

## I. Introduction

- A. Happy Father's Day
- B. I'm not good at Dad Jokes, you can ask my kids. When I come up with one, I feel like Father of the year. So, I've got a few to use on my kids... what do you think?
  - 1. If April showers bring May flowers, what do May flowers bring?" "Pilgrims."
  - 2. "I thought the dryer was shrinking my clothes. Turns out it was the refrigerator."
  - 3. "Why can't eggs tell jokes? They would crack each other up."
  - 4. "Did you hear the rumor about butter? No? Well, I'm not going to spread it!"
- C. We love dads. Any dad who packs up and goes to church is extra special, so thank you for being here. We respect that. We honor you. We love you. Let's give it up for all the dads here today.
- D. God makes a beautiful promise to us, here in the Bible.
  - 1. *"I will be a Father to you, and you shall be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty."* (2 Corinthians 6:18)

## II. Three Dads

- A. The first and greatest influence in your life is the family that raised you.
- B. Your family gave you a massive shove in a certain direction.
  - 1. That direction might be really healthy. That direction might be really sick. It might be violent. It might be heartbreaking. It might be confusing, addictive, or totally messed up.
- C. If you come from an awesome family, and you know your dad loves you, and he loves God, that's amazing. I'm happy for that beautiful influence in your life.
- D. But if you come from a destructive family, or a scary or heartbreaking family, I want you to know that your earthly family does not have to define your life. If your family shoved you in a messed up direction, you can change direction.
- E. You can move into wholeness and happiness and joy.
- F. So no matter what kind of family you come from, and no matter what kind of earthly father you have, I have good news for you today.
- G. You have another Father, a Heavenly Father, and he is the Father you've always dreamed of.
- H. This Father's Day, you can make God your Father, and Jesus your brother, and I want to show you how to do that at the end of my talk.
  - 1. I literally want to talk you through being saved today. There's your head's up. Don't worry, it won't be weird, and I won't single you out.

## III. Lessons from Three Fathers

## A. Father one: The father who forgot his kid.

- 1. About a thousand years before Christ, God sent the prophet Samuel to identify the second king of Israel.
- 2. God sent Samuel to the little town of Bethlehem, and to the household of a man named Jesse.
- 3. God said, "One of Jesse's sons will be the next king; you'll know him when you see him because I'll tell you."
- 4. Samuel rolled into town found Jesse, and told him the plan.
- 5. Jesse was excited. He gathered his sons and sent them one by one before the prophet Samuel.
  - a) Son number one, Eliab, a military man comes before him. He's strong, Perfect. Confident. He stands before Samuel, God whispers into Samuel's heart, and Samuel says, "No. Bring in the next son."
  - b) Son number two came in – tough and ready to lead. Samuel knows in his heart he's not the one. "Next!" said Samuel.
  - c) Son number three, son number four, sons number five, and six come before him. No, no, no, and no.
  - d) So finally the last son. Number seven comes forth, and you know it has to be him. But for the seventh time, God says no.
    - (1) What's going on?
    - (2) Here's how the Bible describes that awkward moment:
      - (a) **In the same way all seven of Jesse's sons were presented to Samuel. But Samuel said to Jesse,** *"The LORD has not chosen any of these."* (1 Samuel 16:6-10, NLT)
- 6. Zero for seven. Wait a minute! God told Samuel that Israel's next king would come from among Jesse's sons, and Jesse paraded all seven of his sons in front of Samuel, but the Lord didn't choose any of them.
- 7. What's going on?

8. Samuel scratches his head and looks at Jesse. A cricket chirps. Jesse shrugs his shoulders and looks at Samuel. A fly buzzes through the tent. Samuel looks at the sons. The sons look at Samuel. Nervous cough. Awkward situation.
9. Everybody's confused.
10. Then Samuel had a thought. He looks at Dad. "Jesse, you didn't by any chance happen to skip any of your sons, did you?"
11. Jesse's face turns red and he says:
  - a) **Well....** *"There is still the youngest," Jesse replied. "But he's out in the fields watching the sheep." "Send for him at once," Samuel said. (1 Samuel 16:11, NLT)*
12. Father of the Year, right? The prophet said, "Show me all your sons" and Jesse skipped one.
13. Thanks, Dad.
14. So they go get the shepherd boy David, and God says He's the one I've chosen.
15. David's own father labeled him with one of the most painful labels of all; he labeled him: NOBODY. This is the father who says...
  - a) I don't think about you. I don't spend time with you. I don't listen to you. I don't see you. I don't know you. You don't matter. To me, you are nobody.
    - (1) I might feed you and shelter you, but you're dead to me.
16. What do you do when your dad calls you nobody? What do you do with the man, who more than anybody else, is supposed to bless and help define you, but instead he forgets you or worse?
17. Some of you today know this story because you lived the story. You're still living it, maybe.
  - a) I had a young adult tell me how people looked right through her all the time like she wasn't even there. She'd be the next person standing in line at the grocery store, and the checker would literally look through her to the customer behind her. She felt invisible. She said I'm a nobody... and her world reflected that back to her.
    - (1) Where do you think she got that script? From a father who ignored her.
  - b) A researcher did a deep dive into what motivated 75 high achieving, clearly independent women. She wrote,
    - (1) No matter how successful their careers, how happy their marriages, or how fulfilling their lives, women told me that their happiness passed through the filter of their fathers' reactions... Even for women whose fathers had been neglectful or abusive, *I found a hunger for approval*. They wanted a warm relationship with men who did not deserve any relationship at all.
  - c) Those words, a hunger for approval jumped out at me. I feel that deep inside.
  - d) When I was in my mid-20s, my dad sat me down, and he broke the news that he and my mom were getting a divorce. I wasn't surprised. But do you know what I asked him? Here I was, adulting. I was living on my own, paying my own bills, I had my own apartment, I bought my own car, I was a youth pastor, I'd earned a Master's Degree and was heading for a doctorate. By any measure, I was successful.
    - (1) But when my dad told me he and my mom were splitting up, I had only one question for him—and it had nothing to do with their divorce.
      - (a) I said, "Dad, are you proud of me?"
      - (b) Of all the things I could have asked, why that?
    - (2) Another researcher has written, "Life for most boys and for many grown men is a frustrating search for the lost father who has not yet offered protection, provision, nurturing, modeling, or, especially, anointment" —being chosen, blessed, and approved.
    - (3) Yes, I get that... do you?
      - (a) A hunger for approval. A frustrating search for a lost father.
        - i) I think that's a lot of us.
        - ii) It certainly was David.
    - (4) But I said I had good news for you.
    - (5) David received that anointment from Samuel.
18. Fast forward a little bit. David goes back to his sheep. Later, he slays Goliath. Later he becomes a warrior.
19. But something inside him had changed.
  - a) Something he was missing got supplied.
  - b) In all those long hours when he was sitting with the sheep under the stars, God did something to his heart.
  - c) David's frustrating search for a lost father came to an end. He had an epiphany... a discovery I hope you can make today if you've never made it.

20. Here is that epiphany, David wrote in the Bible:

- a) *“Even if my father and mother abandon me, the LORD will hold me close.”* (Psalm 27:10)
- b) *“Father to the fatherless, defender of widows—this is God, whose dwelling is holy.”* (Psalm 68:5)

21. Little David, neglected by his earthly father, found his Heavenly Father, and he was the Father of his dreams.

- a) And I’m hoping will find that same heavenly Father today, and make him your own. That’s coming soon.

22. Father one: the father who forgot his kid.

**B. Father two: The father who rejects his kid.**

1. The Bible tells the story of an ancient power couple named Isaac and Rebekah. They’re wealthy. They’re important. They are leaders.

2. They have twin boys, which, in that culture, is a huge blessing.

3. But, like a lot of successful, wealthy, power couples, mom and dad mess the twins up.

- a) *As the boys grew up, Esau became a skillful hunter. He was an outdoorsman, but Jacob had a quiet temperament, preferring to stay at home. Isaac loved Esau because he enjoyed eating the wild game Esau brought home, but Rebekah loved Jacob.* (Genesis 25:27-28)

4. Both parents played favorites... not a good thing for kids ever.

5. This broke something in Jacob’s spirit.

- a) And if you follow it out, the father who rejected his son just about destroyed his own family tree.
- b) He invited in so much drama, so much conflict, and so much lying, that the two brothers almost killed each other.

6. Here’s the thing that happens that all of these characters have to figure out:

**a) Without realizing it, most people begin to think of God as a bigger , badder version of their earthly father.**

- (1) If your earthly father is mean, you see God as mean.
- (2) If your earthly father is absent, you see God as absent.
- (3) If your earthly father is a bully, you see God as a bully.
- (4) If your earthly father is a wimp, you see God as a wimp.

7. When Isaac rejected Jacob, Jacob transferred that to God.

8. The message Isaac gave to his son said...

- a) If you want my love, pay for it. If you want my attention, earn it. If you want my approval, fight for it till you dying breath. If you want my blessing, steal it.

9. And all of that sadness, and all of that dysfunction got wired into Jacob’s psychology. And he fought, and lied, and cheated, and stole, in every relationship he had.

10. Jacob was a conniver... but can you see why? His dad set him up for that.

11. And then Jacob transferred that to God.

12. One of the worst days in my life happened when I was 7 or 8.

- a) It was late at night. I was in bed. Through the walls, I heard my mom and dad arguing. Like I said, I wasn’t surprised when my parents split up. And I actually heard my dad say he didn’t want me.
- b) Little pieces of my little heart dropped into an abyss. It took a long time for me to recover.
- c) That broke something in me.
- d) But I feel the worst thing was that it did something to how I thought of God.
- e) I projected my earthly father onto my Heavenly Father. *He* didn’t want me. God didn’t want me.
  - (1) And that really messes with everything... with your relationships, with your goals, your dreams, everything.

13. Just like it messed up Jacob.

14. But I want to fast forward when God comes to Jacob to repair the broken places in his heart. This really weird thing happens to him:

- a) *This left Jacob all alone in the camp, and a man came and wrestled with him until the dawn began to break. When the man saw that he would not win the match, he touched Jacob’s hip and wrenched it out of its socket. Then the man said, “Let me go, for the dawn is breaking!” But Jacob said, “I will not let you go unless you bless me.”* (Genesis 32:24-26)

15. Jacob is at the lowest point in his life, and some man comes down, and he says, You wanna fight? Let’s fight.

- a) Later on, we find out this is God.
- b) I think this is awesome.

- c) How many people are already running a UFC fight simulation in their minds with God.
  - (1) God did this to you. God did that to you. God wasn't there for you. God has all these rules that don't make sense to you.
- 16. You're already running the fight simulation, like Jacob.
- 17. So God comes down and says, let's make this as real as it can be.
  - a) Do you actually think you have to fight me to bless you? Do you actually think you have to fight me to love you, approve of you, honor you, protect you, provide for you? Do you think my rules are there to hurt you?
- 18. God brought you to this church today to here me say, YOU CAN GIVE THAT FIGHT UP.
- 19. Why?
- 20. It's right here where Jacob wrestled God.
- 21. This grappling goes on for hours. All night long. And Jacob can't win, he knows it, but he refuses to tap out.
  - a) He won't quit fighting God. He won't stop playing his messed up scripts. He's stuck in a really bad place.
- 22. So God, who loves Jacob, says ENOUGH! He touches Jacob on the hip, and it goes out of joint... fight over.
- 23. Jacob can't fight any more.
- 24. All he can do is hold on tight.
- 25. And that's the golden moment we all need to have with God.
  - a) It's something you can have with God today.
- 26. Jacob toggles the switch *from* fighting *to* clinging.
  - a) Fighting means proving yourself.
    - (1) Clinging means trusting your Heavenly Father's approval of you.
  - b) Fighting means convincing the world you're a winner.
    - (1) Clinging means letting God's triumphant grace count for you.
  - c) Fighting means works, and law, and human effort.
    - (1) Clinging means faith, and grace, and Calvary Love.
- 27. Jacob stopped fighting and started clinging.
- 28. When Jacob started clinging to God, the raging in his soul stopped.
- 29. He said, I will not let you go unless you bless me.
  - a) Do you see that word bless?
    - (1) **To bless means to give someone something beautiful and good that they haven't earned and don't deserve.**
    - (2) **To bless means to give a free gift of absolute grace.**
- 30. I give up.
- 31. Instead of fighting you for what I think you deserve, how about I let you bless me with what I don't deserve.
  - a) It's a whole new way of thinking about God. I will not let you go unless you bless me. For the first time, he saw a father who blessed without making him have to prove something.
- 32. That's your Father too.
  - a) Your Father wants you whole. Your Father wants you successful. Your Father wants you living with joy and meaning and transcendent purpose.
- 33. Your Father has paid an enormous personal price for your sake.
  - a) You are precious to him. You are special to him. You are loved by him.
- 34. So what do you do when you hear your father say he doesn't want you? What do you do when the man whose main job in life is to bless you says out loud he doesn't want you? That he's okay with shattering your heart, just because he's mad at your mom, or you're not rugged enough or tough enough?
- 35. David had a father who forgot him.
- 36. Jacob had a father who rejected him.
- 37. The last father I want to mention today:
- C. Father three: the Father who honors his child.**
  - 1. God is a Trinity. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. I know, it's confusing.
  - 2. But it's also beautiful. Because even though God is One, God is never alone. The Father loves the Son and the Spirit, the Spirit loves the Father and Son, and the Son loves the Father and the Spirit.
  - 3. The Trinity gives a new meaning to the truth that God IS love.
  - 4. The way the Father loves the Son is absolutely beautiful. It's all over the Bible.

- a) *"For to which of the angels did He ever say: "You are my Son, today I have begotten you"? and again: "I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a Son"?" (Hebrews 1:5)*
- b) *"But to the Son He says: "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of your kingdom."(Hebrews 1:8)*
5. The Father declares to the cosmos that Jesus is his Son. The Father delights in pointing to his Son. God is proud of him. God approves of him beyond measure. God magnifies him. God glorifies him, and makes his throne forever and ever.
6. Jesus Christ went to the Cross and he died for our sins. He shed his blood for us, and he paid the ultimate sacrifice for us.
7. There is so much depth there, and so much mystery there. There is beauty there. And there is power there, at the Cross, where Jesus died.
8. All the suffering. All the pain. All the judgment and wrath. Look at what, and then look at why:
9. Here's the what:
  - a) *"Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (Philippians 2:9-11)*
10. The Cross of Christ is the glory of God. For that Cross, God has exalted Jesus to the highest degree.
  - a) The Father glorifies the Son.
  - b) The Father honors the Son.
  - c) The Father celebrates the Son.
  - d) The Father enjoys the Son.
  - e) The Father approves the Son.
  - f) The Father elevates, and enriches, and blesses, and magnifies, and praises, and absolutely loves his Son, Jesus, with all his infinite heart.
11. He is the Ideal Father. He is the Father of your Dreams. That hunger for approval, that frustrating search for lost Father, never happened to Jesus, because to him, the Father in Heaven met every desire of his heart and more.
12. We do not have words to adequately express the honor the Father bestows on his Son. **God is bringing Jesus, his Son, to glory.** That's the What.
13. And now, here's the why...
  - a) *"God, for whom and through whom everything was made, chose to bring many children to glory. And it was only right that he should make Jesus, through his suffering, a perfect leader, fit to bring them into their salvation."* (Hebrews 2:10)
- 14. God is bringing many sons and many daughters to glory.**
15. This is the place God is bringing Jesus.
16. And this is the exact same place God is bringing you.
  - a) The same glory. The same honor. The same approval. The same blessing. The same love. The same celebration. The same exaltation. The same throne in the same heaven with the same riches and the same joy unspeakable and full of glory.
17. Why did Jesus die?
  - a) To bring many sons to glory. To bring many daughters to glory.
18. Where God is bringing Jesus, God wants to bring you.
  - a) To a place of honor, and blessing, and authority, and love.
  - b) To a place of a purpose bigger than just yourself and your family.
  - c) To a heaven where there is no more sorrow and no more pain.
  - d) He fixes the broken places in your heart.
  - e) He heals your damaged emotions.
  - f) He fills in the gaps left by your earthly father, and makes you a new creation in Christ.
  - g) God wants you whole.
  - h) God wants you successful, so that in whatever you do you will prosper and have good success.
19. This is the gospel. This is the good news.
20. The Father will bring you where he's bringing Jesus... an offer and a gift that's totally free.
21. Are you willing to receive that gift right now?

#### IV. Invitation

- A. There's that beautiful parable Jesus crafted of the Prodigal Son. In that parable, the wayward son finally comes home to his Father.
  - B. It's not hard to imagine that long walk home.
  - C. He prepares a speech: "Father, I have sinned. I am no longer worthy to be your son, just please, please give me a job as one of your hired hands."
    - 1. There he is, with his face smudged with pig slop, and his ragged shirt, and his shoes with holes in them, and the filth matting his overgrown hair...
    - 2. There he is with regrets like a fog around his head... He's on the long dirt trail home. He's so guilty. So tired. So sad. So afraid. So ashamed. So broken.
    - 3. His fragile mind can't keep his speech straight, so he keeps rehearsing it... Father, I have sinned. I am no longer worthy to be called your son... make me a hired hand.
  - D. When his father say him, has father ran to him. Took his filthy body into his arms and squeezed him to his chest and washed the dirt off his face with tears and the grime off his cheek with kisses...
  - E. I can't get over this picture. I can't get over this love.
  - F. That's My Father.
  - G. And if you've never received him, He can be your Father too.
- V. ABCs
- A. Admit
    - 1. God I admit that you are the Father I need, and the Father my heart really craves.
    - 2. I admit I have sinned.
    - 3. I admit I have strayed far from you.
    - 4. And I want to come home to you today.
  - B. Believe
    - 1. God, I believe Jesus is my only way back to you.
    - 2. He died for my sins.
    - 3. He shed his blood for me.
    - 4. I don't get how it all works, but I'm telling you I believe in Jesus as my Savior.
  - C. Choose
    - 1. So right now I choose Jesus.
    - 2. I choose the salvation he made possible.
    - 3. I choose to bring my whole self back to you.
    - 4. And I'm asking you right now, because of Jesus,
    - 5. Please save me.
    - 6. Please forgive me.
    - 7. Please be my Father forever.
    - 8. Amen.

Discussion question:

What's one thing about your view of God that might have transferred over from your view of your father?