

"Our Father's Day"

Someone once said, "How we think about God has a direct effect on how we live our lives". This is true for EVERYONE- even the atheist. What we believe about God determines our values, our priorities; it determines what we believe is right and wrong, what is good and bad. It determines our hopes and has effect on our dreams- it even determines about how we view and feel about ourselves...

As you know, today is Father's day, a day when we recognize and honor one of the most important and influential people in our lives. Regardless of how well they loved us or disciplined us or taught us- even if they were largely absent, fathers have incredible influence on how we as individuals develop. Whether good or bad.

Some of us had great experiences with our dads, when we think of the word "Father" or "Dad" or "Daddy"- only good things come to mind- we think of someone who was kind, gentle, patient, loving, someone to comfort you and tell you always that they loved you. Someone who would make the bad guys go away, someone who had all the answers and always had great advice.

But others may have had a different experience. When they think of the word "Father" or "dad", they think of other words. Words like "dirt bag" or "dead beat", words like "jerk" or "mean" or cruel. Instead of pleasant memories of smiles and hugs and kisses, they remember moments of yelling and hitting, empty beer bottles and moments of rage. Instead of feelings of safety and comfort, the word "Father" or "Dad" evokes emotions of sadness, and fear and anger and resentment. And sadly, there's nothing that can change that. We all only have ONE childhood, and the memories and impressions we had then; we have for the rest of our lives. And I know this is true for some people in this room. Today is not a day to celebrate- but instead it's a day of trying to forget, and to avoid thinking about because whether we want to admit it or not- the relationship that each one of us have had with our earthly father, has had many direct bearings on how we feel about ourselves, what we've been driven to do in life, what we have become and where we think we are going. And contemporary Psychology backs this all up.

Now, what do I say all this- BECAUSE, the reality and truth is, how we each feel about our earthly father, many times has direct bearing on how we view our HEAVENLY Father, and as I said at the very beginning, how we feel about our HEAVENLY FATHER, has absolute direct bearing on how we live our lives...

And today, I want to address this reality. For those who had a wonderful earthly father, I want to celebrate that, give thanks for it and underline how they exemplified what our Heavenly Father is to us. For those who had a "less than wonderful" father or dad growing up, I want to offer you a picture of what your HEAVENLY Father is to you. How He feels about you every moment, what He DOES for you every day, what being HIS son or daughter actually means, the ramifications it has for each of us that call Him "Father" and what it will mean for us after we leave this life.

Friends, I want this Father's day to be a great one for everyone who is listening to my voice, and it CAN be great once we realize that we have a Heavenly Father who is so incredibly wonderful. Lets

looks at WHO He REALLY is...how He feels towards us, and what He does for us every single day we draw breath AS our Heavenly Father:

I. **HE'S NOT ANGRY WITH YOU.** (In fact He actually LIKES You)

Whether people admit this or not- most people view God this way- Angry, sitting on a throne of Holy Righteous Power just WAITING to chuck a lightning bolt down the MOMENT you mess up or stumble- ESPECIALLY if you're a Christian and should KNOW BETTER!! Listen to these words by Julie Gillies

Listen to this story:

"It never took us kids long to figure out that our dad was angry (usually because of something we broke, or because we didn't listen or because we had gotten too loud) He'd bite his bottom lip then ball up his hands into fists. In nanoseconds, all five of us would scramble as fast as we could to escape out the back door where we hung out in our 10-acre wooded back yard until the terrifying eruption was over. Unfortunately, many times some of us wouldn't make it out the back door fast enough and would have the smacks on our behind and ringing words in our ears to prove it. So years later, after I became a believer, the concept of a kind, loving heavenly Father was hard for me to grasp. The words my Pastor spoke sounded wonderful, but deep down, I couldn't escape a vague sense of God's anger directed toward me. Even when I read my bible, the words often sounded angry to my ears. And every time I failed, messed up, or fell short, I felt myself the target of God's anger. And believe me I failed, messed up, and fell short all the time..."

(<http://proverbs31.org/devotions/devo/god-is-not-mad-at-you/> viewed 6/10/16)

RIGHT? Anyone ever felt that way? Even if we have had kind fathers in our lives, there STILL tends to be this thing that creeps in with shame and guilt every time we mess up and we just feel like we are in trouble with Him every time, UNLESS we do something GOOD to make up for it like give something in the offering, or take communion, or mow our neighbors lawn. BUT! Listen to what He says in His word regarding this:

Psalm 103:8-14 *The Lord is compassionate and merciful, slow to anger and filled with unfailing love. He will not constantly accuse us, nor remain angry forever. He does not punish us for all our sins; He does not deal harshly with us, as we deserve. For His unfailing love toward those who fear Him is as great as the height of the heavens above the earth...The Lord is like a father to His children, tender and compassionate to those who fear Him. For He knows how weak we are and remembers that we are only dust...*

COMPASSIONATE friends, SLOW to anger- PATIENT with us. He tells us that He REMEMBERS and UNDERSTANDS that we are dust and weak, and tainted with the inability to walk rightly all the time!

And He is a Father that has SYMPATHY for us friends, giving grace for our faults and failings, KNOWING we'll do them BEFORE we do them and He LOVES us ANYWAY. ALWAYS. EVERY MOMENT, of EVERYDAY- even on our BAD days.

There's NO lightning bolt in His hands- and no boiling rage towards His children. He IS a LOVING, GENTLE, TENDER, FORGIVING, ATTENTIVE Father...ALWAYS

II. HE GIVES US BELONGING AND PURPOSE.

Whether you grew up with a Father, or not; whether your dad is still wonderfully in your life or left when you were young or emotionally unavailable or passed away- there are ALWAYS moments and times when we feel lost, out of place and unsure of who and what we are and WHERE we belong. And many times it has to do with the relationship or LACK thereof we have with our Father's

Belonging and purpose is SO incredibly important, listen to this article from CNN:

"In a series of ongoing studies, first published in 2007 in the Journal of Personality and Social Psychology... [We] as humans, need to belong. To one another, to our friends and families, to our culture and country, to our world.

Belonging is primal, fundamental to our sense of happiness and well-being.

Belonging is a psychological lever that has broad consequences, writes Walton. Our interests, motivation, health and happiness are inextricably tied to the feeling that we belong to a greater community that may share common interests and aspirations.

Isolation, loneliness and low social status can harm a person's subjective sense of well-being, as well as his or her intellectual achievement, immune function and health. Research shows that even a single instance of exclusion can undermine well-being, IQ test performance and self-control.

Walton's earlier studies demonstrated that a sense of social belonging can affect motivation and continued persistence, even on impossible tasks. That is, if you don't feel like you belong, you are both less motivated and less likely to hang in there in the face of obstacles."

(<http://www.cnn.com/2012/06/01/health/enayati-importance-of-belonging/> viewed 6/10/16)

Talk about an essential for making it through LIFE!! And guess what? It's given to us if we would just open our hearts and eyes and see what God tells us about belonging and our purpose in HIM as our Father and in the family He has given us.

Just listen to what He has said in His Word to us:

John 1:12 *And to all who did receive Him, who believed in His name, He gave the right to become the children of God.*

Eph. 2:12-13, 17-19 *Therefore remember that at one time you were at one time separated from Christ...having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus, you who once were far off, have been brought near by the blood of Christ.... For through Him we both have access to the Father so that you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.*

Philippians 2:12-13 *Therefore dear friends...continue to work out your salvation...knowing that it is God who works in you both to will and to act in order to fulfill His good purpose in you.*

Romans 2:28 *For we know that God works all things together for good, for those who love Him, who are called according to His purpose...*

When we remember that we have a Heavenly Father that we BELONG to and that has stamped His Name and approval on us, who has lavished us with acceptance, grace, forgiveness, IDENTITY and PURPOSE, we no longer have to feel lost and wonder what it is we are worth and IF we are really here for any real purpose or reason. But the Bible tells us that we are HIS SONS and DAUGHTERS- with a big brother called Jesus, a family that surrounds us across all space and time, a home called heavenly paradise, and gifts that were individually given to us by HIS hand to fulfill a cosmic and eternal purpose beyond what we can comprehend in this life.

So many of us friends are in search for identity- it marks this current generation for sure. So many of us are in search of acceptance, of purpose, of meaning and of desiring to simply BELONG.

Well THIS is what our Heavenly Father does for US- He gives us the gift of purpose, of meaning, of BELONGING to the greatest group or club or family or place to belong- THE FAMILY OF GOD.

And ALL are welcome and VALUED beyond belief! No one more important than the other- no one more popular than the other- all simply sons and daughter of God enjoying His LOVE and eternal affection!!! THIS is what our Father does for US!! He gives us belonging

III. He is FAITHFUL and Will NEVER Leave Us

Some sitting in the room today had fathers or people that have left them, that maybe abandoned the family or maybe died early, or maybe just was NEVER really there for you (NEVER was able to make it to the events or things that were important in your life) - and because of that there has always been a lingering scar of fear and hurt that has carried over to how you develop relationships both with people AND with God. Maybe you've felt because you were burned early by a Father or Parent, you simply can't trust people, you can't let them too close because you can't count on them and they can't be trusted to be there for you and love you. And because of that you keep everyone at a safe distance...including God.

Friends, our Heavenly Father is SO very different!! LISTEN TO WHAT HE SAYS!

Deuteronomy 31:6 *Be strong and courageous, do not be afraid- for the Lord your God is the one who goes with you- He will never leave you nor forsake you.*

Genesis 28:15 *Behold I am with you always, and will keep you wherever you go...*

Isaiah 41:10 *So do not fear- for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you- I will uphold you with my hand.*

Matthew 28:20 *Behold I am with you always, even to the end of the age"*

Psalms 121 *I lift my eyes to the hills, from where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord...He will not let your foot be moved, he who keeps you will not slumber- behold He who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep...The Lord will keep you from all evil; He will keep your life...*

He IS faithful friends, and even when we can't see Him or feel Him He IS right beside us

This reminds me of the old "Footprints in the Sand" Poem:

"One night a man had a dream. He dreamed he was walking along the beach with the Lord. Across the sky flashed scenes from his life. For each scene he notices two sets of footprints in the sand: the one belong to him, and the other to the Lord.

When the last scene of his life flashed before him, he looked back at the footprints in the sand. He noticed that may times along the path of his life there was only one set of footprints. He also noticed that it happened at the very lowest and saddest times in his life.

This really bothered him and he questioned the Lord about it. 'Lord, you said that once I decided to follow you, you'd walk with me all the way. But I have noticed that during the most troublesome times in my life, there is only one set of footprints. I don't understand why when I needed You the most you would leave me.'

The Lord replied, 'My precious, precious child, I love you and I would never leave you. During your times of trial and suffering, when you see only one set of footprints, it was then that I carried.'

God is a Father who will never leave us...

IV. He is TENDER Towards Us

Once again, for some people, this is a very difficult attribute to think of God as. Whether it's been upbringing where you've been taught to literally FEAR God, and tremble before Him—NO HAVING FUN IN CHURCH OR GOD WILL KILL YOU! Or whether it's been too many life circumstances that have led you to believe that God just DOESN'T CARE...All I can point to is what He has said about Himself and what He has ALREADY done for us. Listen to His own words...

Isa. 49:16 *Can a woman forget her nursing child and have no compassion on the child of her womb? Even these may forget, but I will not forget you. Behold I have engraved you on the palms of my hands...*

Psalms 103:8-13 *The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. He will not always chide, nor will He keep His anger forever. He does not deal with us according to our iniquities nor repay us for our sins, for as high as the mountains are above the earth, so great is His steadfast love towards us...As a father shows compassion to his children, so the Lord shows compassion on those who love Him.*

Matthew 23:37 *Oh Jerusalem, Jerusalem...how often have I wanted to gather your children together as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you would not let me...*

Lamentations 3:22-23 *The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, His mercies never come to an end. They are new every morning...*

Zephaniah 3:17 *The Lord your God is with you...He takes great delight in you, He will quiet you with His love, He will rejoice over you with singing...*

What a different picture God gives to us of Himself—He IS our loving Heavenly Father who is tender and gentle and nurturing to His children. THIS is who your Heavenly Father is- abounding in mercy, full of love and compassion with open arms to all who would come to Him. SINGING over us- not ANGRY and vindictive, but DELIGHTING in us and ENJOYING us!

YOUR name is engraved on His hands, He loves you friend- He is patient with you, and He LOVES you intensely EVERY moment...

V. He is Our Teacher and Discipliner for Our BEST Benefit.

OH WHAT A TOUGH ONE TO EMBRACE!!

Tom Landry- one of the greatest coaches in NFL History said this: "**the job of a football coach is to make men do what they don't want to do, in order to achieve what they've always wanted to be.**" **PUT THIS UP ON THE SCREEN

WOW! Doesn't that just put it in perspective? NO ONE likes to be disciplined. Not kids. Not adults. BUT, the most effective individuals are those who have yielded to training and a lifestyle of discipline to become people of great control, accuracy, precision, understanding, knowledge, power, skill and merit.

Our Heavenly Father wants the very best for us, and there ARE times in our lives when He allows us to walk through certain things to shape us and form us and discipline us into a person of great strength and wisdom and character- both for THIS life AND for the Next.

Only a great and loving Father would risk momentary emotional back lash in exchange for doing what's best for us in the long run...I mean ISN'T THAT WHAT REAL PARENTING IS ALL ABOUT?!

Listen to what He says in the book of Hebrews:

Hebrews 12:7-11 ESV *It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.*

The hard part is accepting that it's for our good. No one likes pain or sacrifice while they are going through it- but ask any Navy Seal, ask any accomplished Musician, ask any Culinary Chef or Professional Athlete or Master Craftsman or Medical Surgeon and they will tell you that without going through the pain, the falls, the agonizing personal commitment, sacrifice and grueling repetitive training – they would not be what they are – And sometimes God knows we just WON'T do it ourselves, and therefore, HE becomes our coach and task master in order to bring us to a point of discipline and sacrifice that will yield great results.

Sometime he takes people out of our lives for our benefit though it hurts,

Sometimes he takes abilities out of our lives because He knows it'll be a distraction from what really matters

Sometimes He allows pain and hurt to develop character, and empathy and Christ-like endurance.

Bottom line we must TRUST Him friends, that everything He allows will ultimate turn for our Good in the light of eternity...And only an incredibly wise and caring Eternal Father can make that happen.

And finally...(my favorite today!)

VI. He Gives us a GREAT Inheritance...

Ephesians 1:3, 18-19 *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places...having the eyes of your hearts enlightened that you may know what is the hope to which He has called you, what are the riches of His glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of His power toward us who believe...*

Romans 8:14-18 *For all who are lead by the Spirit of God are sons of God...for you have received the spirit of adoption whereby we cry 'Abba Father'...and if we are children of God, the we are heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ...that we may also be glorified with Him. For I consider that the suffering of this present age cannot be compared with the glory that will be revealed in us.*

What does all this mean friends? It means God OUR FATHER has prepared a GLORIOUS and BEAUTIFUL inheritance for all those who are His children- who worship and serve and love and receive Him as Father.

Though we may be poor and penniless, though our earthly fathers may not have been able to leave ANYTHING to us, though we may have never inherited ONE THING in THIS life- in the life TO COME there awaits us untold beauty and riches and glory and a magnificent country and home that will be OURS TO INHERIT!!

HEAVEN is yours to inherit!, ETERNAL LIFE is yours to inherit! Jesus told us A BEAUTIFUL MANSION is ours to inherit! 1 Timothy says that we will become RULERS with Him, judging angels and sitting on Thrones as we assume our rightful place in eternity being wed to the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords!!!

He has given to us a place of permanent rest, and peace and beauty and glory and belonging in a wonderful family of love forever and ever and ever...THAT is what our Heavenly has given us. and THAT is what it means to be Sons and Daughters of the Loving and Glorious God of all the Universe!

Conclusion:

Video "A Father's Love Letter" (start at 7 second mark)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zJvqmhGs1Y8>

Friends, there is much more that I could mention about who and what our Heavenly Father is to us. How He is our provider, how He prays for us, how He is approachable and wants to be known, how He is closer to us than the breath in our lungs, and knows what we need even before we think or speak it. Friends He calls us by name, He knows our greats hopes and desires- in fact HE is the one Who has put many of them there...

But before we leave today, my goal is to make each and every one of us know how much we are loved, and how much you're cared for, how much purpose and glory we have in living in the reality of being Sons and Daughters of the our Eternal Father that loves us some much more than we can ever imagine. He HAS a purpose, He HAS a plan, He IS in control, and He wants you to know it in your bones.

If you're here today and you've never known the love and the purpose that comes with being a son or daughter that is TRULY loved- TODAY is for you... I want to take a moment and for anyone that doesn't know Him- I want to give you that opportunity to come to Him.

If you HAVE known the Lord but just need a new and fresh embrace- now is the time to come before Him and to fall at His feet and be loved by Him...Let's take a moment and do that now