

Good Father

“There is None Good, Save One”

I. SCRIPTURE

Luke 18:19 – “And YAHUSHA [Jesus] said unto him, ‘**Why do you call Me good? None is good, save one, that is, YAHUAH [God]**’.”

II. INTRODUCTION

Tomorrow, many around the world will celebrate Father’s Day. For me, this has become a very special time each year. Any why do you think that is? Well, since you asked, the reason that this day has become so special for me is that on Father’s Day 2009, my heavenly Father YAHUAH [God] provided me with a very special Father’s Day gift, a unique blessing – the birth of our youngest girl Rica – who arrived several weeks earlier than she was expected. As true spiritual blessings go, I know that YAHUAH [God] did this beautiful act for me, just so I could enjoy a beautiful Father-daughter memory each year as Father’s Day approaches. As with that said, this year is a very special Father’s Day, because Rica’s June 21 birthday falls exactly on the same day of the week as Father’s Day. And if you haven’t guessed yet, today’s message is a “Father’s Day” message, entitled “Good Father”.

III. DADS DON’T GET NO RESPECT

If you recall, it was just a few weeks ago that we celebrated Mother’s Day. This year, I’m not sure that we had a special message for the moms, but for the most part, pastors usually have a very *special* sermon on Mother’s Day. It usually goes something like this:

“Moms are amazing. They are like human unicorns: special... beautiful... smelling of lavender and night jasmine... they are deserving of our gratitude and our complete affection... and, oh yes, don’t forget that they each and every one deserve breakfast in bed... pedicures and massages... and all the additional pampering that we muster up. We ask the mothers to please stand up so that we can recognize them as gods on earth... that we can shower them with applause. Here locally, we ask Steve and others in the local congregation to

present them the flowers that they have so mindfully brought with them... so we can commemorate the moment, the day... and bask in their collective loveliness.”

On Father’s Day, on the other hand, the sermon that most pastors preach go something like this:

“Hey Dads! What are you doing? Seriously, can’t you get your act together?! Don’t you know that it’s far time that you guys learn to become leaders in your households? It’s time for you to put away the jobs... your sports interests... and the other diversions that consume you. Yes! It’s time to put down your smart-phones and start to serve your family with more heart, more soul! So cowboy up already guys! Don’t you know that your role is critical to the family? Don’t you know that it’s time for you to get motivated and become active in your family? To get a life in the community and in the world?”

Doesn’t what I’m saying sound right... about the difference between Mother’s Day and Father’s Day sermons? Have you ever wondered why Dads don’t really get no respect? For example, why is the joke usually on the dad, rather than the mom? Well, consider these...

One person asks: When does a dad joke become a dad joke?

The other one answers: I have no idea.

The first responds: When it becomes apparent.

So usually the jokes on dad begin when they become dads; it seems that that’s when the joke on them becomes inherent. And if it’s NOT inherent, then we dads are probably earning our less than stellar reputation through our behavior patterns. For example, we say and do things like this...

Son: “Dad, are bugs good to eat?”

Dad: “Let’s not talk about such things at the dinner table, son.”

After dinner, Dad inquires: “Now, son, what did you want to ask me?”

Son: “Oh, it’s nothing... just that there was a bug in your soup, but now it’s gone.”

Daughter: Dad, do you know the difference between a pack of cookies and a pack of elephants?

Dad: No.

Daughter: Then it’s a good thing Mom does the grocery shopping then, right?

Dad: How do you like fourth grade?

Son: It isn't much fun.

Dad: That's too bad. It was the best three years of my life!

Daughter's Friend: How do you like the drum set you got for your birthday?

Daughter: I love it!

Friend: Why?

Daughter: Whenever I don't play it, my dad gives me 10 bucks!

Dad: Why don't you try to be a good boy, son?

Son: For \$20, I'll be good.

Dad: Are you kidding me son? \$20? When I was your age, I was good for nothing.

The question was submitted to the Focus on the Family organization: "Is there evidence that dads really have a uniquely important impact in the lives of their children? Our culture seems to place little value on the role of fathers ... I see evidence of this everywhere, from pop culture and media to government policy. My own experience and belief system tell me that fatherhood is important, but I'd like to be able to explain exactly why this is the case. Can you help me?"

IV. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF DAD

Says Dr David Popenoe, Professor of Sociology at Rutgers University and Co-Director of the National Marriage Project:

Fathers are far more than just "second adults" in the home. Involved fathers – especially biological fathers – bring positive benefits to their children that no other person is as likely to bring. They provide protection and economic support and male role models. They have a parenting style that is significantly different from that of a mother and that difference is important in healthy child development (written in "Life Without Father", New York: The Free Press, 1996, p 163).

Stepdads, granddads, foster dads, and ALL male role models: do NOT underestimate the significant role that you play in the lives of the boys and girls of today, through your "good" adult male behavior and interaction with them... and the negative, enduring psychological impact you have on them through your "improper" behavior toward these extremely vulnerable children of YAHUAH [GOD]. For as YAHUSHA [Jesus] has told us, "whoever receives [even] one little child like this in My name receives Me. But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a

millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea.” (Matthew 18:5-6)

Dr Popenoe says that the most vital aspects of a dad’s contribution to the lives of his children lies precisely in his “significantly different parenting style”. Men and women are different, so moms and dads parent their children differently:

Dads, for instance, love their children “more dangerously.” That’s because they play “rougher” and are more likely to encourage risk-taking. They provide kids with a broader diversity of social experiences. They also introduce them to a wider variety of methods of dealing with life. They tend to stress rules, justice, fairness, and duty in discipline. In this way, they teach children the objectivity and consequences of right and wrong. They give kids insight into the world of men. They prepare them for the challenges of life and demonstrate by example the meaning of respect between the sexes. Research indicates that a married father is substantially less likely to abuse his wife or children than men in any other category.

(Because I have all girls: comment on my brand of guidance for my girls.)

Fathers encourage competition, engendering independence; mothers promote equity, creating a sense of security. Dads emphasize conceptual communication, which helps kids expand their vocabulary and intellectual capacities; moms major in sympathy, care, and help, thus demonstrating the importance of relationships.

Dads tend to see their child in relation to the rest of the world; moms tend to see the rest of the world in relation to their child. Neither style of parenting is adequate in and of itself. But taken together, they balance each other out and equip the new generation with a healthy, well-rounded approach to life.

- 82% of studies on father involvement and child well-being published since 1980 found “significant associations between positive father involvement and offspring well-being...” [Paul R. Amato and Fernando Rivera, “Paternal Involvement and Children’s Behavior Problems,” Journal of Marriage and the Family 61 (1999): 375-384.]**
- In an analysis of over 100 studies on parent-child relationships, it was found that having a loving and nurturing father was as important for a child’s happiness, well-being, and social and academic success as having a loving**

and nurturing mother. Some studies even indicated father-love was a stronger contributor to some important positive child well-being outcomes. [Ronald P. Rohner and A. Veneziano, "The Importance of Father Love: History and Contemporary Evidence," *Review of General Psychology* 5.4 (2001): 382-405.]

- According to child psychiatrist Kyle Pruett, a father's more active play style and comparatively slower response to a toddler or infant experiencing frustration serve to promote problem-solving competencies and independence in the child. [Kyle D. Pruett, *Fatherneed: Why Father Care is as Essential as Mother Care for Your Child*, (New York: The Free Press, 2000), p. 41-42.]
- In the words of Dr. Pruett, "positive father care is associated with more pro-social and positive moral behavior in boys and girls" [Pruett, 2000, p 52]. This is borne out by research from the University of Pennsylvania which indicates that children who feel a closeness and warmth with their father are twice as likely to enter college, 75 percent less likely to have a child in their teen years, 80 percent less likely to be incarcerated and half as likely to show various signs of depression. [Frank Furstenberg and Kathleen Harris, "When and Why Fathers Matter: Impacts of Father Involvement on Children of Adolescent Mothers," in *Young Unwed Fathers: Changing Roles and Emerging Policies*, R. Lerman and T. Ooms, eds. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993).]
- In a 26-year-long study, researchers found that the number one factor in developing empathy in children was father involvement. Fathers spending regular time alone with their children translated into children who became compassionate adults. [Richard Koestner, et al., "The Family Origins of Empathic Concern: A Twenty-Six Year Longitudinal Study," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 58 (1990): 709-717.]

V. "GOOD" DAD CHARACTER BEGINS BEFORE CONCEPTION

One Summer evening, during a violent thunderstorm, a mother was tucking her small son into bed. She was just about to turn off the light when he asked in a trembling voice, "Mommy, will you sleep with me tonight?" His mother smiled, and gave him a reassuring hug. "I can't, dear," she said, "I have to sleep with your daddy." After a long silence the little boy said, "dad's a big sissy!"

In case you don't disrespect dads enough already, here's a few things that dad's are know to say to their children:

- 1. "GO ASK YOUR MOTHER"**
- 2. "DON'T WORRY; IT'S ONLY BLOOD"**
- 3. "DO I LOOK LIKE I'M MADE OF MONEY?"**
- 4. "I'M NOT JUST TALKING TO HEAR MY OWN VOICE."**
- 5. "A LITTLE DIRT NEVER HURT ANYONE; JUST WIPE IT OFF."**
- 6. "WE'RE NOT LOST!"**
- 7. "NO, WE'RE NOT THERE YET." (And my favorite...)**
- 8. "DON'T MAKE ME STOP THIS CAR!"**

Are you aware of any famous bible dads who don't have a single negative thing written about them? How about Joseph, the [step]dad of YAHUSHA [Jesus]? There isn't a single word quoted by Joseph, yet we know quite a lot about him. Although he does say a single word in the bible, we know that he certainly listens and obeys. Although his words aren't recorded, we can kind of imagine his conversations with Mary, YAHUSHA [Jesus]'s mother... and with the archangel Gabriel... and, we can "hear" him talking with the innkeeper. We can visualize him teaching YAHUSHA [Jesus] about carpentry... but then, he kind of fades from the scene.

It is widely thought that Joseph was much older than Mary, because when YAHUSHA [Jesus] started His ministry, Mary appears to be alone. The bible doesn't say Mary is a widow, but it seems like Joseph has already died by then.

Joseph probably thought his life was well planned out; his marriage and his vocation were all prearranged for him... but then, his world comes crashing down... he discovers that bridge-to-be is pregnant. We learn then that Joseph was a man of "good" character... he wanted to do the right thing, in the right way. When he learned of Mary's pregnancy, he considered divorcing her. He wanted to do it in a way that would not call attention to the actual reason. He could have publicly disgraced her... and even had her stoned for adultery. But because of an angel's instruction in a dream given to him by YAHUAH [God], he ignored the prying voices of the villagers about Mary's pregnancy, and married her anyway.

In those days, a marriage contract was worked out between the two (2) families. The engaged couple continued to live with their parents until their

wedding day, but the townspeople probably thought that Mary and Joseph didn't wait until their wedding night. Joseph moved up the wedding date, and the Roman census took them far away from a questioning town.

Even though Joseph came from the royal line of King David, he was a humble man. The brief picture we have of him in the bible suggest that he was a quiet, unobtrusive man, and available when he was needed. He was willing to endure hardship and disappointment, and was looking forward to being a dad to his child, a stepfather to a child that was not his own. He accepted the humbling circumstances that surrounded YAHUSHA [Jesus]'s birth. He trusted his heavenly Father's providential care *every* step of the way. Think about it: He had faith and compassion as he fathered the Son of YAHUAH [God]. His upbringing and prior relationship with YAHUAH [God] certainly prepared him to be a "good" dad: a "good" provider and a "good" protector of his wife and Son.

VI. ADAPTING TO A LESSER ROLE

A church school was putting on a seasonal program which included the story of Joseph and Mary coming to the Inn. On boy wanted so very much to play the part of Joseph, that when the director handed him the part of Inn-keeper instead, we was very upset with the other boy who was assigned the part of Joseph. And he held onto his feelings of disappointment all the way until the night of the performance, when...

...finally, here comes Joseph and Mary walking across the stage to knock on the door to his inn. So he, as the Inn-Keeper, gruffly asks them what they wanted. Joseph answers, "we'd like to have a room for the night". Suddenly, the Inn-keeper throws the door wide open and says, "great! Come on in and I'll give you the best room in the house!"

For a few seconds, poor little Joseph didn't know what to do. But thinking quickly on his feet, he looks inside the door past the Inn-keeper and then says, "No wife of mine is going to stay in a dump like this. Come on Mary, let's go to the barn!" And just like that, based on Joseph's good judgment and behavior, the play was back on track as if the snide remark never even happened.

As in all Christmas pageants that get performed, Joseph doesn't get the starring role... however, his part is so very important. His righteous path in life was to watch over the baby YAHUSHA [Jesus] and His mother Mary... caring for the

needs of others as a “good”, righteous dad. And, as earthly dads, we have a lot to learn from Joseph’s example.

VII. THE GOOD FATHER

When our lives take a nasty turn, we can cry out as Joseph must have cried out: “O Good Father in Heaven, how can this be? And like Joseph, we can hear a still small voice for our heavenly Father saying “trust Me”. “I Am with you”. For as His thoughts are higher than our thoughts, and His ways much different than our ways, we may never understand what He is doing in our lives... at least on this side of heaven, but He is, nevertheless, guiding us with His eye upon us, because we are His children. He says, “trust Me! And all things will work together for your good, I promise you.”

Joseph accepted young YAHUSHA [Jesus] as his own child. Joseph accepted his Father’s will and followed the instructions that the angel gave him. He traveled from Nazareth to Bethlehem... Then he traveled to Egypt... and later back to Nazareth again. And looking at his example, it becomes easy now for us to see how Joseph accepted “his” Son, our Messiah, as a special gift from his heavenly FATHER [God]. And became, in fact, a good father role model to the world’s Savior. And as a result of his example and his “fathering”, the “step-son” of Joseph would one day teach us all about the acceptance and grace of the one “Good Father”. Joseph was charged with the naming of his son, and in doing so he define YAHUSHA [Jesus]’s mission. For the word YAHUSHA [Jesus] means “Savior”.

Was Joseph a “perfect” father? Was he even a “good” father? Today’s scripture, taken from no other than Joseph’s step-son’s words, says **“None is good, save one, that is, YAHUAH [Father God]”**. I’d like to know more about Joseph, about how he raised YAHUSHA [Jesus]. The last we hear of Joseph was when he made that pilgrimage to Jerusalem with YAHUSHA [Jesus] and Mary... that was when YAHUSHA [Jesus] was 12-years old. [Just one (1) year less than Rica is with tomorrow’s birthday.] Even though Joseph was a man of few words, he DID what he was supposed to do. And even though we don’t know too much about Joseph, we can be pretty sure that he wasn’t afraid of thunderstorms! The Bible calls him “a righteous man” (Matthew 1:18). For Joseph, his “righteousness” meant doing the “right” thing. Joseph was a real man and he had real strength... real “strength” means “strength under control”. He knew when to be firm, and he knew when to be sensitive to others. Most importantly, he

committed himself to following the one Good Father, and as a result, he became YAHUAH [God]'s appointed dad, who fathered the world's MESSIAH, the way it ought to be done!

VIII. CLOSING PRAYER

Oh, our Good Heaven Father in heaven, Hallowed by Thy Name. When I see what Joseph the step-dad did... the one that You hand-picked to raise your one and only begotten Son YAHUSHA [Jesus]... then I start to see a glimpse of You: of what a truly "good" father should be... how he should behave... that he should have Your compassion... your involvement: engaged with his child and with his family as Joseph was engaged with Mary and your Son.

Oh, Good Father, I want to be just like your Son YAHUSHA [Jesus]... please understand me... please be patient with me... because my earthly "father" wasn't as "good" as a "father" as Joseph was to Your son. Oh "righteous" Father in heaven, you see I sometimes have a hard time to see your "good"-ness. For my father wasn't always good to me. Many times my father wasn't there for me. Many times my father abused me. Many times my father abused my mother. For some of us, our father was even around, or he left us alone all by ourselves... having to fend for ourselves without a road forward. So dear precious righteous Father, please understand when I have... when we have... a hard time to understand You... to understand your love... your "good"-ness... to understand that you are indeed the one and only "Good Father". Please help us to learning to trust You, even when we can't see You... please help us to understand that even in suffering, we have to believe You. And when all hope is gone, and your words are all we've got, we have to believe them... that you can still bring water from the Rock... to satisfy our thirst, to love us at our worst... even when I don't remember, that you remind me of my worth.

And like Joseph, I want to be as a responsible parent: compassionate and righteous. I know today, that for me to be as good a dad as Joseph was, that I have to be connected to You... I need to learn to trust in You... I need to learn to know and understand your voice... to be able to hear your angels... to recognize your leading... to understand your will for me: so that I can be obedient in each and every step that I take in the path that you set before me... despite whether it is a humble and sometimes a hard road to navigate.

Yes, dear Good Father, like Joseph, please help us to hear your still small voice saying, “trust Me”, and “I Am with you”.

Thank you, dear Good Father. I pray this prayer in the name of your Messiah Son’s precious and saving name. Amen.

References & Credits:

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