

Fathers' Day
June 21, 2009

To all fathers, grandfathers, to fathers in heart, and future fathers, Happy Father's Day! The United States is but one of a few countries in the world that has an official day on which to honor fathers.

AT&T, otherwise traditionally known as "Ma Bell," records that Mother's Day break all records for the number of telephone calls made; well over 100 million. Although the number of phone calls made on Father's Day is increasing, the number of calls made is far less than those made on Mother's Day. However, telephone calls made on Father's Day do break another record: more collect calls are made on Father's Day than any other time of the year.

From the Internet, I read a heart-warming story entitled, "The Day That God Created Fathers." I do not know the name of the author; however, I hope you will be moved by this story as much as I am. Some of you may be familiar with this story and, if you are like me, still moved by the hearing of it once more.

On the day that God created fathers, an angel of the Lord stood in the background & watched. "Lord," the angel asked, "are you sure you know what you are doing? If children are so close to the ground, why are you making fathers so high up? After all, they will have to kneel down if they ever shoot marbles with their children. They'll have to lean way over to tuck them into bed at night, and they'll have to bend so far down to kiss them."

The Heavenly Father said, "Don't worry. I know exactly what I'm doing. If I didn't make fathers so high, what would children have to look up to?"

Then the Lord made the hands of a father. They were big and sinewy and awkward. The angel asked, "Have you really thought this through? Those fingers are so big and clumsy. How will they be able to handle the pins of a diaper or unbutton a little button? They will never be able to take a rubber band off of a ponytail, or remove a splinter from a finger."

God replied, "Relax. They'll be just fine. They're big enough to hold all the things that a young boy takes out of his pocket at the end of the day, and

they're large enough to cup the face of a child."

God continued on and He made the legs of a father - long and bony and hairy and not very attractive. And then He made broad shoulders. The angel asked, "Lord, do you realize what you have done? You have just made a father without a lap. How is he ever going to be able to hold a child close to him without that child slipping through his legs?"

God answered, "Mothers need laps, fathers need broad shoulders so that they can pull a sled in the wintertime and balance a bicycle in the summertime, and cradle the sleeping head of a child on the way home from church."

Then, just as God was in the middle of creating two of the biggest feet that you have ever seen, the angel said, "It's not fair. Do you really believe that those two big feet are going to get up in the middle of the night and respond to a crying child?"

God answered, "They'll work, you will see. They are big enough to support a father who is pretending to be a horse while his child is riding to an imaginary castle. They're big enough to wear two shoes that will be a challenge for any child to fill."

Then God gave the father a voice, strong and authoritative. He gave him eyes that could see everything and yet remain calm and in control. Last of all, God gave the father tears. Then He turned to the angel and asked, "Do you still doubt?" And the angel said no more.

So, what are God's expectations of fathers? I invite you to open your pew bibles to page 613 OT, to Psalm 103, left hand column, to verse 13:

13 Just as a father has compassion on *his* children, So the LORD has compassion on those who fear Him.

As a father has compassion and love for his children, so will our Lord have compassion and love for him. It may be concluded from this verse that it is a given fathers are to have a sacrificial compassion and love for his children. It is out of this sacrificial compassion and love that we do the things we can to make sure our children are raised as well as our ability enables us so to do.

And how are we to raise our children? I invite you to turn in your bibles to page 1173 NT, to Paul's letter to the Ephesians, chapter 6, right hand column, verse 4:

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

Fathers are cautioned and advised by our Lord not to provoke, hassle, or aggravate our children. Instead we are to bring them up in the love, training and the instruction of the Lord. We are to love our children enough to raise them in, and to discipline and teach them the way of the Lord. Fathers are to raise their children with both firmness and gentleness as needed in each particular case.

By looking at the King James Version of this phrase, we are able to acquire a deeper understanding of this verse. Follow along in your pew bibles to observe the difference in wording as I read The King James Version of Ephesians 6:4 reads:

4 And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

Please note that the King James Version uses the term *nurture* for the word discipline. In the Greek, *nurture* means "chastening (disciplining, correcting) and instruction." We find this to be so in Hebrews 12: 7:

7 It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom *his* father does not discipline?

Returning to Ephesians 6:4, the King James Version uses the term admonition for instruction. The term *admonition* literally means "putting into mind," and we put into mind through the process of instruction and teaching. Admonition of the Lord implies teaching the Lord's ways through His Word, which means, daddies are to sit down with their children and teach them the Word of the Lord. The conclusion we can make for this verse is that fathers primarily are responsible for instruction through actions and instruction through verbal teaching to their children. It is significant to note that the first reference to teaching in the Bible has to do with Abraham's responsibility to bring up his own son, Isaac, in nurture and admonition of the Lord (Genesis 18:19).

Fathers are not to break promises to our children nor neglect them. Nor are we mindlessly to indulge our children's every whim so that they lose respect for us. Instead, we are to bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord. The Bible calls Christian fathers to a different standard than what the world wants.

From Proverbs, chapter 22, verse 6, we read:

*Train up a child in the way he should go,
Even when he is old, he will not depart from it.*

We are to bring up our children in the same environment in which God would raise them. We are called to produce a Godly atmosphere, a living, holy greenhouse, in which our children are to be nurtured along to adulthood and eventually to bear fruit themselves.

I believe that Matthew's record of the final words of Jesus to his disciples also is appropriate to recall on this Fathers' Day. Jesus said to his disciples: "*Go out into the world, make disciples of all nations, baptize and teach them.*" And then, just as God has said to Moses at Sinai, Jesus said to his disciples, "*Remember, I am with you always.*"

"*Remember, I am with you always.*" And that really is the bottom line, isn't it? For all through the stories dealing with parental love, this is always implied, "*Remember, I am with you always.*" I share with you a story which makes this point very well. It is a fascinating story that comes out of the 1989 earthquake which almost totally flattened Armenia, Turkey. This deadly tremor killed over 30,000 people in little less than four minutes. In the midst of all the confusion of the earthquake, a father rushed to his son's school. When he arrived there, he discovered to his horror that the building was reduced to nothing but rubble, total and complete destruction.

Standing there, looking at what was left of the school, the father remembered the promise he made to his son, "No matter what, I'll always be with you!" Tears began to fill his eyes. It looked like a hopeless situation, but he could not take his mind off his promise. Remembering that his son's classroom was in the back right corner of the building, the father rushed there and started digging through the rubble. As he was digging, other grieving parents arrived, clutching their hearts, crying, "My son! My Daughter!" People tried to pull this father off of what was left of the school saying that it was too late - they are dead. You can't help - go home. Even a

police officer and a fire-fighter told him he should go home. To everyone who tried to stop him, he said, "Are you going to help me now?" They did not answer him. He continued digging for his son, stone by stone, alone.

He needed to know for himself, "Is my boy alive or dead?" This man dug with his bare hands for eight hours, then twelve, and then twenty-four, and then for thirty-six - without stopping. Finally, in the thirty-eighth hour, as he pulled back a boulder, he heard his son's voice. He screamed his name, "Armand!" And a voice answered him, "Dad? It's me, Dad!" Then the boy added these priceless words, "I told the other kids not to worry. I told them that if you were alive, you would save me, and when you saved me, they would be saved. You promised that, Dad. 'No matter what,' you said, 'I'll always be there for you!' And here you are, Dad. You kept your promise!"

Yes, today is the day set aside to honor the many fathers who provide, however modestly, for their families; fathers who are generous, father who care deeply for their wives and children, fathers who rejoice when the children learn from their own mistakes, and fathers who freely express their affection. As we observe Father's Day, let us pray that the next great revival in America will be for more fathers who will fulfill their roles following the example of our Heavenly Father.

It is our Heavenly Father who blesses us every day with his love because, as the apostle John pointed out, "God is Love." And as Bishop Atwood taught us, "God is love, for that is His ... NATCHA!" And we fathers are to exemplify God's love that lies within us.

A man told the story of how, when he was 12 years old, he went to the circus with his father. They stood in a long line, but finally got to the point where they were one family away from the ticket window. The family in front of them had eight children who stood behind their parents, two by two, holding hands and talking excitedly about the clowns and animals. You could tell they did not have much money, but even at the age of twelve, he was impressed by how neat and nice they appeared. The father of the eight children told the lady in the ticket boot he wanted ten tickets. The lady stated that would be \$30. The father looked stunned and only pulled a twenty from his wallet. The twelve-year-old's father "dropped" a \$10 bill on the ground and made a big scene of picking it up. Then he handed the ten-dollar bill to the father of eight, saying that he must have dropped it. The man accepted it with tears in his eyes. The twelve year old and his

father did not see the circus that night, but that was okay, because instead, he saw a little bit of God – in his father.

On this Fathers' Day, and every day, do our children see a little bit of God in us fathers?

Today, we extend a special blessing on those fathers who take very seriously what God the Father and His son, Jesus Christ, modeled and taught.

A Blessed and Happy Father's Day.