

A Father's Cry

2 Samuel 18:31-33 & 19:1-4

Intro

Today is father's day. I would like to share with you an interesting story I came across a short while ago. There was this father who had 5 children and he had won a toy at a raffle. He called his kids together to ask which of them should have the toy. He asked his 5 children, "*Who is the most obedient? And who never talks back to mother? And who does everything she says?*" Five small voices answered in unison. "*Okay, dad, you get the toy.*"

The History behind Father's Day

Father's Day began in Spokane, Washington. A woman by the name of Sonora Smart Dodd thought of the idea for Father's Day while listening to a Mother's Day sermon in 1909. Having been raised by her father, after her mother died, Sonora wanted her father to know how special he was to her. It was her father that made all the parental sacrifices and was, in the eyes of his daughter, a courageous, selfless, and loving man.

Her father was born in June, so she chose to hold the first Father's Day celebration in Spokane, Washington on the 19th of June, 1910. Then in 1924 President Coolidge proclaimed the third Sunday in June as Father's Day and it eventually was celebrated in Canada and the world.

Roses are the Father's Day flowers: red to be worn for a living father and white if the father has died.

*One time a little boy was asked to define Father's Day and he said, "*It's just like Mother's Day, only you don't spend as much on the present.*"

A Father's Cry – The Example of King David

"The king was shaken. He went up to the room over the gateway and wept. As he went, he said: "O my son Absalom! My son, my son Absalom! If only I had died instead of you—O Absalom, my son, my son!" (2 Samuel 18:33).

Historical Background

In 2 Samuel 18 we find King David well advanced in years. He is no longer the young vibrant man that he once was. He is a broken man. The years had taken their toll on him. He had seen his family fall apart around him. After his affair with Bathsheba, the family fell apart. David's eldest son, Absalom, had led a rebellion against him. A rift had developed between David and Absalom. Absalom gathered a group of men to lead a coup against his father and David was forced to leave Jerusalem.

Forces loyal to David met with the forces loyal to Absalom. Absalom was riding a mule that went under a thick tree, and his long hair got caught up in the tree. The mule ran on, leaving Absalom dangling in the tree. Some of the men loyal to David went and killed him while he was suspended from the tree. David had given the order to protect his son. He did not want to see Absalom killed. Finally word got to David that Absalom was dead. David retreated into the watchtower. There he wept for his son.

David regretted that he had failed his son.

I would like to give the father's today 4 powerful principles that will impact you and your children.

1. Build a Healthy Relationship with Your Child

David wept because he did not build a healthy relationship with his son. That was one of his biggest regrets. As fathers we need to build a strong healthy relationship with our children.

David was grieved that his son rebelled against him. Absalom had acted in open disobedience against his father and against God. He led a coup attempt against his father. Absalom had tried to kill his father so he could be king.

One of the quickest ways to throw your parents into despair is to rebel against them. Parents try so hard to keep their kids on the right path, but sometimes the kids wander off the path. That is the quickest way to break a parent's heart.

David thought of himself as a failure in being a father. He had let his family down. His affair with Bathsheba had plunged the family into a dark period. He saw much of this as a result of his own actions. David was grieved that his son had walked away from him and turned his back on his father.

David had hoped to reconcile his relationship with his son. He wanted to patch things up and make their relationship right. He wanted to heal the wounds that had led to Absalom's rebellion but it was too late.

The reconciliation would not occur now. Absalom was dead. He wasn't coming back to patch things up with his father David. There would be no chance to work things out now. Death made the rift between David and Absalom permanent. Nothing could be done to change anything at this point.

If any of you are at odds with your child please make peace ASAP. Tomorrow may be too late. Do all that you can to be reconciled and restored to your loved one. Build a healthy relationship so that you will have no regrets later in life.

Charles Swindoll tells his experience about the time he just got his driver's license and about his dad rewarding him. He writes,

"My dad told me, "Tell you what son...you can have the car for 2 hours, all on your own." Only 4 words, but how beautiful: All on your own."

I thanked him...my pulse rate must have shot up to 180 as I backed out of the driveway and roared off. While cruising along "all on my own," I began to think wild stuff – like, "This car can probably do 100 miles an hour. I could to Galveston and back twice in 2 hours if I averaged 100 miles an hour. I can fly down the Gulf Freeway and even run a few lights. After all, nobody's here to say "Don't!" We're talking dangerous, crazy thoughts

But you know what? I didn't do any of them. I don't believe I drove the speed limit. In fact, I distinctly remember turning into the driveway early...I had my dad's car all to myself with a full gas tank in a context of total privacy and freedom, but I didn't go crazy. Why? My relationship with my dad and my grandfather was so strong that I couldn't, even though I had a license and nobody was in the car to restrain me. Over a period of time, there had developed a sense of trust, a deep love relationship that held me in restraint." (Source: Chuck Swindoll, The Grace Awakening, 1990)

It was over a period of time that Chuck Swindoll's dad had built a strong trust relationship with his son. This kept him in check and he didn't want to do anything that would hurt that relationship.

One of the most important things that a father needs to do is build a strong and healthy relationship with his child or children. Your child needs your love and friendship.

2. Be Emotionally Connected with Your Child

Another regret that David lamented was that he was not emotionally connected with his son through the early years and later in life.

King David had been too preoccupied with extending the kingdom of Israel to be involved in his son's life. It was only after Absalom was killed that the floodgate of tears was opened. Then, of course it was too late. David was not emotionally connected with his son in his early years. They were distant and apart.

Emotional neglect or abandonment leaves your children open to serious problems. Children who do not have a good emotional relationship with their father can leave them open to premarital sex, cults, peer pressure, alcohol and drugs.

Example

Bill McCartney, former head football coach at the University of Colorado, tells of a greeting card company that gave away free Mother's Day cards at a penitentiary. All an inmate had to do was sign and address the card. So great was the response, the greeting card company ran out of cards and had to rush back for several additional boxes.

The leaders of the company then decided to do the same thing for Father's Day. Word was sent to the prisoners that the procedure would be the same. But this time, not a single person came to send his dad a Father's Day card.

Think about that for a moment. As you probably realize, our prisons are overflowing with men and women who never had a normal, functioning father. Most inmates grew up in homes where the father had abandoned his family responsibilities.

As dads we need to remember: If your children's emotional bank accounts are empty, they will fill them with something or someone else.

As children grow up they need a father who will pay attention to them, love them and care for their emotional needs.

3. Be a Person of Integrity to Your Child

David also wept because he failed to be a role model to his son. After King David had an affair with Bathsheba, his family fell apart. David lost face and respect because of his moral failure.

I want to read to you a letter that a father wrote to his son. This is what the father wrote:

"Dear Dan, Before I start this letter to you I must tell you that I love you and none of what has happened or is going to happen is in any way your fault. If I had been as good a father as you are a son there would be no need for me to write to you now.

Over the years I have been unfaithful to your mother in thoughts as well as in deeds. Because your mother had complete trust in me, I was able to cover up by lying to her. Last May I met a woman. Her name is Susan. I am going to leave your mother and go live with her.

What I have done is morally wrong and I hope you will not follow in my ways. When you meet the right woman make a lifetime commitment to her. I was never able to do this and it has caused much sorrow.

Please do not allow this to change your feelings about your mother and I. We love you very much and both need your love now even more than before. We will always be your family and will be here for you even though we will be living apart.

I love you, signed dad. (Source: July 13 - Moments Together for Couples by Dennis Rainey)

That is a troubling letter. What was going on in this man's head? Did he really think that by telling his son to not follow his footsteps that he could reverse the damage he'd already done? We need fathers of integrity, of spiritual and moral convictions who will stand for what is right and prove it in their lives. We need manly role models who will demonstrate to boys what it means to be a man of integrity and honesty.

Proverbs 10:9, "The man of **integrity** walks securely, but he who takes crooked paths will be found out."

4. Provide Spiritual Nurture for Your Child

Perhaps a last regret that King David wept about was that he did not invest his time in providing spiritual nurturing to his son. David was described as a man after God's heart, but he did not pass this on to his son Absalom.

Josh McDowell has been trying to find out what dads are doing in Christian families, and the news isn't good. In his book The Father Connection, McDowell reveals that there seems to be a parenting gap. He says that the average teen in our churches spends only 2 minutes a day in meaningful dialogue with his dad. 25% of these teens say they have never had a meaningful conversation with their father.

I think David, as a father, not only failed to be emotionally connected with his son, but he neglected to give spiritual care and attention to his son.

As Christian father's we need to encourage our children to draw close to God. We need to pray for them and also pray with them. Don't leave that only for mom to do. It will mean a lot when your children see you pray and hear you pray for them.

Pray for your children

Two young siblings we're always fighting. Their parents tried everything to stop them but to no avail. Finally the parents prayed that God would convict them. For two nights they prayed until the second night one of the boys had a dream that the other brother had died. He went to his parents and said, "I was sad I treated him so badly." The problems stopped just like that. In one night God changed what the parents couldn't change in weeks.

Pray with your children

Pray for the important things going on in their lives.

Pray for their futures - that they will walk with God, marry a godly spouse, etc.

Conclusion

I want to leave all the fathers with this poem:

"He teaches kindness by being thoughtful and gracious even at home.

He teaches patience by being gentle and understanding over and over.

He teaches honesty by keeping his promises to his family even when it costs.

He teaches courage by living unafraid with faith, in all circumstances.

He teaches justice by being fair and dealing equally with everyone.

He teaches obedience to God's Word by precept and example as he reads and prays with his family.

He teaches love for God and His Church as he takes his family regularly to all the services.

His steps are important because others follow."