

INTRO

About me-

- Married to Mischelle for 17 years last Saturday
- Four children, fifth expected in January
- CEO, Reaching Souls International
- Worked with Ben for last 12 years

Why am I qualified to speak to you today on Father's day? Is it because I'm such a good father? Certainly not. But, I have had the privilege of being influenced by some pretty great dads. Specifically my Dad and my father-in-law. Maybe I can share some perspective from a father who is still learning.

I'm not sure what kind of Dad I've been lately. You see, I had surgery 12 days ago and have been at home a lot. Moms, you know what it's like when Dad spends a lot of time at home. It can certainly be disruptive. Especially one who just had hernia surgery and can't lift anything over 10 pounds for two weeks. Try having a fairly particular person around who is highly motivated to get a lot accomplished, but can't lift anything over ten pounds or bend over very much. I've been a real source of joy.

Well, men are men. I read something this week entitled 50 Reasons Why It's Good To Be a Man. I won't read all of them but I want to share some of them with you:

You know stuff about tanks.

You can go to the bathroom without a support group.

If someone forgets to invite you to something he can still be your friend.

You can be showered and ready in 10 minutes.

Wedding plans take care of themselves.

You can drop by to see a friend without bringing a little gift.

If another guy shows up at the same party in the same outfit, you might become lifelong buddies.

Your pals can be trusted never to trap you with, "So...notice anything different?"

You can do your nails with a pocketknife.

Phone conversations are over in 30 seconds flat.

A five day vacation requires only one suitcase.

When clicking through the channels, you don't have to stall on every shot of someone crying.

You get extra credit for the slightest act of thoughtfulness.

Well guys and girls are different. When Katherine was 5 years old I had the beginning of my many encounters of my incompetence to lead as Dad. Katherine was mad at me. She was sitting on her bed and as I kept walking by her bedroom door doing other things, she was getting more and more agitated with me. Every time I walked by she sighed more loudly. She finally said, "*Daddy, can you come in here?*" I did and as I sat on her bed next to her she said, "*Take a good look at my face and see if you can tell me how I feel.*" She gave an awful look. I said, "*Bad?*" Katherine said, "*That's right!*" I got up and went straight to Mischelle for reinforcements.

What does the best kind of father look like? The best father is the one who knows God as his Heavenly Father, and only Jesus Christ can provide that relationship. When we place our trust in Christ we receive new resources for fathering because God the Holy Spirit comes to dwell within us. As you know, one of the greatest responsibilities of a father is to provide spiritual leadership for his family.

Think of the man (or men) who have played the role of father in your life. Think about what you have learned from your father. Consider the good qualities you admire about him. What does it show you about God's attitude to his children? There are some people who have never known their biological

father, or who have had a negative experience of a father. Sometimes this can make it difficult to relate to the idea of God as a father. If you are in such a situation think of other men (stepfathers, older brothers, friends of the family, grandfathers, youth leaders and church ministers) who have been a constant, supportive and positive influence in your life.

When you look at God's Word, you find at least three vital needs in a family that the father has the responsibility to supply. These have been covered in depth many other times – the roles of Priest, Provider, and Protector. I'm not going to focus on those this morning. There is a lot of help available to the Christian parent - Love languages, Spiritual headship, Growing Kids God's Way, Family vision. I'm not going to cover any of that either.

Today, I'm going to talk to you about my ongoing fathering story. I didn't have perfect parents, but I did have really good ones. Mischelle and I both have been blessed by our parents training and nurturing and their influence in our lives. As I share with you some of my experiences growing up and how my dad's influence affected me...I know some of the details may not be how my parents remember them. My memories are filtered through the lens of childhood and adolescence. But, it's my perception of those events that shaped me...my interpretation of the truth of how things were laid out before my eyes.

For years, I had a drug problem...

When Jack was 5 he asked me, *"When will church be over?"* As I began to answer him, he continued, *"I mean, when will we not go anymore?"*

The greatest commandment in Scripture is this: ***"Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength"*** (Deuteronomy 6:5). Going back to verse 2, we read, ***"So that you, your children and their children after them may fear the LORD your God as long as you live by keeping all his decrees and commands that I give you, and so that you may enjoy long life."*** Following Deuteronomy 6:5, we read, ***"These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up"*** (vv. 6-7).

This is the Scripture I hear most read about parenting. This is what Mischelle and I believe our parents did.

When Jack was 6 we were on the way to church and I asked Jack if he was going to be good in Sunday School class. Jack said, *"I was good last year."* Figuring he has years confused with weeks, I asked, *"Are you going to be good again this year?"* Jack said, *"Yes!"*

PRAYER

Let's turn to 1 Thessalonians 2:7-12.

When a man becomes a father, he isn't given some sort of rulebook on how to conduct himself. No one tells a man how to manage his household. It is something he picks up from a few very important sources: First, from the way his own father treated him: how he grew up as a child and interacted with his dad, Second from what he learns from his relationship with God and by the Word of God. *Not going to focus on mistakes this morning...*

You know we all crave the love that comes from real attention by our dads. To be a good father means sacrificing many of your wishes to fulfill the proper role of leader, protector, teacher, disciplinarian and loving friend. Finding the proper balance (and inspiration!) to fill this role is extremely challenging.

Where do you find guidance for that? Well, the Bible is always the best source. So I've selected a

passage from 1 Thessalonians 2 that few would probably consider to be a Father's Day text. But I think it is a good one.

7 but we were gentle among you, like a mother caring for her little children.

8 We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us.

9 Surely you remember, brothers, our toil and hardship; we worked night and day in order not to be a burden to anyone while we preached the gospel of God to you.

10 You are witnesses, and so is God, of how holy, righteous and blameless we were among you who believed.

11 For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children,

12 encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory. 1 Thessalonians 2:7-12 (NIV)

In 1 Thessalonians 2:7-12, Paul says, "...we were gentle among you, like a mother caring for her little children. We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us. Surely you remember, brothers, our toil & hardship; we worked night & day in order not to be a burden to anyone while we preached the gospel of God to you.

"You are witnesses, & so is God, of how holy, righteous & blameless we were among you who believed. For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, encouraging, comforting & urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into His kingdom & glory."

Let's look at some of the traits of a great father today as they were shown to me by my own father.

1. SHOW SINCERE LOVE

The first trait of a great father would be the ability to show sincere love. They are able to express genuine love. Notice what Paul says in vs. 8,

***We loved you so much* that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us. 1 Thessalonians 2:8 (NIV)**

"We loved you so much." In the original language those words expressed an intensity of love that gives over & over again. Paul says, "It's hard even to find words to express how much, but we really do love you."

I think that is an important character trait for fathers because loving & expressing love does not come naturally for most men. I'm convinced that is the reason the Bible tells husbands to "love" their wives, because we have to learn how to love.

The Bible almost never tells wives to "love" their husbands because that usually comes naturally for them. Instead, wives are told to "respect" their husbands, because sometimes that is hard to do.

For my brother and me, it was easy to see my dad's love for my mom and vice versa. This brought security to our home. My parents showed affection towards each other.

Dad takes about 5 minutes to get ready for just about anything – church, weddings, work, sometimes even packing for Africa. My mom takes a little while longer. Oftentimes as Dad, Darin, and I would be waiting on my mom – my dad would look at his sons and say, "It's always worth the wait."

We didn't have iPods and cell phones on our family vacations. We had my dad and mom singing. Silly songs that created family identity and belonging. I sing those same crazy songs to my kids. It's in those memories that I felt loved. Maybe because it was time spent together; proximity. And we laughed a lot. It is important that fathers spend time with their children, for in doing so; we are demonstrating our love for them and showing them that they are important to us.

Basketball in the driveway, volleyball in the back yard, wrestling on the den floor, pacing the sidelines of all my football games – investing in more than what we might think is spiritual – my dad was there.

A father also expresses his love through discipline. And I assure you my brother and I had plenty of that. "Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him." My dad did a lot of rod driving. My brother and I could be quite foolish. *Belts over the fence story...*

One of the best stories to show a father's love is the story of the Prodigal Son. The reason this is so universally applicable is that virtually everybody experiences what the prodigal son experienced, where we're sure we know better than our parents. We have it all figured out.

You know the story. The son goes off into a far country & squanders all his money. And when he runs out of money he runs out of friends & ends up in a hog wallow, eating from the slop that is fed to the pigs. This is the most humiliating place a Jewish boy could possibly be.

As he sits there the Bible says, "He came to himself." And he starts thinking, "How many of my father's hired men have food to spare? And here I am, starving to death. I will set out & go back to my father."

Now notice something important. He felt that he could go back to his father. The relationship might never be the same. But he knew the door was open to him.

How did he know that? All through the time of raising his son the father had communicated his love. "No matter how far you go, you can always come back home again." That kind of love is a vital thing to communicate to our children.

So he said, "I will say to my father, 'I have sinned against heaven & against you, & I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired men.'" Do you think this was a speech he practiced every step of his way back home? He had it down pat.

But before he could blurt it out his father had run to him & thrown his arms around him & kissed him. He had no fear of expressing love, did he?

The year my dad started full-time work at then Jimmy Hodges Ministries, his sons were on a different course. After my sophomore year in college, I was at a time in my life when I was far from God.

I was a wayward son, but I had a father who had a heart to receive me even though I didn't take the advice and had shamed the family name. My Dad represented grace to me in this area and showed me an example of Godliness.

I wasn't living at home and had bottomed out spiritually and emotionally. After I repented and returned to my heavenly Father, I knew I needed a total change in my surroundings and after rehearsing what I was going to say with a Christian friend, I asked my dad for his forgiveness and asked if I could move back in under his authority.

I know more than one father that have accepted their children back home in this way. Sometimes they come home with Grandchildren in tow.

You know, the beautiful part is that our Father in Heaven always leaves the door open for us to come home again. And as dads, we need to teach our kids, no matter how deep their sin, “You can always come home.” And there’ll be a father waiting to throw his arms around you, & to assure you of his abiding love.

I hope that as my children grow up and if they make some big mistakes in their lives I am going to be an example of how our heavenly father extends his love and grace to us.

One trait of a great father is that they’re able to express genuine love.

Here’s an excerpt from a letter I wrote to Kannon when he was 4 years old.

“Yesterday I taught you what ‘Alertness’ meant. I’m trying to teach you different character qualities to implement in your life. When I returned from work, I asked you if you remembered what being alert meant. You said, ‘Yes, it’s when you don’t take off your pants in front of people.’ Your Mom had been teaching you about ‘Modesty’ that same day. Thanks for giving me so much joy. – Dad”

1. SHOW SINCERE LOVE

2. A TRANSPARENT LIFE

The second trait is a transparent life. Paul writes in vs. 8,

We loved you so much that ***we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well***, because you had become so dear to us. **1 Thessalonians 2:8 (NIV)**

“We loved you so much that we delighted to share with you not only the Gospel of God but our lives as well.” Now notice that there is a connection between “gospel” & “lives.”

What Paul is saying is, “When we lived among you we not only told you the good news, we modeled it for you by how we lived.”

My parents shared the Gospel with us, but they also shared their lives with us. Lives that were changing as their relationships with God were changing. And, if you’re a Christian dad, your kids ought to know it by the way you live.

Prior to Western Hills, I remember my parents searching for a new church - for something deeper, more authentic. I saw my parents grow in living the Gospel. I saw it in the friends they had, the conversations I overheard. As children you see things that not everybody else sees.

My parents took my brother and I out of the public school system and placed us in a Christian School when we were heading into 8th & 9th grades. Christian education was a concept we hadn’t seen in our community in awhile. It cost my parents in terms of money, time, volunteering, etc. It was radical. We didn’t know any home-schoolers at that time. My parents knew that you are what you eat both physically and spiritually. You fill your mind with the world – via the media. Or, you fill your mind with the truth, via the Word.

Our belief system became transparent to our neighbors, previous schoolmates, church friends, etc.

My dad is a giver. I remember this vividly. I can easily remember dad consistently placing offerings in the plate on Sunday mornings. And, although this taught me consistency, it didn’t stir my heart.

However, when I was 9 or 10 years old, my heart was stirred. My dad started an alms program at our church. This came to be more than a program to our family. One Sunday after church my family went to the grocery store. My parents bought sacks and sacks of groceries. As a hungry boy I was impatient and ready to hurry this excursion along so that we could get to a restaurant and eat lunch. We

proceeded to take all of those groceries to a family that my parents were ministering to through this alms program. When we arrived, I stayed in the car and watched as my parents took the groceries to the front door. I saw the single mother of 4-5 children come to the door and hesitantly greet my parents. And her countenance changed to gratefulness as she accepted this gift to help feed her family.

I can almost feel the cold glass of the car window as I leaned against it in an attempt to gain a better view. The children came running out of the house. My parents came back to the car and it was silent as we drove to the restaurant for lunch. I believe we were all reflecting on what had just happened. I remember thinking, “this has been a great day.”

There were other times we visited this family. I recall one Christmas Eve that we delivered boxes of presents for their entire family. In retrospect, and with the proper perspective, that was one of the best Christmas holidays we had.

Dad gave above and beyond his tithe and as I remember it was usually personal, spontaneous, and emotional. There were many individuals and families that benefited from my parents’ generosity.

This was private philanthropy, not given publicly or for attention, but I was watching.

Great fathers express genuine love and live a transparent life.

It’s hard to find the time to do it all. Be a good provider, but also be the spiritual leader. Sometimes I wish I had more time in the day. My youngest son can relate. Jack has always liked superheroes. He runs around pretending to be different heroes with different powers. In January, we overheard Jack praying in his room – He was asking God to give him superpowers and a new Jack. And before you start to think he meant a born again new Jack, what he meant was another real live clone of Jack. He said the new Jack could go to school and work while the old Jack saves the day.

1. SHOW SINCERE LOVE
2. A TRANSPARENT LIFE
3. SELFLESS PERSEVERANCE

Here’s a third trait – selfless perseverance. Paul says,

Surely you remember, brothers, *our toil and hardship; we worked night and day* in order not to be a burden to anyone while we preached the gospel of God to you. **1 Thessalonians 2:9 (NIV)**

in verse 9, “You remember, brothers, our toil & hardship; we worked night & day in order not to be a burden to anyone while we preached the gospel of God to you.”

One of the greatest attributes I learned from my dad was perseverance – defined as a steady persistence in a course of action or purpose, in spite of difficulties, obstacles, or discouragement.

Doggedness, tenacity, an unselfish diligence. My dad used to sell Bibles and Bible books door to door.

My dad’s dad wasn’t a consistent provider for his family, wasn’t faithful, and ultimately he didn’t stick around. Grandpa was charming, but not responsible. My dad wouldn’t say this, but I think he thought at the beginning, if I provide well for my family and don’t leave, I’ll be a successful dad. Well, God intervened in my family and dad did much more than that.

But my dad exemplified a hard work ethic. During most of my growing up years, dad was an entrepreneur – working long hours in the retail business or long hours in the oil & gas business. Dad didn’t ask for help and never expected anything to be given to him. And we witnessed the reward of hard work. Dad taught us initiative. Dad taught us that positive persistence always pays off.

Now I think we have a responsibility as parents to teach a good work ethic to our children. And oftentimes, if our kids don't see a father who is a hard worker & who has a good work ethic, they'll never learn it.

We teach it in two ways. First, we teach by example, by just doing it & letting our children see that. Secondly, our children learn by doing. There was no sleeping in on Saturday mornings at the Manis household. Always work to be done, although Darin and I felt like most of the work was invented to give us something to do. Inventing jobs that really didn't exist or need to be done. But, now I see him make up things for himself to do on Saturday mornings.

My dad stayed and he provided well and consistently.

I remember growing up in a family who was in the Oil & Gas business and life in Oklahoma was pretty rewarding. Then along came the oil bust and many successful Oklahomans were now bankrupt. My family and my father's business did not file bankruptcy, but it was close. Dad owed a lot of money and the family's dynamics were increasingly changing. I remember the toll the stress had on my dad. Sometimes he would go for days without sleeping, sometimes he slept a lot. God was with us. Dad was determined for our family to maintain a good name. People were making deals for pennies on the dollar and my father was able to pay off all of his debts.

My dad is a decision-maker. He had determination – I'm defining as his will to succeed.

Perseverance – the strength to finish, a no-quit attitude over things that matter. My dad is an optimist. You take optimism, initiative, and perseverance and you have a pretty good combination to pass on to your sons.

Great fathers express genuine love, live a transparent life, and have a selfless perseverance.

Mischelle asked Koal to practice his piano. He has played for a few years but was ready to move on to some new instruments. After some time, Mischelle noticed she didn't hear anything coming from the piano and went to check on Koal. When she arrived at the piano she found Koal's piano book sitting on the chair with a note attached to it. It read, *"I quit piano. I'm done with it. You taught me to stand up for myself – so I am. – Koal. "*

1. SHOW SINCERE LOVE
2. A TRANSPARENT LIFE
3. SELFLESS PERSEVERANCE
4. A TOTAL COMMITMENT

Fourthly, the trait of total commitment or genuine spirituality.

You are witnesses, and so is God, of how **holy, righteous and blameless** we were among you who believed. **1 Thessalonians 2:10 (NIV)**

Paul said, "You are witnesses, & so is God of how holy, righteous & blameless we were among you who believed."

Now notice what he said, "First of all, we preached the gospel of God to you. Secondly, you are witnesses of how we lived. We lived holy, righteous, & blameless lives among you."

My parents' behavior was influenced by what they believed about Jesus. They were genuine and their Christianity wasn't something just for Sunday, but something they were all week long. I saw the genuineness of their faith.

They had a total commitment. Webster defines Total Commitment as the alignment of one's motives, resources, priorities, and goals to fulfill a specific mission, accomplish a specific task, or *follow a specific person*.

I'm not talking about salvation, I'm talking about surrender. My parents were Christians for all of my life, but I do remember seeing them grow and our corresponding distancing ourselves from the things of the world. I saw a real thirst for all God has to offer.

The values at our home were different than at the homes of most of my neighborhood friends. Different than those found in a worldly home. A worldly home values things like pleasure, prestige, and possessions. But in our home, we learned the things we can't see, things we can't buy, & things we can't hold on to, are really the most precious. My parents weren't conformed to the world anymore, they had been transformed. It affected everything. We were unashamedly Christian and we saw it.

So if you come to church & carry your Bible & look very pious on Sunday, but you never open it through the week, your kids will know. They'll be watching you & they'll know. If you pray here on Sunday morning when everybody else is praying, but you never pray at home, your kids will know that, too. If you never worship God through the week, or if you aren't a good steward, your children will learn that, too. And they'll doubt the realness of your faith.

Great fathers express genuine love, live a transparent life, have selfless perseverance, and a total commitment to Christ exemplified by their lifestyle.

About a dozen years ago I was having my quiet time in what was then my home office. Kannon was 3 years old at the time and he came into my office. It was 5:30 in the morning, but Kannon knew where to find me. Kannon asked, "Daddy, can I pray with you?" I said, "Sure son" and was excited about this early spiritual moment with my oldest boy. I was way ahead of the game. I began reading the Scripture aloud and when I read, "A fool says in his heart that there is no God," Kannon asked, "Daddy, what is a fool?" I answered, "Kannon, a fool is a silly person who doesn't believe in God and doesn't love God." Kannon said, "Daddy, we've got to kill those fools!"

1. SHOW SINCERE LOVE
2. A TRANSPARENT LIFE
3. SELFLESS PERSEVERANCE
4. A TOTAL COMMITMENT
5. INSPIRES A LIFE WORTH LIVING

Finally, there is the trait of inspiring a life worth living, having a positive influence.

For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, *encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God*, who calls you into his kingdom and glory.

1 Thessalonians 2:11-12 (NIV)

Paul writes, "For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, encouraging, comforting & urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into His kingdom & glory."

That is what a father does. He encourages & comforts & urges his children to live lives worthy of God.

Dad always taught us to strive for excellence, and he's always been results-oriented. But, the most influential choice he made for me was when he obeyed God's call on his life for missions and evangelism. When my dad went to Africa for the first time - his life and focus changed with that trip.

I witnessed a change in my dad as he grew in his focus on eternal things. And his example helped lead me to eventually making the same decision regarding ministry. To invest my life in the things of primary importance – eternal things.

My dad showed me I didn't have to be squeezed into the world's mold. The world's value system – a counterfeit on how to find happiness, contentment, significance, fulfillment – all genuine desires God has placed in our hearts. Satan lays out a salad bar of options that are all lies and says here's how you can get it.

- 1. SHOW SINCERE LOVE**
- 2. A TRANSPARENT LIFE**
- 3. SELFLESS PERSEVERANCE**
- 4. A TOTAL COMMITMENT**
- 5. INSPIRES A LIFE WORTH LIVING**

My dad sowed me that Great fathers express genuine love, live a transparent life, have selfless perseverance, a total commitment to Christ, and inspire a life worth living.

TRANSITION

Jesus applied the example of the greatest love possible when He laid down His life to save us, His people. In the same way, a father is charged with the duty of laying down his life, his desires, his personal interests for the sake of his family. My dad put my interests before his own, and today he partakes in whatever reward might come through my life because of the investments and sacrifices he made to help me here.

We have the power to shape our families and our societies by the ways we live every day. We are the first line of defense for our families and are commissioned by God to deliver the Good News of the Gospel message to our families, not just with words, but in the way we live every day. And the greatest legacy a dad leaves behind is the gift of salvation through Jesus Christ.

My Father-in-law, Gene Sims, has influenced my walk with the Lord as well as me as a father. The jewels in Gene's character that have meant the most to me are his: compassion, forgiveness, availability, mercy, and a nonjudgmental spirit. Now, with those characteristics, he might sound kind of soft. I can assure you that is not the case – especially when you're dating his daughter.

Mischelle and I are building upon a foundation that started with our parents and their commitment to the Lord, each other, to us, and now to our children.

MISCHELLE – 15 Minutes

CONCLUSION

PRAYER FOR DADS.