

Fathers, Bring Them Up in the Discipline and Instruction of the Lord

by John Piper

John Piper emphasizes the importance of honoring fathers and the responsibility of fathers to raise their children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

Duration: 51:36

Scripture: Exodus 20:12, Proverbs 22:6, Matthew 6:33, Romans 8:15, Ephesians 4:15, Ephesians 6:1-4, Hebrews 9:26

Topics: "Parental Discipline", "Salvation Through Faith"

Description

In this sermon, Johnny Piper reflects on the lessons he learned from his father's preaching. He emphasizes the importance of being transformed and obedient in the Christian faith. He also discusses the balance between speaking the truth in love and not using Bible doctrine to beat people up. Piper shares how his father's absence due to ministry work made him realize the reality of hell and the urgency of spreading the message of salvation through Jesus Christ. Overall, the sermon highlights the preciousness of life, the need for trust in God, and the mission to spread a passion for the supremacy of God.

Transcript

The following message is by Pastor John Piper. More information from Desiring God is available at www.DesiringGod.org Our sermon text is Ephesians 6, verses 1-4. That can be found in the Pew Bible on page 979.

That's Ephesians chapter 6, verses 1-4. Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother.

This is the first commandment with a promise, that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land. Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. Our earthly fathers have taught us there are moments to be afraid.

And they have hugged us and shown us there are moments of total security. So I praise you, Father, that you are our Father. We are able to call you Abba, Daddy.

And we call you Sovereign One. And so now come and enable the fathers in this room to so do their fatherhood as to show your glory to their children. I ask this in Jesus' name.

Amen. Number one, I want to honor my father, my earthly father, Bill Piper. I want to pay tribute to him in obedience to verses 1 and 2. Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.

Honor your father and mother. This is the first commandment with promise, that it may go well with you and that you might live long in the land. When children are little, the primary dominant way that they honor their father is by implicitly obeying what Daddy says.

If he says stop, you stop and it saves your life. You're not in the road. You learn to obey and that honors the father.

But as children move into adulthood, the category of honoring transforms out of the dynamics of command and obedience into tribute and care and respect. And so as my father has moved into a season of demanding more care, my way of honoring him becomes more care and tribute and respect and honoring in those ways. Verse 3 helps us here, I believe.

It's a quote from Deuteronomy 5.16. It says that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land. That's a quotation from the Ten Commandments or the version of the Ten Commandments in Deuteronomy. What does it mean? I think it's a general encouragement to all of you children and young people that God delights in obedience and then the way he supports that is to point us back to Israel and say look at the promise that attended this command in Israel.

And the way it worked was this. When Israel was the kind of people that was pervaded by humility and respect and obedience, especially children to parents, God worked for the people and protected the people and supplied the needs of the people. But when those people turned away from the laws of God and became arrogant and disrespectful and disobedient, especially to parents, He withdrew His protection, handed them over to their enemies and their days in the land were not long.

In other words, it's a general statement that in those days, if you wanted to have prosperity and longevity in the land, be a God-honoring, commandment-keeping, respectful, obedient people. And if you want a short life in the land, turn away from your God, forsake His commandments, disrespect your parents. And now He applies that to us and does not mean every obedient child lives to be an old man or an old woman.

That's not the point. The point is, look at the history of Israel and learn how God favors respect and humility and commandment-keeping and obedience. And then know He'll favor that, He loves that, He'll bless that.

In families, churches, nations, I think that's the point there. And so, I feel very drawn to, on this Father's Day, call my father, which I will in a few hours. And pay my verbal respects to him.

And in this sermon, I want to pay public tribute to my dad. I'll come back to this shortly. Second reason, second aim of this message is, by this tribute, to inspire you fathers to want to be the kind of father who would be worthy of this tribute.

And I know that there are older fathers here. There are 20-year-old fathers and 40-year-old fathers and 80-year-old fathers. And the older you get, the more regrets you have.

Right? And I don't want to discourage fathers who have walked with their children long enough to fail a lot and have to walk out of here feeling, well, if I had to do over, I might be alright, but I feel discouraged. I

want to say so clear that wherever you are in your fathering, it isn't too late. This will be plain.

I'll point this out why this is later. A 60 or 80-year-old dad that has a 60-year-old son or a 40-year-old son or daughter, it's not too late to turn and so begin to do fathering as to point those young people or older people to their Father in Heaven. So my second aim is to inspire you to do that.

Third, I simply hope that in those two things, our Father in Heaven will be glorified. I want us to make much of God, not me or any other father or my father. I want God to shine through this service.

He's the ultimate Father from whom we learn all fatherhood. There's a verse here, verse 4, second half of the verse that led me this way in regard to glorifying our Father in Heaven. It says, bring them up, bring up the children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

And I thought, what does that mean, of the Lord? Instruction of the Lord. Discipline of the Lord. I'm sure it's rich and beyond all that I could say now, but one of the things that I would say is this.

The Lord there, I'm sure, is Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus is Lord.

So, discipline of the Lord Jesus, instruction of the Lord Jesus. And then my eyes then go back to the Gospels, and I look at what the Lord Jesus in His human nature did in regard to fathers, and He mainly pointed us to His Father. In His human nature, He modeled for us what humans should do, and that is glorify their Father.

And when you get to that great prayer that He prayed in John 17, it begins like this. Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You.

Jesus Christ lived to glorify His Father, and modeling for us in His human nature, I say as a preacher now, that's what I should do too. I should glorify my Father in heaven the way Jesus glorified His Father in heaven. And so that's the third aim of this message.

So, number one, tribute to my earthly Father. Number two, stir you up to live and father in such a way as to be worthy of such a tribute. And three, in that, glorify our heavenly Father.

My father is 86 years old, and he lives in Greenville, South Carolina, in a home as a widower, twice over, called Shepherd's Care. And there's an interesting little turn of providence in this home. It's owned and operated by Bob Jones University, where my father graduated, and which bestowed on him the Doctor of Divinity in 1956.

It is a sweet homecoming for him to be able to be surrounded by people who share his faith and will now provide for him in my absence. And just in case you wonder how I think about his presence there and me here, I have pressed my father for years to come to Minneapolis and live with me. If I could break his arm and do it, I would do it, because I would really much rather have him sitting there, paying this tribute in public, with all the stress that that would bring to our family in his particular condition, and he will not budge.

So, south is thicker than blood. So what I want to do is share a fragment of the legacy of truth that he imparted to me. And when I say imparted truth, and you put those two words together, I don't want you to think, well, we had a little class every day, and here was the truth for today, and deposit that truth in John's mind, and now another class.

No, no, no. I'm not thinking that way. I'm thinking a whole life of demonstration, as well as instruction, that imparts to me eleven of eleven of these truths.

Number one. And most of these have Bible texts with them, so that I hope you will see how rooted my father's life was, and my life is in the Bible, God's Word. Number one.

There is a great, majestic God in heaven, and we were meant to glorify Him. To live for His glory, not ours. There were maybe three or four texts that repeatedly were used in our home.

This one might have been number three in frequency. It's 1 Corinthians 10.31. So whether you eat or drink, Johnny, do all to the glory of God. So I knew from the beginning that there was a God over this family.

We did not exist for ourselves. We existed to make God look good. That's why the Piper family is on the planet.

It isn't about us. Remember the song? It's about God, son. Live for the glory of God.

I couldn't help but think in this regard as I was preparing the day before yesterday, that that mission statement on the wall up there, we exist as a church, I exist as a pastor, to spread a passion for the supremacy of God in all things, for the joy of all peoples, through Jesus Christ. That was crafted in 1995. That mission statement.

And I can't help but think that in heaven someday, we can all gather around, and one of the things of the billions of things that the Lord is going to do to keep us very interested for all of eternity is to point out that little Johnny Piper learning 1 Corinthians 10.31 has unbreakable links of cause and effect that lead to 1995 and that mission statement. And we'll see how it worked through all those years and then was deposited in that mission statement when the subcommittee sent me away to St. Paul for two days to fast and pray and bring back a mission statement for our church. Number two, when things don't go the way they should, God always makes them turn for good.

If you've ever heard that little rhyming couplet in this church before, raise your hand. Not many have been around, but there's a group. This is not new for us.

We've used this before. I was going to show where it came from. Right above 1 Corinthians 10.31 in our home was Romans 8.28. All things work together for good for those who love God and are called according to His purpose.

That comes over when things don't go the way they should, God always makes them turn for good. And so I have one memory emblazoned in my mind in this regard, more than one, but this one above all. I'm riding in an ambulance with my father, seriously lacerated, life in jeopardy, on the way from Atlanta, Georgia to Greenville, South Carolina with a hearse riding behind with my mother's dead body in it.

And in that ambulance, I hear him for three and a half hours wail and talk, wail and talk. And the talking is all Romans 8.28. It's all this phrase I remember. There must be a reason why I didn't die in the accident.

He must have a purpose for me. Now, I've got to translate this for you. There must be a purpose for why I live.

There must be a purpose that only has meaning if God rules over accidents and makes no mistakes. That sentence has no meaning if that's not true. Reasons come from purposes.

God was reigning in that accident. He took my mother. He barely spared my father.

And my father taught me in his wailing, God will turn this son for our good. I wish I could tell you the story. He was 56 when that happened.

He's 86 today. And in between those years, there was a 25-year marriage with sweet LaVonne, who's now with the Lord. And there was a 20-plus year mission to the nations called Raghma, Rod of God, ministries Asia, Africa, in which tens of thousands of people in hundreds of countries came to Christ because of my father's latter-day survival.

When things don't go the way they should, God always makes them turn for good. Number three, God can be trusted, son. Trust Him.

The verse here was so frequent. It was at the end of letters. It was on notes in lunchbox.

It was in the mouth. Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not rely on your own intellect, Johnny. In all your ways, acknowledge Him.

He'll make your paths straight. Proverbs 3, 5, and 6. So I have a picture now. I have many pictures.

Here's the one for this text. We're sitting around a card table. My sister's three years older than I. Beverly, she lives in Charlotte today.

She's sitting here, I'm sitting here, mother's sitting here, daddy's sitting here. On the table are 300 letters that daddy has written. They're all the same.

And 300 envelopes and 300 stamps. My father is an itinerant evangelist. We live off love offerings that are taken in evangelistic crusades held in local churches.

My father was a small-time Billy Graham. And the way he got invitations to come preach was to send letters all over the country to churches saying, My name is Bill Piper. Here's some quotes from pastors who've gotten help from my ministry.

Would you let me come preach at your church? That's the way we lived. And they were all in the letters. And so all of us as a family folded the letters, stuffed the envelopes, licked the stamps, pasted the envelopes, and then prayed.

And when we prayed, we prayed that when we put them in the box in a little while, that enough pastors would say, Come, preach for us, that we could pay the bills and have bread on the table and thousands of people would get saved. Never, never once in those prayers did I hear a flicker of a doubt in my Father's voice that He would supply our needs. God can be trusted, Son.

You do what you can do to raise the money in your life. You get a job. You do what you have to do.

But God can be trusted, Son. What a gift. And what a legacy.

There was a financial crisis, he told me one time, 1952. He had just moved to a new neighborhood. He had bought, I guess, several lots.

And something happened and the whole bottom fell out. He almost lost everything. And he told me that God directed him in those days to Psalm 37, verse 5, which says, Commit your way to the Lord.

Trust in Him and He will. And he would tell me that story again and again. And he would put the word submit on the second half and commit.

He said, we need to commit our way to the Lord and then, Son, we need to submit to His will. And He will act. And so those are the lessons.

Trust Him. Trust Him. Trust Him.

He can always be trusted. Number four, life is precarious and life is precious. Do not presume that you will have it tomorrow and do not waste it today.

Life is precarious and life is precious. Don't assume you're going to be alive tomorrow and don't waste your life today. Oh, the memories of my father's preaching to my little boy's ears about the seriousness of life and death.

My father began every sermon with a joke. I have never in 25 years in this pulpit begun a sermon with a joke. In fact, I've never told a joke in this sermon.

Now people laugh, right? You're laughing. That happens. That's okay.

I believe in humor. I just don't tell jokes in sermons. So you can see there's a little difference between me and my father here.

He began every single sermon with a joke. That's what they taught him, I guess, at preacher boy's school. Within about three minutes, my father's eyes were ablaze with seriousness.

He was so blood-earnest in preaching it would make a little boy tremble sitting in the first or second row. And he had certain texts that he quoted about life and death and certain illustrations that he used that I can remember to this day. One of the texts was Hebrews 9.26. And he had a certain way of doing it.

About halfway through the verse, his eyes would squint. And then when he finished the verse, his lips would go like he had just tasted a lemon. So he said, It is appointed unto man once to die.

He would blink like that. Blink. And after that, the judgment.

And I could just see that face and I knew one thing was true about little Johnny Piper. I'm going to be ready for the judgment. Oh, how serious was life and death.

The motto on his college wall, he told me, was, The wise man prepares for the inevitable. There hangs in our house over at 1801-11, right by the living room front door, a plaque that hung in my kitchen all my growing up years which says, Only one life will soon be passed. Only what's done for Christ will last.

I read that every day of my life from six years to 18 years. And that's how serious life was for us. It is precarious and it is precious.

You don't waste it. And then he would tell these stories in his preaching. I have manuscripts of his preaching and so these stories come from there.

This is what he used to say. During a South Carolina campaign, a lovely high school senior attended every night but refused to accept Christ. Shortly after the crusade, while driving her car over a treacherous railroad crossing, she was killed instantly by a freight train she failed to see coming.

While I was in Pennsylvania, I witnessed a whole town shaken by the sudden death of six young men driving home from an afternoon football practice. They failed to stop at a major intersection and a big truck broadsided them and six were dead within three hours. I have seen babies die in their mothers' arms.

I have seen little boys and girls struck down before their lives had scarcely begun. I have witnessed men die in the prime of their life and others in the height of success. He told a story one time, I remember that he was in a crusade and there was this young girl who said to him, I'll give Jesus my life when I'm old.

And an older woman heard her say this and that night sent her a bouquet of dead flowers. And she was very offended. And the old woman said, Isn't that the way you're treating God? You can't hear too many of these stories as a little boy growing up without taking life seriously.

Life matters. It's real serious. There's heaven, there's hell, there's life, there's death, there's cross, there's forgiveness.

It is serious. And I learned that from my father. I put this in the book, *Don't Waste Your Life*, which all came out of this.

There was a crusade in which an old man for years in the church had been prayed for by the congregation. You remember that story? And on the last night of my father's preaching, God broke in and the man came forward weeping. And the church was gasping with gratitude.

And as he collapses into my father's arms, getting saved, he said through tears, I've wasted it. I've wasted it. And this is the point I said I would come back to with regard to fathers in this room who feel like you've wasted it.

Because I know that's the feeling for some on a father's day. Maybe you got saved later in life. Or maybe you woke up to your responsibilities later in life and you never led your family devotions or never set the right boundaries for your kids and never modeled Jesus.

And here you are 50, 60, 70. And I just want you to know, yes, much has been wasted. We've all wasted much.

We're all sinners. And it is not too late. That's the whole point of the thief on the cross, isn't it? It's not too late.

God will welcome you into paradise and you can begin to have input into your adult children's life that will blow them away. Last night when we finished this service, you know who I prayed with? We were here praying for about 45 minutes with people. The most common prayer request was not fathers.

It was young people being brokenhearted because of their fathers. Fathers who are right now committing adultery and won't admit it. And all the kids know it.

Right now, fathers who are addicted to pornography and all the kids know it. Right now, a father who's addicted to gambling and goes to St. Croix instead of to Texas where he told his wife he was going. And everybody knows it.

And these fathers are enslaved, killing everybody in their situation. And I just... If you're here this morning in that category, grace upon grace is abounding to you. That's going to come out later too, but I say it here.

Number five. A merry heart does good like a medicine, and Christ is the great heart-satisfier. You know that's a quote from the Bible, don't you? Proverbs 17, 22.

A merry heart does good like a medicine. I say it with very measured and careful words. My father, Bill Piper, is the happiest man I've ever known.

He wrote a sermon one time called A Good Time and How to Have It. Here's a quote. Right from the start, let's get this straight.

A Christian is not a sourpuss. I grant you that some may look that way, but you must not blame it on God. Some folks seem to have been born in the objective case and the contrary gender and the bilious mood.

I remember that. He used that on me all the time at the dinner table. Objective case, contrary gender, bilious mood.

I never knew what bilious meant. I had to get old to find out bilious. It comes from the word bile.

Bile. Sour, yucky stuff. So bilious is the adjective of a bile.

Mama. This is another illustration. Mama, that mule must have religion too.

He looks just like Grandpa. He preached a sermon one time called Saved, Safe, and Satisfied. He said, He's God.

When you fully trust Him, you have all that God is and all that God has. You cannot be otherwise than satisfied with the perfect fullness of Christ. And then he illustrated with the cow.

He said, worldly Christians are like a cow with her heads ducked through the fence eating the stubby grass along the highway while a beautiful green pasture lies behind her. Sort of sounds like Christian hedonism, doesn't it? A merry heart does good like a medicine and Christ is the great heart satisfier. Number six.

A Christian is a great doer, not a great don'ter. A Christian is a great doer, not a great don'ter. Now context.

We were fundamentalists. We were fundamentalists without the attitude. What I mean by that is, we had our lists.

I never smoked. I never drank. I never swore.

I never learned to dance. And I almost never went to movies. Still haven't learned to dance.

Still haven't smoked. Still haven't drunk. Well, I did drink some when I was offered wine in Germany, not to offense.

But basically, I'm a teetotaler. And I find it really hard to go to movies today because they're all crap. Well, I said it.

But I never swore. Send your letters. I'm used to getting those letters.

So why would you want to go mess up? But here's the thing. My daddy built the fences. And I never chafed.

I never walked up to the fence and said, I want to go over there. I want to go over there. This pasture is not green enough here.

I never did that. And I think I know now why. It's because my father was a great doer, not a great don'ter.

All there were was a few fences. And then inside the fence, this glorious, beautiful field where I lived with my father, there was enjoying God, loving people, doing good, feeling significant in what you were investing your life in. So let me read you from a sermon called The Greatest Menace to Modern Youth.

This is my dad talking now. Millions insist upon thinking that Christianity is a negative religion. You don't do this and you don't do that.

And you can't go here and you can't go there. To the contrary, the Bible constantly sounds the note, and it is a positive note. Be ye doers of the Word and not hearers only.

Whatsoever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might. God wants us to be doers, not don'ters. A Christian who is only a don'ter is a sour saint and spreads gloom.

A don'ter is usually a hypocritical Pharisee. Years ago I heard Dr. Bob Jones say, Do so fast, you don't have time to don't. And then he said, that sums it up.

And it did, it did. It summed it up for me. I didn't mainly think about the don'ts in my life.

They were just obvious. Because there was so much right going on, so much beautiful going on, so much significance. I mean, when you've got a dad, who gets on the plane on Saturday, gives you a big hug and says, Pray for me, the Gospel will triumph.

And he's gone for one, two, three, four weeks at a time. And he comes home always on a Monday. And Monday night dinner was the best time in the world for this little boy and his sister and that wife.

And he would come home and the first thing he'd do, tell us his new jokes. And the second thing he would do, is tell us the triumphs of the Gospel. I mean, I just lived in that and I thought, This is the best thing in the world.

To have a daddy who's living like that. And to have a mom who can endure that kind of absence and believe in him and never criticize him at all. Though he was gone two-thirds of the year.

Why would a kid grow up chafing when there was magnificent joy in mom, a magnificent joy in daddy, and significant investments of life at home and away. He left an indelible mark on me. We had our strict standards, but they were only fences protecting the best thing in the world.

Number seven, the Christian life is supernatural. I have one DVD of my dad preaching so I can see him. I remember, but now I can watch him.

And it's a sermon on the new birth, John 3, 7. Do not marvel that I say to you, you must be born again. Oh, how my father could preach on the new birth. And here was the lesson.

Becoming a Christian is not a mere decision. It is a supernatural work of God. You've got to be born again to be a Christian.

You can't just say, I'll decide to keep the rules. Baloney, rules don't save anybody. They don't create anything.

A new creation is the work of the Holy Spirit. It's a supernatural religion. Christianity is not a willpower religion.

I'll decide to do this. I'll keep the rules. I'll read my Bible.

I'll pray. I'll go to church. Blah, blah, blah.

That makes nobody a Christian. You become a Christian by the Holy Spirit making a new heart that now has new affections for God. I love God.

I love His ways. I love His Son. I love His Word.

I love His people. I love His commandments. That happens only by new birth.

And I learned that from my dad. It wasn't a willpower religion, which meant that as a family we prayed. Why does anybody pray? I mean, why would you pray? If you don't pray, I know why you don't pray.

You think you can do it. That's why. But if you have a religion that you can't do, and your whole goal in life is impossible, which it is, then you pray.

You get on your face as a family, and you say, Oh God, give daddy success this week. Grant that people would have their hearts opened to the preaching of the gospel this week. Grant that I would be transformed, that I'm an obedient son this week.

If you know what Christianity is, you're a praying person. If you don't know what Christianity is, you skip it. So test yourself to see what you've learned about the nature of the Christian faith.

It is a supernatural faith. Number eight. Bible doctrine is important, but you don't beat people up with it.

Now at this point, he admitted openly and with tears that his fundamentalist tradition had in part let him down. I watched it happen. I watched it.

It was not a happy thing to watch, the kinds of warfare that emerged. And he would say to me, Johnny, don't ever reject any of the truth, but do Ephesians 4.15 better. Anybody know what that is? Speaking the truth in love.

Speaking the truth in love. Be a truth person, Johnny. Be a truth person.

But there's more to life in Christianity than being a truth person. You must be a love person. Right doctrine and right relationships.

You're not real if you don't have both. That was huge. Number nine.

This is a trembling one. Respect your mother, son. You want to see my daddy angry? You don't want to see my daddy angry.

But if you saw him angry, I can almost for sure predict what caused it. This kid sassed his mother. This kid spoke sarcastically to his mother.

Boy, you want to see my father's face change from that laughter doeth good like a medicine to a blazing of eyes and a certain mouth and I'm in big trouble here. Well, then just sass your mother. And he had a special reason, I think, for why this was such a big deal to him.

Number one was biblical. The Bible says honor your mother. But number two, he knew my mother was pulling 175% of the weight in this family.

He's gone. And he's getting these phone calls about this kid named Johnny. He's so hard to deal with.

And you're not around to be a father to this kid and I don't know what to do. He's six inches taller than I am and age 13. I had a very short mother.

She was 5'2". And he knew what weight she was pulling. And therefore, he would illustrate in his sermons true love, not with married love, but mother love.

I heard it over and over again. When he wanted to get across real love, he would call it mother love, not romantic love. And therefore, he clearly communicated to me, do you know the sacrifices she is making for you? And you dare not ever treat her that way.

So, I would just commend to all fathers, so esteem your wives, that your children tremble to disrespect her. In any way. Number 10.

We're almost done. Be who God made you to be and not somebody else. This one is very encouraging to me.

My father, as my mother, was short. He was a little taller than she was, so he would stand about this high to me. And he's gotten shorter in the last 20 years.

I'm starting to get shorter. I didn't know that happened in human life, but it does. And as a short man, you know, men are supposed to be like Billy Graham, right? Six feet four, strong, good presence.

Well, there are a lot of short men in the world. He had come early on to be totally at peace with this. So much so that he would use it to great effect.

And he would joke about it. He told me one time, I was part of a football team of short guys. And we called ourselves little potatoes but hard to peel.

That's how at ease and at home he was. In fact, I've thought, as I've looked at history, and I had a pastor come up after the first service, named David, visiting here today, who's also 5'6", like my dad. So he liked this point a lot.

I said, as I looked at history, I think God really delights to take short men and make them great preachers. John Wesley was 5 feet 2 inches tall. And he could be heard by 10,000 people without a microphone.

Unbelievable! So my dad was okay with who he was. And that came over to me like this. He never pressured me to be a preacher.

Never pressured me to be an evangelist. Never pressured me to go into vocational ministry. He had one agenda for me.

What your hand finds to do, you do it with all your might to the glory of Jesus, son. There's a little side story here I'll tell you. When I was born, my dad, believe it or not, wanted to name me Peter.

Peter Piper. And my mother, the embodiment of submission, said, absolutely not. And she rescued me from a cursed life.

So, together, they decided on John Stephen. These are all biblical names, right? Peter, John, Stephen. You've all got pictures in your mind? The beloved disciple? The martyred disciple? Later in life, he said, Johnny, she was right.

She was right. That's a better name for you. I mean, after he saw me grow up and start to be who I was, he said, that's a better name for you.

I think you are a John Stephen and not a Peter. And here's what he meant. I think he wanted to name me Peter because he was Peter.

He is. I mean, what did Peter do? He stands up on Pentecost and the first sermon he gets 3,000 converts. That's what he wanted for me.

Embodied in the name Peter. I've never been that. I'm a total failure when it comes to that kind of fruitfulness in evangelism.

I'm not my dad. I've often grieved over it. I want to see more people saved through my ministry, right? I want more people saved through our ministry.

And he said, it's okay. It's okay. You are who you are.

And I'll tell you, when I talk to him, even to this day, I have to remind him I'm in Minneapolis. I have to remind him the name of the church. But he remembers I'm a pastor.

And he's happy about that. He just blesses me for that. So, fathers, be careful now.

Have a dream for your kid. And it's even okay, I think, to have a vocational dream for your kid. But don't press that on the child.

Press one thing on the child. God is worthy of your life. Whatever you do, do it with all your might.

And do it for the glory of Jesus. One last point. We close.

Now this is for dads, especially, who may be wandering away from their Heavenly Father. And I want to let my dad preach to you for three minutes here. I know this is what he'd want me to do.

To close with this one. And here's the eleventh truth. People are lost and need to be saved through Jesus Christ.

People are lost and need to be saved through faith in Jesus Christ. I mean, picture this. In and out.

In and out of the home. All my life. Home for four days, gone for three weeks.

Home for four days, gone for a week. Home. That's the way the life was.

What did that mean to me? You know what it meant? Hell is real. That's what it meant. Hell is real.

My mother and my father had made a pact early on. And my mother shed many tears over his absence. But they had made a pact.

Ruth and Bill are going to do this together. They're going to make this happen. They're going to make this evangelistic thing work.

So my mother will carry the load of whatever it takes so Daddy can preach to lost people who are going to hell. This was a family project to rescue people from destruction. That's what gave such profound significance to this little boy's life.

It was built into me. Daddy has gone to rescue people. Wouldn't that be great to know that your dad had gone somewhere and was rescuing people? And I'll tell you, he was fruitful.

My dad had a gift. There is a gift to evangelism. My dad was called to the ministry when he was 15.

The day after he was called to the ministry, he stood up in his English class in Redding High School, Pennsylvania and preached for 20 minutes in the English class. And kids got saved. They invited him to be the speaker at a little evangelistic thing in a theater.

Believe it or not, a theater. And he went to this theater and he didn't have a clue how to preach so he took six tracks and he laid them out here and he read the tracks. He read the tracks.

Ten kids walked forward and got saved. There was an anointing on this man. An incredible anointing on this man.

So when he got married, he said to this woman, he got married when he was 18. My mother was 19. And they got married and they said, will you let me do this? I must preach the gospel everywhere I'm called.

And so they did it together. And so I saw it and it meant people are lost and need to be saved. You can't grow up in a home like that and not feel the weight of lostness.

He said this in a sermon. In my evangelistic career, I have had the thrill of seeing people from all walks of life come to Christ. I have seen many professional people saved.

I have knelt with PhDs and led them to Jesus. College professors, bankers, lawyers, doctors. I have seen them all saved.

Then I have seen many from the other side of life come to the Lord. I have put my arm around drunkards in city missions and prayed with them. I have sat by the bedside of dying alcoholics and led them to Christ.

I have seen the poor, the forsaken, the derelicts, the outcasts, all come to the Savior. Yes, God takes them too. Isn't it wonderful that anyone who comes, anyone who wants to, can come to Christ? So perhaps you never had a father like that.

And perhaps you are wandering away from your heavenly Father. It just occurs to me in the last 14 hours or so that Father's Day would be a golden day to come home to the Father. All you prodigals, daughters included, this would be a great day to come home to your heavenly Father and ask Him to help you be, if

you are a father, the kind of father you want to be.

And He will. He will take you. That was the whole point of grace.

My father wrote a book called Grace for the Guilty. It just occurred to me while I was getting ready for this message, I think one of these days I am going to write a book called My Father's Faith and just put an introduction and include the four books that I know my father wrote. They are just little books and he published them himself.

No publisher would do it. And as I read them, they are good stuff. And so, you may have not had that kind of father and you can have a perfect father if you would come.

Let's pray. So Father in Heaven, we love to call You that. We love to celebrate You mainly on Father's Day.

I pray for fathers now who feel inadequate, which we all do, that You would forgive us for our failures. Give us a new lease on fathering. Help me to be a good father for adult and married fathers, sons, and a good father to my daughter Talitha.

And I pray that all of us would so unite as to make families in this church that bring up children who would be good mothers and good fathers who glorify our Father who is in Heaven. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

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