

Cell Notes 18 June 2017

Father's Day

The Bible reading was the Prodigal Son Luke 15 v11-32

Q1. The son asked for his inheritance early - How do you think you would react in the same situation?

Q2. The Father in the reading represents Father God, the perfect Father. How can we match up to that role as Fathers/parents?

Q3. I said that my Father's behaviour did not dictate My father behaviour. How can we influence young men and fathers to look to God The Father as a role model?

Sermon notes

Abigail beautifully read the parable of the Prodigal Son. For some reason, I thought Prodigal meant sorry or repentant. For example. the repentant son, but the word "prodigal" actually means "wastefully extravagant". The Wastefully Extravagant Son.

This reading is about the son who wants his inheritance early, leaves his family, squanders his money – being Wastefully extravagant - and is left looking after pigs before making the decision to return home.

On this Father's day I want to focus on the father.

Imagine how he felt when his son asked him for his inheritance early. He was basically saying to him 'I can't wait for you to die, I want my inheritance now!' But, the Father gave him what he wanted and let him go. However, he never stopped thinking about his son. He longed to see him return home and constantly looked out at the horizon thinking about him.

Then one day he sees his son in the distance, on his way home.

Now I know what I would have thought if I had been the Father – 'here he comes with his tail between his legs'. 'I told you so' I would say. I would have wanted to make the experience a little uncomfortable for him before letting him come home. Maybe letting him look after my pigs for a couple of days just to be sure he was sorry.

But the father was so happy to see his son that he pulled his robe up and ran to greet him. He ordered the fattened calf to be prepared, and dressed him in the best clothes. His love was so great for his son that all he wanted was for him to be home safe, and back where he belonged. He was wastefully extravagant in welcoming him home.

Now there is a lesson in Grace.

Can anyone tell me who the father represents in this story?

The father is God...and He is a Prodigal God! He is "wastefully extravagant" with his love. There is nothing we can do to make our heavenly father love us more, or less. He loves us unconditionally for ever. He loves us just the way we are – but He loves us too much to leave us that way. The father in the story is an example of how we earthly fathers should be with our children. Loving, forgiving, willing to let go, but equally ready to welcome back, to always be there for our children – in their time.

How often do we reply to a child's request with 'Not now son – when Daddy has finished this'!

The story demonstrates the love of a perfect father.

It's not surprising then that we don't always step up to the mark, as the mark is set so high.

But what if our experiences were not of a perfect father?

Someone once said, 'While almost any man can father a child, there is so much more to the important role of being a father in a child's life'.

In his book 'The Father heart of God' Floyd McClung says that we are given to our paternal fathers by God to look after us in this world - on behalf of our father God.

Just last week I was reading the 'Man Prayer Manual' by Carl Beech. He says, about the birth of his two daughters, 'I held them within minutes of the birth. These were, on both occasions, profound moments. I heard a still small voice that I knew to be the Lord's. I had a distinct sense from God that he was telling me that they were in effect on loan to me'.

I'll let you into a secret. Men do not get any training to be a Father. It's true - we don't.

Hands up any Dads who have passed their Fatherhood proficiency test? Or have a Father competency award?

Fathers are not trained to take on the role. It just happens. Men may have role models they can learn from but some don't.

Some make great fathers and some mess up and are rubbish. There's no manual – or is there??

I would like to tell you about my Father.

As it happens He was a rubbish Dad. He wasn't a bad man, but he was a rubbish Father. That sounds a bit harsh but it's true.

I remember when I was about 8 years old.... Dad looked after us when Mum was away and He made Porridge for breakfast... now some of you may think that is bad enough but he made it with salt!

Imagine that, sitting down at the breakfast table taking a big spoonful of porridge only to find that you are struggling not to spit it all out, not wanting to swallow it!!

He also cut my hair with his new electric hair trimmer and left it looking like I had a mixing bowl on my head. That's why I'm grey - from the shock!

I never really had a relationship with my Father. I can never remember a time when my Dad played any sort of games with me. He never showed any love or affection. But that's ok. In those days men didn't show much affection.

I think that's why I had trouble showing my emotions - until God got to work on me and look at me now blubbing at the slightest thing!!

When I look at my Dad's background and character I can see why he wasn't a good Dad. He didn't have any training, he didn't have any role model. He was wrapped up in work, drink and socialising.

I forgive him because I know he was weak.

When I got married I did worry that I would be like my Dad and that I would be a rubbish father. I can tell you from experience I am not like him. Although I didn't know it at the time, I had a much better father role model. I was

blessed to know some great father's and of course Father God was waiting in the wings for the moment I said 'yes' to him.

I needn't have worried. My Father's behaviour did not define MY father behaviour. I'm going to Repeat that as I think some guys here may need to understand this.

Some men here today are brilliant Dads, some are not so brilliant. Some people here have brilliant Dads – some do not.

I want to return to the prodigal son and reverse the roles. This time the Father leaves.

Sadly, this is an all too common situation in today's world of fatherhood. For whatever reasons the Father decides that his future is better away from his family.

In my Prodigal Son story the Father doesn't ask his son to let him go. He just goes.

Every day the Son thinks about his Dad, he misses him and desperately wants him to come home.

The Father experiences what the world has to offer and eventually realises that he has made a big mistake. He realises that he is on his own – even when he is with other people. There is a huge son shaped hole in his heart. There is no love in his new world. He is lonely and hungry for the love of his family. He decides to return home – even if it is just to spend a little time with his family.

His son is looking out of the window expectantly as he has always done, waiting to see if his Dad would come home. As soon as he sees him he runs excitedly to meet him calling him Dad, Dad. He throws his arms around him and tells him how much he has missed him. He hugs him tightly. He is wastefully extravagant with his love for his father. He has totally forgiven him.

What I'm trying to say is that if you are in that story and you are the prodigal son – or daughter – don't give up on your Dad. In your heart forgive him. Receive the love of God as your father. Your prodigal father may return – he may not, but you need to be able to let go and forgive. As I said men do not have any training to be a Dad and some fail miserably.

If you are the Prodigal father, never give up on your children. Be big and admit your mistakes and ask for forgiveness – from God and your children.

We all need to know the love of a Father.

Dad's, think, how often do you tell your children that you love them. How well do they know you? How often do you open up to them?

Kids, when was the last time you told your Dad that you love him. How much time do you spend with your Dad? How often do you talk to him?

We are here today to celebrate and give thanks for our fathers, and particularly for the fathers in this Church – paternal fathers and acting fathers. Men who can be a role model to young men who do not have a good father role model. I have seen many good father role models in this church. I'm sure you have too.

I also want to reach out to the Fathers here that think they are not good enough. We can't all be good at sports, or have impressive muscles, or be able to build or fix stuff, but you don't need to be. What you need to be a good Dad is love, commitment, understanding, patience and time for your kids.

Ask God for wisdom. As it says in James 1 V5 'If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you'.

When I started this talk I asked, 'Who's the Daddy'? Who is number one Dad? I think it is clear that God the Father is the number one Dad. He is the ultimate loving, caring Father who will never let you down.

In God -

- You have a daddy who loves you.
- He is strong enough to protect you.
- He is engaged enough to teach you.
- He is tender enough to hug you.
- He is alive enough to play with you.

You just need to be in a relationship with him.

10 mins

My talk is done. I have tried my best to tell you about your loving Father in heaven, but I am only a man, and as I have said us men are flawed.

As it says In Psalm 8:2 in the [Amplified Bible \(AMP\)](#)

Out of the mouths of infants and nursing babes You have established strength
Because of Your adversaries,
That You might silence the enemy *and* make the revengeful cease.

Well these two babes certainly know what they are talking about, and are far better at expressing it than I am.