



By Neil Smith, 17 June 2018, Father's Day (Family Service)

INTRODUCTION

Happy Father's Day! .. Kids are so interesting when you ask them about Dads... One child apparently said this about Father's Day... "Fathers Day that is just like Mother's Day... only you don't have to spend as much!!!" Is that true? 😊

Now... there is a really famous story that Jesus told about a Father in the bible – we often call it the story of the Lost Son... but it is also really the story of an amazing Devoted Father too... So this morning I want to pull out some special tips for Dads... And look at **what great devoted Fathers are really like!**... and then in a little while... I am even going to get some great dads up here to ask them some questions!

Right... Now while this message obviously applies for Dad's here this morning, the points actually apply to all of us in most relationships... so please don't switch off if you are not a Dad! Okay! So let me read you the story from the book of Luke 15; Verse 11;

"There was a man who had two sons. ¹² The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them.

Now kids... I don't now why it is that you guys always want so much stuff! You give us poor parents such a hard time... But even you guys are not as bad as this son... This son told his dad, "Dad, I want you to give me everything that you are meant to give me when you die one day right now!!!" How's that for cheeky! That's really not cool. But, we're not really focussing on the son today, we are focussing on his Father, and this Father is amazing. Here is what I want you to see..

- **Devoted Father's understand that each of their kids is different!**

I think this is one of the most amazing things about being a parent – each child is so different! Even when they are born from the same parents, live in the same family & grow up with the circumstances, they can turn out so differently! Different personalities, different talents, different tastes. And in this story, this Father has two very different kids. Yet somehow... this Dad understood just what each son needed. I think many of us would have got upset with this kind of request and said; “Now you listen here young man!” But no, this Dad realised that sometimes you have to let go! The stories goes on in Verse 13;

¹³ “Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. ¹⁴ After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need.

¹⁵ So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. ¹⁶ He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything. ¹⁷ “When he came to his senses, he said,

‘How many of my father’s hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! ¹⁸ I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. ¹⁹ I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.’

And here’s the truth guys...

- **Sometimes kids make mistakes**

This is really hard as a parent to watch. I’m sure this Dad could have predicted what was going to happen – that this was a REALLY BAD IDEA!! – but he went through with it... and let his boy feel the consequences of it. This is so hard – you love your kids so much and you want to protect them from all the bad stuff – even the bad stuff they choose to do. Yet it looks like this son would not have responded to his dad’s advice – he had to feel the consequences... to realise what was important... and who was important. Fortunately... he decided to fix his mistake... Verse 20;

²⁰ So he got up and went to his father. “But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

Here’s a tip from the bible about what it takes to be a great dad...

- **Devoted Father's never give up looking out & having hope**

This son went home, head held low, practising over and over how he would apologise and expecting to become a servant, if he was lucky! Yet while he was coming up the road... he was spotted by Dad – Dad was on the look out for him. Dad has never given up hope... that his boy would come home.

He is swept up in emotions and compassion and runs to embrace his son. While his son is thinking he is written off, the Dad always has always hoped that his boy would return. Verse 21;

21 “The son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ 22 “But the father said to his servants,

‘Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. 23 Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let’s have a feast and celebrate. 24 For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ So they began to celebrate.

I know all that stuff about killing the calf sounds a bit heavy... and you might not get the robe and the ring thing... but let me apply it to the kids today... that’s kind of like you mess up big time, and you come home, and your dad orders the BIGGEST BURGER KING MEAL EVER! And you have a huge party at your house where you get given new Nike trainers, iPhone and an awesome hoodie! Pretty crazy right??? What’s the point...

- **Devoted Father’s don’t hold grudge**

I think that many of us Dads would be waiting with an ‘I told you so!’ lesson for this wayward wasteful boy. But instead, a great Dad, a devoted father celebrates a lesson learnt and a relationship restored. It is too easy to scold and get stuck on the mistake, instead of forgiving and moving on. We don’t hear what happens next about the inheritance and all that – And I’m sure there were consequences, you guys know about consequences, right????! Right! But for this dad, the relationship with his son was more important than being right!

Meanwhile, what about the other son... Let’s take a look at that... Verse 26;

25 “Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. 26 So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. 27 ‘Your brother has come,’ he replied, ‘and your father has killed the fattened calf (Burger King!) because he has him back safe and sound.’

28 “The older brother became angry and refused to go in. (This is that thing you kids sometimes do when you close your door and sulk! With me?) So his father went out and pleaded with him. 29 But he answered his father, ‘Look! All these years I’ve been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. (Kids, that is called being a brat! Not cool! And then he goes on)

30 But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, (We won’t go there today!) you kill the fattened calf (Burger King!) for him!’ 31 “ ‘My son,’ the father said, ‘you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. 32 But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ ”

What’s the lesson dads...

- **Devoted Father's parent each child differently**

Just as I said in the beginning... each child is different – so the approach to each has to be different. As Fathers... we have to be so careful not to fall into the comparison or favouritism trap. Each child is a gift from God... and each is blessed with a different personality – embrace and celebrate the differences.

So here's the last point I want to make today... this dad in this story, he was pretty amazing, but you know what. Dad's also make mistakes!

- **Dad's mess up, but we all have a perfect heavenly Father**

I realise that on a day like today... there are mixed feelings about Father's Day – it will be shaped by your experience of a Dad and Dad figures in your life. We all know of absent Dads... who are not in the picture... and doing what they should be doing.

We all know of struggling Dads who are burdened with their own issues and are the less than ideal parent figure. We also know of great Dads, devoted fathers, and also great moms who are playing double duty as single parents. The truth is that we all know... some more painfully than others... that Dad's mess up. This is not an excuse for them or saying to gloss over that. But you need to know that if your Dad was not what he should have been in your life, we each have a perfect Dad- Abba Father. Daddy God! The Apostle Paul, one of the great Fathers of our Faith said this;

The Spirit you received... does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received... brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." (Romans 8.15)

You see, the word Abba is not just a word from an old music band your parents used to listen to... the word Abba simply means "Daddy." Or "Papa." If you have accepted Jesus into your life, and you want to follow him... then you have been "adopted" by God – And He is now your perfect Father. He is the one who recognises we are different and He loves us individually. He is the one... who sometimes lets us make mistakes and learn the hard way. He is the one... who never stops looking for you and hoping that you will come back to Him. He is the one who does not hold a grudge. He is the one... us Dad's need to all look to for help. Amen.

- **Questions & Answers with Fathers**

So, here's how we are going to end today, we are going to get some dad's to come up here... Some great dads, who I have a lot of respect for. Clinton, Ron, Paul, come on up guys...

1. What do you enjoy the most about being a father?
2. How has your life changed since becoming a father?
3. After being away on business or just working long hours, what is your favourite or best way to reconnect with your family?
4. Have you always been the spiritual leader in your home?
5. What does spiritual leadership look like in your home?
6. How do you handle conflict resolution in your home? Do you have any ground rules?

7. What practical things did you do or have you seen done to lay the foundation for your children's faith? What works and what doesn't?
8. How are boys different to raise than girls? What is the mother's role in raising a son?
9. What is the best way for a wife not to put her relationship with her children over her relationship with her husband?
10. Do you have any advice for parents with teenagers?
11. What speaks respect to you? What makes you feel disrespected?

A possible prayer for Father's Day: