

The last few weeks have been an incredible Journey for me. It seems that lots of people want to talk to me about this Father series. There is lots of vibes, but like youth and pimples, this too must come to an end. For 6 weeks we have Journeyed through the scriptures, discovering this mystical, powerful, enigmatic Deity that we refer to as Father God.

Along the way, my life has been changed and I know that a number of other lives have too. Today, we want to return to where we began, and take another look, but this time, with a better image of our heavenly Father in our hearts and minds.

But before we begin, let me remind you of something here. My goal in this series has not been to revisit your Father. I may not have hit on your dad on all. Maybe your dad was a mixture of all of the father's that we have looked at. Maybe he is none of them.

Our goal in this series was not to discover who your earthly dad was, or even to completely give you the tools to heal from pain related to that relationship. My goal in this series has been to expose the Fallen

Images so that we could approach our heavenly Father without all this baggage. Now, if you have baggage, you are still going to need to deal with that baggage at some point. And so we've looked at the **Impossible to Please/Manipulative Father**: and we saw how Jesus didn't operate from a place of seeking his father's approval, but because he already had his Father's approval, he ministered to other people. Then we looked at the abandoned child, or the **absent Father**. And we saw how God didn't abandon us without hope to our situation but he provided a way, a means of escape, an adoption free and clear into his family. Then we looked at a very painful Father, **the Abusive Father**. And we saw how our Heavenly Father stands in sharp contrast to this evil. Though abused himself, the Heavenly Father never abuses. Then we look at **the stingy Dad**. And how our Father is a very generous Dad. He just loves to give gifts. How we have a transactional view of God, that we invest and he gives a return, which is a legitimate view of God, but limited view of God. Finally, last week we looked at the **Weak Father**, and we saw how absolutely amazingly big our heavenly Father is.

Today, I want to try and do something different with you. Today, I'm going to speak directly to the Father's here. Everyone will get something out of this, but to finish this series, I'm going to speak to the Dads. I want to share with you 5 different gifts that every father should give his children. 5 gifts every Father can and should give his children.

So let's get started.

Christmas at the Porter house growing up, at many houses growing up, revolved around a number of small gifts under our Christmas tree, but there was usually 1 large gift for each child. Something that cost a lot. For each person here, how you perceive and receive these gifts will be a little different. Some you may not appreciate now, but you'll be very very grateful later.

Because of time, I'm going to cover these fairly quickly, so here we go.

Gift 1: Proclamation: In the ancient Hebrew world, there was a custom called "The blessing." A Father, sometime later in life, would call his children to him. It was often near the time of a Father's death, but as we see in the life of Isaac, not necessarily so. The Father would do a number of things. First, he would

give gifts. There was a birthright. That came from birth order. Then there was a blessing. A blessing was words. Simply that. A Father would speak into reality, almost in a prophetic act, the future that he felt that child would have. We see this in Isaac's case, and we see this in Jacob's case.

They believed that their words had power to impute identity into the child. I believe every father needs to speak praise and destiny into the life of their child.

Now, let's clarify something here. There is a self-help, positive feeling, wishy washy mushy psychology out there that many of our children are falling victim to today. And that is this. "You can be anything you want to be if you work hard enough or try hard enough." That is simply lazy parenting and lying to your kids. I'm in my middle to late 30ies, and there are things I haven't been able to do, even though I worked really really hard at them. There is a tribe in southern Tanzania, that have some sounds in their language that unless you learn them as a child, you can not learn them. Period. You just can't do it.

What I am talking about here is speaking value into a child's life. **Speak purpose**

“You are unique. God has a unique destiny and purpose for your life.” **Affirm Character:** You are strong. You are gentle. I respect the way you treat other people. You are courageous. Every night before going to bed, I ask my son Joshua “what are you?” I’m strong, I’m brave, I trust Jesus. I am reaffirming God’s identity in him. Proclamation.

Gift #2: Preparation: Father’s, your job is to prepare your children for life. There was a time when a man took his sons to work with him, and mother’s took their daughters with them. Today, parents feel their job is to provide an academic education for their children. But Dar es Salaam is full of unemployed, lazy, incompetent college graduates. That alone is proof that academics is only a fraction of what education is really all about.

Father’s, how do you prepare your children for life?

Discipline. Yes I know, but teach them they can’t always get their way. Don’t break them, but don’t give in to their every whim either. Because life won’t always baby them. Prepare them by discipline. Spare the rod, spoil the child, the scriptures say. It doesn’t say beat them to a pulp. It doesn’t say hurt your child. That scripture says correct bad behavior early, and

you won't have to correct it later. Fathers, the toughest time to parent your kids I believe is when they are below 5 years of age. And I see a ton of Dads that are basically like

Here. Take it, feed it, clean it, teach it to talk, and when we can play football together, bring it back. By that time, it may be too late.

Preparation: teach them to manage money. Time. To make good decisions. To choose their friends wisely. And if they aren't choosing wisely, be their Father. Remove them from the situation. Ban that boy from being in your house. Have the uncomfortable conversations. They will hate you now, and love you later. You are the Father. Your God given responsibility is prepare your kids for life. Bring them to church. Make them be part family devotions.

Gift # 3: Provision: Your job is to provide for you family. Now, I want to be careful here, because there are times when dad's loose their jobs. When money comes from mom, not dad. But money is not all there is. Making provision for your kids is planning for their future. In good times, you are looking ahead. Guess what? You have to pay school fees every year. For every one of your kids.

Provision: The biggest thing you can provide your kids, or one of them, is a good model to follow. Give them a good example.

Gift #4: Protection: Fathers, this is your job. Protect those kids. The funny thing here is often you have to protect them **from themselves**. My little ones would always head to electrical sockets. We are not born knowing how to make good decisions. We simply aren't. We have to be taught. Dads, protect your girls from the boys. And these days, protect your boys from the predatory girls. We joke a lot about in the states about getting a shotgun to run off the boys. We should be more serious I think. With the amount of date rape, of sexual abuse by teachers, we need some men to stand up and protect their little boys and girls. Protect them from themselves. I don't care. Turn off the stupid TV for a while. Make them do their homework. Trust me, they won't break.

Protect them from manipulators, from people who would make them feel inferior because of money, or status in society, or any other reason. Stand and fight for your family.

And Finally, the biggest gift you can give your kids, bar none. **Presence.** A Dad in the home. In their

lives. Some of you dads work so long, you leave before the kids get up, you come home after they are in bed. You are the law enforcer, you are the policeman. When you have a rare day off, you wonder why none of your family wants to spend time with you. Who wants to spend time with a stranger?

You don't understand Charles. My job.... My schedule. Whatever. Love is spelled TIME. And there are people who say that you can make up for quantity by quality. Just spend quality time with your kids. **Quality comes when there is lots of quantity.**

You need lots of time, lots of trust, so that when the moment comes where your kid is ready to open up to you, you are there. If you had to make half the money, move to mbeya, farm, and you could keep your family together, its worth it.

And let me say this. I've heard this before. Marriages in trouble, and the parents split up and divorce. And they say "its better for everyone involved. Especially the kids." The only time its better for the kids is if there is physical or abuse danger to one of the people in the home. But men, be honest. If you don't want your wife there anymore, its not better for her. Its not better for the kids. Its better for you. A child's worst

nightmare is their parent's divorcing. Fighting parents are frightening to children.

You have to be there.

I want to finish this morning by return to Luke 15. I want to reread the story of the Father, and I want you to notice how in this story, the Father longs to give every one of these to his sons.

Proclaim: THIS IS MY SON

PROTECT: BRING HIM BACK INTO THE HOME

PROVIDE: FOOD, CLOTHING, SHELTER

PRESENCE: He was there with him. Remember week whatever, when we talked about King David and how lousy a dad he was. When he was estranged from Absalom, he brought him back, but he refused to be in his presence with him. That must have been insanely painful for Absalom. My dad won't let me be in his presence.

11 Jesus continued: "There was a man who had two sons.

12 The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them.

13 "Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. 14 After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. 15 So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. 16 He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

17 "When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! 18 I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. 19 I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.' 20 So he got up and went to his father.

"But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

21 "The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'

22 "But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger

and sandals on his feet. 23 Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. 24 For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate.

25 "Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. 26 So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. 27 'Your brother has come,' he replied, 'and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.'

28 "The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. 29 But he answered his father, 'Look! All these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. 30 But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!'

31 "My son,' the father said, 'you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. 32 But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.'"

This morning, I want to take one last stab at this. To show you that your heavenly Father is not like your Fallen Images. Your heavenly Father is ready to give you all 5 gifts this morning.

Proclamation: Here is what God says

John 1:12 I am a child of God (Romans 8:16).

John 15:15 I am Christ's friend.

John 15:16 I am chosen and appointed by Christ to bear His fruit.

Romans 3:24 I have been justified and redeemed.

Romans 5:1 I have been justified (completely forgiven and made righteous) and am at peace with God.

Romans 6:7 I have been freed from sin's power over me.

Romans 8:1 I am forever free from condemnation.

Romans 8:14,15 I am a son of God (God is literally my "Papa") (Galatians 3:26; 4:6).

Romans 8:17 I am an heir of God and fellow heir with Christ.

Romans 11:16 I am holy.

Romans 15:7 Christ has accepted me.

1 Corinthians 1:2 I have been sanctified.

1 Corinthians 2:16 I have been given the mind of Christ.

1 Corinthians 3:16; 6:19 I am a temple (home) of God; His Spirit (His life) dwells in me.

1 Corinthians 6:17 I am joined to the Lord and am one spirit with Him.

1 Corinthians 6:19,20 I have been bought with a price; I am not my own; I belong to God.

2 Corinthians 2:14 He always leads me in His triumph in Christ.

2 Corinthians 5:17 I am a new creation.

2 Corinthians 5:18,19 I am reconciled to God and am a minister of reconciliation.

2 Corinthians 5:21 I am the righteousness of God in Christ.

Galatians 2:4 I have liberty in Christ Jesus.

Preparation:

Ephesians 2:10 For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

2 Timothy 2:21 Those who cleanse themselves from the latter will be instruments for special purposes, made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work.

Provision:

Matthew 6

25 "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? **26** Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? **27** Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life[e]?"

28 "And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field

grow. They do not labor or spin. **29** Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. **30** If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? **31** So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' **32** For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. **33** But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. **34** Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

Protection:

Psalm 59

8 But you laugh at them, LORD; you scoff at all those nations.

9 You are my strength, I watch for you;

you, God, are my fortress, **10** my God
on whom I can rely.

Presence

Psalm 139:

Where can I go from your presence? The highest of
heights to the depths of the seas. He is there.
Nothing like the presence of your Father.

Always available. Always reachable. Always
emotionally connected. Always forgiving, accepting,
loving, caring.

Father's covenant:

Men, stand up. Before God and the community,
before our children, our wives, and our families,
charge you to be

Proclaim. Provide. Protection. Prepare. And Be
present.

Finally, forgive our Fathers for not being what they
can not be. Father God.

