

**INTERCEDING FOR OUR FAMILIES**  
**Job 3:1-5; Psalm 1; Ephesians 6:4**

Wangaratta, Father's Day, 6/9/15

Good morning! And happy Father's Day to all our fathers this morning – especially to any who are experiencing their very first Father's Day this year.

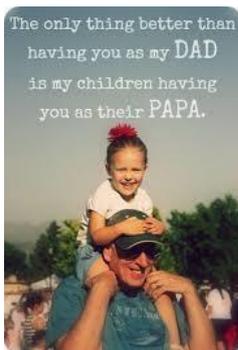
Here are a few thoughts on fathers and fatherhood I found on the internet. Starting with some good advice even if it does seem a bit impractical, if your children are young.



Our next one is kind of sweet, especially for those of us with daughters.

Daddy,  
I may find my  
Prince  
but you will always  
be my  
King

And this one is for the grandfathers among us, and it's a little hard to read: "The only thing better than having you as my Dad is my children having you as their Papa."



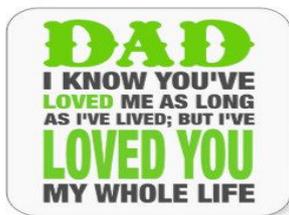
Happy Father's Day to any of our Dads this morning who are blessed to have three daughters:



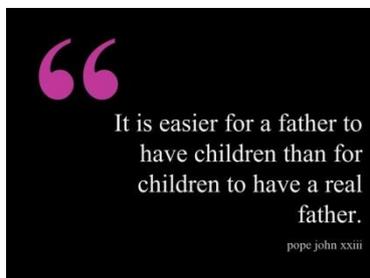
Still with the T-Shirt theme: a bit of a parody on President Kennedy's famous quote:



Here's one from a child's perspective

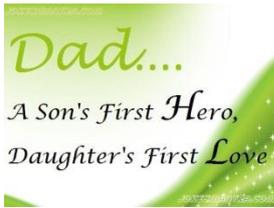


Here's a thought from Pope John

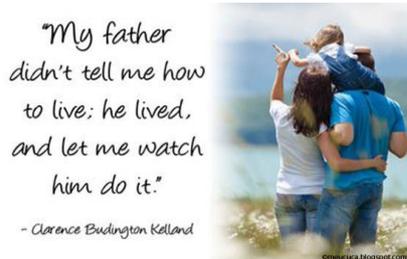


Something to think about!

And something for us to aspire to and then live up to!



And finally, something of a reminder of the importance of what we do as role models.



Being a father is many different things at different times. One thing that really hit me, soon after Jennie was born, was the sense of responsibility. Life was never going to be the same again. A whole new dimension to life had just opened up to us, and my responsibilities had just increased, dramatically. I suspect many new fathers experience this.

This morning, I want to take the great, Old Testament hero Job as an example of the kind of father we can aspire to be. Actually, there aren't too many positive role models when it comes to fatherhood in the Old Testament; many of the men were a bit ordinary in their home life. What a challenge to Christian fathers today. Can we be strong men of faith, and good husbands and fathers in our homes? Job says "yes"! So I find his example personally encouraging. Let's take a closer look at

## I. Job: Man of Character.

His story is fascinating. Of all the books in the Bible, Job teaches us a lot about the problem of suffering, and the sovereignty of God, and the link between them. Lots of chapters, and a lot of conversation, but it's a great book to read. In the first chapter of Job, we find,

### A. He Was Upright and Blameless.

Some of our personal characteristics we inherit from our parents. We say thing like: "The apple doesn't fall far from the tree!" She has her mother's eyes." "He has his father's nose." And the resemblance we bear to one or both our parents isn't limited to physical appearance. The disposition to a sweet nature, or a bad temper, can also be seen down the generations.

But there's a strong element of choice, when it comes to character. Job was a good man; recognised as such within his community. There was a consistent pattern to his behaviour.

**INTERCEDING FOR OUR FAMILIES**  
**Job 3:1-5; Psalm 1; Ephesians 6:4**

Wangaratta, Father's Day, 6/9/15

Faced with choices, as we all are, every day, Job consistently made good choices. He was recognised as “upright”, a man of integrity, someone to be trusted.

And he was described as “blameless”. Does this mean Job never sinned? Never did anything wrong? I can't imagine that for a moment. However, it does mean that whenever he did slip up, he took steps quickly to rectify it. Elsewhere in our Bibles we learn about the importance of confession and repentance, and setting things right with others, when we've done something wrong. No blame sticks when we take appropriate steps to set right those things we've done wrong. We'd all love to be faultless in our behaviour; and we all know how far short of this we fall. God has provided us with the means to be blameless, in his sight, and in the eyes of those around us, including our families. This was where Job stood.

He was upright and blameless, and

**B. He “Feared God and Shunned Evil”.**

He was good, and he was godly! We don't like to talk about “fearing God” so much these days. God is our friend! We trust him, at all times. Why would we be afraid of him?

I wonder if the pendulum has swung too far. Have we lost something of that sense of reverence and awe that is surely God's due as the Sovereign Creator of everything we see and enjoy? As parents, as fathers, do our children see reflected in us, a reverence and respect for God that will help shape their attitudes and relationships with him?

We don't tend to use the word “shun” much either these days! It's such a descriptive word! It's such an appropriate way to deal with evil! It has the sense of “keep right away from”; “avoid at all costs”.

“Fearing God” and “shunning evil” are appropriately linked. As we grow to understand God and his nature, his abhorrence of evil; as we give him the reverence he is due, we see through his eyes things that may otherwise appear attractive to us. Fathers, we are uniquely placed, as Job was, to set healthy patterns for our families in this.

As we note this description of Job and his circumstances, we see

**C. God Prospered Him.**

These days, we're a little cautious in drawing the link between faith and prosperity; especially when we see material prosperity used as a hook, or bait, to attract people towards faith. Prosperity is so much more than many camels, oxen or sheep, or even a large family – although it may include these kind of blessings.

Psalm 1 describes the prosperity of someone who is godly. He's like a healthy tree in a fertile environment; naturally productive. God still blesses, in many different ways, those who honour him in their attitudes and behaviour and relationships, as he blessed Job.

God stills calls men today, to be men of character and integrity. And I should say here, he expects the same of women. It's Father's Day today, and that's where our emphasis is; and there is a difference between a father and mother's role within the family. God expects us all; to be people of character and integrity.

It's the second paragraph of our reading I want to focus on this morning; and there, stemming from Job's character, we see he is a

## **II. Family Man and Intercessor;**

and an example in this, to fathers today. Our next point is an obvious one:

### **A. He Loved His Family.**

How do we know this? We read of his willingness to "sacrifice". What Job did regularly for his children cost him. He had ten children, and each time, he sacrificed a burnt offering for each of them. That's an easy calculation! Ten children, ten birthdays a year; that's a hundred burnt offerings every year!

Love and sacrifice are often linked. In fact, love places the term "sacrifice" in a whole new context. We often think of sacrifice in terms of cost, or loss; but when it comes to family, love looks past the cost and finds joy in giving up something that will bless the ones who are loved.

We're immediately drawn to Jesus' sacrifice on our behalf. Only love could motivate this depth of sacrifice. God, the perfect Father, out of love for us, his children, offered not one hundred sacrifices, but one perfect sacrifice, his Son, for all people, and for all time.

Let's consider the nature of Job's sacrifice. Job loved his family, and

### **B. He Cared for Their Spiritual Well-Being.**

I'm sure he provided for their physical needs. Did he roll around on the floor with them, when the kids were little? Did they do that kind of thing back then? I don't know. In the context of what we do know about him, Job was a good father.

And he did not neglect his children's spiritual needs. He recognised the potential for his children, in good times and times of celebration, to sin against God and move away from him. He didn't preach or nag. He didn't "exasperate his children"!<sup>1</sup>

And in an Old Testament setting, before Jesus and his perfect sacrifice, Job took on the role of priest and intercessor for his family. He used the means God provided, to bring his children into God's presence.

What a challenge to us fathers today! We provide for our children's needs in areas of nourishment, discipline, education, exercise, sport, hobbies; what about their spiritual needs? Is it easier to leave this to their mother? Or Children's Church?

Can we picture godly Job, rising early after each of his children's birthdays, to provide for their purification? Perhaps one of them had sinned in their heart. Job was prepared to stand in the gap, and intercede for his children. In this context, we should note the importance of

### **C. Building Our Own Relationship with God.**

Fathers, we won't be much use as intercessors, if our own relationship with God is looking pretty scratchy. James urges us to pray for each other, especially in the area of healing; and he tells us, "The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective."<sup>2</sup> Again, I'm sure the prayers of a righteous *woman* are also powerful and effective. Men, we need to be diligent in this area of opportunity and responsibility. Can we make sure we keep our relationship with God fresh and growing; for our own sakes firstly, but so we can be powerful and effective as intercessors for our families?

Job offered sacrifices; we can pray. Let me use the last of our time to talk about

### **III. Praying for Our Families.**

Maybe you feel you're not very good at this. I'm not sure we have to be "very good" at it! Let me refer again to what James said: it's the prayer of a *righteous* man that is powerful and effective. Surely what's important is our standing with God, and our relationship through Jesus, rather than how well we pray. Here are a few suggestions of things to pray for. As we intercede for our children, we can pray firstly,

#### **A. For Their Salvation.**

---

<sup>1</sup> See Ephesians 6:4

<sup>2</sup> James 5:16

**INTERCEDING FOR OUR FAMILIES**  
**Job 3:1-5; Psalm 1; Ephesians 6:4**

Wangaratta, Father's Day, 6/9/15

That's fairly basic, isn't it? And it's the basis of everything else we ask for on their behalf. When it comes to our children's salvation, there is much we can do, and something only *God* can do. We can provide a Christian home, where the things we do reflect our own love for God and our commitment to following him. We can bring our children with us to church, where, as a church, we're committed to teaching our children about Jesus, and helping them discover him themselves. And we can pray.

Because the work of salvation is God's work. Only he can give them this new life.

We don't have to overcome God's reluctance in this! We pray for soft, open and receptive hearts. We pray that the seed once sown will take root in fertile soil, and grow a faith that is strong and vigorous, able to withstand the many pressures we know are out there. We pray for protection against any forces that would damage or corrupt that tender faith in its infancy.

Let me acknowledge this morning those of you whose children are older and have not yet taken that step of salvation; or have taken a first step, and then apparently abandoned all thought of living as a Christian. I can only imagine how hard this must be for you. What can you do? What can you say that will help, rather than turn them further away? Can I encourage you this morning to keep praying? "The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective." We also pray

**B. For Growth in Maturity.**

Statistics tell us that most decisions for Christ are made when we are young. That's the blessing of a Christian home and a consistent example. It also reminds us that first decisions will usually be followed by others, as that young, immature faith confronts the realities of life and is challenged to go deeper.

As we reflect on our own journeys, most of us have had our spiritual ups and downs, our high points and low points. Let's acknowledge that some of this is probably necessary for the formation and development of our faith; and some of it was due to human sinfulness. What better way for a father to pray than for the growth of his children's faith; and in the faith of other parents' children. Can we also pray,

**C. For Their Relationships?**

For their relationships as they grow through their formative years, but of course I'm thinking particularly of that one relationship that leads to marriage, and families of their own.

**INTERCEDING FOR OUR FAMILIES**  
**Job 3:1-5; Psalm 1; Ephesians 6:4**

Wangaratta, Father's Day, 6/9/15

Ask God to raise up someone godly for your son or daughter; that he would protect and keep them for each other; that they would meet and form a healthy relationship that leads to a rich and satisfying marriage and family.

When should we start to pray this way? Could it ever be too early? Could you imagine a better investment of your time in your children's future? Fathers, you take your child to soccer, or ballet, and all the other great opportunities we hope will help them grow into balanced adults. Will you also spend a few moments, each day, to ask for God's guidance in their lives?

Our emphasis has been on fathers this morning; can I finish with a word to everyone about

**D. Praying for Our Intercessors?**

The work of intercession is not exclusively for fathers of course. But they have a vital role in this for their families. And it isn't an easy one; and many of us are more into getting out there and doing things, than disciplining ourselves to regular, systematic praying.

I think of the classic instance of intercession, with Moses on the mountain, hands raised, interceding for Joshua and his men, fighting the Amalekites down in the valley. As the battle continued, Moses' arms became tired, so Aaron and Hur, one each side, held up Moses' arms until the battle was won.

Ladies, will you pray for our fathers, as they intercede for their families, (as well as praying for your families yourself, of course)?

And fathers, can I challenge you this morning to commit yourself afresh to praying for your family, and your children, regardless of how old they are? Given what is at stake, this could well be the most valuable moments of your time, in the whole day.

What a privilege it is to be a father!