

## THE SIX ADMIRABLE TRAITS OF A GODLY FATHER

*“For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just.”*

Genesis 18:19a (NIV)

Good morning! It is Father’s Day and I’m so glad to see a lot of fathers this morning. They all look so handsome like Kuya Rey.

You know, being a father can be an interesting and trying experience. For example, a small boy said, “Father’s Day is just like Mother’s Day, only you don’t spend as much on the gift.”

Then, there’s the boy who asked, “Dad, are bugs good to eat?” His father replied, “Let’s not talk about such things at the dinner table, son.” After dinner the father inquired, “Now, son, what did you want to ask me?” “Oh, nothing,” the boy said. “There was a bug in your soup, but now it’s gone.”

By the way, it’s really interesting that in the dictionary the word that comes before father is fatheaded. You know what fatheaded means, right? If you don’t, google it.

Now, I’m not saying that fathers are fatheaded but that seems to be the image that we’re getting from the media nowadays. Fathers don’t get the same kind of appreciation that mothers do. We see them being panned and caricatured in movies, TV programs, and even in comic strips. And people laugh at and relish the sight of bumbling dads who cannot do or say anything right. Perhaps, this is because of what’s happening in our society today wherein fatherhood has become a lost art. Meaning, many fathers don’t know how to be a real father to their children. They are disconnected to their children, they don’t know how to relate, and they are busy with so many things other than their children. Worse, some have given up on being a father altogether and abandoned their children.

In 2016, for example, according to statistics, approximately 35% of children under 18 in the US lived in homes where the father was absent. That's about 18 million children.

There was a time when fathers were well-respected and held in high regard. For example, during the colonial period in America men defined themselves by their level of community involvement and fatherhood. Marriage and fatherhood were seen as being among the highest aspirations in a man's life. Today the highest aspirations of men seem to be career success and personal leisure to the detriment of their families' well-being. As a result, too many men, including professing Christian men, express their role as father exclusively in terms of financial provider. The fact is children are not looking for financial provision; they are looking for love, guidance, and a role model for what it means to be a parent and a man.

It's so sad that many men have given up on their God-given role as leaders in the family. This is not God's purpose for fathers. His purpose for fathers is the same purpose he has given to Abraham when God chose him to be the father of God's chosen people, the Jews. Let's read together this passage from Genesis 18:19. Here, God is speaking. "For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just."

Now, of course, this promise was to Abraham only. But this promise contains a principle which is supported by numerous verses in the Bible. And the principle is that the father should be the one to direct the affairs of his children and help them to follow the ways of the Lord.

So, in our message this morning, I'd like us to look at six admirable traits that a godly father should have based on the six admirable traits that our Heavenly Father himself possesses.

And just like my message on Mother's Day, we will look at the acronym FATHER and describe what it means to be a godly father. First, I'll relate each trait or quality to our Heavenly Father and then apply it to our earthly fathers. And I hope, through this, those of us who are fathers can live up to this standard of fatherhood that God has set for us. And those who are not fathers, I hope you can focus on God's love for you this morning as he reveals himself to you as your father today.

So, let's talk about FATHER.

## 1. FAITHFUL PROVIDER

This is an apt description of our Heavenly Father. He is faithful in providing our every need. He provides not only food, but also clothes, shelter, and what-have-you. That's why there's no need to worry. He knows your situation. Whatever you're going through, if you're his child, he will not forsake you. I want us to open our Bibles to Matthew 6:25. We're going to read from 25 through 32. This is a great passage to remind ourselves of the faithfulness of God. I want us to read alternately. If you're feeling like God seems to be not concerned about you, please don't feel that way. I hope these verses will encourage your heart this morning. READ Matthew 6:25-32.

I remember the story of Corrie Ten Boom. Corrie was a Christian Dutch lady who gave refuge to a number of Jews in her family's home during World War II. The Germans found out about it and arrested her and her family. They were brought to a concentration camp where her parents died and she witnessed a German guard raped her sister. She was released after a few years in a miraculous way. Years after, a film producer contacted her because he wanted to make a movie out of her experiences during the war. She agreed and they started shooting. Toward the end of the project, however, they found out that they were short of \$50,000 to finish the film. That was a big amount in the 60's.

Many in the film crew were discouraged. Corrie reminded them of God's faithfulness and gave them this verse in Psalm 50:10 where God declares, "...for every animal of the forest is mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills." So, they prayed for God's provision armed with the knowledge that God owns everything in this world and can provide in his own way in his own time. After three days, a mail arrived with a letter from a Christian businessman who said that he was prompted in his spirit to donate money to the movie. Enclosed in his letter was a check for \$50,000. No one ever contacted that businessman before. The movie, by the way, is "The Hiding Place". This movie is actually based on a book of the same title.

Our heavenly Father is a faithful provider. The earthly father must also be a faithful provider for his children. He may not provide their wants or all they desire – but he provides for their needs. The Bible says, "Anyone who does not provide for their relatives, and especially for their own household, has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever." (1 Timothy 5:8)

There it is in black and white. If we, fathers, do not provide for our families we have denied the faith and are worse than unbelievers. We have an obligation to provide for the needs of our families – and not just material or financial needs. There are emotional needs and other kinds of needs, too.

So, the father needs to be conscious of the needs of his children. Their needs should be foremost in his mind. This may require sacrifice on his part especially if the children are growing and, therefore, expenses are growing, too, but his income is not growing. In which case, he may need to curtail his spending on certain things that are unnecessary. If he is prone to buying the newest and coolest gadget, he may need to forego of that. If he is accustomed to watching the latest movie in town, he can just wait for it to be available in Redbox. Unless he goes on a date with his wife, which is just fine. You cannot sacrifice that.

The point is, sometimes a father must give up things or make an extra effort to attend to the needs of his children. So, the first admirable trait of a father is being a faithful provider.

## 2. ALWAYS AVAILABLE

Our heavenly Father is always available to his children. If you are a child of God, you can be assured that he will be there with you when you need him. He is not an absentee father. Just call his name and he will be there. He is there for you.

When the Israelites were in the desert after leaving Egypt, they began to mumble and grumble and doubted that God cared for them. They were so afraid because of the pagan nations around them who they knew could attack them any moment and annihilate them. But listen to what God says to them, “Do not be terrified; do not be afraid of them. The LORD your God, who is going before you, will fight for you, as he did for you in Egypt, before your very eyes, and in the wilderness. There you saw how the LORD your God carried you, as a father carries his son, all the way you went until you reached this place.” (Deuteronomy 1:29-31) God had always been with them. From the time they left Egypt to the time they reached the Promised Land. And, of course, even beyond that.

You see, we may lose our wi-fi connection or AT&T, TMobile, Sprint, and Verizon may fail us but connection with God will always be on. We have a direct line to him. And when we call, God is all ears. In Jeremiah 33:3, God says, “Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know.”

In the same way, a godly father is there for his children. He makes a way to be there. He will not abandon his children when they really need him.

Earlier, I mentioned a statistic that showed the percentage of children who don't have a father at home. Let me show you some more statistics that show the effects of not having a father at home.

According to the U.S. Department of Justice, children from fatherless homes account for:

63 percent of youth suicides

90 percent of all homeless and runaway youths

85 percent of all children that exhibit behavioral disorders

71 percent of all high school dropouts

70 percent of juveniles in state-operated institutions

75 percent of adolescent patients in substance abuse centers

75 percent of rapists motivated by displaced anger

All of these are the devastating effects on children who grew up without a father figure. I think it is quite obvious then that the presence of a father in a child's life is important for the healthy development of the child.

Availability, of course, means that the father can be easily approached or is ready to listen and give advice. It means that the father may be miles away but if he is just a phone call away, then that means something to a child. On the other hand, the father may be just a few feet away, but if he cannot be bothered at all, then it's as if he is miles away. You see, it means nothing if the father is physically present but absent in spirit.

I read about a little girl who drew a pretty picture. She went in her dad's office. Crawled on his lap. And said, "Daddy, come and see my picture."

And the dad said, "Not now, honey. Dad's busy."

About 10 minutes later, she came back again. Crawled on his lap. And said, "Daddy, will you come see my picture now?"

And the dad got frustrated. And said, "Can't you see I'm busy? Don't bother me right now. I'll come and look at your picture later. When I'm ready."

A couple of hours later, the dad came out. And he said to the daughter, "Can I see the picture now?" And the girl said, "Sure."

And it was a picture of her and her brother and her mom standing on the lawn. With the family dog. With big smiles. On a sunny day. But the dad noticed that he wasn't in the picture. And so the dad said, "That's a nice picture, sweetheart. But how come I'm not in the picture?"

And the girl said, "Because you're working in your office, daddy."

Availability means giving of your time. And time is a gift you give that you can never get back. You can give money, and always make more. You can give gifts, because you can always get new things anyway. But once time is given, it never comes back. Use your time wisely when it comes to your children.

### 3. Trustworthy

Trustworthy means able to be relied on as honest or truthful. In other words, you keep your promise. Also, you say what you mean and you mean what you say. It is closely linked to integrity. And this is what makes our heavenly Father worthy of our trust. We can rely on every word he says. He never breaks his promise. The Bible says, "God is not man, that he should lie, or a son of man, that he should change his mind. Has he said, and will he not do it? Or has he spoken, and will he not fulfill it?" (Numbers 23:19)

And so, whatever your situation is, however difficult it may be, and you don't understand what's going on, just trust God when he says in Romans 8:28, "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who<sup>l</sup> have been called according to his purpose."

Time and again, I say this, God is in control. He really is. Your situation may seem to be out of control but God is firmly behind the wheel. He is steering your course. He will never leave you nor forsake you as he promises in his Word. We must just hang on and wait for his deliverance. You can always trust him. He will never fail you.

Now, I mentioned earlier that trustworthiness is linked to integrity. You see, your integrity is kept intact by the promises you keep. What is integrity anyway? Integrity is composed of three different activities – telling the truth, keeping your word and practicing what you say you believe. If you want to be a person of integrity always tell the truth, always keep your word or your promises and always practice or do what you say you believe.

Proverbs 25:14 “Broken promises are worse than rain clouds that don’t bring rain.” Have you ever failed to keep a promise? Don’t promise something you can’t keep.

Years back, my boss rushed her 9-year-old daughter to the hospital because of an infected appendix. It’s good that it didn’t explode yet and the girl underwent surgery to have the appendix removed. The next day we overheard our boss talking to her husband, who was in the army and stationed in Afghanistan. In fact, he just arrived in Kandahar the day before. Her husband wanted to come back home to visit the girl who was his step-daughter. Despite my boss’s objections, he came back to the US anyway and saw the girl in the hospital.

After a few days, I told my boss, “You’re lucky to have a husband like him. He’s so thoughtful. Imagine coming back home when he’s not even settled yet in Afghanistan to visit your daughter.”

She said, “I told him he didn’t have to come home. He could’ve just saved the \$4000 for our second honeymoon or something.”

And I said, “Still, he must love you and your daughter so much / for him to do something like that.”

And my boss said, “Only if my daughter could love her the same way too. I don’t think she really appreciated his gesture.”

“What do you mean?” I asked, puzzled.

She replied, “When she was five-years-old, my husband told her that he would never leave her. That even if he was called abroad, he wouldn’t go. But he did. He went to Afghanistan. That devastated her. And she never forgot that. She never forgave him for that. So now, my husband has been trying all he can to win her love back.”

Dads, if you want to be a trustworthy person, you’ve got to keep your word. Studies have shown that the number one cause of resentment in children is parents who don’t keep their promises. So, you’ve got to keep your word. You’ve got to tell the truth. You’ve got to practice what you say you believe.

#### 4. Hope-Giver

In the world we live in, it’s easy to lose hope. There are wars, economic uncertainties, diseases, drug problems, and the like. And we experience personal problems. They keep piling on us. That’s why some who couldn’t take it anymore, just give up. Recently, we learned of the suicides of people like Anthony Bourdain, the American celebrity chef, and Ruslana Korshunava, the Russian supermodel who was just 20.

In our hopelessness, we can hold on to God because he gives us hope. He is the one who tells us to keep on looking at the bright side of life because he gives us a future that is full of hope. He says in **Jeremiah 29:11**, “‘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.’” Whatever you’re going through, just hang on. It will pass away. **Zephaniah 3:17** says, “‘For the Lord your God is living among you. He is a mighty savior. He will take delight in you with gladness. With his love, he will calm all your fears.’”

In the same token, good fathers are a source of hope and inspiration for their families. Dads are the family’s pillar of strength and they are the ones who tell us that things will be all right when tough times are around the corner.

Clare Boothe Luce once said, “Where there is no faith in the future, there is no power in the present.”

Hopeful fathers are always positive. They can be that way because of an ever-abiding faith in God. So it is important that a father first of all must put all his hope and trust in God in order to provide hope to his children. His faith in God will enable his children to put their hope and faith in God as well.

The importance of faith in the life of a father cannot be underestimated. A study released by the Swiss government in 2000 revealed that “it is the religious practice of the father of the family that, above all, determines the future attendance at or absence from church of the children.” In short, a church-going father will highly influence his children to become regular church-goers.

## 5. Encourager

Our heavenly Father is a great encourager. The fact that he has given us his Word, the Bible, attests to his encouraging heart. Throughout the pages of the Bible, God has given us words of encouragement.

We must understand that the Lord has great empathy for us. He knows what we’re going through because he went through some of the most difficult circumstances in life when he was on earth. The Bible says, “For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin.” (Hebrews 4:15)

An earthly father must be a good encourager, too, to his children. And encouragement starts with the father affirming the value of his children. You see, more than anything else, children want to feel accepted and loved by their parents. And when they receive that, they grow up to be healthy emotionally, mentally, and spiritually. So, how can a father affirm his children?

First, is by paying attention to them. God sure pays attention to us.

Matthew 10:30 (MSG) says, “He pays even greater attention to you, down to the last detail—even numbering the hairs on your head!”

You can affirm your kids just by noticing them. Just by looking at them. Eye contact has incredible power when it comes to expressing and sharing values. Put down the newspaper and look at them. Turn from what you’re doing and look at them.

The second way is by showing affection. God says in Hosea 11:4 (GNT), “I drew them to me with affection and with love. I picked them up and held them to my cheek.” That picture reminds us that people need loving touches. Your kids need hugs. I know sometimes as they get older you think they don’t need that any more. But kids always need hugs. They always need loving affection. When you do that, that values them.

Then the third thing you and I can do following the example of God is express appreciation. In Isaiah 43:4 (NLV) God says to his people, “You are of great worth in My eyes. You are honored and I love you.” When was the last time you said something like that to one of your kids? If you feel like you can’t say it, then write it down. Write a note of encouragement. Just write out something that says, “You’re doing a good job. I appreciate what you’re doing.” Anytime you appreciate your kids, you make them feel you really value them.

## 6. Role Model

When our heavenly Father came to earth in the person of Jesus, he became our role model. He modeled for us all those qualities that make for a godly person. We all need a hero in our lives and Jesus is our ultimate hero. It is because he saved us all from our sins. He sacrificed himself on the cross. He willingly gave his life for us by being nailed on the cross.

All this took courage, humility, endurance, and most of all, unconditional love which is the greatest trait or quality that God wants each of the fathers in this world to have.

How do fathers show unconditional love to their children?

The first is by offering them forgiveness. No doubt your children will fail you. They will do things that will drive you crazy. They will do and say foolish things. You've got to forgive them when they fail. Because you fail, too.

Ephesians 4:32 "Be kind and loving to each other, forgiving each other just as God forgave you in Christ." We forgive our children because we've been forgiven by our heavenly Father. The truth is you're going to be hurt as a parent. But godly parents keep on loving. Just as we have been forgiven we forgive others.

The other way you offer love unconditionally is you never give up on them. You never give up on your children. Love always believes the best. The Bible says this in 1 Corinthians 13:7 (Phillips) "Love knows no limits to its endurance, no end to its trust, no fading of its hope; It can outlast anything." Real love never gives up on people even when they get into drugs, when they get their lives messed up in some relationship. It never gives up.

Fathers, let us never give up on our children. Let us be a role model to them, faithfully providing, always available, being trustworthy, giving hope, and encouraging them at all times. Let us all mirror our heavenly Father who never gives up on us. He loves us so much that he sacrificed his own son to forgive our sins then give us hope and life through his resurrection from the dead.