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Title: Secrets of Successful Fathers

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Topic: Fathers

Series: Living a Life God Can Bless

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Secrets of Successful Fathers

Matthew 5:7

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It has been proven that good fathering strengthens children and home in every way. Self-esteem and individual identity, definition of purpose and direction, a basic sense of worth all derive first in a family from good fathers.

A child psychologist spent years studying the faith of children and comparing it to their relationships with their fathers. Here is his conclusion: "No child will think more of God than he thinks of his own father." What an awesome responsibility, and privilege, we have been given!

How can we be the best fathers? If you're not a dad, how can you influence others in the most godly and effective way? How can your life count for eternity? How can you make a difference long after your time on this planet is done?

We're studying Jesus' beatitudes this summer, one per week. Today let's survey them together and apply them to fatherhood and relationships. As we do, I encourage you to listen for the life principle that is God's personal gift to you today.

Adopt these Father's Day resolutions

Jesus' familiar beatitudes begin: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:3). To be "poor in spirit" means to know our need of God, that we cannot live and succeed without his help. It means to admit that he is the I Am and that I am the I Am Not.

Our culture stands on self-sufficiency. We can meet our needs if we just put in enough hours, take enough classes, consult enough experts. God knows better. He knows that our children are eternal souls entrusted to our care. So here's the *first Father's Day resolution*: "*I will seek the help of God daily.*" Will you make this commitment now?

The second beatitude states, "Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted" (Matthew 5:4). The "mourning" to which Jesus refers is primarily spiritual. Mourning for sin, failures, shortcomings before God. It means to admit that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23), myself among them.

Our culture stands on self-assurance. We're good fathers if we provide financially for our families. Pete Rose heard that his daughter had told a reporter he was a terrible father. He responded, "That's not true. I'm a great father. Why, just the other day I bought her a new Mercedes."

God knows that our children will become what we are, so that we must spend time every day confessing our sins, staying right with God. Here's the *second Father's Day resolution*: "*I will confess my sins daily to God.*" Will you start today?

Jesus continues: "Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth" (Matthew 5:5). The Greek word translated "meek" meant strength under submission. Biblically it means to be under the control of the Holy Spirit, to obey the command to be "filled (or controlled) by the Spirit" (Ephesians 5:18).

Our culture is self-reliant. So long as our finances are healthy, our jobs productive, our health good, our future is secure. God knows that we do not possess the wisdom, patience, or strength we need, that we must have the Spirit's power. So here's our *third Father's Day resolution*: "*I will submit daily to the control of the Holy Spirit.*" Will you make this surrender right now?

The fourth beatitude: "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled" (Matthew 5:6). "Righteousness" in Scripture deals with our actions, but also with our motives and our thoughts. God's word teaches that as we think in our hearts, so we are (Proverbs 23:7, KJV). Moody said your character is what you do when no one is looking.

Our culture judges only our actions. So long as we are righteous in the eyes of our peers, we're doing all we must. But God sees our hearts. He knows that our children so often do what we do. So here's our *fourth Father's Day resolution*: "*I will think and act by the word of God.*" Does anything need to change in your life this morning as a result?

The fifth beatitude: "Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy" (Matthew 5:7). Grace gives what we don't deserve; mercy does not give what we do deserve.

Our culture knows little of mercy. We are driven by performance, possessions, and perfection. So we drive our children to succeed as we have. Recent periodicals have documented the problem of sports stress, for instance, as parents live vicariously through their children and push them to succeed at all costs.

But God knows that we fail more than we succeed, and that our children need our forgiveness, unconditional love, and mercy. So here's our *fifth Father's Day resolution*: "*I will forgive and encourage my children when they fail.*" As your Father forgives you.

The sixth beatitude promises, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God" (Matthew 5:8). To be "pure in heart" means to live by God's single purpose for your life. What is that purpose? To love God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength, and to love others as yourself" (Matthew 22:37, 39).

Our culture's defines success by how much we own. God measures success by how much we give. Our culture measures us by how many people love us; God measures us by how many people we love. So here's our *sixth Father's Day resolution*: "*I will love my Father, my family, and others unconditionally.*"

The seventh beatitude states, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God" (Matthew 5:9). A "peacemaker" is one who seeks righteous resolution to conflict, not just the absence of conflict but the presence of justice.

Our culture thrives on competition, victory, success. God wants our families to live in harmony and peace with each other in an atmosphere of mutual respect and love. So here's our *seventh Father's Day resolution*: "I will teach my children to respect and love each other."

The last beatitude concludes: "Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:10). Living by these principles will cost us.

Humility, confession of sin, submission to God, biblical thinking, forgiveness, unconditional love, and mutual respect are not popular values in our culture. So here's our *last Father's Day resolution*: "I will pay any price to be a man of God." Our God, and our families, are worth our sacrifice.

We can give our children no greater gift than to be such men of God.

Conclusion

Which of these life principles is the one God wants you to apply first? As you choose biblical fathering and relationships, know that your Father in heaven is ready to help. He will give you the strength, patience, and wisdom you need to live by his word and will.

Whatever problems you're facing in your marriage or family today, he's still the Great Physician. Wherever you're weak, he's still the Creator of the universe. Wherever you've failed, he's still the God who is love. Your children were his before they were yours. Ask him today to help you live by the beatitudes of fathering, and know that he will.

Start today. We cannot expect our children to do what we will not. Where we go, they will likely follow. What we are, they will likely become. Begin today. The poet observed:

*I took a piece of potter's clay
And idly fashioned it one day;
And as my fingers pressed it still,
It bent and yielded to my will.
I came again when days were past,
The bit of clay was hard at last;
My early impress still it bore,
And I could change its form no more.*

*I took a piece of living clay,
And gently formed it day by day.
And molded with my power and art,
A young child's soft and yielding heart—
I came again when years were gone,
It was a man I looked upon.
He still that early impress wore,
And I could change him nevermore.*