

Father's Day 2019 | David Baumgartner

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[0 : 00] We welcome you to the media ministry of Bethel Community Church. Knowing Jesus, making Jesus known. I was thinking about the Apostle Paul and during his travels, he visited many different churches and each church was unique, right?

It was. You think about the uniqueness in terms of its composition, in terms of its background, mostly in terms of the issues that each church faced.

In his letter to the believers at Philippi, Paul deals with an issue that I think ought to resonate with each one of us here. And that's that issue of spiritual maturity.

Wherever you and I stand on the spectrum of spiritual maturity, I believe that it can be said that all of us could do better. Would you agree with that? Yeah, all of us could do better.

Some of us could do a lot better. And I also believe that there are others who frankly are in trouble. They are. Let me give you an example.

[1 : 12] We all know believers who at one time were on fire for the Lord. They had a zeal about them. And that zeal carried into their boldness and their faith, their proclamation of the gospel.

But then as time went on, something happened. And that fire that we once saw began to smolder. And maybe it stayed that way for years. So much so that today their life, we would say, would be indistinguishable from that of an unbeliever.

I want to ask you, do you know anybody that that describes? It's pretty sad. We may wonder what happened. Well, brothers and sisters, it's one thing if I'm describing a single guy who's basically unattached and has minimal responsibilities.

But what if that guy that I'm talking about has a family, has a wife and children who are counting on him to be the spiritual head of his home?

Yeah, I say the stakes, they seem higher. Would you agree with that? They are. This morning, if you agree with that, I'm glad that you're here today.

[2 : 28] We're going to be looking at a portion of just one sentence that Paul says in his letter to the Philippians. If you'd please turn with me in your Bibles, it's Philippians chapter 1, verses 9 to 11.

Or you're welcome to just look at that handout here. It's a very challenging and very practical verse. It's one of, in fact, it's one of Paul's prayers. And he says this, here's his prayer, that they would be able to, verse 10, approve what is excellent.

Just think about that. That you'd be able to approve what is excellent. I like what the NIV says. To be able to discern what is best in life.

Boy, that's what we need. Let's go ahead and read this passage here. Philippians 1, verses 9 to 11. It is my prayer that your love may abound more and more with knowledge and all discernment.

And here's the goal. So that you may approve what is excellent. And so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ. Filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ.

[3 : 40] To the glory and praise of God. So, friends, my outline is very simple this morning. What does it mean to approve what is best? And then secondly, how do we do it?

And third, why should we do it? Let's go ahead and go to the Lord, though. Heavenly Father, we are so glad that we can be here today. And be reminded of these truths, Lord.

And that it is your desire that we would approve what is best in our lives. Lord, we ask that by the power of your spirit that we would see things that would just encourage us this morning to be those who would be your ambassadors.

Lord, show us things in scripture. Things that we don't know about. Things that would encourage us. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. So, the first thing to look at.

What does Paul mean when he says to approve or discern what is excellent? That word there, approve or discern, it's a very common word in the New Testament. It refers to being the critical or

thorough examination of something.

[4 : 56] Here's a few examples. Like in Luke 14, verse 9, there was this guy who had to, he said, it says that he bought five oxen. And it says that he had to go examine them.

Or how about Luke 12, verse 56? Jesus commented on the Pharisees' ability to analyze and discern the weather. Now, I was thinking, boy, that would have been helpful yesterday, wouldn't it? At that blues rally, all that rain at first. Be able to discern the weather. Today, there's things that we approve, right? If you've ever test-driven a car, you're discerning, you're approving something. Or maybe how about when you pick out a good set of teeth? I'm thinking about my own dad. And as long as I can remember, my dad had a full set of false teeth.

And my dad would horse around quite a lot. One day, when I was really young, I asked my dad, Daddy, where did you get your teeth? And he says to me, I bought them at a store.

[6 : 06] He said there was a barrel of teeth there. And all these men were standing around trying on different teeth. I think my eyes were probably this big at that time, thinking about that.

Because you want the best ones, right? Yeah. You want to discern what is best. Well, Paul wanted the believers at Philippi to do something else.

He wanted them to discern what is best. And when you think about that, it brings a few things to mind. First of all, aren't these true that life is a series of choices that we make on a daily basis? Yeah. Some of them seem like really small things. Like, what are we going to eat? What are we going to wear this morning? Other decisions may seem really big. Like if you're going to make a career decision.

Or maybe a decision on a spouse. It's a big thing. The second thing is that with each choice, there's a corresponding consequence.

[7 : 07] Isn't that true? Yeah. And it can be very difficult to undo a bad decision. The third thing to observe is that there's usually a range of options as we make decisions.

There's good. There's better. But then there's that best. The superlative. That's what we want. And those best choices, they just don't drop out of the sky, do they?

No. They must be discerned. And sometimes, friends, it's difficult to discern what's the best choice. Would you agree with that? Putting this all together.

If you're a husband. If you're a father. Here's some questions to consider. How do you spend your discretionary time? Do you spend it with your family?

Or do you spend it with your buddies? However, here's the thing. However you use your time. The question is, is it the best? Or maybe you'd consider, what do you put before your eyes?

[8 : 16] Yeah. What books do you read? What magazines do you look at? What websites do you see? Whatever it is. The question is, is it the best?

You might want to ask yourself that. Here's the third thing. How do you spend your discretionary money? Here's the point. We can go on and on with these here. And my intention is not to generate a load of guilt here this morning.

No, it's rather to get us thinking. To get us to live with some intentionality. Out of all the choices that we make in life, what's best?

What is best? For me. For my family. For those in my household. If you're a spiritual head of your house. Keep in mind here, friends.

It's easy. If you're a father. If you're a husband. It's easy to deceive ourselves. There's this one study. You may have heard this before. This study asked how much time fathers spend with your children.

[9 : 22] What do you think the dad said in that study? Pretty generous, you know. They measured it. And the average that the dad said was between 15 to 20 minutes a day with each child.

15 to 20. Well, they were in the study. They installed microphones all over the house. They had permission to do this. But they installed microphones and they actually measured it.

Guess what it was? 37 seconds. The average father spent with his child. There's a... Christianity Today did this...

They had this article here where they looked at the three most common things that fathers say to their children. What do you think the third one was? Keep quiet.

The second most common one, most common statement that fathers tell their children, we don't have enough money. What was first? What?

[10:23] I'm too tired. Wow. Wow. Friends, we've got one life to live. But I'm too tired to be with you.

Isn't that surprising? Dads, fathers, friends, brothers, we must be able to approve what is excellent in our lives.

We're called to do that. We are. Well, secondly, how do you do it? Yes, but how? Isn't that the question? You know, you can say a lot of things, but how do you do it?

Well, in verse 9, look with me in this text here. Paul tells us, in order to discern what's best, he says, I pray that your love would abound still more and more.

I just want to stop right there. Notice here he talks about love. What do we see in the scripture about love? Love is described as the most excellent of all of the virtues that you and I could possibly have.

[11:30] You may have read 1 Corinthians chapter 13, the love chapter. Paul talks about love as the superiority and the necessity of love over all of the qualities that we could have.

But here's the thing. Love can have lots of enthusiasm. Love can have lots of honorable intentions behind it. And yet, it can be misguided.

Here's some examples. Maybe you have a co-worker who's married. And your co-worker says to you one day, I'm having an affair. But you know what?

It's okay because I love the guy. I love him. And you know, God is love, right? And maybe you ask, well, how'd that happen?

They may say, I just fell in love. I couldn't help it. Friends, here's the fact. What Paul says, our love needs to be seasoned with two things.

[12:34] Look with me here, verse 9. He says, knowledge. Now, you might ask, knowledge about what? Well, this word that's used here is referring to the truths that God has revealed to us in his word.

In other words, we're to let our love be guided by what scripture says. And if you search scripture, you will find that biblical love is not an uncontrollable emotion.

Biblical love is not some spontaneous impulse. Paul actually confirms this in the love chapter. He says in verse 6 of that love chapter, he says, Love does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but it rejoices in the truth.

The truth. That's what ought to guide us. Secondly, not only should love be guided by the truth, it should be guided by insight. Now, that word there is referring to our capacity to understand and apply truths.

In other words, it's the application of God's word to real life situations. For example, you look in scripture and the Bible tells us how everything good came into being, right?

[13:55] Yeah. It's not through some years, millions of years of random events. No. Things came into being through a creator. A personal creator.

And so, we can see in creation beauty, harmony, order. And that's because God is like that.

In scripture, we're given an account of how disease and death came into being. And doesn't sin affect every dimension of our lives?

Yeah. It does. Including our relationship with our creator himself. Death is so unnatural. And we should remember that. Through scripture, we learn of God's plan of redemption.

Here at Bethel, we teach. We celebrate that God sent his son. And through him, we can be reconciled back to the father. And enjoy a relationship with God forever.

[14:57] Paul says this. This is in your handout here. In Romans 12, verse 2. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed, he says, by the renewing or the renewal of your mind.

That by testing, you may discern what is the will of God. What is good and acceptable and perfect?

As a husband and a father, we have this spiritual responsibility to be the head of our homes, right?

I'm going to ask you dads, how are you doing in that? Dads do have a tough job. Think of this.

There's no instruction manual that's attached to the heel of that little newborn.

Was there? No. No. There was, yeah. There was nothing. No instruction manual. I heard about this one dad. He was so excited about the birth of his son.

He wanted to follow all the instructions to a T. And so he asked the nurse. He said, so tell me. What time should I wake up the little guy in the morning?

[16:06] Yeah, that's guys. That's guys. You know, that's us. It's been suggested that women are just more spiritual than men.

Have you heard of that? Yeah, some of you have heard that. Some of you, maybe you agree. In many homes, spiritual decisions are made by the wives.

I'm talking about praying before a family meal. I'm talking about going to church and which church that that might be, how often we go. On any given Sunday in our country, church attendance is mostly women.

Did you know that? Yeah. The leadership in churches are increasingly by the women. It is. It is. It is. You know, we may point out of just, you know, like, well, it's, they have bad doctrine.

No. There's, where are the men? And so it's the ladies who are showing up. And here's the thing. Our adversary, the devil, he wants to get rid of dads.

[17 : 14] He does. He does. And that's because he wants to sideline us. He wants to neutralize us. And that's because when dad is out of the picture, the role of the father as the spiritual head of the home is not being fulfilled.

Or it's being fulfilled by somebody else. Dads have a great influence on the family. There's this one paper that focused on the family.

They researched just how the presence or the decisions that dads make affects the family. Get this. When mom comes to faith in Christ, the rest of the family follows 17% of the time.

How about when dads come to Christ? It's a lot higher. When dads come to Christ, the rest of the family follows 93% of the time.

That's amazing. What's missing today is that many men don't see life as a battle to be fought. Can I hear an amen out of that?

[18 : 23] It is true. If men saw this life as a battle to be fought, friends, this church would be full of people. It would.

It would be packed. Our real enemy, the devil, has been able to blind the hearts and minds of so many people to the truth. You know, that people will say, God doesn't want a relationship with us because there is no God.

Maybe you've heard that. There is no God. There's no truth. And therefore, there's nothing to fight for. Maybe you've heard that.

And no doubt, today's emphasis on relativism has sidelined millions and millions of men. I've noticed something here in talking to people.

Somebody may say this. I used to go to church, but not anymore. Who's heard that recently? Yeah, somebody, maybe a coworker or a neighbor.

[19 : 27] I used to go to church, but not anymore. If you talk to them, they may refer to some event that happened in the past where God's goodness was called into question.

And perhaps they will say they had a crisis of faith. In other words, God didn't handle their situation as they would have liked.

And so gradually, there was this hardening of the heart began to take place. And what followed was a life of compromise. Not giant steps, just little steps.

And the next thing you know, they're away from the Lord. But here's the thing that we learn in Scripture. Is that God allows things to happen in our lives for a reason.

Here's what Paul teaches in Romans 8, 28. We know that for those who love God, all things work together for good. For those who are called according to his purpose.

[20 : 29] I've been reading this book. It's called Praying with Paul. It's by this guy named D.A. Carson. I'd like to read a portion of this. Because he's talking about how God answers our prayers.

And I was actually able to share some of these thoughts with some of Jack Frost's relatives while we were in Kentucky. He's talking here about the best way for us to understand our relationship with God and our prayers to God.

Is if you would consider the relationship between a father and his son. Let me paraphrase here. What D.A. Carson says.

If a boy asks his father for several things. And all are within his father's power to grant. The father may respond in several ways.

Now get this. He may grant one request right away. He may delay granting him a second request. Decline giving him the third.

[21 : 33] And fourthly set up a condition for the fourth request. Here let me read this. The child is not assured of receiving something.

Just because he spoke the right words. That would be like a magical incantation. The father may decline to give something.

Because he knows it's not in his child's best interest. The father may delay giving something.

Because he knows that many of his young son's requests are temporary and whimsical.

The father may withhold something he knows his child needs. Until the child asks for it in the appropriate way. Above all.

The wise father is far more interested in a relationship with his son. Than merely in just giving him things. I just find that so helpful.

[22 : 35] Because it emphasizes that through Jesus Christ. That believers are in a relationship. A dynamic relationship with our father.

All of. And if you think about this. All of human fatherhood. Ought to be patterned after God's fatherhood. It should.

Dads. We should live in such a way. That our children can see. Oh. That's how God is. He's like that. What a great way to live.

Even though it'll be imperfect. I'll be the first one to claim that. Our children should be able to see God's strength. God's tenderness. God's wrath.

God's mercy. God's wisdom. Taken all together. Friends. The way for us to discern what's best.

Can be said just this way.

[23 : 34] It's a lifelong pursuit of spiritual maturity. That's what it is. God is interested in our spiritual growth. Our spiritual maturity.

Here's a verse out of Ephesians. Paul says in Ephesians chapter 5. Be careful how you walk. Not as unwise men. But as wise. Making the most of our time.

Because the days are evil. So then. Do not be foolish. But understand. What the will of the Lord is. Here's a few other verses to consider here.

Out of 1 Corinthians. Let a person examine himself then. And so eat the bread. And drink the cup. When does that apply? Yeah.

In our Lord's Supper. If you have not been to our Lord's Supper meeting. Beginning at 9. You're invited. Please come. But remember. It's not something frivolous.

[24 : 30] Because the Lord died. The Lord Jesus died. Gave his life. And so Paul says. Let a person examine himself. And then eat the bread. And drink the cup.

He says in a second letter to the Corinthians. Examine yourself. To see whether you are in the faith. Wow. Examine yourself.

To see if you're in the faith. He says test yourself. Or do you not realize this about yourselves. That Jesus Christ is in you. Unless you fail to meet the test.

Or how about this one. In the writer of Hebrews. Chapter 3. Take care brothers. Lest there be in any of you. An evil unbelieving heart.

Leading you to fall away from the living God. And then he says later in chapter 5. Solid food is for the mature. For those who have their powers of discernment.

[25 : 28] Trained by constant practice. To distinguish good from evil. So we looked at what. We looked at how. Why should we do it.

He tells us. Here's the result. Verse 10. And so. In other words. Therefore. We can be pure and blameless. For the day of Christ.

I'm taking that right out of the NAS. To be pure and blameless. What this is saying here. Is that. Approve what is excellent.

And if you do. You will be pure and blameless. In preparation for that wonderful day. The day when Christ returns in glory.

That's quite a claim. Isn't it? That's really. Having a long view. Of life. And you might want to ask. How is that even possible?

[26 : 26] If you're talking about me. A sinner. Well first. It comes through. Notice verse 11. Having been filled. With the fruit of the righteousness. Which comes through Jesus Christ.

To the glory and praise of God. This righteousness. This right standing of God. It's not something that's earned. Rather it's imputed. Or bestowed. Upon us. And here Paul.

Notice. Is speaking about the fruit of it. The fruit of that righteousness. That flows from it. You might have seen a tree. A fruit tree. And you know that it's alive. But it's.

If it's filled with fruit. There's something special going on. And friends. I would say that same applies to us. Because isn't there something special going on? If I could put on spiritual eyes.

And look out here. And if we could see each other this way. There's something special going on with you. You have the Lord. The Holy Spirit. Residing inside of you.

[27 : 26] Isn't that special? Isn't that powerful? How often do we forget that? How often do we fail to live according to that?

It's amazing. And he's. And. For the believer. There's something special here. To. And notice he ends. To the glory and praise of God. Isn't that the goal of life?

When you think about it. For dads. Here's a question I want to ask. Why do you go to their. Your son's little league games? Why do you go to your daughter's dance.

Or music recitals? Why do we watch our kids. Graduate from school? Is it so that we can watch them fail? No.

It's so that we can encourage them. And celebrate with them. When we were. When we're born again. We discover that there's this. Spiritual dimension.

[28 : 25] In our lives. That's a lot more important. Than just graduating. With a degree. The more we know about God. The more reason we have. To love him. And to appreciate him.

And to walk in ways. That are pleasing to him. Paul says in Ephesians 5. Walk as children of the light. For the fruit of the light. Consists in all goodness. And righteousness.

And truth. Trying to learn. What is pleasing. To the Lord. Dads. And moms. Approve. What's best. You may have.

Saw this verse. Out of 3rd John. I have no greater joy. Than to hear my children. Are walking. In the truth. Isn't that amazing? And I think that this applies.

To spiritual children. As well. If I could invite the musicians. To come up here. There's a whole lot more. That could be said here. But just to consider these thoughts. These things.

[29 : 22] This Father's Day. How can you and I approve. What's excellent? Did you know that the Apostle Peter said. In his second epistle. That God has granted to us.

Everything pertaining to life. And godliness. Through the true knowledge of him. Who called us. By his own glory. And excellence. Excellence. Isn't that amazing?

That God does that for us. It's amazing. But we must cooperate. Let our season our love. With truth. With knowledge. And insight. And as we go through the trials. And challenges of life. Even death itself. Death's door. What a difference it makes.

To be able to say. I'm with you Lord. You are mine. You know what Jack told me. The night. That he found out. That he had cancer. I was at a leadership meeting.

[30 : 19] With several of you. He said. Don't feel sorry for me. Because I'm going to be with my father. I'm going to be with the savior in heaven. What a thought.

What a great thought. Let's discern what's best. For your family. My family. For Bethel. All to God's glory. Amen. Let's pray.

Heavenly Father. Thank you so much. For these words. From the apostle Paul. That he would give this challenge. For us. To be able to discern.

What is best. And Lord. You've done it all. And Lord. We thank you so much. We thank you for one another. Because through your church.

We can encourage each other. To walk in ways that are pleasing to you. Of course. We thank you for your. Your holy word. We thank you for your spirit. Who lives in us. We thank you Lord.

[31 : 14] For all the blessings. That you have revealed to us. Through your son. In his name. Amen. God's blessing to all. Happy Father's Day. Thank you.