

Christ Community Covenant Church
Authority in the Family: Encouraging Dads
Pastor Dave Scherrer - June 16, 2013

Happy Father's Day! In our study of authority we are going to look at the authority of fathers and in my research for this I have come away with a new respect for fathers. Not that I didn't already have a healthy respect. I am one and a grandfather too so I know how my experience as a father has shaped me and shaped me in Christ. But as I have studied and prayed about it I have become even more excited and concerned for the authority of fathers and for the importance of fatherhood.

Thankfully we have a template: The Fatherhood of God

Did you know that God was never known as "Father" until Jesus came to earth and revealed Him as such? Not in a personal manner anyway. God was sometimes addressed as the Father of Abraham and Isaac or as the Father of the nation of Israel but God was never referred to as a personal intimate 'father' until Jesus made it so.

The teaching of the Fatherhood of God becomes a decidedly Christian concept with Jesus, as "Father" was his favorite term for addressing God. It appears on his lips some sixty-five times in the first three gospel narratives, the Synoptics, and over one hundred times in John. The term for Father is usually translated into the Greek as '*Pater*' but the word he used in His native language of Aramaic is '*Abba*.' The uniqueness of Jesus' teaching on this subject is evident for several reasons. This teaching of God as Father is striking. As I said a moment ago, there is no evidence in pre-Christian Jewish literature that Jews addressed God as "*Abba*." The frequency of this metaphor is all out of proportion to what we find elsewhere in the Old Testament and other Jewish literature. (Note 165+ times in the four Gospels compared to only 15 times in the entire Old Testament!) This was not just *a* way Jesus taught his disciples to address God; it was *the* way. They were to pray, "Father, hallowed be your name" (Luke 11:2). Jesus' emphasis on *Abba* God is why the Greek-speaking Gentile churches in Galatia and Rome continued to address God in the Aramaic *Abba*. They used this foreign title for God because Jesus had used it and taught his followers to do so. It was important teaching about the character of God.

Secondly, Jesus' use of *Abba* for God involves the intimacy of the term. *Abba* was a term little children used when they addressed their fathers. Jesus Christ's use of the Aramaic "Abba" made such an impression on His disciples in that it was a unique instance in 1st Century Jewish piety; this explains why it stamped the apostles' memory. But why? Why all this fuss about a simple Aramaic word? Well, it is because — and modern biblical research has convincingly shown that — "Abba" actually means something close to "Daddy"! Shocking: A young man of 1st Century Palestine called God "Daddy." Unbefitting, scandalous, blasphemous, crazy, unreal! ... Maybe! But he did it. He did call the Almighty One "Daddy"! He addressed God as a child as though God were his own father!

In His high priestly prayer just before his death recorded in John 17 Jesus' prayer to His Father, Jesus said, "And I have declared to them Your Name, and will declare it, that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them." (John 17:26) What name was Jesus referring to . . . I believe it was this name "Father". If there was anything close to Jesus' heart, it was to introduce God as "Father" to us. In the Bible, Jesus said, "Therefore, do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'... For your heavenly **Father** knows that you need all these things." (Matthew 6:31–32) Once, He said, "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your **Father** who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!" (Matthew 7:11)

Jesus wants you to always have this image of God in your mind — that He is your *Abba, Father*. Why? Because He wants you to know that to be a Father is to carry the very character of God into your relationships with your children. So God's fatherhood could only really take on meaning when the Son was revealed. The fatherhood Jesus shows us is based not so much on God's role in creation or as the father of a nation but rather on the redemption and reconciliation he has made available in and through His Son Jesus Christ. This is why Paul refers to "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 15:6 ; 2 Cor. 1:3 ; 11:31). It is through the work of Christ that adopts us into the family of God that God invites us to call

him "**Abba, Father:**" It is through Christ that grace and peace have resulted and we have become God's children.

So fathering is a big deal according to God. This message has relevance for everyone in this room whether you are a father or not; and whether you had a Christian father or not. Or indeed whether you ever knew or even had a father figure in your life. I want to make clear from the outset that the sadness many may feel at never having had a father like the loving and kind and patient and forgiving Father Jesus knew His Heavenly Father to be, that sadness can be swallowed up and overcome with joy this morning because God offers his fatherhood to anyone who will accept the gift of adoption by trusting Christ and yielding to be led by the Holy Spirit. There are two ways to listen to this message this morning. One is to take it as a straightforward exhortation from the Word of God to fathers on how to rear their children. The other is to take it as a parable pointing to the way the Father in heaven loves those who believe and follow his Son. Frankly, I hope all of you hear it in both senses.

"What is important to God for us as His children?"

I think there are two things we must keep in mind as fathers. One is how we are to love and instruct and encourage and shape our children in a practical and human manner. I want to talk about this first. We have some hints from Scripture. (But actually not very much, there are only a couple of passages that give us concrete instructions regarding parenting. Mostly God asks us to be a father as our heavenly Father fathers us!)

Colossians 3:21

Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.

Ephesians 6:4

Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

So let's break down this verse a little bit. Moms and grandmas and future moms may find that these have application to us in your family as well. Feel free to listen in: Let's look at the first word.

"Fathers"

We have a need for fathers. Too many young people are growing up with either absent or disengaged fathers. I love what Scouting, Big Brothers, and Save our Youth and various coaching and tutoring programs do to bring fathers into the lives of our children. Just because you don't have a child doesn't mean that you can't still be a dad.

"Don't provoke"

"Exasperate" "Embitter" "Provoke to wrath" "That they may not lose heart".

1) Excessive Discipline

Some parents crush their children with **excessive discipline**. I have known parents who seemed to think that if discipline is good for a child, extra discipline must be even better. They constantly waved the threat of corporal punishment as if they loved it. No parent should ever be eager to punish. And no punishment should ever be brutal or bullying. Parents should always administer discipline with the good of the child in mind, never more than necessary, and always with love. Never discipline out of anger or when in a rage. Bad things happen.

2) Inconsistent Discipline

Other parents provoke their children by **inconsistent discipline**. If you overlook an infraction three times and punish the child severely the fourth time, you will confuse and exasperate your child. Sometimes we keep score and dog-pile after we get emotionally spent. Effective parental discipline is consistent and just. That's one of the main reasons parenting requires full-time diligence.

3) Unkindness

Some parents provoke their children with *unkindness*. I cringe when I hear parents deliberately saying mean-spirited things to their children. It comes out of wanting to win, or to make yourself feel bigger by making another feel smaller. But many parents do, it seems—and to compound the problem, they often seem to do it in public. I've overheard parents saying things to their own children they would never say to anyone else. That's a sure way to crush a child's heart and provoke him to resentment and bitterness. No name calling, no swearing, no sarcasm, no shaming for the sake of shame. Discipline is not a public venture.

4) Favoritism

Another way parents provoke their kids is by showing *favoritism*. Isaac favored Esau over Jacob, and Rebekah preferred Jacob over Esau (Gen. 25:28). The resentment their favoritism provoked caused a permanent split in the family (Gen. 27). But Jacob made the same mistake with his own children, showing such favoritism to his youngest, Joseph, that Joseph's brothers plotted to do away with him (Gen. 37). Although God sovereignly brought about much good from what happened to Joseph (Gen. 50:20), that doesn't change the fact that Jacob and his family had to endure much sorrow, heartache, and evil because of the chain of events that began with Jacob's favoritism.

5) Overindulgence

Some parents actually goad their children to exasperation through *overindulgence*. They are too permissive. Research from many different sources shows that children who are given too much autonomy feel insecure and unloved. No wonder. After all, Scripture says parents who let their children misbehave with no consequences are actually showing contempt for the child (Prov. 13:24). Children know that instinctively, and it exasperates them.

6) Overprotection

On the other hand, some parents frustrate their children by *overprotection*. They fence them in, suffocate them, and deny them any measure of freedom or trust. That's a sure way to provoke a child to frustration: make your child despair of ever having any liberty at all unless he or she rebels.

7) Pressure to Achieve

Plenty of parents arouse their children's anger through constant *pressure to achieve*. If you never praise your kids when they succeed but always drive them to do even better next time; if you neglect to comfort and encourage them when they fail; or worst of all, if you force your children to try to fulfill goals you never accomplished, they will certainly resent it. It's fine to encourage our children to excel. In fact, that is a natural and normal part of parenting (1 Thess. 2:11). But excelling in Christ is where we are to attend.

"But rather encourage"

Ours is a special kind of encouragement

1 Corinthians 2:9-13

But, as it is written,

"What no eye has seen, nor ear heard,
nor the heart of man imagined,

what God has prepared for those who love him"—

¹⁰ these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. ¹¹ For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. ¹² Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God.

¹³ And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual.

1 Thessalonians 2:11

¹¹ For you know how, like a father with his children, ¹² we exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you to walk in a manner worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory.

Thoughts for Dads

Be their parent not their friend
They are not little adults, they are children
Discipline in truth and for the sake of truth, never in anger
Reinforce their character, not that which can be taken away
Catch them doing 'good' and help them to 'live' there
Only you can be the person-appropriate teacher/model your child needs

Your legacy: The Rope as a timeline

Pointing your child toward the Kingdom, valuing the Kingdom and living for the Kingdom. Your life modeling the pursuit of Christ and His priorities in the world is what makes a great dad. It is not about great grades, a great marriage, and great acclaim. It is not about beauty contests and running fast, being class president or being in the class play. All those things can be taken away. It is about love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness and self-control. It is about selflessness and being other centered. It is about loving God's word, loving to live the truths told there.

This is hard work, this is good work. Fathers, you are my heroes! Hang in there.