

A Father's Influence

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[0 : 00] Pastor John is going to be preaching from Ephesians chapter 6 this morning. Ephesians chapter 6, Ephesians chapter 6, you turn there with me. I'm reading verses 1 to 14. Ephesians 6, starting! Ephesians 6, starting at verse 1. This is God's holy word.

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother, which is the first commandment with a promise, that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth. Fathers, do not exasperate your children. Instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord. Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ. Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but like slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart.

serve wholeheartedly as if you were serving the Lord, not men, because you know that the Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does, whether he is slave or free. And masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Do not threaten them, since you know that he who is both their master and yours is in heaven. And there is no favoritism with him. Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world, and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore, put on the full armor of God so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place. Amen.

[2 : 19] The early bird gets the worm. Many hands make light work. A stitch in time saves nine.

What are these? These are proverbs, aren't they? Pithy, short sentences that capture an observation in life.

Common sayings. Today is Father's Day. And I'm going to give you three well-known proverbs about fathers and see if you can discover what they all have in common. What is the single truth they're communicating?

The acorn never falls far from the tree. He's a chip off the old block. Like father, like son. They all reflect the powerful shaping influence that a father has upon his son.

Over the years, people have observed that sons turn out to be like their fathers often, in many ways, not just in appearance and physical mannerisms, their walk and their talk, but even in their character. And so the fact that we have so many current proverbs making this point suggests that it must often be the case. But having said that, not all proverbs are true.

[3 : 54] Some overstate what is often found, but not always. An apple a day keeps the doctor away. Well, not always. Barking dogs seldom bite. I've never been ready to trust my leg to that proverb and have found it to be otherwise. So we must turn to God's word then to see whether this proverb, these proverbs about fathers is true. Because this word, it has proverbs, and those are all true, true. And it is the truth that determines the truth claims that are being made today, even in our common proverbs. So we turn to the scriptures. And what we find is that the Bible also testifies to this powerful shaping influence of fathers over their sons. And this is nowhere seen in the biblical record more than in the kings of Israel and Judah. Each of these kings have a short summary statement about their life and reign. Just a few words that sum up their reign, like an epitaph on a gravestone.

Some samples then. It's striking how many of those summaries refer to their fathers. And so I'll give you some samples from 1 and 2 Kings. I won't give you the references. You can turn there and you'll find them yourself. 1 and 2 Kings, 1 and 2 Chronicles. But Abijah was the king of Judah.

And this is what it says of him. He committed all the sins his father had done before him. Ammon, king of Judah. He did evil in the sight of the Lord as his father Manasseh had done. He walked in all the ways of his father. He worshipped the idols his father had worshipped and bowed down to them. Three times in this brief synopsis, we have the mention of Ammon's likeness to his father.

Of course, we all know King Ahab, king of Israel, from his run-ins with Elijah. The summary of his life was there was never a man like Ahab who sold himself to do evil in the eyes of the Lord, urged on by Jezebel, his wife. He behaved in the vilest manner by going after idols. Ahab was bad to the bone.

[6 : 30] So we're not surprised when we read of his son Ahaziah, the next king. He did evil in the eyes of the Lord because he walked in the ways of his father and mother. He served and worshipped Baal and provoked the Lord, the God of Israel, to anger just as his father had done. So over and over, the record is saying that these sons turned out to be just like their fathers. Now, the question is, is this just a coincidence? Being mentioned to point to some unlikely thing? I mean, can you believe it? Who would have ever thought that a son of Ahab would turn out just like him? Well, this is no coincidence, is it? It's observed too often to be simply a coincidence with no cause-effect relationship.

It's rather given at least a partial explanation for why the son turned out as he did. It's a testimony, again, to the powerful shaping influence of a father upon his son. Think of it.

Every day growing up in the palace of Ahab, this boy Ahaziah saw his father's evil deeds close up. He saw what his father did to get Naboth's vineyard, pouting, murdering, abusing his power. He witnessed him serving and worshiping Baal. He saw his idols and the temples to Baal. It was as much a part of his life as some of you coming to church each week. And whenever there was sickness or trouble in the family or trouble in the nation, well, he turned to Baal for help. And whenever good things happened, he heard his father tell his mother how kind Baal was to bless them. And as a boy, he must have often gone with his father to sacrifice and give thanksgivings to Baal and to ensure future fortune for himself. So when grown up and facing troubles in his own life, it was quite natural then for Ahaziah to look to Baal to bail him out and to attribute all good things that happened to him to Baal's influence. He served and worshiped Baal just as his father had done. Again, a father's example is a powerful thing. So that's the first lesson we have today about fathers. Fathers have a powerful shaping influence upon their sons. Now, the second lesson is that this shaping influence can work two ways. So far, I've been citing references of a father's negative example followed by his son. A father's sins grease the slide for his son to follow in. But we also find in scriptures the powerful shaping influence of a father's positive example to his son. His virtues, you see, as well as his vices exert a powerful pull on the son to follow in his ways. And the record of the kings of Judah and Israel make this point as well. So Asa, king of Judah, did what was right in the eyes of the Lord. Jehoshaphat, his son, was 35 years old when he became king. In everything, he walked in the ways of his father Asa and did not stray from them. He did what was right in the eyes of the Lord.

Or Amaziah, the son of Joash, became king of Judah. He did what was right in the eyes of the Lord. In everything, he followed the example of his father Joash. So a father's positive example can be a powerful thing in the hand of God. And then Amaziah's son, Uzziah, became king and reigned 52 years.

[10 : 38] And it's said of him, he did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, just as his father Amaziah had done. We're given a history lesson on the power of a good example, especially when it comes from a father.

So a Christian wheat farmer had a most promising year with fruitful fields of golden grain. But just before a harvest, a storm came through with tornado and large hail. They all took cover in the basement. And after the storm, they came up out of their safe hiding place and surveyed the damage.

Father holding the hand of his young son, looking out and seeing total devastation. Everything flattened. A total loss of a year's crop. The little boy looked up and saw tears rolling down his father's cheeks.

And then he heard him sing. When peace like a river attendeth my way. When sorrows like sea billows roll.

Whatever my luck, thou hast taught me to say. It is well, it is well with my soul. My sin. Oh, the bliss of this glorious thought. My sin, not in part, but the whole is nailed to his cross and I bear it no more. [12:22] Praise the Lord. Praise the Lord. Oh, my soul. Amen. Now you tell me, what effect do you think that father's example had upon that son that day?

Do you think it ever left him? I think we know the answer to that because we're still telling the story. The son must have passed it on to generations behind him.

The powerful example of a father who had learned to be content in any and every circumstance. A father who had learned to give thanks in all things for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

To see a father taking refuge in the Lord in his times of trouble. A father who treasured the forgiveness of all of his sins more than a whole year's crop.

A father who could glory in the cross even through his tears. The power of a father's godly example.

So far we've seen then that a father's example is a powerful thing in shaping sons.

[13:32] And secondly, that it works powerfully in both directions. Positively for their good and negatively for their ill. But we must go on to say, thirdly, that a father's shaping influence is not determinative.

It doesn't determine the outcome. It's not the only factor. And if it were, then that would mean that every good father would have all good sons. And that every bad father would have all bad sons. And you would be locked into becoming just like your father was. And that's not the case. As once again we see in the biblical record of the king. Sons do not always follow the examples of their fathers.

And that works both ways too. So we read of David's son Solomon. He did evil in the eyes of the Lord. And did not follow the Lord completely as David his father had done.

So David had left behind a trail of godly footprints for Solomon to walk in. But at significant points, Solomon abandoned his father's example and did evil in the eyes of the Lord.

[14:41] He chose his own different path. So a father's shaping influence, though powerful, was not determinative. And it works the other way too.

We saw how Ammon did evil in the eyes of the Lord as his father Manasseh had done. Walking in all the ways of his father, worshipping the idols of his father. Oh, but Ammon's son, Josiah, became king and did what was right in the eyes of the Lord.

So wicked Ammon had a godly son, Josiah. Because the grace of God can interrupt. And break the ungodly chain and make sons to differ from their evil fathers.

So the record shows that not all sons are like their fathers. That his influence may be powerful, but it is not determining the outcome.

There are other influences that must be factored in. And I want to mention two additional influences. We've seen the influence of a father. That's not the only influence.

[15:46] Secondly, we need to see the son's own fallen sinful nature that affects his choices and the outcome. Fathers can give their sons a positive example to follow.

But dads, the Bible tells us we've not only given them a positive example, we've given them a sinful heart. A heart that goes astray.

A heart that loves to wander from God's way. A heart that's turned to his own way with his back toward God. They're not born with neutral hearts.

Just waiting for the best examples. And whichever has the most power determines the way he goes. No, not at all. They were sinful from birth, David says.

From the time they were conceived in their mother's womb. And so from the womb they go astray, speaking lies. Psalm 51, 4 and 58, 3. They hit the ground with their backs toward God.

[16:50] And their faces toward sin and self. That's how they entered the world. And dad, you gave them that heart. Dad, you didn't have to teach your sons to lie, did you?

You didn't have to send them to school to learn how to steal or be mean or selfish or proud or to hide and cover up their wrongdoings. No, it just comes naturally to them.

Because that's the nature you passed on to them. Because fallen sinful parents can only give birth to fallen sinful children. The flesh gives birth to flesh.

The spirit gives birth to spirit. They're born sinners. And that's why they choose to sin. Sinner is what they are.

So sinning is what they do. A wayward heart gives them wandering feet that transgress God's laws and boundaries of what is right and wrong.

[17 : 50] So though a father watches ever so closely an example to give to his son, this does not ensure that he will choose to follow God too.

As we've seen, good fathers can have bad sons. Indeed, they will all end up going their own way unless the Holy Spirit gives them a new birth. And that's the third influence.

You have the father's example. You have the son's own sinful heart. But by the grace of God, there's also the reality that God's sovereign grace can give sons a new birth.

Make them to differ from what they were as they came into this world. He gives them a new nature so that they'll love God and return to God and hate their evil ways.

That's what Jesus taught in John 3 to Nicodemus. You must be born again. You were born a sinner. If you're to go to heaven, you've got to be born again. You need a new heart.

[18 : 50] You need a new nature. What Ezekiel promised, that God must give them a new heart, taking out the heart of stone and putting in a heart that's tender toward the things of God.

putting his own spirit in them to move them, to follow his decrees and to be careful to keep his laws. God's got to do something for that to happen.

And so through the gospel, God's sovereign grace conquers sinners and he makes them new creatures in Christ. And it's a supernatural work, just as supernatural as stopping the sun from shining.

or stopping it from going down for a whole day. God must do a new work of changing the heart so that they will willingly turn from their way and turn to Christ, trusting in him and then walking in his ways.

So these are the three shaping influences of how children turn out. At least three. There's others, no doubt. But there's the influence of parents or fathers. There's the sinful nature of the child, the son.

[20 : 03] And then there's also the reality that God gives new birth to some in salvation. Now let me seek to apply, make some applications.

And first for fathers and foremost, because after all, it's Father's Day. This shaping influence upon your children is no small gift from God. It's his plan and his wisdom that you would have them for those most formative years.

For this reason, a son shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife. The idea is until then, dads have this hands-on influence in their son's life.

What a wise God. Realize its value, fathers, and make the most of it for their everlasting good. And realize your responsibility to God. You will one day have to give an account for what you did with the influence God gave you over your sons and daughters.

When my father died, we were all gathered around his bed singing, God be with you till we meet again, till we meet at Jesus' feet.

[21 : 17] When he drew his final breath, one of my brothers said what we all felt. There was a life that made the gospel attractive.

He taught that the gospel changes lives. He taught that the gospel makes a sinner like Jesus.

Not in this life completed, but it changes him. And we saw the beauty of Christ in our father close up. By the grace of God, his life did adorn the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Christ. And God used that attractive life to influence his children. And all eight of them came to follow the Lord Jesus.

Dad was using his shaping influence as a father for the eternal good of us, his children. And I'd like to pass on to you fathers just three things that we receive from our father.

[22 : 22] And it's, I believe all three of these things are found in Ephesians 6 and verse 4. Fathers, do not exasperate your children, but bring them up in the discipline and the instruction of the Lord.

The first is the importance of family worship. The importance of family worship. We would gather before breakfast around the table with our Bibles and song books.

and those were non-negotiable priorities in the home. You know, the command of Ephesians 6-4 is not given to Sunday school teachers.

It's given to fathers. Fathers, bring them up in the instruction of the Lord. Gather your sons and daughters then around the Bible and teach them what God says about himself, about his attributes, his names, his works, his ways.

You know, the world's full of lies about God. You teach them the truth about God. About them, who they are, why they exist.

[23 : 33] Teach them God's commandments that they are to keep. Deuteronomy 6, a word to parents. These laws that I give to you today, the Ten Commandments, are to be on your heart.

That's where it starts. Get them in your heart and then impress them upon your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the way and when you lie down and get up. The word of God is to be the atmosphere in which your children live. Teach them God's commands. That's how they'll know they're sinners and need a savior.

They don't keep them. They don't measure up. And then teach them. Show them Christ in the gospels. Show them what he's done for poor sinners like you.

You tell them you're a sinner and tell your kids what Jesus did for you and what he will do for them if they will come in faith and repentance. There are wonderful events in the Bible.

[24 : 41] We read this morning chapter 10 of Joshua. Are those not wonderful things? Are those not things that would make a child say, did it really happen dad?

They're all throughout the Bible. So gather the family for worship. Read the Bible. Explain the Bible. Ask a few questions about the passage you've read. What does it teach us about God?

What does it teach us about you? What does it teach us about Jesus? Answer their questions. Sing and pray. It doesn't have to be long.

Don't exasperate your children with a 40 minute sermon each day. Make it age appropriate. And there's tons of helpful material in the library back there to help you.

Fathers, but start early. even before your child can understand what you are reading, they're learning something important.

[25 : 43] They're learning that this book is important. Because I see my mom and dad calling time out on life and we stop and we get the book out and we read it together.

And then we pray. They're learning something. That's how they learn to revere the word of God and the God of the word. And you're training them how to sit and to be taught.

Preparing them to come and join us here. To hear the teaching and preaching of God's word. The scriptures are the way to make your children wise unto salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.

God's given you a book. Make good use of it in family worship. Secondly, be consistent in discipline.

Fathers, do not exasperate your children. Instead, bring them up in the discipline of the Lord. God does give us many true proverbs that we can build our families on.

[27 : 00] I'll not give you all the references. Just listen to what he says about disciplining your children. Do not withhold discipline from a child. If you punish him with a rod, he will not die. He will die for lack of discipline, led astray by his own great folly.

Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline drives it far from him. Whoever spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is diligent to discipline him.

I'm thankful that my father loved me and loved me enough to discipline me as needed. Not all transgressions deserved a spanking, but lying did.

And any willful disobedience when we were given a command, if we didn't obey, that was a spanking. Again, start early.

If you wait until there are two, you've lost half the battle and you're going to find at rough sledding to try to redress what you've been reinforcing. You've been reinforcing their rebellion for two years.

[28 : 09] So, start early. Children need to understand early in life their God-appointed place in the authority structures that he's established in the world.

And you can teach that very, very early on. They can learn, I'm not the king of the universe. I'm not even the king of this house. No, mom and dad are over me.

And that's a God thing. God made it that way. They need to learn that. The sooner they learn that, the better prepared they are for life when they live under other God-appointed authority structures.

And they can learn very early on what no means, can't they? No. And they look at you and they keep their hand out and no.

And they still touch it, don't they? They're testing you. But what happens? What needs to happen is enough pain inflicted to make them think twice before doing it again.

[29 : 18] That's not child abuse. God's put on their anatomy a place that's padded well enough that you can still create a sting without injuring them.

It's not child abuse, it's loving your child. He who withholds discipline hates his son. Parents, don't fall for this thing called gentle parenting in our day.

Don't let the term throw you. Yes, we're to be gentle and yet firm. But gentle parenting as it's being taught today withholds discipline from a child. And our Lord does not leave us guessing what that does to them.

So love your children and discipline them when they need it. Just like your heavenly father disciplines those he loves, everyone he accepts as a son.

And consistency is the key to learning the lessons. Consistency. not once every other time they disobey.

[30 : 24] No, it's consistency. And you say, but it takes so long to disobey. Yes, that's right. Just like so many important things in life, they take time. And this is one of those very important things.

And if the battle is won early, I say the battle of wills is won early, it will save you from many headaches and heart aches later on. So bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. Fathers, God has not only given you a book, he's also given you a rod. Make good use of it in raising your children. And then third and last, have fun with them.

You say, where in the world is that in the Bible? Well, I believe it's an application of the first part of verse four. It says, fathers, do not exasperate your children. Or other versions, do not provoke them to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

I think I've read something like 26 different ways for parents to exasperate, for fathers to exasperate their children. And if the only time you're interacting with your kids is when you're enforcing the rules, laying down the rules, instructing them and disciplining them, you will provoke your children to anger.

[31 : 45] You will exasperate them, you will wear them out, and your shaping influence for good upon them will drastically be hindered. It's such a healthy thing for families to play together.

Growing up, Friday evening was family night. The kids got to choose the menu for the night and the games that we all played together. I had a friend, I have a friend who has four young daughters, one evening he posted a video.

It was his wife's night out and he was left at home with his four young daughters. The video showed him dressed up like a ballerina. They had makeup on him and jewelry.

A broom was lying on the floor and he was standing on the Brussels, the brushes end of it, on one leg, you know, in the ballerina pose.

And another girl had the other end of the stick and she was walking around and around which meant that he's spinning like a ballerina and music in the background for a ballerina.

[33 : 03] and they were all having a ball, laughing, enjoying their father. You say, what in the world is he doing? Well, he's not becoming effeminate.

He's an ex-marine. He still wrestles for competition and does martial arts for competition. He's all man and they know it. I'll tell you what he's doing.

He's getting down on their level and having fun with them. And what influence do you think that will have upon his children the next time he says to them, okay, kids, let's settle down and get our Bibles out.

It's time for family worship. Well, this isn't a guy that's just coming around in our lives when forcing the rules. That's the only time we see him. No, this is the dad who loves us and plays with us.

He's clearly for us, not against us. So let's pay attention to him now like he pays attention to us.

[34 : 09] And what influence do you think that will have upon them the next time he has to discipline them? Again, it's not just the guy that shows up, the policeman when I've done something wrong.

This is my dad. He loves me. We laugh together. We have fun together. And if he's coming to discipline me, I must have done something wrong. Because I know he loves me.

that's bringing them up in a way that does not exasperate them, wear them out, provoke them to anger.

It puts a whole different slant on your instruction and discipline. So God has given you a book, a rod, and a laugh. Make good use of that laugh with your children.

family worship, consistent discipline, and fun times together. That's a way to obey Ephesians 6.4. It's a way to make the most of your shaping influence upon your children as you bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

[35 : 18] If your children, Father, look at them, if they're here with you, if your children are to live forever, either in heaven or hell, and they are.

And if you are laying down a trail of footprints for them to follow in, and you are, then be sure it's a trail of godly footprints.

And don't undo with your life what you're teaching with your lips. Make your life a clear illustration of what you're teaching them. And when you fail, as every dad does, be humble enough to confess it to them and ask their forgiveness.

You see, it's not perfect godliness that they need in a father, but it is real godliness. And real godliness means getting real about my sin, not just theirs.

And let me add this one other important note. Next to pointing them to Christ, fathers, the most important thing you can do is to love their mother. To love their mother.

[36 : 29] To see you loving her in word and deed gives them a security they need in which to flourish. A stable home where dad loves mom and mom loves dad.

And mom and dad love us and love Jesus. What a beautiful home that is to grow up. A fertile soil for kids to grow in.

Well, these are the ways that your life will be a life that makes the gospel attractive to your children. And with the blessing of God, it will be a powerful shaping influence upon them. And fathers, let me just remind you that the time of your greatest influence upon them is quickly passing.

You blink and they're graduating and they're out the door. So while you have them, while you have their attention, make the most of it.

there are other voices that they are soon to be hearing. Voices contrary to yours and contrary to the book you're teaching them. So while you have them, pour your life into them.

[37 : 34] Sacrifice for them. You know, I've never met a father who said, you know, I really regret how much time I spent with my children. But I have met fathers who regretted how much time was stolen from their family because of their business and their job and their games.

And even after they've left the nest, stay involved. Stay involved. Still influencing them with your words, with your life. You see, the job is never done, dads.

And then finish well. Finish well. So that your life is punctuated by finishing well. And all the lessons that you've taught them along the way has a big exclamation point.

When you die in Christ, a faithful man to the end, there's a life that makes the gospel attractive.

Maybe you say it's too late, John, for me. I've already wasted so much of my influence upon my kids. And let me just tell you, it's never too late to start the fresh. God is ready if you are.

[38 : 53] Well into his Christian life, George Whitefield prayed, oh Lord. Help me today to begin to begin to be a Christian. It's never too late.

God is ready today if you are. He can redeem the years that the locusts have eaten. The wasted years, the misspent years. He can rebuild broken relationships with your children.

He is the redeemer. He redeems broken things. So make the most of whatever time you have left.

And fathers, there's something else that God has given you.

It's a secret, unseen weapon. Not only a book, a rod, and a laugh, but also a throne, a throne of grace. Where sits the king of grace, dispensing mercy and grace in your time of need.

Mercy to forgive your failures as a father. Grace to help you to be a better father. Pray that God would add his blessing to all you attempt to do with your children.

[40 : 02] children. And even after you're gone, your prayers are laid up in heaven and are not forgotten. And many fathers have had wandering prodigals back on earth come to the Savior while they were at the Savior's side in heaven.

So pray on. Pray on. As long as you have breath, we have a throne. Make use of that. The prayer of a righteous man avails much. Very briefly, just a word to sons and daughters.

Has God given you such a father? Thank God for him. He's one in ten thousand, if not a hundred thousand. You could have been, you could have had a father been born into a family where all he taught you was about Islam or Hinduism or Buddhism.

But no, God puts you in that home where your father cares for you and wants you to know his Savior. Thank God for him. Realize what a rare privilege you have to grow up in such a home.

And if you reject that upbringing and still go off your own way instead of heeding the word that he taught you, that will haunt you. You will have to give an account one day to God when he says, I gave you a godly father.

[41 : 34] He wasn't perfect, but he pointed you to Christ. What did you do with that? And you will be silent. You will not be able to answer, and that will gnaw on you forever in hell.

That will be the worm that never dies. No, no. Come to Christ. Turn from your own way. Heed the directives of scripture coming from your father.

And become the joy of your father, who has no greater joy than to see that his children are walking in the truth. Mothers, a word to you.

Help your man. Help your man in this most important work. You know God gave you to him to be his helper, and help him. He needs your help.

Give him honest feedback on how he's doing as a father. Fathers, listen to her. She probably knows what's going on in those children's hearts better than you do.

[42 : 37] So listen to her. Encourage him. Wives, don't nag him. Just criticize his shortcomings.

Praise his efforts. And make your suggestions to make it even better. Reinforce his teaching with the children. If you have him more often than what he does, take what he's teaching and build on it. Pray together with him for your children. And pray, fathers and mothers, for your children, with your children. Spurgeon tells us what an impact it had upon him when he knelt by the knees of his mother and heard his mother pouring out his heart to God, her heart out to God, to save her son.

And said, God, if you don't save him, I'm going to have to give a swift witness in the day of judgment against him. That I taught him your ways and urged him to trust in Christ.

And he would not listen. And she wept before the Lord. The prayers of a godly father and mother. A wonderful effect upon a child. And all of us then, let's pray and labor together for the young ones in the congregation to see them coming to Christ early.

[44 : 02] Can I tell you about a perfect father and his son? Did you know that Luke chapter three and giving the genealogy of Jesus ends by saying the son of Adam, the son of God, Adam was the son of God, not the son of God in the way that Jesus is.

But he came into the world by virtue of the father giving him life. He's called a son of God. Well, he had a perfect father, a perfect environment, didn't he?

And he rebelled. And he turned his back on his perfect father who had just showered him with every blessing he could have ever wanted. He rebelled and he brought rebellion to all his offspring.

That's why we all have sinful hearts as we come into the world. But in love, the father chose to redeem the fallen sinner. He chose to give his one and only son, Jesus, that he might make us children when he could have created sons cheaper.

But once he decided to redeem us from sin, to bring us, the only thing that would do it was his son, the eternal son of God. And he gave him to make us children of God.

[45 : 29] Behold, what manner of love is this that the father has lavished on us? That we should be called children of God. And that is what we are. If we are in Christ, we're sons and daughters of God.

Amazing love. So on this Father's Day, whether you're a father, a mother, a grandmother, a grandfather, child, whoever you are, there's nothing more important for you to do than to come to the perfect heavenly father through his son, Jesus Christ.

It's the only way to the father. No one comes to the father except through me, Jesus said. Trust in the Lord Jesus to forgive your sins. Turn from your way, trusting in him and walking with him in the new way.

And you'll have the joy of a new life, which is in no small sense wrapped up in living as a child of the living God.

Having God as your father. Walking under his love and protection and provision. Let's pray.

[46 : 42] We thank you, Father, for being the perfect father, being the model for every dad here and we thank you for the fathers that we have had who pointed us toward you and toward your son and your Holy Spirit.

And we want to be good fathers to the end, whether they're gone from the nest or still in the nest.

So would you work in each of our hearts who are fathers and help us to use our influence, whatever it is, to point our children to you.

Oh, thank you for the gracious father that you are, for that throne of grace that we have come to be in need of every day, every hour, and have found you to be a father who understands and cares for us.

Draw others to trust in the Savior and to come to know you as father, we ask in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen.