

Psalm 78:1-8

“Give ear, O my people, to my teaching; incline your ears to the words of my mouth. I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings from of old, things that we have heard and known, that our ancestors have told us. We will not hide them from their children; we will tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the Lord, and his might, and the wonders that he has done. He established a decree in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our ancestors to teach to their children; that the next generation might know them, the children yet unborn, and rise up and tell them to their children, so that they should set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments; and that they should not be like their ancestors, a stubborn and rebellious generation, a generation whose heart was not steadfast, whose spirit was not faithful to God.”

There was a rather intriguing ad in a magazine for Arrow shirts for Father's Day. It was an acrostic on the word Father. It read;

"F" is for your favorite occupation. (A man is pictured asleep in his chair)

"A" is for the anniversaries your blew (mother is shown waiting in vain for father to come home for their anniversary dinner)

"T" is for talk and your sparkling conversation (dad is depicted as reading a newspaper while the children and wife are talking to him)

"H" is for the helpful things that you do (dad is shown poking a ladder through a window)

"E" is for each time you were forgetful (shows father leaving the pregnant mother standing at the front of the house while he drives off to the hospital)

"R" is for the recitals that you attended (father is shown as being literally dragged to his child's piano recital)

The ad concluded by saying: "He may not be a perfect father but he does deserve a perfect gift. Give him an arrow shirt for Father's Day." As a father, how would like to be remembered? How would like to be remembered? A man once said that as a child he was terribly afraid of his father. He said, "He was a pretty awesome figure, and when he spoke that was the end of things. I always imagined if I could hear the voice of God that it would sound like the voice of my father."

Even though this man did not mean to compliment his father, I guess he should have been congratulated for connecting his father in any way with God, even if it was a negative connection. In the book of **Proverbs 4:1** we read these words: *“Listen, my sons, to a father’s instruction; pay attention and gain understanding. I give you sound learning, so do not forsake my teaching.”* (NIV)

That is quite a tall order isn't it dad? This is quite a huge responsibility which has been placed upon us. As fathers we are to be the voice and wisdom of God within our family. I wonder how many fathers today are filling the bill. How are we father's doing? I'll tell you how we're doing “We're failing!” If we want proof of the failure of the American father let me present to you several pieces of evidence of how we are doing:

1. Mother's Day is celebrated as a church high day. People who never grace the church with their presence any other Sunday during the year will many times show up on Mother's Day. As one man put it, “Yeah, mother gets quite a bang out of it when we all go to church with her on that day.”
2. You should see the list of bulletins and items from Cokesbury (Methodist Publishing). Currently for Mother's Day, 28 worship bulletin designs. In addition to prayers, bookmarks, special music, etc. Now, let's take a look at Father's Day 4 bulletins.

3. Father's, if you received a card today, chances are very good of it not having anything religious on it. Most likely it had a picture of a pipe, or a golf club, or fishing pole, or someone walking with a child. In fact, I defy anyone to say that Father's Day, either as a secular holiday or as it's celebrated in the church, is as big a deal as Mother's Day.

4. If you were to compare the Men's groups the Women's groups in any church in America I will tell you what you will find. You will find that the women's groups are usually twice as large, twice as enthusiastic, and twice as productive. In fact, if you have something in the church that has to get done almost every time without fail it is given to the women.

Yes, we don't very often associate church and dads. As you have been looking at Father's Day items this week have you found any cards or articles with scriptural references in them? About the closest thing you've probably found religious connected with Father's is something like: "Honor thy father and give him Old Spice." Why is this? Why do we not associate fathers with church? Has such a credibility gap been created between reality and what the book of Proverbs stated that the father is to be the voice of God within the family?

Well, we fail to associate Father's Day with the church because we don't associate father with the church. Let's be honest. The American father today as a whole is usually only viewed as the, and today just one of the

family breadwinners. Fathers we do this to ourselves constantly being desperate to provide the family with greater material benefits rather than spiritual ones. Fathers today strive to give their children most of what they want and what they need is just seen as a given Fathers today strive to give their children everything, everything that is except what they need most a spiritual father!

I am going to read a quote to you, listen and then tell you who said it: "A small child waits with impatience the arrival home of a parent. She wishes to relate some sandbox experience. She is excited to share the thrill that she has known that day. The time comes; the parent arrives. Beaten down by the stresses of the workplace the parent often replies: "Not know, honey, I'm busy, go watch television." The most often spoken words in the American household today are the words: go watch television. If not now, when? Later! But later never comes for many and the parent fails to communicate at the very earliest of ages. We give her designer clothes and the newest iPhone (I added that one) and all the latest computer toys, but we do not give her what she wants the most, which is our time.

Now, she is fifteen and has a glassy look in her eyes. Honey, do we need to sit down and talk? It's too late! Love has passed by." Who said this? The person who wrote these words was Robert Keeshan better known to older America as Captain Kangaroo.

The 78th Psalm has a kind of refreshing honesty. The sole purpose of the writer is to admonish future generations of Hebrews not to be like their fathers. They should **NOT!** be like their fathers, because their fathers were a stubborn, rebellious generation, a generation whose heart was not steadfast, and whose spirit was not faithful to God. Like father, like son? I hope not, implies the psalmist.

Do you remember the name of that little song about the relationship between his father and his son? When I tell you the words you will recall it. It's about a father who did not have time for his son as he was growing up. Then one day, when the father had gotten up in years and needed help, he called his son up. The response he got was: "Dad, the job's a hassle and the kids got the flu , but it's sure nice talking to you dad, it's sure nice talking to you. Then the haunting last words of the song: As I hung up the phone it occurred to me, My boy was just like me, he'd grown up just like me."

When are we going to learn that what we do as parents speak louder than what we say? How many times have I seen a parent drive up to the churches and let their child/children off, only for them to drive off. The message is clear: you go, but it's really unimportant to me. That's the message that is imprinted on the child.

Allow me to get out a long held frustration just a moment. I get so tired hearing men say that they had too much religion shoved down their throat when they were young, and they don't want to do that to their children. There isn't one man in a hundred who could document such a statement and even if they could it's nothing but an excuse for denying something to their children that they had the good fortune to receive.

Fathers, it's time to face some hard truths. Our immersion in the working world, our supposed busyness with business, is nothing but a camouflage, it's an easy way out. It's easier to provide a house than it is to provide a home. It is easier to give dollars than it is to give time. It is easier to write a check than to share love. It is easier to share fun than it is to share discipline and wisdom. It's easier to be a provider than it is to be a good father.

It's easier to push our children through the door of the church, and in many case today allow them to stay home in bed or at the lake or at the beach, rather than lead them into the church. It's easier to be the bread winner, than to teach our children about the bread of life.

The simple fact is too many of us fathers have defaulted on our position in Christian fatherhood simply because we're lazy. The father is to be the religious head of the home. Far too often, however, in reality fathers are nothing more than religious appendages. We are far too often usually church tag alongs with mothers leading the way. For the most part today fathers are not the religious heads, hearts, and souls of the family.

I spoke last week of a minister friend who at Annual Conference stood and made a speech against changing the wording of our Book of Discipline which states "Homosexuality is not compatible with Scripture and Methodist teachings." This man stood before the whole South Carolina conference and stated he believes just what the discipline says that "Homosexuality is not compatible with Scriptures and Methodist teachings." And with that being said he said his son is homosexual. He said he loves his son with his whole heart, but! He stated his son early on had the propensity towards

homosexuality and added to that his son grew up without his father to lead and instruct him. He then said he, his father was in college and seminary during his son's early years and as such was absent and he was not there to lead and instruct him. He then took the blame for putting what he saw as the most important thing ahead of being a father to his son.

I wonder if we in the church are today reaping the results of all our years of being absent in the lives of our families? I wonder if the lower attendance and fewer members in churches today, is the result of the non-faith of fathers. I heard a theory about why women's lib came to the forefront over five decades ago. The woman's movement, in part, was born out of necessity. Be honest men. We live in a matriarchal society in America. We hear a lot of talk today about single parent families. In most incidences that single parent is not the father. Women have rushed in to fill the void us fathers have created. Oh, we still have lots of dads who are the family bully and/or the family dictator, but how many fathers can honestly say they are the loving religious spiritual heads of the family. How many children can honestly say this about their father?

In the end there is only one way that we can gain the true status of father. That is by remembering that when Jesus prayed He used the words “*Our Father.*” You are a true father in the spiritual sense but only if you seek to have the same relationship with your children as our heavenly Father has shown toward us. May we as fathers recommit ourselves to that challenge to be the spiritual head of our families starting on this special day? I pray all fathers seek to become the spiritual leaders in your homes. Our children need to see and hear us pray to God. It’s time to stop abdicating from our responsibilities. It’s time to take our rightful place as the spiritual leaders within the home. Are you ready to take your proper place as a father? Remember our children are watching and listening. Question is what are we doing and saying?

July 5th 1908 the first Father's Day church service was held at Williams Memorial Methodist Episcopal church, now known as Central United Methodist in Grafton West Virginia. Rev. Webb conducted the first service upon request of Mrs. Charles Clayton, daughter of Methodist minister Fletcher Golden. This took place two months after the first Mother's Day service. National recognition came in 1972 by Congressional resolution.