



Auburn Presbyterian Church

Passionately loving the Lord Jesus Christ and radiating that love to every individual

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“A Father’s Blessing”

Luke 15:11-32; Ephesians 6:1-4

Dedication of Stewardship Decisions

The Lord’s Supper

Fathers Day

A Minnesota pastor sent in this story. Back in the days when fathers-to-be didn't go into the delivery room, a pastor went to visit one of his men whose wife was in labor. As he sat with his member, he saw another man across the room who looked familiar. He couldn't place the man's name, though. A few minutes later a nurse came out and went to the man across the room and said, "Congratulations, sir. Your wife just had twins!" The man was a bit surprised, but joyous nonetheless. He thought for a moment and said to the nurse, "Isn't that ironic. My wife just had twins, and I pitch for the Minnesota Twins." Immediately the pastor recognized him as a ballplayer. A few minutes later a nurse came out to another man in the waiting room. "Congratulations, sir. Your wife just had triplets!" To say the least, the man was taken back. After he gathered his composure he said, "Imagine; my wife just had triplets and I work for 3-M Corporation." About that time another man in the waiting room darted out of his seat and ran for the exit. The pastor could tell something was wrong and he grabbed him by the arm and said, "Is something wrong, son?" The man replied, "I work for 7-11 and I'm getting out of here!"

That man knew he was facing daunting responsibilities as a father—but so were the men whose wives were giving birth to 3, or 2, or even a single child. Parenting is not for sissies.

The Bible gives us important insights about parenting, and the role of fathers. Let's open our Bibles to Ephesians, chapter 6. Paul is writing his friends at Ephesus, after he had led a number of people to trust Jesus Christ for their salvation and follow him as Lord, and after he had gathered a church and appointed elders to guide that flock. He covers many subjects in this letter, including in this section on fathering. Listen with me for God's Word TO US TODAY, as I read these words aloud. *[text]*

This is a picture of a healthy home, with good relationships between parents and kids. But there's a particular task of parenting that I want to lift up today, and that's a parent's role in giving The Blessing to each of their children. And I'm not talking about money, though there are many jokes about that.

A dad routinely dispensed his daughter's allowance every Sunday night. She knew where to find it when she got up on Monday morning. One Sunday night he forgot to leave the allowance. When he got home from work on Monday evening, he found this note from his daughter: "I believe you are guilty of delinquency in contributing to a minor."

It appears to me that many fathers are guilty of delinquency when it comes to contributing to and participating in the lives of our children. Fathers, we're fooling only

ourselves when we think our youngsters don't need our active involvement. (from Ray Franklin Koonce, "Model of Maleness," *Living with Preschoolers* magazine, Jan - Mar, 1992, pgs. 30-31)

The specific involvement I want to urge upon you is the act of Blessing each of your children. You can do this even if you do not live with the child's mother—in fact, your children who live mostly without you in their lives need this from you all the more, in addition to your verbal support for their mother.

Think of how important The Blessing was in the stories we men are reading from Genesis. The male children, especially, longed to hear The Blessing from their fathers. It set them up for success, even if that success was meager.

In this special kind of blessing, you provide your child a hope and a future, as God says through Jeremiah 29: "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." (Jeremiah 29:11, NIV) In all that follows, I'm taking guidance from a book by John Trent and Gary Smalley called, *The Blessing*. I bought an extra copy and have put it in the library, because I cannot cover all the important topics they tackle in their pages [including how we can live twisted lives if we don't get The Blessing from our parents]. This applies to women, as well as men—we all need to live in hope. If you feel that you have never received The Blessing (men, especially, need to get that from their fathers, but that is also true of women), then check out the book and find how to get a blessing that fills your life with hope. Pray for your children. Lead them to know God in Jesus Christ, for God is our Father, the source of all blessings in general, and of each person's personal blessing.

There are five elements Trent and Smalley see in *The Blessing*, which I'll review quickly, and which you might like to write down. This material will be on our Web site in the next day or so, and in print on the Ushers Table by next Sunday morning.

The first element of *The Blessing* is meaningful touch. This is not a handshake, or a pat on the head. This is a hug that plants peace, deeply in the heart of your child. This is laying on hands, in a weekly blessing ceremony. Our skin covers our bodies, but is largely neglected in our culture. Babies who are not touched a lot soon after birth can die; infants who are not touched a lot can fail to thrive. As Bessie Eichorn knows and practices, even as adults we all need a holy hug—seven to twelve each day—in order to maintain emotional balance. That's meaningful touch that tells the one we embrace, "You are important to me." I will be hugging every one of you as you leave today, if you will let me.

The second element of *The Blessing* is a spoken message. This is not just words tossed across a room, but words that pay full attention to the child, and take in the child's reality. We have to tell them, often, that we love them—and we have to mean it. If we don't tell them, they are left guessing, and perhaps turn into workaholics because they can never be sure they are OK with us. Other kids give up; if they are cursed or neglected, they can form the conviction that they are worthless, and build a life based on that conviction. Words have power, the Bible shows us. God's words create what God says. We need to regard our words carefully.

Some parents withhold this part of the blessing. They'll say, "I don't want my kids to get a big head," or some such. When you withhold your blessing, you damage your kids. Perhaps you do that because your parents withheld that part of the blessing from you. The Bible tells us,

“The sins of the fathers are passed on to their children, and their children’s children, to the third and fourth generation,” (Exodus 20:5--which is like saying, “forever”). Break that chain, by blessing.

Third, we have to attach a high value to the one being blessed. If they are OUR child, they need to know they are special to us above all other children in general. We need to pay attention to our kids, and identify their great qualities and character traits that remain before and after episodes of misbehavior and mistakes.

Our authors give us some ways to form up and deliver this high-value communication. First, think of a word-picture that captures the quality we want to lift up. The Bible is full of word-pictures that people of those times knew by heart. Jesus used word-pictures often, and the story of The Prodigal Son in Luke 15 is only one extended example. Our word pictures we use with our kids have to be based on their experience. They need to match the emotional meaning of the trait we are praising. For example, watching together a mother cat care for her kittens may be a word picture you can use with a firstborn child who has been pitching in to care for the infant you’ve just brought into the house. Word-pictures have a way of getting past our defenses; we don’t doubt or dispute them like we might do to words alone. And our word-pictures need to lift up that child’s potential, which begs the question, “What do you see ahead for your child?”

This leads to the fourth trait of The Blessing—attaching high value to the one being blessed. Trent and Smalley say, “Children are filled with the potential to be all God intended them to be. It is as if the Lord places them on our doorstep one day, and we as parents are left as stewards of their abilities. During the years we have children in our homes, the words we speak to them can wrap themselves around them like a cocoon. What we say shapes [and develops them in powerful ways].” “If a parent pictures for a child that their value in life is low, that child will find it difficult to rise above those words. In one insightful study of fathers and their daughters, it was found that these women’s achievement in life was directly related to the level of their fathers’ acceptance of them.” (p. 109, 111)

Trent and Smalley point out that we have to earn the power to have our blessing taken seriously. We achieve that by being consistent and trustworthy in the past, and by following through dependably in the present.

The fifth element of The Blessing is an active commitment to fulfill the blessing, which simply means, we invest our time, energy and money to help this word-picture of the future become realized in our child’s life. There are some steps that our authors recommend, beginning with “commending them to the Lord”. Every week I stand up here and bless you this way, with the words of Scripture: “May the Lord bless you and keep you, may the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you. May God lift up his countenance upon you and give you his peace.” (which is Leviticus 6:24-26) Do the same for your child. Commend them to God, and they will look to God for blessing, courage and presence, even when you are not there.

A second step of this commitment is to commit yourself to the best interests of your child, which includes the occasional discipline to help them form good character.

A third step in this commitment is to become a student of those we bless. That means, taking specific time to talk with your kid, Doing things together is the best way to make that

time. Here's a pop quiz: Do you know what each child most often daydreams about? When they think of their years as a young adult, what would they really enjoy doing? Of all the people you've studied together in the Bible, which one would they most like to imitate, and why? What do they believe God wants them to do for the human race? What type of boyfriend or girlfriend are they most attracted to, and why? What is the best part of their school day, and what is the worst? (p. 134) And we must give our children our full attention: face-to-face, listening to their words and their voice tone and watching their body language, and give them feedback that shows we are listening. A grunt of an "Uh-huh" while you are doing something else is a rip-off that even little children can see through. Children deeply need this active listening, for it proves--in real time--that we value them.

How are you doing? Not so good? Then I have a suggestion. Take this to your Life Group. Ask two others to hold you accountable for how you have been a blessing to your children since the last time your Life Group met. This group accountability will help you change your habits, so you can be more of a blessing to your kids, which pays huge dividends in the years to come.

"Bubs" Roussel was only 17 on December 7, 1941, when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor. Like many others, Bubs was called to service, assigned to the Army Air Corps (now, the Air Force), trained as a radio operator, and placed in a crew of a B-29 bomber. His crew was soon sent to Saipan, in the Western Pacific. From that tiny island, bombing runs were mounted over Japan itself. The work was dangerous, and could well be deadly. On the morning of December 13, 1944, eighteen bombers set out to make a run on the war factories of Nagoya, Japan. Four of the planes that left Saipan that morning never returned. Bubs's plane was one of them.

The War Department sent word home that the Roussels' son had been killed in action. Families of each of Bubs's crew received, along with the telegram, a small white flag with a gold star in the middle of it, showing that their son had given his life in the war.

Bubs's parents received something else. Almost a month after his plane went down, they received a letter that Bubs had placed on his pillow before his last mission. It read, "Dear Folks, I have left this with instructions to send this to you if anything happens to me. My life has been a full one. I have been loved like very few persons ever. I love you all with the best that is in me. It hasn't been hard for me, knowing you believe in me, trust me, and stand behind me in fair and foul. Knowing this has made me strong."

Would our children be able to write a letter like this to us? (pp. 140-141)

Will you be a blessing to others this week? As the men hear me say a lot on Fridays, "the three most important verses in the Bible are Genesis 12, 1, 2, and 3. We are blessed to be a blessing." Fathers, be a blessing to your children—even if you're starting late, start NOW.

INTRO TO COMMUNION

HUG EVERYONE AS THEY LEAVE

[This sermon preached to the congregation of Auburn Presbyterian Church, Auburn, California on June 15—Fathers Day--2008, by Rev. Kenneth B. Winter.]