

# Father's Day 2018 | Dave Baumgartner

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Date: 17 June 2018

Preacher: David Baumgartner

[0:00] We welcome you to the media ministry of Bethel Community Church, Knowing Jesus, Making Jesus Known. I'd like for us this morning to look at a passage that's written to fathers.

So if you have your Bibles, please turn with me to Ephesians chapter 6. In this section here, Paul's wrapping up his letter with some wisdom for various people that you would find in a common Roman household.

You have wives, husbands, children, slaves, masters, and last but not least, fathers, dads. And we're only going to be looking at one verse this morning, but I'll tell you what, friends, it is very rich. It's very insightful, and I think it's very practical. I want you to notice, or you're going to notice, that this passage is addressed to fathers.

I think it's important to see that although that word used for fathers has been translated as parents in other places, I think that Paul mostly had in mind dads.

[1:15] And I don't think that this doesn't diminish the contribution of mothers in the role of the children. But remember, the chief responsibility of the spiritual health of the family, it rests with the fathers.

That's what the Bible tells us. And if that's so, this command would have been very challenging to the original audience in the city of Ephesus.

In Paul's day, the father actually had the supreme authority in the home. There's a Roman law. It's called *Patris Potestas*.

And that's Latin for the power of the father. And that meant that the father had unilateral, absolute authority and power over the life and death of his family members.

In other words, he could sell any of his family members as a slave. He could actually have any of them incarcerated. He could even have the death penalty inflicted on a family member.

[2:19] This one commentator, Warren Wiersbe, he says that in a Roman family, what would happen is that a newborn would be laid before the feet of the father.

And if that father, if he did not pick up that baby and accept it into the family, that baby would either be sold or given away or even be killed.

Well, as a missionary and a minister of the gospel, Paul has something much better for us because it's from the Lord. Read with me.

Ephesians chapter 6, this is verse 4. Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

Let's go ahead and go to the Lord in prayer. Heavenly Father, we've sung these songs to you, Lord, that just talk about you and the love that you have for us.

[3:15] You are a good, good father. That you love us. Oh, how you love us. Lord, these are truths that just mean so much to each one of us here.

These are truths, Lord, that we can build our lives upon and rest in knowing that you are a good God.

We thank you, Lord, that you have given us your holy word, that we can study it and see just what you have for us as parents and this morning as dads, that we can live in ways that are pleasing to you and that are wholesome, good for us.

Thank you for today, Lord. May you be glorified in our very midst. Show us things out of your word, Lord, things that we don't know, that we would glorify you.

In Jesus' name, amen. So Paul says here, dads, do not provoke your children to anger.

[4:20] What does he mean? I'll tell you what he doesn't mean. He doesn't mean never anger your children. I mean, the only way for that to happen, if you think about it, is to just, if you would totally indulge your children.

Always give them what they want. Always tell them what they want to hear. And is Paul saying that? No, he's not. Rather, what I believe here he's saying is, don't treat your children in a way that'll create attitudes of resentment and frustration.

And it'll lead to a state of anger. There's a similar verse that's found in Paul's letter to the Colossians. I spoke on it actually seven Sundays ago.

Verse 21 in chapter 3. Fathers, do not exasperate your children, that they may not lose heart. That word exasperate, it's just one word.

And it means basically to provoke to anger. So again, don't provoke them to anger. That'll lead them to a state of frustration, resentment.

[5:32] I know of a family where the children who are grown now, they won't even talk to their parents. Boy, that's really sad. What that means is that there's been a long-term frustration, a long-term settled resentment in that family.

Boy, dads, you know, what do you do about that? Think about all the anger that's out there today, the road rage.

Think about the shootings that we hear. And these kids, it seems like they're frustrated. They're angry. This last five years, wouldn't you agree that it seems like we've just turned a corner in this country?

I mean downward. I believe that. You consider the political discourse that's out there. It's filled with rage, frustration, resentment, anger.

I think we're in trouble. If it were not for God's mercy and grace, we would be in bigger trouble.

Dads, if this is written to us, how do we prevent this?

[6:45] Here's the focus here, dads. He continues, Paul does. Verse 4, Bring them up in the discipline and the instruction of the Lord.

In this passage here, I see three things. And I'm going to call this for the wise father. A wise father knows first the balance between discipline and instruction.

A wise father knows the balance between dependence and independence. And then the wise father knows the importance of moving his children toward the Lord God himself.

You might think of that, he knows the direction here. Let's look at these here. First of all, a wise father knows the balance between discipline and instruction. We see these two words here in the Greek.

I want you to consider this. The word for instruction actually suggests reasoning, persuasion, using rational arguments to convince a person.

[7:49] You might think of it as the counsel that someone receives in order for them to prevent or avoid a mistake. Here's just for an example.

In 1 Corinthians chapter 10, Paul is talking about the things that happened to the Jews while they were in their wilderness journey. Look with me. 1 Corinthians 10 verse 11.

He says, Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction on whom the end of the ages has come.

So that's that word instruction. The second word we see here is discipline. Now this is a much more stern word. It refers to correction.

It refers to reproof. Maybe after doing something wrong. The writer of Hebrews says, Have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons?

[8:46] My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. So here are these two things. But the key to know is that in raising children, both of these are needed.

Notice, it's discipline and instruction. And a wise father knows which one is needed for any given situation.

You know, as I look out here this morning, it's so refreshing and encouraging to see so many young families. And what a blessing it is to see what the Lord has for us here.

A wise father knows which one of these is needed at any given occasion. But here's the thing. Problems come when a father gets stuck on only one of these and not the other. It causes an imbalance. Here, let's give you some examples here. Some of you know of families, none here at Bethel, by the way.

[9:54] Don't look around. Some of you know of families where the dad is always laying down the law. He's got an authoritarian style of fatherhood.

Rigid rules and expectations. He's either reminding his family of the rules or he's yelling at them for breaking them, which in his mind is probably most of the time.

But this thing, the constant stream of that correction, it causes long-term problems. It creates barriers. It creates emotional distance and frustration.

I'll tell you what, when I consider my life today, I've been a grandpa now for about 10 years, and I love it. I just, I'm not as uptight as I used to be.

When I was, when I was, when I was the parent, I was uptight. My wife will tell you. And I, and it's just so good.

[10:59] I think this is something that I have grown to learn to just not be uptight. You know, what a, what a great thing to learn. So, but there are families where the dad is uptight all the time.

Here, on the other hand, you may know families. Again, I don't think there's any here at Bethel.

Where the parents deal with their children only through reasoning and logic.

Let me give you an example. You've seen this. There's a woman with her child in a store. And that little child is sassy, misbehaving very badly.

And you see this poor mom. She's there explaining, persuading, pleading with her child. What, what a sight.

You know, and I'll tell you what, that keep, that causes problems too. Here's one. It really doesn't deal with the main issue. And that main issue at that time is usually the child is asking, who's in charge?

[12:03] You know what I mean? Yeah. And the second thing, it gives the child the impression that he or she has to thoroughly understand everything before they obey.

And friends, that's not how life works. Now the fact is, children are not capable of understanding complex issues. Like what?

Like time? Yeah, delayed gratification. Kids can't understand that. How about the concept of evil? Trying to tell a little child about evil, that there are people out there who want them for bad things.

So, the remedy, a wise father knows these two things. First of all, he knows that both instruction and discipline are needed. And secondly, he knows which one to use at any given time.

So, dads, on your handout there, there's a little rating there. Just rate yourself. How do you think you do on that? One to ten? I go to the Lord here after this.

[13:17] Secondly, there's another balance here. And this is the balance between dependence and independence. Let me ask this question. Ask it this way.

What is the goal of parenting? I think that most parents of teenagers would say the goal is getting them out of the house.

Yeah. Let me say it nicely here. The goal of parenting is that one day, our children will be fully functional, self-sufficient adults.

Amen. Yeah. That's a hearty amen. So, here's the challenge. We need to raise our children to be independent of us, but not forcing that too soon.

How do we do this? Notice here in verse four, he says, you bring them up. Bring them up. Let's look at these words here.

[14:16] Bring them up. That word, *ektropho*, again, it's one word and it means to nourish. Here's an example. Earlier in Ephesians, Paul says, no one ever hated his own flesh, but get this, nourishes it and cherishes it just as Christ does the church.

Now, the key to know is that to nourish anything requires time. Right? Yeah. It's a gradual thing.

You have increments of growth. It's not all at once. You may think of the vitamins that you have in your cupboard at home. What do you take vitamins for?

They're good, right? They're supposed to make you healthy and strong. Well, if that's the case, why not take the whole bottle all at once? No, people don't advise that.

The benefits are derived over time, over the long haul. Growth is gradual and incremental. And it's the same with our children.

[15:22] Notice here, he says, we bring them up. To me, that suggests that our children are moving towards something that's higher, something that's more noble than they are right now.

I mean, normally, you would not teach your child how to become a beggar, would you? I don't have anything against beggars, but it seems to me that a goal in life should be, you know, there's better things to do in your life than to be a beggar.

So parents, dads, we're preparing our children toward independence and at the same time, we're keeping them home so that they can be nourished, so that they will flourish in this safe environment.

But here's the key, both are needed and this requires a balance. If there's only one or the other, that leads to, again, an imbalance.

Let me give you some examples. We've all known of parents, now again, none here, don't look around, but we all know of parents who smother their children.

[16:37] They're overprotective. They're trying to meet all of the needs of their children all the time. And in this situation, the emotional attachment is too much.

Offentimes, instead of being a parent, they'll try to be the child's best friend. And that does not happen. That does not work. It's not successful.

On the other hand, you may know of situations where a child receives absolutely no emotional support at home at all.

There's no natural affection. No interest from the parents. The child has to fend for him or herself. Why does that happen? Maybe it's drugs. Maybe there's mental health issues with the parents.

There is a verse that Paul wrote in his second letter to Timothy.

[17:41] Know this also. In the last days, perilous times shall come. And get this. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection.

Yeah. The fact is, friends, children need to be protected. There's challenges that they have at school. There's children that are taking their own lives because of something on Facebook. The social pressures. Again, there are child predators out there that are looking to take them, to take advantage of them. But your child also needs to know that you can't be 40 years old and still living in our basement.

There's something unhealthy about that. Well, a wise father knows that there's a balance between dependence and independence. And that a wise father is also committed over the long haul.

Dads, how would you rate yourself on that? How do I rate myself? We're going to go before the Lord here pretty soon. Thirdly, a wise father knows the direction to lead his family.

[19:05] Notice, this is not just the instruction and the discipline that comes from watching Dr. Phil. No, it's the discipline and the instruction of the Lord.

The Lord himself. Here's the distinction, friends, talking about the gospel. The good news. The Lord himself provides us with the desires and the ability to do these things.

Here, let me show you how the gospel enables us to be the fathers that he intended us to be and how to avoid these imbalances here.

First of all, let's ask ourselves this question. Why do people underdiscipline their children? You know, always pleading, always explaining to them.

I think the main reason is fear. It's because they don't, it's because they want their child's approval. Think about it.

[20:10] we want our children to like us. But that can be unreasonable. Secondly, why do some parents overdiscipline their children?

Well, again, I think the biggest reason is fear. Because these parents can't bear the thought of their child being seen by others as having problems.

It might be a bad reflection on me as a parent. But notice, in both of these cases, the primary concern here is the approval of others.

And some people are consumed with worries about the approval of others. What people, what other people think of them, either their children or people around them.

But friends, the gospel frees us from the need for the approval of others. And that's because of this. In the gospel, our identity, our self-esteem, our self-value, it's found in Jesus Christ.

[21:18] Amen. What a great thing that is to apply to our lives. And when we place our faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ and Him alone, we're completely accepted by God the Father.

and so, whose approval do we need to seek? It's God's. And in Christ, we find that approval. When He looks at us, He's smiling because He's seeing Jesus Christ.

Let me go on here. Why do some parents abandon their children and show no interest nor care for them? I would say selfishness.

Yeah. You know, we've got our own lives and this is my time to shine. Why do some parents perpetuate their child's dependence on them?

Even when the child gets into adulthood, the parents are perpetuating dependence on them. I think the biggest reason is because some parents can't bear the thought of not being needed anymore.

[22:27] again, the gospel changes everything. And that's because through the indwelling presence of God's Spirit in our lives, friends, you and I are changed.

Our eyes are opened to all the riches and the blessings that we have through Jesus Christ and we become caring, generous, loving people.

I love this verse in Romans 10 verse 12. There is no distinction between Jew and Greek for the same Lord is the Lord of all, get this, bestowing His riches on all.

Who? On all who call on Him. Boy, here's a great Bible study. Do a Bible study on the riches of Christ. friends, you will be amazed at how wonderful it is and how precious it is to be in Jesus Christ because through Him and His power we can live balanced lives.

If the musicians can come up here, there's another section here, how are you doing dads in this? How are you doing? You know, when we consider how the gospel changes our lives, all of this happens through faith in Jesus Christ and this is one of the most precious truths of all.

[24:01] When we place our faith in Christ, we are adopted. Yeah. As we talk about Father's Day, I think it's very fitting that our thoughts would turn toward our Heavenly Father.

Amen? He is the ultimate Father. In fact, many people experience a sadness on either Father's Day or Mother's Day and that's because they themselves didn't have a godly father or mother or maybe they themselves have not been a godly father or mother.

But friends, whether or not you had or have a godly father or whether or not you yourself have been a godly father, there's good news. The first thing is this, God offers His fatherhood to anybody who will accept it.

Place your trust in the one whom the Father sent. In the Gospel of John, chapter 1, He said, as many as received Him, He's speaking of Jesus, to them He gave the right to become the children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but born of God.

Only those who have been born of God have the right to receive God's fatherhood and, of course, then the inheritance that we'll get as His children.

[25:39] Secondly, through the ministry of the Holy Spirit and God's Word, just like today, we can apply this to our lives. Here's the goal for you dads.

Teach your children who your heavenly Father is. Amen? You know, live in such a way that your children can see, oh, this is who God is.

This is what God is like. strength, love, courage, integrity, consistency, some great things that we can learn.

Our highest calling, I believe, as fathers is to be the image of God and His fatherhood to our children. I believe that.

And so that our children will see a reflection of their heavenly Father in us. And here's the thing, for all of us who have a low mark on these things, when we fail, and we do, we can receive the forgiveness and the grace that was purchased for us at the cross by the Son, by the one who the Father sent.

[27:00] What great privileges it is that we can know the balance between discipline and instruction. We can know the balance between dependence and independence, and we can walk in that path that God provides us, rather than what the world has for us.

Let's go to the Lord. Father, we thank you that just through this very short passage, we see that it's jam-packed with things, things that we can, as dads, take to heart, because they come from a God who is a Father himself, a loving God, a God who is committed to us, a God who is committed to our well-being.

And we see that expressed in the emblems that we have before us, because this God sent his one and only Son into this world to take on the sins that we have committed.

And through his death and his resurrection, we find forgiveness, we find a cleansing, redemption, we find adoption.

Lord, thank you for that. And all that's required is that we believe. You said it, Lord. You gave the offer, and all we need to do is receive it, Lord.

[28:38] Receive it through faith, and therefore we are changed. We receive your salvation, the salvation that was purchased for us. Lord, I just want to pray for each father here, each grandfather, that we would be those godly examples to our children and grandchildren.

Lord, it's never too late to have a good relationship and a right relationship with you. Help us to find forgiveness where that's needed. Help these families that need restoration.

Let it be found at the foot of the cross as we remember right now who Jesus is and what he did for us.

Thank you for all this. God's people say. Amen. Thank you.