



Father's Day

Text: Proverbs 17:6

Business Administrator Michael Sullivan

1. When you hear Proverbs 17:6, does your story read, “the glory of children is their fathers” or “the pain of children is their fathers”? Share with the group what this verse brings to mind about your father.

1. The way we talk about “love” in culture often is a watered down and inaccurate picture of God’s love, a Biblical love. From a cultural standpoint, what comes to mind when you hear the word “love”? What do these passages say about what love is and does? How can you reinforce this love with the people in your life?
 - a. John 15:12-14
 - b. Ephesians 5:1-2
 - c. Hebrews 12:3-11

2. For some of us the quote from Donald Miller, “...I wanted to be important to my father, but I wasn’t.” resonates deeply.
 - a. What did you learn from this sermon about how important you are to Jesus?
 - b. How does that cause you to live differently?

3. Many of us have experienced the loss of a father, or have even been hurt or abandoned by them. If not them, we have all experienced that in some capacity from someone in our life.
 - a. If comfortable, share an area where God’s redeemed a relationship/hurt in this area? Or feel free to share a way you are currently hurting and struggling that your community may come around you.
 - b. What does it look like for our spiritual family to truly be our family and help in the process of healing and care? How can we stand in the gap for each other and function the way God’s family was meant to?

4. Read James 1:27, Exodus 22:22-24, and Psalm 10:8, 82:3. Who is the orphan? Is it just the images we see on TV or hear about when our friends go on mission trips to third-world countries? What

about your neighbor or co-worker that is a single mom raising two boys on her own? What is the connection to the fatherless and the orphan?

Challenge: How did Michael's talk cause you to think and respond in the following areas? Do you feel like the Spirit is calling you to action in regard to:

- a. Your own relationship with your father
- b. Your relationship with your children (if you are a father)
- c. Caring for those without fathers or parents, even. (James 1:27)
- d. Loving others in your community in a way that reflects the Father's love?

Prayer:

- Pray for our kids—that God would rescue them from an early age.
- Pray for believers to respond—to serve in Kid's Ministry—to be a part of what God is doing in kids' lives right here at Faithbridge. Thank you for those who are already serving faithfully.
- Pray for those who are hurting, that God would be their healer—that he would show them His love and bring them new life and a new future this morning.
- Pray for our fathers—that God would give them the wisdom and strength to lead their kids well—to point them towards God's love. Prayer of thankfulness for the Father's in our lives who loved us well

STUDY DEEPER

Finding the Fatherless: A call to fill the gap.

It was my sophomore year in college. I sat frustrated in the office of our campus minister, Chad. I don't exactly remember what I was frustrated about, just that I needed to vent and I knew Chad would listen.

We had only recently been introduced, but he was intentional about meeting with me. Initially, I wasn't interested. It appeared we had nothing in common. Chad is white. I'm not. He is short. I'm not. He listens to bluegrass music. I didn't, still don't, and likely never will. However, since he showed great interest in me I decided to accept his invitation to hang out, which we ended up doing about twice a week, meeting on campus to talk about life and Jesus, and my issues with authority, girls, and people in general.

Those were my issues in those days, and though I don't remember the precise problem I was ranting about in his office, it most likely had something to do with that. Take your pick. I went on and on as Chad listened patiently. Once I finished, he looked at me intently and said something that hit me like a ton of bricks: "Phillip, you have daddy issues."

Who Is the Orphan?

Scripture has plenty to say about the orphan and our responsibility to them. We're instructed that our neglect of the orphan reflects the purity of our faith before the Father (James 1:27). We're warned that mistreatment of the orphan is punished by the wrath of God (Exodus 22:22–24). We are also exhorted to seek justice for the orphan (Psalm 10:8, 82:3). Since Scripture is our guide for living faithfully in this fallen world, we cannot afford to ignore the orphan if we desire to follow Christ.

During Old Testament times, the word "orphan" most often referred to children that were fatherless and not only isolated to those who had lost both parents. However, when our culture thinks about orphans, hardly anyone thinks about the boy or girl growing up in a single-mother home. I think this is a result of two assumptions in our culture. First, women are able to work and provide for families, therefore, we assume that if a child is financially secure, this eliminates the necessity of the father. Second, distinctions in gender roles have been bleached, thus eliminating the idea that men and women make unique contributions to the home.

But contrary to society's claims, fathers play a crucial role in the mental, emotional, and spiritual development of a child.

Beware the Costly Assumption

Voddie Baucham has noted some startling statistics on fatherlessness. Nearly 75 percent of fatherless American children will experience poverty before the age of eleven, compared to 20 percent of those raised by two parents. In fact, fatherlessness is the number one cause of poverty in America. Although it happens on occasion, very few children are living in poverty with a father in the home.

Children living in homes where fathers are absent are far more likely to be expelled from school. They are also more likely to drop out of school, develop emotional or behavioral problems, commit suicide, and fall victim to child abuse or neglect. Fatherless males are far more likely to become violent

criminals (fatherless males represent 70 percent of the prison population serving long-term sentences) (Baucham, What He Must Be, 22).

The assumption that the father is of little use in the home and lives of children is costly. This mindset is especially unfortunate because the church has adopted it, at the very least, in practice, even in Reformed circles. We reveal this when we show little care for those without fathers. If we can agree that the fatherless should be considered orphans, and even the children with absentee dads, does the church have a responsibility?

To find the fatherless, one doesn't necessarily need an agency. We're everywhere. We're your next-door neighbors. We're in your school systems. We're in your local congregations. According to the US Department of Census, 43% of children in the United States live without their father (and these statistics can't account for fathers who are physically present yet absent in every other way).

If the church wants to bring up young male and female leaders in their congregations and effectively evangelize their city, they must address the issue of fatherlessness. This is not an option. But how does this look?

How We Can Learn from Paul

Paul is a great model for what it meant to be a spiritual father. He exhorts the church at Corinth to "be imitators" of his fatherly example (1 Corinthians 4:15-17). In this passage, Paul points out that the Corinthian Christians have many "guides" but few fathers. The difference between teachers and fathers is intimacy. Paul perhaps recognized that mere words are insufficient – opening our mouths isn't enough if we never open our hearts to train. Paul sends Timothy, his beloved and faithful child in the Lord, to remind the church of his "ways in Christ, as I teach them everywhere in every church."

Paul had modeled fatherhood well in Timothy's life. He affectionately refers to Timothy here and in other letters as his "true child" in the faith (1 Timothy 1:1; 2 Timothy 1:1). We know that Timothy was disciplined by his mother and grandmother, Eunice and Lois. His father is not mentioned at all, which leaves us assuming that he was either absent or not a Christian. Paul sending Timothy provides the church at Corinth a model of fatherhood through the gospel – as well as the fruit of it. We can still learn from this example today.

It takes men and families building relationships with kids and young adults intentionally looking for spiritual sons and daughters to adopt "unofficially." To our surprise, I think we'd find most kids and young adults with absent fathers would be open to older godly men acting as a spiritual father in their lives. These relationships need to be developed patiently, with the local church encouraging and supporting this initiative in the context of discipleship.

There are many children and young adults who need to hear the words Chad said to me that day in his office. And there are many men in our local congregations who God may be calling to say them – and fill the gap.

<http://www.desiringgod.org/articles/finding-the-fatherless-a-call-to-fill-the-gap>