

The Legacy Of Faith

Week 15 • A Father's Blessing

Genesis 12

Father's Day Service Welcome Home Dr. Jack Graham President of The Southern Baptist Convention

June 16, 2002 • Sunday AM • Dr. Jack Graham, Pastor PBC

MESSAGE:

Amen! *In Christ Alone*. Take your Bible and turn with me to Genesis 12. I want to speak to you very briefly this morning in closing this service on, A Father's Blessing. Abraham is described on numerous occasions in Scripture as Father Abraham because he became the father by faith to a great nation, the Jewish people and not only the Jewish people but to all who believe. We are descendants of Abraham by faith. We are a part of the spiritual family by this man. In Genesis 12:2:

Genesis 12:2 (NKJ)
*I will make you a great nation;
I will bless you
And make your name great;
And you shall be a blessing.*

Now, Abraham has blessed the world. Father Abraham, a man whose faith has been carried on from generation to generation. It is my prayer that every father here, every dad, every mom, every parent would extend that blessing to our own families as we are living our own legacy of faith. I want to ask and answer the question today, how do we bless our children? So many children grow up without the blessing of God upon their lives. So many children never experience the blessing of a father, the blessing of a parent, those words of affirmation and acceptance. Just as you have blessed me as a congregation today by laying your hands upon me and extending the love and the grace of your blessing to us, we're supported in that and we're strengthened in that. So, every child needs the blessing of the father, every child needs the blessing of the family. What is it to bless our children? I want to use a little acrostic this morning.

Build our children's self-esteem.

By building our children's self-esteem inside of every child, made created by God, stamped with the signature of God Himself is incredible potential for life. Just as God promised Abraham to make a great nation of his people God has promised greatness to all who believe and trust in Him. So there is the opportunity within every child born, the gifts given to us by God, the opportunity to build character and confidence and compassion by blessing our children. God made every child to win. Yet, the reason that so many kids today are acting like losers is because they've never been told, they've never been blessed, they've never been built up in their own confidence in Christ. Therefore they don't know how to win. When you look at your child what do you see? I hope men that you see an incredible amount of potential. When our children were little we used to sing with them the little Gaither song, *I Am A Promise*.

*I am a promise.
I am a possibility.
I am a promise with a capital P.
I am a great bundle of potentiality.*

Every child carries within the heart and the life, certainly when that child is redeemed by the blood of His cross and the power of His resurrection, every child possesses amazing potential. I heard about a class in Vacation Bible School and they were asking the boys and girls what they wanted to be when they grew up. The various answers were, the normal answers were on the way of course; I want to be a fireman, I want to be a policeman, I want to be a mom, I want to be a president and then finally one little boy raised his hand and said, "I want to be possible." The teacher said, "Possible? Why do you want to be possible?" He said, "Because my dad tells me all the time I'm impossible I want to be possible." [Laughter] God help us to teach our children to tell our children that they are possible. God has poured out lavishly His love upon every one of us. In the same manner as He has blessed us with this confidence, this Christ confidence that we can square our shoulders and lift up our heads and live life confidently. So in passing our faith to our children and the blessing of our faith upon our children do we teach them to live life with self-esteem and confidence and possibilities for the future? You child is a blank check from God and we get the joy of building them up in who they are. But secondly we bless our children by...

Love our children unconditionally.

This is an unbreakable love that perseveres through trials and obstacles. Love is best defined of course as sacrifice, particularly in the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ.

John 3:16 (NKJ)

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son...

God gave Himself in love for us. When we love our children unconditionally our children respond to that love. Don't ever in any sense of the word in any way in your life suggest to your children that your love is based upon their behavior or based upon what they do but rather let your children know that no matter what they do that your love is lasting. Even as the love of God is eternal so is the love of a dad, the love of a mom lasting. The other day after the Southern Baptist Convention at a little dinner with our family and friends our children gave a tribute to dear old dad. It was interesting what they said and it was a very emotional moment. Each one of them mentioned the unconditional love but in particular they said, "Dad thank you. Thank you for providing security in our home by loving our mother and being faithful to mom." One of the best ways you can show your love for your children is by loving their mother and men to be faithful to the calling that you have as a husband and as a parent. Know that unconditional love must not, cannot be withheld. We express our unconditional love in all kinds of ways. Dads do it with hugs, do it with kisses and embraces. Be expressive; be effusive in your love for your children. Don't be standoffish but rather open and transparent with your love for your kids. Several years ago a letter was recorded by a lonely man and he was writing during the fearful days of the 2nd World War. His son was fighting in a far off distant place in the 2nd World War and the man set down to compose the following, anguishing verses.

Dear Son;

*I wish I had the power to write the thoughts wedged in my heart tonight,
as I sit watching that small star and wondering where and how you are.*

*You know son it's a funny thing how close a war can really bring.
a father who for years with pride has kept emotion inside.*

*I'm sorry son when you were so small I let reserve build up that wall.
I told you real men never cry and it was Mom, who always dried your tears
and smoothed your hurts away, so that you would soon go back to play.*

*But son deep, deep down within my heart I long to have some little part,
some little part in drying that small tear stained face,
but we were men, men don't embrace!*

*Suddenly I found my son a full grown man with childhood done
and tonight you're far across the sea fighting away for men like me.*

*Well, somehow pride and what is right have somehow changed places here tonight.
I find my eyes won't quite stay dry and that real men sometimes cry.
If we stood here face to face, I'm sure my son we would embrace.*

Embrace your children dads, hold them close, love them with all your heart and express it every day. We bless our children by building their self-esteem, by loving them unconditionally and thirdly...

Encourage our children's best.

Every child needs a cheerleader and dad you don't have to put on a skirt to be a cheerleader. I'm so thankful for my dad, Tom Graham who cheered me on every step of the way. I can't remember a ballgame or an event that my father was not there cheering me on. He was willing to stand in the background in order that my brother and I might take center stage. So many children grow up with constant criticism and negativity. If we grow up with criticism we learn to be critical but if we learn to grow up with praise we learn to be praiseworthy and to be expressive of praise. Remember when you start blessing your children with encouragement you are encouraging generations to come. Some of us here today are negative, or critical, or critical in our family environments because that's what we learned in our families. Perhaps you grew up in a family where there wasn't much praise and there was much criticism and you have just succeeded this in the generations of today. But you can break the cycle of criticism; you can tear that wall down. Remember this, how you praise and encourage your children will ultimately be reflected in their own lives and in their own parenting. I'm talking about your own grandchildren. So begin the cycle of praise and encourage them in every way possible. Next we bless our children by...

Shape our children's values.

We must not leave our children alone in order to fledge for themselves in this world that is no friend to grace. We shape our children's values by praying for them, by protecting them and then by teaching them to love God's Word and to live in obedience. For example the book of Proverbs in the Old Testament is actually a book of short and simple truths given from a father to a son. It is the role of the father, the big time role of the father to make sure that we are imparting wisdom, not just human wisdom but God's wisdom to our children and prepare our children for life by shaping their values. The Psalmist said in Psalm 127...

Psalm 127:4 (NKJ)
*Like arrows in the hand of a warrior,
So are the children of one's youth.*

Just as arrows are to be prepared and pointed and polished and then propelled against the adversary so we dads, like warriors, must be setting the arrows and releasing them. What does an arrow do? An arrow flies to a place where you cannot go and our children will live in a time and an era that we will not live but they are our message and the mission of Christ into the world through our lives. Therefore we are shaping them and developing them.

Proverbs 22:6 (NKJ)
Train up a child in the way he should go,...

Nourish the child and develop that child into a disciple of Christ. What is the role of a dad? You are to be a disciple maker in your own family, with your own children as you take the responsibility of shaping the values of your children for the years to come. Then finally we bless our children by building their self-esteem, by loving them unconditionally, by encouraging them to be at their best for Christ, by shaping their values and finally...

Strengthen or Share our own faith with them.

It's like the passing of a baton. As we transfer our faith in the race to our children and our children's children. One man wrote, Joseph Bailey who is one of my favorite writers, speaks of this transfer, this very important moment that some of us need to be thinking about a little more today dads. He writes...

Sometimes God speaks to us or causes us to take a long look at ourselves and our families at a time of change and that time may be beginning, the beginning of a new year or it may be an unexpected jolt or coming up short. My 60th birthday, [he writes] was such an occasion. It was a time when I had a warning of my own mortality, that a day was coming when my voice in this world would be stilled and I shall awaken in my Lord's awesome and joyous

presence. The warning was a tap on the shoulder, not hand around my neck or a shove to the ground but it caused me to think deep thoughts and consider separations and ponder my life and work. One heavy thought that came to me was, what final testament I would leave for my children and other Christians of their generation? That was not a new thought but in recent weeks it had been a recurrent but now there was an edge of urgency to it. I could not avoid the evidence that my generation is in the process of turning the game over to a fresh team...

We are now in the process of turning the game over to a fresh team, our children and our grandchildren and how we make the transfer is vital to the cause of the kingdom of God and the future of our families. They say that in a race, a relay race, the most critical moment is the exchange from one runner to the next, the passing of the baton. You don't get to slow down to do it. In fact you're running at full pace if you intend to be successful and you make the exchange by handing that baton to the one who will run after you. So it is in the Christian life in this race of faith that we're in gentlemen and ladies, that we have the opportunity and the responsibility to pass the baton of faith to our children and ultimately to their children. The bottom line is that the last steps in the race are the most critical in passing the baton. As we're getting older and as the race continues let's make sure that we don't stumble but that we keep running and running well and that from the first steps to the last steps that our children will know that we are men of faith, women of faith and that we are sharing our faith and strengthening the faith of our children. That's how you bless the generations to come.

It's my prayer that you would not only know the blessing of God upon your own life but that you would give that blessing away. As it were you would lay your hands upon the heads of your children and even as an ancient patriarch bless them for the sake of the gospel and for the joy of our faith in Christ.