

## I. Introduction

## A. Dad Jokes

1. Did you hear about the restaurant on the moon? There's great food, but no atmosphere.
2. What would the Terminator be called in his retirement? The Exterminator.
3. It takes guts to be an organ donor.
4. I was going to tell a time-traveling joke, but you guys didn't like it.
5. My wife said I was immature. So I told her to get out of my fort.
6. I know a bunch of good jokes about umbrellas, but they usually go over people's heads.
7. What invention allows us to see through walls? Windows.
8. Son: Dad, I'm hungry. Dad: Hi hungry, I'm Dad.

## B. Things Dads Say

1. When your Dad says turn left, but you turn right... Dad says... Your other right.
2. When your dad is snoring in the recliner. Dad are you asleep? No, I'm just resting my eyes.
3. When a kid comes home with expensive new shoes. What do you think I'm made of, money?
4. When you ask, Dad, did you get a hair cut. Dad says, No. I got 'em all cut.
5. When you says, But Dad, everyone else is going. Dad says, If everyone else was jumping off a cliff, would you?

## II. Father's Day is Tough

A. For the summer, we are looking at how God is working in this book of the Bible called Acts. The series is called Our Turn.

B. And today, in honor of Father's Day, I'd like to think with you on the subject the **Value of a Father**.

1. *"Suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were loosed. And the keeper of the prison, awaking from sleep and seeing the prison doors open, supposing the prisoners had fled, drew his sword and was about to kill himself. But Paul called with a loud voice, saying, 'Do yourself no harm, for we are all here.' Then he called for a light, ran in, and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. And he brought them out and said, 'Sirs, what must I do to be saved?' So they said, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household.' Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes. And immediately he and all his family were baptized. Now when he had brought them into his house, he set food before them; and he rejoiced, having believed in God with all his household." (Acts 16:26-34)*

C. Two of the hardest days for preachers are Mother's Day and Father's Day. Those days are hard because so many things can go wrong when it comes to being a mom or a dad. Talking about parents, or talking about being a parent, or taking about not being a parent but wanting to, the emotions are all over the map.

D. Some feel great about this topic. Some feel guilty. Some feel bitterness, or fear, or anger, or pain. Others feel satisfaction or pride. Some have always wanted to be a mom or dad, but for some reason aren't... Some moms or dads want to have a relationship with their kids, but they can't, or the other parent won't let them, or they foolishly wrecked that relationship and feel there's no going back.

E. To talk about our Dads or Moms, or to talk about being a Dad or a Mom, is one of the hardest topics for a preacher and days like this can be hardest to preach.

1. I want you to know I am really sensitive to these pains and losses. The Bible tells us to weep with those who weep.
2. The Bible also tells us to rejoice with those who rejoice. So we have to flip that over too.

F. Let's just agree to this. We're all imperfect and we've all made mistakes. I am a Dad. I have tried to be a good dad. At the same time, I look back with a lot of regrets and a lot of things I wish I had done differently. I'm not going to be morose or to go into depth on any of that. But let's just say that I have two kids, and at some point in their lives, while playing with my kids, each of them wound up with a broken bone. And there you are judging me...

1. So every honest dad carries some measure of guilt. Guys, we're all in the same boat.
2. Now, let's flip that over. Because every honest son or daughter — meaning all of us — we all carry at least some pain from our imperfect fathers. So we're all in the same boat.

G. Can we all agree that there's no such thing as an ideal family, an ideal mother, and for today, and ideal father? Can we agree on that? We've all sinned and we all fall short. So I don't want you to feel judged or condemned... just to honestly look within. There's no such thing as an ideal Father.

H. And can we also all agree that the Bible does teach us an ideal to strive for, and that we have to talk about it. The Bible teaches family. God designed the human being to thrive in relationship. God defined the most beneficial relationships as being a family — which — and again, we're talking about the ideal — a father and a mother who love each other, and then children who are nurtured and cherished into adulthood.

1. Not all families have children, and that's part of God's plan too.
2. But when we talk about families, we are not talking about some optional, flexible, malleable social construct. No. When we talk about family, we are taking about a revelation from God himself.

I. God created family.

J. Now, there are certain ground rules in life.

1. Rule One: God Rules and he is both all powerful and all loving.
2. Rule Two: This fallen world is a morally broken Pain Machine.
3. Rule Three: The rule and reign of God will not be fully expressed in this fallen world until Jesus returns.
4. Rule Four: Bad stuff happens, and we can't blame God.

K. Given the Ground Rules, God established Family. The ideal family.

L. Why?

**1. Because A Healthy Family is the best possible environment to minimize the damage the Pain Machine can cause.**

M. Which brings us back to Fatherhood.

III. The Fatherhood Initiative

- A. You don't have to be a Christian to understand the pain and harm that comes from not having a healthy dad in the home with a healthy relationship with the kids.
- B. There's a great group called the National Fatherhood Initiative. They are not a Christian group, but overall, their material is fantastic. They have a great motto: Creating a world in which every child has a 24/7 dad.
  - 1. When I say dad or father today, I'm talking about a biological dad, an adoptive dad, a grandfather helping to raise his grandchildren, a committed stepdad, or any caring man acting as a father, okay?
- C. Here is some of their research showing the value of a Dad.
  - 1. Involved dads improve their children's overall emotional and social well-being.
  - 2. Children with involved dads are less likely to be mistreated.
  - 3. Children who live with their dads do better in school.
  - 4. Teen boys who live with their dads are less likely to carry guns and deal drugs.
  - 5. Involved dads reduce mom's parenting stress.
  - 6. More than 1 in 4 children live without a father in the home.
  - 7. Children with imprisoned fathers are more likely to have depression.
  - 8. Children living without their father in the home are 47% more likely to live in poverty.
  - 9. Men with absent fathers are more likely to become absent fathers themselves.
  - 10. Women with absent fathers are more likely to have children with absent fathers.
  - 11. Boys have fewer behavior problems and girls have fewer psychological problems when they have involved dads.
  - 12. Daughters are less likely to engage in risky sexual behavior when they have consistent contact, and a sense of closeness, with their dads.
- D. The good news is that on either side of this equation, God calls himself a **Father to the fatherless**.
  - 1. **Wherever you as a father have let your children down, God fills in the gaps for them — he is there for them.**
  - 2. **And wherever your father has let you down, God fills in the gaps for you — he is there for you.**
    - a) He is there for you so much that you can be a transitional character in your family. In one generation you can bring healing and life to generations of brokenness in your family tree.
- E. My father was not a church going man. When I grew up in the church, it was not with my father and it was not because of my father. For the early part of my life it was my aunt who brought me to church. And for my childhood and beyond, it was my mom. The fact that I am still walking with the Lord today when my father did not at all walk with the Lord is a huge exception to the rule.
- F. Because the rule is that when it comes to church and to God and to Christ and the Bible, the rule is that kids will do what their dad is doing as soon as they're old enough to push back against mom.
- G. Father's matter immensely.

IV. The Philippian Jailer

- A. The Scripture I read begins when two apostles are thrown in jail for preaching the gospel.
- B. All night long, they are singing and sharing the gospel with their fellow prisoners.
- C. God sends an earthquake, and busts open the jail.
- D. The jail guard, assuming the prisoners have all escaped, has a huge problem. He figures... A Roman soldier would rather die than face the disgrace of failing his mission.
- E. So he draws his sword, and starts take his own life, when Paul cries out to him:
  - 1. **But Paul called with a loud voice, saying, "Do yourself no harm, for we are all here." (Acts 16:28)**
- F. The jailer is amazed and grateful. He falls to his knees in gratitude and relief. And we get this:
  - 1. **And he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" So they said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household." (Acts 16:30-31)**
- G. That's not saying that one parent getting saved means the whole household is saved. It's saying that when a Father gets saved and follows Jesus Christ it's highly likely that the rest of the family will follow him too.
- H. That's the power of a Father.
  - 1. *Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes. And immediately he and all his family were baptized. Now when he had brought them into his house, he set food before them; and he rejoiced, having believed in God with all his household. (Acts 16:32-34)*
- I. The Father believed and was saved. The mother believed and was saved. The kids believed and were saved. And probably servants believed and were saved, and then they were all baptized.
- J. That's a one-house revival and the ignition point was Dad.
- K. I want to point out six qualities of a father's heart.

V. Qualities of a Good Father's Heart

- A. **Humility (v. 25)**
  - 1. *"But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them." (Acts 16:25)*
  - 2. But it wasn't just the prisoners listening to them. The jailer was listening too.
  - 3. Here is a man and a father who was interested, and humble, and open to the things of God. He could have turned away, but he listened. That humility before God is the door that opens for grace to rush in.

4. The worst thing a dad can have is a fragile and needy ego. His wife and children will always be afraid of him one way or another. He's not humble. He's incapable of humility. He's too fragile.
5. But when a man knows himself enough to humble himself, he is a father who can be trusted to give of himself without losing himself, and that is true and mature love.

**B. Honor (v. 27)**

1. That point at which he drew the sword to end his own life. That's always a heartbreaking moment — and I know many listening to me to day have had to deal with this in your lives. Our heart goes out to you.
2. But in this case, this jailer was not acting in fear over reprisal for losing his prisoners. As a Roman soldier, he was acting out of a sense of honor and duty as misplaced as it was. Human life is sacred, from womb to grave. Human life belongs to God. None of us has a right to take life (exceptions: police and military in the line of duty, and civilians in self-defense), not even our own.
3. Even so, the jailer took his responsibility with all seriousness and he had a sense of honor.
4. A father who always makes excuses, a father who always blames his wife, or blames his kids, or blames his church, or blames God is a father without honor.
5. When you have your principles and abide by them even when it is inconvenient, you have honor. And when you have your commitments and duties and fulfill them, even when it is painful, you have true honor.
6. And you will be a father whose wife and children and whole circle of friends will be blessed.

**C. Honesty (vv. 29,30)**

1. The jailer was honest with the facts before him. What facts?
  - a) These men were preaching salvation in Jesus Christ and singing hymns — they had faith when faith made no sense. He heard them with his own ears. How would an honest man account for that?
  - b) He also heard stories of *why* they were imprisoned. Because they cast out demons from a demon possessed girl who kept crying out, "These men are the servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to us the way of salvation" (17). What should he do with that? Explain it away? Pretend it was just craziness? He was hearing this way of salvation, not communicated in words and in song. How would he deal with this?
  - c) And then there was the earthquake. The timing was miraculous. The effect was miraculous, in that it not only opened the prison doors, it even opened the stocks that held their feet. And the effect was miraculous in that none of the prisoners fled! What to do with all this Jesus stuff?
2. With all of this, the Philippian jailer did the only thing an honest man could do. He concluded that there is a God in heaven. He confused that the message of Jesus was true. He concluded that he needed salvation and that Jesus was the way. He did the opposite of what millions and millions of people have done through the ages. They all explain the Lord Jesus away... they all deceive themselves.
3. But not this man. Not this father. He is an honest man. So he asked Sirs, what must I do to be saved?

**D. Courage (v. 32)**

1. The jailer brought his prisoners home.
2. Think how his Roman commander would feel about this. Imagine how the Jews who hated Paul and Silas would feel about this.
3. The jailer didn't care. He had the courage of his convictions.
4. And so does every father who makes a difference in his family's lives. These are my principles. These are my convictions. These are my believers. My heart is bound to Christ and to his Word.
5. I don't care what people think about me.
6. I don't care what consequences may come.
7. I will live for God first and for my wife and family, and let what happens happen.
8. That is courage.

**E. Concern (v. 32)**

1. *"Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house." (Acts 16:32)*
2. Back in my Chicago days, when I was a high school pastor, not too long ago, a student in my ministry was saved. It took a long time for him to come to Christ — he was full of questions and objections. But was honest in his search, so he met the Savior.
3. The next week at youth group, he brought three friends with him. He literally sat them at a table and told me to wait. He came and found me, brought me to his friends, and said, "Bill, tell them what you told me." He wanted his friends to be saved. And eventually, they all were.
4. And this father wanted his wife to be saved. And he wanted his kids to be saved. And he wanted his servants and employees to be saved.
5. He was so concerned for their salvation, he sat his family down and told Paul and Silas, "Tell them what you told me."
6. And they were all saved too, and they were all baptized.
  - a) Never underestimate the power of a concerned and loving father.

**F. Compassion (v. 33)**

1. *"And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes [wounds]. And immediately he and all his family were baptized." (Acts 16:33)*
2. I think it's funny that he had them preach the gospel to his family before he washed their wounds. That's what you call priorities!
3. Here is a jailer bringing his prisoners home. Now, he was washing their wounds, and bandaging them, and soothing them.
4. In the next verse, he is feeding them, and throwing a party.

5. This is a father's heart. Compassionate in his own gruff way.
  - a) Whatever kids that jailer had were truly blessed to have this man as their dad.
  - b) It will be amazing to talk to the Philippian jailer's kids in heaven.

**VI. Healthy Masculine Energy**

- A. Kids need a dad in their lives, one way or another.
- B. Every kid growing up has a desperate need to encounter healthy masculine energy every single day.
  1. Healthy masculine energy creates boundaries and enforces them with love.
  2. Healthy masculine energy brings structure to both the outer world and the inner world.
  3. Healthy masculine energy provides.
  4. Healthy masculine energy protects.
  5. Healthy masculine energy commits.
  6. Healthy masculine energy makes children explore their outer limits and pushes them gently beyond.
  7. Healthy masculine energy models self sacrificial love... and when the gas tank is empty, healthy masculine energy just keeps running on fumes.
  8. Healthy masculine energy can find the humor in just about anything — a healthy dad can laugh at himself.
  9. Healthy masculine energy husbands his wife and fathers his children every day, all life long.
  10. Healthy masculine energy insists there is right and there is wrong, and enforces the right to create moral order in his children's souls.
  11. Healthy masculine energy follows in the footsteps of Jesus, a man's man, who modeled the ultimate sacrifice. Paul wrote revolutionary words into his culture — he upended centuries of evil and pain — when he wrote, "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her." (Ephesians 5:25). That's how a real man loves.
  12. Healthy masculine energy, above all else, draws a living breathing three dimensional picture on earth of the Father in Heaven. A godly man depicts the love and justice, grace and mercy, and never failing presence of our Heavenly Father, who is the ideal Father for us all.
- C. Thank God for Christian fathers!
  1. Thank God for men who at least try to keep faith with God, even if it's a messy faith.
  2. Thank God for men who bring their families to church. You are planting a harvest into your children and your children's children.
  3. Thank God for men who, in their own way, have asked What shall I do to be saved? And who then have believed on the Lord Jesus Christ.
  4. My gruff old Italian father was saved in his 80's. He and my mom, who were divorced, were watching a sermon of mine online from Florida. When I gave an invitation to be saved, my mom asked my Dad if he would pray to be saved. And he did. And I baptized him at age 83.
    - a) Men, your children are watching, and it's never too late to change course.
  5. But there's something else. There is one and only one time in all those long years I ever saw my father pray. I was absolutely floored. We were at a family gathering, and dinner was served. And it was time to pray, and my truck driving, bar-tending, cigar smoking, drinking, cussing Dad said, "Can I pray?" Every jaw dropped, and we all bowed our heads, and he stumbled through a prayer. Do you think I cared about his eloquence or words? Not one bit. It was beautiful, and it was miraculous, and that moment healed some childhood wounds in corners of my adult heart.
  6. It's never too late.
  7. Dads matter.
- D. I'm so thankful and proud of every dad who is here. Well done. You came to church. I just wish we could cast a net and gather back the dads who are not here, the ones who have dropped out of church, and by so doing, dropped out of God.
- E. When God said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved, and your house... **There is a powerful and lasting link between the spiritual life of a father and the spiritual life his family.**
  1. How I pray that God would gather in the father's and soon to be fathers and not yet fathers and grandfathers back into the household of faith, and back into the house of God.
- F. God bless you, dads. God bless every spiritual dad. God bless every future dad.
- G. **Happy Father's Day.**