

Parenting | Visitor Sunday | David Vinyard

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[0:00] I was talking to somebody in the break about being punctual, being on schedule. For me, on time is five minutes early. And we are on time, ahead of schedule. Sometimes at Bethel, we don't always accomplish that.

So it's great to be starting on the right foot today. I'm going to try and see if I can raise this, actually. No, I'm not. The risk was higher than the reward, you know.

Anyway, no, it's, I mean, if you can. Maybe just a tad, yeah. It said having four arms versus two thing. That's good, yeah. Thank you. Appreciate it.

That seemed too high? We're no longer on time. No. Anyway, good morning. Just glad to have you here.

If you're a visitor today, we're really glad you came. It's a pretty humble church, pretty regular people. That's one thing I like about this group. Just a collection of what I think is just, you know, the common person.

[1:03] That's not an insult. That's not a praise, really. It's just an observation. You really won't see too many fancy cars in the parking lot. There's no royal lineage that I'm aware of.

Correct me if I'm wrong. No. You won't see many designer brands. You know, I actually, true story, the first shirt that I grabbed in my closet was, I think, the oldest shirt that I still own.

And I was like, it wasn't this one. But usually when I dress myself, I get the comment, like, are you still wearing that? Like, why? Or why are you still wearing that? Like, we've talked about that one before, you know? But the point of sharing that is I'm still welcomed back week after week to this group.

So it's a point to note. Very accepting. And the other thing I like about that is it's not our stuff. It's not our things. It's not what we bring to the table that this group has in common.

It's not our professions. I always find it interesting that most of us are in different fields. Most of us come from different backgrounds. It's not our hobbies, although we have some of those in common.

[2:06] It's not our neighborhood. I don't even think many of us live in the same neighborhood with more than one or two groups in the room, which is also kind of interesting for a church. And I was thinking about that. And I was thinking about what's the one thing?

What's the simple thing? Am I getting some feedback here? Or is it go lower? Okay. What's the thing that unites us in the room? And it's this. It's that we believe in the one true God.

The God of the Bible. The God who provided a way to save broken humans from our sin. No matter how bad a week we've had, no matter how dated our wardrobe in some of our cases, we believe that it's our God that sets us apart, not ourselves.

And there's something freeing in that. There's something simple in that. There's something unifying in that that I've always appreciated about this church. That through believing in Jesus as the Son of God, who gave his life to pay for our sins, we have a commonality.

Now, for those that don't know me, I've been married for 14 years to someone who dresses better than me. We usually actually ask each other, are you wearing the same color today?

[3:16] How do we get dressed with the same thing? Yeah. I'm the father of two sons. This is not my day job, for those that were wondering. I actually work, and there's nothing special about me, I work in HR technology sales.

That doesn't mean anything. Shouldn't mean anything. It really is just, I find ways to connect with people for a living. shared experiences, maybe a little humor, hopefully some active listening, but

ultimately, I have to be relatable.

I have to have a reason, an engagement, something to connect with another. Why do I say that? I was preparing for this message, I was thinking about what would be helpful to share, what would God have for us, and I was thinking about all the things that are relatable.

And it dawned on me, there's something that I noticed in kind of my business life. There's a particular thing that resonates with folks more than other things. It's not just, it's more in common, but it actually hits at a deeper level.

So what is that thing? What is that one thing that I've noticed? You might think it's travel. You might think it's, and everybody does love to talk about a recent vacation. It's not travel. You might think it's food.

[4:31] Any foodies in the room? A few, maybe. Everybody loves to eat, but that's not quite it. Sports are also a very close runner up, but it just doesn't go past that small talk level.

Uh-oh, don't give away the future here. Anyway, the one thing I noticed that really resonates with people, and this is whether it's in business, in a neighborhood, it connects strangers past that surface level, and it creates this instant commonality, and it's the experience of parenting, being a parent, or just talking about parents.

I have found that that is one of the most unifying, relatable, understandable things that transcends really people from all walks of life. So who in here is a parent in any capacity?

New parent, old parent, step-parent, grandparent, aspiring parent, doesn't matter. Got a few photos up on the screen. I spent just a modest amount of time thinking about, what does it feel like to be a parent?

I personally identify much more with the one on the left. That's a daily for me, but then the one on the right, let's see, yeah. The one on the right is also relatable, right? You have every good intention, and you still get vomited on.

[5:54] But how do we know this is true? Like, what I'm saying, is it just, oh, not quite yet. Is it my opinion? You know, here's an exercise. All the introverts are in a panic right now.

We're not going to do this exercise. But if I split the room in a group, so four or five people, and I said, I want you to talk about parents, or parenting, or your own kids, for ten minutes.

By the end of 25 to 30 minutes, you would all still be going strong. You'd be laughing, you'd be sharing stories, you'd be crying next to somebody you just met, talking about this topic.

And so I was thinking about that. Like, what is it? You know, why is being a parent such a unique experience? Why does it pull us into this different dimension of understanding? Why does it create this relatability that, you know, whether it's, even if you're really close with your nieces and nephews, like, what is it about this sort of thing that we have, these relations in life, that impacts us? It spans the good. It spans the ugly, the bad. It brings us this new perspective. Now you can, now you can afford it. Adam Sandler once said, he said, now that I'm a parent, I understand why my father was in a bad mood a lot.

[7:06] And I love that one. And I'm like, yeah, all right, it makes me feel a little bit better. You might have to click through the animation if it goes. Oh, anyway, is it, there you go. I can relate to that one.

I'm sure you can too. How about this next quote? I've got one more. It's from Ryan Reynolds. I'll channel my inner Ryan Reynolds here. He says, being a father is the single greatest feeling on earth, not including those wonderful years I spent without a child, of course.

That's a typical Ryan Reynolds quote. But it changes us. It's sort of like a new chapter of life. It strikes a chord of commonality. And here's what occurred to me. Parenting.

It's not just useful in neighborhoods and business. It's actually something that God instituted as a way to connect with us, to convey truth, to share a deeper understanding, wisdom about life.

Just as God established marriage by creating a man and a woman, and just as he established a work week, or sorry, a week by working, followed by a weekend or a rest, God also established the experience of parenting, parents, child, offspring, with its many challenges, and its limited, limited moments of joy, as a way to connect with us on a deeper level.

[8:25] So that's our topic for today. We're going to go through a survey. We're going to look at a few examples. We're going to share some things. And then I have one particular example that I think is weightier or

heavier than the next. So let's pray, and we'll kick this off.

God, thank you for the morning. Thank you for the chance to share. I pray that you would speak through me. Share something that's encouraging, challenging, something that you would share in truth to this group here. In Jesus' name, amen.

All right, so how does God use parents from the Bible? I should have had a different landing screen so you don't have to look at Ryan Reynolds here this whole time. We're going to move past that.

Anyway, parenting in the Bible.

You thought it was just for gray hairs and face lines, right? No. God uses it. Let's look at a few examples. Here's a short, easy one to start with. Matthew chapter 20.

We have a mother of James and John. What happens here? She approaches Jesus, demanding that her two sons may sit one at his right hand and one at his left. Here's a parent.

[9:25] I love the example because parents, we get passionate. I have some parents in the room that I've been on sports teams with, and the parental passion on the sideline is great. And it's, you just see people want the best for their kids, right?

Here's a parent who missed the entire point of why Jesus came to the earth, to the world. He wasn't born to rule it. He came to die. He came to take the penalty of our sin. But we can't really falter, can we?

She just wanted the best for her kids. And so we see it's kind of natural. We see that this inclination of wanting to do the best for our kids is something that's common as parents. Here's another example.

We're going to fly through some of these, so just bear with me. Another example, you might have heard of Abraham. He's often called Father Abraham because of his many descendants. Did you know he had not just one famous son, but he actually had two?

In Genesis 21, we read how the two sons started clashing and one mocked the other. Let me just tell you, he's the father of two sons.

[10:27] I mean, it never ends, right? Genesis 21, Sarah, his wife, said, get rid of the slave woman and her other son. And the matter distressed Abraham greatly because it concerned his son.

So we see from several examples, but this one in particular, that parenting is stressful, marriage is stressful, family is stressful. What else do we learn from this particular occasion in Scripture if you look at the whole survey of Abraham?

God shows us jealousy, envy, conflict. It's part of our sin nature. It's not unique to his family. It's every family. Certainly my family.

And that all of us, no matter how put together we might appear, no matter how popular or any of those features we think we have, we are all broken and lost.

And here's, let me share with you, as I was going through examples and examples of parents in Scripture. The Bible is chocked full of split homes, sibling rivalry, parental preference.

[11:30] And here's what's neat. God uses these failures, even in parents' examples, to show us that our sin is what causes us to live in dysfunction. You see parents dealing with favoritism, parents dealing with separation, and yet even as broken people, just like Abraham, we share this burden of concern for our kids.

So hold on to that for just a minute. Here's another example. You may have heard of King David. Anybody?

King David? Yeah? In 1 Samuel 16, we read about David as a boy and his father Jesse. So you're noticing the theme here, all these father-son, father-daughter combos, mother-daughter, son.

It says David was smaller than his brothers. It's a little close to home for me. My brothers are both larger than I am. In fact, most of the guys in my family are all bigger than I am, so here I am.

And yet it says God chose David as the next king of Israel. Check this out. The man he replaced was chosen for his good looks and towering height. I love that story.

[12:38] I don't really know what that feels like, but good for that guy, you know? And look at this key fact that we learn from this parent, from this father and son and his family.

1 Samuel 16, the Lord said, do not consider his appearance or his height, for God does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but God looks at the heart. So you've got this story being told through parents in the Bible.

We're all broken. We all live in dysfunction. All of our kids argue nonstop. Why is that? Because of sin. And despite however worthy we think one or others of them are, they're not.

God doesn't care about those things. No one is good or decent enough or tall enough or good looking enough or worthy on their own. There's a lesson God chose us through a parent.

It's not how it works with God. We tend to have the wrong perspective. In 1 Corinthians, verse 128 and 29, it says, God chose the lowly things, the weak things, and the things that are not to nullify the things that are so that no one may boast before him.

[13:50] So anyway, the topic of God using parents and parenting to teach us truth. It's one of those things, once you notice it, and I've been chewing on this one for a while thinking about, man, where do we go?

Where do we go with this topic? Where do we use this? Once you see it, though, it's really hard to unsee. I'll be honest. It's everywhere. He teaches us of the dangers of pride through parents.

He teaches us the futility of trusting in ourselves as parents. He even outlines the risk of juggling our own individuality and personal goals with the sacrifice of investing in our kids.

Anybody, does that resonate with anybody today that has kids, grandkids, you name it? Maybe you're here today and you've had a child go astray in some way. Maybe you're not on great terms with your own parents.

My kids are still young, so, of course, they resent me every day. But as a father, how do I live my life as a flawed man, aspiring to grow in my marriage, in my career, in what God has for me, while also being a good parent to my sons?

[14:54] God shows us examples of parents who made great contributions, but whose children fell away. You may have heard of a man named Eli.

He was a priest of God. He was a leader of Israel. And yet, his sons were disobedient. 1 Samuel 2, verse 12, says they were scoundrels. They had no regard for the Lord.

Wow. That's hard. Another example was the prophet Samuel himself. This guy led God's people for close to a generation. What does it say? It says his sons, Joel and Abby, accepted bribes and were corrupt.

These were people. These were parents who lived impressive lives and served God despite that. Their offspring, their sons, were a problem. And so that's a real struggle.

God doesn't sugarcoat it. He doesn't just tell us the good version of the stories. He says, look, this is life. This is how it goes. These are things that will be common to wrestle with. The struggle is real.

[16:00] And I was just thinking about that and thinking about all those examples. And you know, some people think the Bible is full of mysteries and hieroglyphs and riddles. And I'm thankful it's not.

You know, we do Bible studies here in the week with different groups. Women's studies, men's studies. We've started to segregate by age, which is probably something we shouldn't do, you know, because who's young anymore?

I don't feel young, but you might put me in a young men's study. We're still wrestling with that. But, oh, I lost my train of thought for a second. I'm thankful it's not so mysterious.

I'm thankful it's practical. I'm thankful God has established these examples, these relatable experiences, and gives us that opportunity as parents so we can see the truth. So I mentioned there are examples, countless examples.

We're not going to go through all of them today. For the sake of time, though, I want to pivot to one sort of big, big theme that I noticed looking at all these examples.

[17:08] And I consider this the premier example, the premier topic. how God uses parenting. What is the, if you had to distill the most important thing that he shows us through that. It's a big topic.

You're thinking, wow, what are we about to hear about? Something that God shows us as parents that supersedes the rest of life's lessons. It's a little heavier.

It's a little weightier. And it has to do with an element of how God loves us that is further defined in parenting. So here's a question for the parents and also the grandparents because I see how my parents and Amy's parents love my kids and I feel like, man, that's cool.

That's a cool relationship there too. So here's a question. Is there anything you wouldn't do for your own? How far would you go to save or protect your own son or daughter, granddaughter? Did you know Jesus often encountered parents facing this exact question? One example. If you want to turn to the book of Mark, you're welcome to. We're going to be in Mark for just a few examples here and then we'll wrap up.

[18:16] One example that I found comes from Mark chapter 5. Starting in verse 21. It says, Here's a little context from this scenario since I just plucked it out of the middle of nowhere.

this father, Jairus, he was in the circle. He was in the inner group of Jewish leaders. They didn't like Jesus at all. Most of them.

He was a threat to their prominence and their status. And so Jairus would have been questioned. He would have been scolded. He would have been maybe kind of put out of that inner circle. Maybe judged for that.

So here's the question. As parents, thinking about that, would we risk our careers for our child? Would we take on ridicule for our son or daughter?

Would we take on shame ourselves? Mark 5.35, While Jesus was still speaking, people came from the house of Jairus saying, Your daughter is dead. Why bother the teacher anymore?

[19:40] Now think about that as a parent. Think about being away, looking for help while your daughter passed. That sinking feeling, right? Overhearing them, Jesus told Jairus, Don't be afraid.

Just believe. And when they came to the home, Jesus saw a commotion. I'm skipping down to verse 38 here. With people crying and wailing loudly. So obviously, she was dead.

And it says, Jesus took the child's parents and his disciples and he went in there where the child was and he took her by the hand and said, Little girl, I say to you, get up. Verse 42 says, Immediately the girl stood up and began to walk and everyone was astonished.

Now you might think that's just a story. That's just one parent that's captured in the Bible. But do you think those parents remember that day? Do you think they understood the deepness, the magnitude of their love when that kid, when that daughter came back to life?

Do you think those words stuck with them? Don't be afraid, just believe. And Jesus made a statement by doing that. It wasn't just, well, I'll go, but she's already dead.

[20:50] We'll see what we can do. Maybe we'll get lucky. You know? It was, hey, I'm not just a guy. I'm not just a teacher. I have power over death. I'm not just a man.

He was God in the flesh. Here's a second example. It's still in the book of Mark. If you want to pick down to Mark chapter 7. Jesus is taking a break now.

So he's been doing a lot of this. He's been meeting with parents and family and other sick people. And now he's on the outskirts of town because it's heating up. But it says he entered a house in Mark chapter 7 and didn't want anyone to know.

And I have to smile at this because you talk about relatability as a parent. Boy, do I feel that one. Like, have you ever just sat down and thought, hope nobody finds me right here.

You know? Maybe forever. And yet they do. They always do. But guess who found Jesus as he was kind of reclining on the outskirts? A desperate mom.

[21:50] A parent. Mark 7, 26 says, she came to him and begged Jesus to heal her child. Here was a woman, you know, forget breaking and entering, right?

Whatever penalties that was in the day. Culturally, this was just not appropriate. You did not engage with a group of teachers or leaders and disrupt that. It just wasn't, it wasn't accepted.

As parents, thinking about what God shows us through this interaction, would we risk being jailed to save our child? Would we break societal norms to help ours, our offspring?

And get this, it says Jesus, when you read that story in Mark 7, it says Jesus saw her faith and chose to save her daughter. But I, I kind of dwelled on that example for a bit, thinking about that desperation, thinking about being willing to travel, being willing to break into someone's house.

I think God shows us through parents, sometimes we really have to get to the end of ourselves.

That there's so much beyond our control that we have to trust him. Even with those we love most.

[23:00] All right. There is one final example in Mark. This is sort of the, the final lap. This one has a little bit of a personal touch for me, so I'll, I'll get there.

But it's one example and it's in Mark chapter 9, if you want to turn there. This is another encounter, but it says Jesus was out for a hike.

It's kind of around Mark chapter 9, 15. I'm sorry. It says Jesus was out for a hike with his friends.

And as he came down the hillside, there was a crowd waiting for him.

A crowd arguing, in fact. And guess what it was about? You never, you never believe it. It was another parent. It was a father and his son. Mark chapter 9, 16 says this.

He says, what are you arguing about? And again, I have to laugh because I've probably asked that question in my house 12 times a day. What are you arguing about? Like, what is going on now? I just went for a hike.

[23:55] Like, I was just gone and now I'm back and we're fighting again. Anyways, I digress with that one. But, verse 17, the father answered. He says, Teacher, I brought my son to you.

For he has a spirit that makes him mute. And whenever it seizes him, it throws him down and he foams at the mouth and grinds his teeth and becomes rigid. So I asked your disciples to cast out this demon, but they couldn't do it.

Verse 20 says, so they brought the boy. And when the spirit saw Jesus, immediately it convulsed the boy and he fell on the ground and rolled about foaming at the mouth. And so Jesus asked the father, how long has this been happening?

His father said, from childhood, it has cast him into fires and into water to destroy him. And then the dad says this, but if you can, have compassion on us and help us.

Just think about that verse for a minute. As parents, we don't really, our kids don't really suffer by themselves, do they? No. Jesus' response, I love this.

[25:02] I kind of highlighted this in my own text. Jesus says, if you can, who are you talking to here? Why'd you come to see me? If. And then he says, all things are possible for one who believes.

In verse 24, immediately, sorry, don't get choked up here. He says, immediately the father cried out with tears, saying, I believe. Help my unbelief.

What a statement. I'm good. Maybe as a parent, you've watched your child, you know, suffer through something.

I remember my son Isaac was two. He's not in here, is he? Okay, I can make it through this. Isaac was two. At that time, he was my only son and he was sick.

He was feeling a little crummy and we put him down for an early nap and it wasn't a big deal. It's just like something, you know, didn't feel right but I remember he was stirring in his room and I kind of snuck in and I was like, what's going on, buddy?

[26:09] Sound machine was on. It was dark. There was Isaac and I just remember walking up to his crib. I think Amy was getting ready. We were going to go somewhere and she was in the bathroom and I just, his little body was shaking and it never happened before but it was rhythmic.

He was just convulsing in his bed and I'm like, my son's having a seizure. What's going on? And so I reached to pick him up. You know, those cribs are not, I feel like every mother and maybe the father but the mother does a lot of the lifting of the baby, you know, so every mother for newborns, like the back breaks, right?

I remember reaching in and just like turning him over and I saw his eyes were rolled back and he's all spitty at the mouth and I just like, it's an image I can't forget and I shouted to Amy, I said, get in the car.

I probably violently shouted that through the house. I said, get in the car, you know, we got to go. For those that are familiar with Fenton, I drove 60 down bowls.

It's fast. It's more than fast. I think it's 35, right Brian? 35 miles in, 60 into 35. And Amy was on the phone with the hospital and I just remember, I remember driving and feeling like, you know, nervous.

[27:24] I was angry. I was scared. I was like, what is going on? And that, that I just, that verse, like thinking about Mark 9, I prayed, God

help us, not my son, not my son. It's a heavy feeling, you know, as parents, we were vested.

It's more than vesting. It's, it's a care. It's beyond ourself. Let me go back to the story in Mark for a minute. Mark chapter 9, it says, Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, saying, I command you, come out of the boy and never enter him again.

And after crying out and devulsing him terribly, it left him. But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up and he arose. And I think about that story because after about an hour at the hospital, Isaac was fine.

You know, you've seen him run around here. He's, he's back to his usual self for better or for worse. But you know, at the time, I just, you know, I think about that.

I think about that state of watching him suffer and, you know, an hour. It was no big deal. It really was no big deal. It's actually more normal than I thought. They give him some fever medication. His body calmed down.

[28:37] There was no brain damage, anything like that. But here's what hit me as a parent. It was something new that I figured out that day. It wasn't just that I really loved my son.

And it wasn't just that I hated that feeling of feeling powerless, that I couldn't do anything for him because I didn't know what to do. I hadn't experienced that. I'm by no means medical. I can't even help myself. But it was something, it was the realization that I couldn't give him up as a parent. I wouldn't give him up, not for any price. Not to save myself. Don't take this the wrong way, but not to save any of you. In all my weakness and selfishness, I knew giving up my son was something I could never do under any circumstance.

And here's the key. There was someone who would. There was a, come on David. There was a father who did. Within God's word, and I know we've barely scratched the surface of it today, there is a clear truth that's painted.

That God not only sees our pain and our hurt, but that he loves us. And you hear that all the time. God loves us. God loves you. Jesus loves you. Despite our sinful state.

[29:54] But it's with a crazy love. God loves you. Like that of a parent after their child. Here's the irony. He knows we need saving. He knows we're broken.

Those that know me know I'm broken. I've made plenty of mistakes. More than I should. The irony is that the cost that it took to save us is something I would never pay.

Matthew chapter 3, I think I have one more verse here. You know, what does God say of his own son? It says, God spoke through the clouds to Jesus saying, this is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased.

God had a perfect son whom he loved dearly. And yet somehow he was willing to let him die. He was willing to give him up to pay for the sins of all of us in the room.

You hear this verse at Christmas a lot. Isaiah 9, 6, it says, for unto us a child is born. Right? You hear that picture, you see it on Christmas cards, you see that with a baby in a manger, but the second part of that verse is more important than the first.

[31:03] It says, and unto us a son is given. That was God's only son. Not given as an ornament on a tree. Given as a sacrifice.

And let me just close with this as the musicians want to make their way up. You know, history is full of parents going to great lengths for their kids. The Bible is full of parents going to great lengths for their kids. But there's really only one perfect example of a father being willing to give up their son to be tortured, mocked, humiliated, and killed.

Let me share these next couple verses with you. In 1 Peter 2, it says, He bore himself, he himself bore our sins in his body on the tree that we might die to sin and live to righteousness.

Those are pretty small, aren't they? That's okay. Write down these references. 2 Corinthians 5, 21, For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

It was a trade. It was a give and a take. Romans 5, 8, God chose his love for us in that while we were still sinners, broken, Christ died for us.

[32:14] And then finally, John 14, 6, Jesus says, I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. I

think in all its relatability, God allows us that experience as parents. And yes, there are other experiences that we get from parenting and we could talk about that all day. But I think this is the one that we could just catch a glimpse, a small flavor of what he did for us.

It's something we would never do. And Jesus didn't come to travel abroad. He didn't come to set up a school and show us how to live a decent life. He didn't heal the sick so he could run for election that year.

Imagine, imagine knowing that a parent sacrificed their child for you. They gave up their own, their grandson, their granddaughter, their whatever, their precious child to save your family and then looking at that parent saying, you know what, that's alright, you shouldn't have.

thanks, but we'll figure it out. I think people wake up every day ignorant of what was given. Like the mother of Jairus, I'm sorry, like the mother whose daughter was dying and like Jairus whose child passed away and Jesus brought back to life and then that father in Mark chapter 9, all God asks is that we trust in what was given.

[33:39] That we put our faith for our own salvation not in ourselves, not in what we have, but what he did. That Jesus paid the penalty of our sins and mistakes.

I think God uses parenting to make that real, to make that something tangible, to describe just how much it costs. And I'll close with this verse, John 1, 2, but to all who did receive him, those who believe in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.

Let's close with the show.