we were eating breakfast together. I had on an old pair of slacks and a fuzzy old sweater. He flashed his baby blues at me over his cereal bowl and said, "Mommy, you look so pretty today."

I didn't even have makeup on! So I said, "Honey, why would you say I look pretty today? Normally I'm dressed up in a suit and high heels."

And he said, "When you look like that, I know you're going some place; but when you look like this, I know you're all mine" (Craig Brian Larson *750 Engaging Illustrations*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1993, p. 165).

C.S. Lewis

Men tell not only their wives but themselves that it is a hardship to stay late at the office or the school on some bit of important extra work. But it is not quite true.

It is a terrible bore of course, ... ah, but how much more terrible if you were left out!

It is tiring and unhealthy to lose your Saturday afternoons, but to have them free because you don't matter, that is much worse (cited in "Tug-of-Work" by John Fuller in *Thriving Families*, Summer 2011, p. 64).

I'm Their Only Father

Families require the investment of precious time. In *New Man* Gary Oliver writes about a difficult decision made by professional baseball player Tim Burke concerning his family:

From the time Burke can first remember, his dream was to be a professional baseball player. Through years of sacrifice and hard work he achieved that goal.

While a successful pitcher for the Montreal Expos, he and his wife wanted to start a family but discovered they were unable to have children. After much prayer, they decided to adopt four special-needs international children. This led to one of the most difficult decisions of Tim's life.

He discovered that his life on the road conflicted with his ability to be a quality husband and dad. Over time it became clear that he couldn't do a good job at both. After more prayer and soul-searching, he made what many considered an unbelievable decision: he decided to give up profession baseball.

When he left the stadium for the last time, reporters wanted to know why he was retiring. "Baseball is going to do just fine without me," he said. "It's not going to miss a beat. But I'm the only father my children have. I'm the only husband my wife has. And they need me a lot more than baseball does" (Craig Brian Larson *750 Engaging Illustrations*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1993, p. 166).