

The Secrets of Every Happy Family – Week 2

Last week, we launched our new series for New Year called, "**Secrets of Every Happy Family.**" If you need to catch up just go to our website and click on "About us" and then "messages".

Well, today, we're going to look at a unique role in the family. It is the role of a father or a father figure. And in order to do it, we're going to take a look at Jesus relationship with his Father, at least what we know about it, based upon a key moment in his life.

You know, when you think about it, so much of life comes down to key moments that have an impact or make an impression beyond the actual experience, and that's one such moment that we're looking at in the life of Jesus. This moment can be found in today's Gospel. And Luke tells us all the people were baptized by John and then Jesus himself was baptized. The point of baptism is to repent from sin and to start a new life with God. Of course, Jesus didn't need to do that. So, why did John baptize him?

Well, scholars debate that point for sure, but it mainly perhaps boils down to two reasons.

First reason, Jesus is providing a model here for his followers over and over again. He showed us how he wants us to live and what he wants us to do, and that's what he's doing here.

The second reason is different. It's to set up this incredibly important moment that we're going to be looking at, and the moment goes like this, after Jesus had been baptized, the heavens were opened, and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove and a voice, came from heaven saying, "***You are my beloved Son.***"

Those are incredibly important words from any father to any son. But then there comes words perhaps equally important, perhaps equally valuable because God the Father says to His son, "***With you I am well-pleased.***" I not only love you, I delighted you. You bring me pleasure. You have my approval. That's a whole another level. That's a statement of relationship.

Jesus was 100% God, but also, fully human. And as a human being, he needed approval and encouragement, every bit as much as the rest of us. The approval and encouragement of his father was incredibly important.

A central role, a principal role for any father in any family is to eventually send his sons and daughters into the world with his blessing. And part of the secret of every happy family is when the father accepts this role and invests in it. And it's a role that uniquely belongs to the father. Mothers obviously have a principal role of equipping and encouraging children, but it's different with dads. Partly, that's because the mother-child bond is more physical. It's more innate.

The father-child bond must be more intentional. People, who grow and go into the world with their father's blessing, grow and go with more emotional health. And emotional health is one of the greatest advantages that anyone can enjoy. If you know the blessing of your father, if he effectively communicated his love and approval for you, it's an emotion that runs deep and wide in your heart. You may even be able to call to mind, the moment or the moments when that happened for you.

On the other hand, if your father's blessing is missing in your life, you feel that absence, perhaps at an instinctive level.

Maybe you've explained it away or played it down, but it's there. Nevertheless, you may carry resentment toward him. You know he let you down, and now you hold on to that, and you hold it against him. You never heard that blessing. It's a daily disappointment, a daily distraction for you. If you don't get that blessing from your father, you look for it everywhere, anywhere, from other authority figures, from mentors, and bosses, and teachers, and friends.

Some people spend their whole lives searching for a father's blessing. For many others, your experience falls somewhere in between. Your father gave you some kind of blessings for sure, but it was messy. You might say it was a mixed blessing. Perhaps, he gave you the blessing with one hand and took it back with the other.

So, all of that said, so, what? What are we supposed to do with this message? At a certain level, it is what it is, - right? What are we supposed to do about it? Well, perhaps just a word to fathers and then a word to

everybody else. Fathers, dads, you need to know that your words and actions carry weight, a huge weight. The reality is that your words, your emotions set the tone for family life. You might not believe this. You might not think this is so. But your sarcasm, your criticism, your complaints, your anger, it carries disproportionate weight. The best gift that you can give your kids isn't the gift of more affluence, or experience, or advice, or even education, as important as all those things are. The greatest gift that you can give your kids is the blessing of knowing that you love them and that they have your approval, and the blessing.

The blessing comes down to a moment. It always all comes down to a moment. **And here's the thing, you never know when the moment is.** You don't know which moment is going to impact, is going to stick with your kids.

I remember the time; my father was in the hospital, it was shortly before he passed and he expressed to the nurses in front of me what a good son he had - that was taking care of him. For me those words were a blessing upon me. The blessing always comes down to a moment, and that was a moment for me.

You never know when the moment is. Speak words of blessing and approval over your kids and be specific. If they do something noteworthy or exceptional on a sports field or in the arts, or even more importantly, if they display some strength of character, recognize it, and celebrate it. Let them know that you believe in them, and you believe that there's a great plan for their lives. Your words are impacting them now and shaping a path for their future.

And the communication of approval and blessing comes not only from words, but it's in action, in everything. Hug your kids, be playful with them, play with them, and laugh with them too. And when you do, you're also communicating blessing.

For the rest of us, we have to be aware of this dynamic too. If you have a father that helped you feel his blessing, thank God for him and thank him yourself if you still have the opportunity. Let him know that you appreciate the support that he's given you.

If your father didn't give you his blessing, if you realize now that you're angry and you're annoyed with him about that, you know what you're supposed to do too. Your job is to forgive him. To let go of those things that he didn't give you. To let go of that hurt in your heart. Not denying it, but just releasing it. Give away what you yourself didn't get.

You know for most of us, the reality is that it's somewhere in between. Your father blessed you sometimes in certain ways for sure, but in other ways, he didn't. And you need to exercise mercy and forgiveness as well as gratitude. And whether you've received your father's blessing or not, here's something we all need to understand. No matter how well your father blesses you, no matter how effective he was in extending approval into your life, it isn't enough. It's never enough. It cannot possibly fill us.

There's still a gap. There's still a longing. There's still a need, and that's nobody's fault.

That's not your father's fault, and that's not some fault or failure on your part either. That's just the way it is because all human fatherhood is only a reflection and a dim reflection of our heavenly Father.

Deep in our heart, God has planted a desire to please and honor him. Ultimately, that longing we're feeling is for the blessing of God. And the good news with the Gospel is that we can begin to understand and appreciate and receive that in the person of Jesus Christ. It is Christ who helps us understand our Heavenly Father. He's pleased with every step of faith that we take toward him. He is delighted with every act of obedience we honor him with no matter how small or seemingly insignificant. In Christ, our Father is easily pleased.