

A Father's Blessing

Sterling UMC
June 20, 2010
Genesis 27:25-34

"When I Was A Boy."

4 yrs old My Daddy could do anything.

5 yrs old My Daddy knows everything.

6 yrs old My Dad is smarter than your dad

8 yrs old My Dad doesn't exactly know everything.

10 yrs old When my Dad grew up in the olden days things were sure different.

12 yrs old My Dad doesn't know anything about that, he's too old to remember.

14 yrs old My Dad is so old fashion.

18 yrs old My Dad is really out of it.

25 yrs old My Dad knows about that, but he should, because he's been around so long.

30 yrs old Maybe we should ask Dad?

35 yrs old I won't do anything about that until I talk to Dad.

40 yrs old I wonder how Dad would have handled this?

50 yrs old I'd give anything if Dad were here now, so I could talk this over with him.

Some of you fondly remember your fathers. Others celebrate their fathers today who they still have with them. To all of you fathers, Happy Fathers Day. There's one thing that we all need from our fathers and from our Heavenly Father– it's his blessing and smile of approval on our lives.

In his book about fatherhood, in the chapter titled, "A Baffling Question," Bill Cosby wrote, "So you have decided to have children. You have decided to give up quiet evenings at home when you listened to good music and read good books. You have decided to give up lazy weekends when you just held each other in your arms and assured each other of your love." "You have decided to give up candlelight dinners where you could finish complete sentences. You have decided to change all your couches into trampolines. You have decided to give up your pursuit of the reproduction of fine art, and start coping with the pursuit of the reproduction of yourself. Why? That's the baffling question." He went on, "Poets tell us that one of the reasons that we want to have children is because we desire immortality. Yes, I must confess that I asked God for a son to carry on my family name. And God did exactly what I asked Him to do. But now there are times when I ask my son not to reveal his identity. I beg him, `Make up a name. Tell them anything, but don't tell them you belong to me, whatever you do.'" "Immortality?" he says. "Now that I am the father of five, my only hope is that I will live long enough to see all five of them leave home."

Maybe you have felt that way, too. Home is sometimes a maze of personalities and confusion and reactions. Fatherhood may be a bit confusing, but I don't think God's perception of what the father is to be and ought to do has changed.

So this morning I'd like for us to look at this story from the 27th chapter of Genesis, the story of Isaac bestowing his blessing to Jacob. Of course, the blessing was intended for the oldest son, Esau. But through deception the blessing was given to Jacob instead. Our focus is not the deception, however, it is on the blessing.

Now the blessing that was given is found in verses 27-29. "So he went to him and kissed him. When Isaac caught the smell of his clothes, he blessed him and said, 'Ah, the smell of my son is like the smell of a field that the Lord has blessed. May God give you of heaven's dew and of earth's richness - an abundance of grain and new wine. May nations serve you and peoples bow down to you. Be lord over your brothers, and may the sons of your mother bow down to you. May those who curse you be cursed and those who bless you be blessed.'"

After he received the blessing from his father, Jacob left. Shortly after, Esau came in with the game that he had killed and prepared, and was ready to receive his father's blessing.

Listen to verses 33-34. "Isaac trembled violently and said, 'Who was it, then, that hunted game and brought it to me? I ate it just before you came and I blessed him - and indeed he will be blessed!' When Esau heard his father's words, he burst out with a loud and bitter cry and said to his father, 'Bless me - me too, my father!'"

According to some who have studied this custom and tradition, the ancient Hebrew blessing contains FOUR INGREDIENTS that ought to be present in every home today. And when those FOUR INGREDIENTS are present, and practiced consistently, then our children grow up solid, secure and confident of themselves, able to go out into the world and function normally. But if those ingredients are absent in the home, then too often the child ends up like Esau, steeped in bitterness and anger.

So let me share with you the FOUR INGREDIENTS of Isaac's blessing – a Fathers Blessing.

THE FIRST INGREDIENT WAS A MEANINGFUL TOUCH

Notice vs. 22, "Jacob went close to his father Isaac, who touched him." Vs. 26 says, "Then his father Isaac said to him, 'Come here, my son, and kiss me.'"

Now this is not an isolated incident in scripture. Almost every time a blessing is bestowed in Hebrew culture, it involves touching - the laying on of hands, a kiss, an embrace - something that conveys acceptance and love.

The 10th chapter of the Gospel of Mark says that people brought children to Jesus so that He could touch them. Jesus took them and placed them on his knee, and laid His hands upon them, and the scripture says, "He blessed them."

Jesus knew exactly what children need to feel loved and accepted. So He touched them and blessed them.

It's important to do that in our homes, too. When children are very small you can't communicate love with words because they don't understand words yet. But the best way to communicate love to a very small child is to demonstrate it by touching them, cuddling them, and holding them close.

Jacob was 40 years old when Isaac touched him and kissed him to convey the blessing to him. And no matter the age, I think it is important to continue to communicate love and acceptance and affection in some meaningful way.

The first ingredient of the blessing was a meaningful touch.

THE SECOND INGREDIENT WAS A SPOKEN MESSAGE OF AFFECTION and LOVE

Listen as he blesses his son in the last part of vs. 27, "Ah, the smell of my son is like the smell of a field. . ."

Now I suppose that today's child would not consider it a compliment to be told, "You smell like a field. I just wanted you to know that."

But to an old outdoorsman like Isaac, who thought he was speaking to Esau, the smell of a field about ready for harvest was a great smell. It was a compliment, a positive message that communicated his love and affection.

You see, too often parents are quick to criticize and remind children of their mistakes. "You dummy, why did you spill the milk?" "You're lazy." "You're too fat." Words of criticism that really don't accomplish much. All they do is cause a child to withdraw.

I think there is room for constructive criticism. But it's more important to communicate love through words that say, "You're worth something. You're such a good little boy or girl. I'm glad that God gave you to us. You're better than any Christmas present I could ever receive. Father's Day is special just because you're here."

Those are words that communicate acceptance and love. And they need to be spoken over and over again, even when our children stumble and fall. Don't wait until the last minute to do it.

Dan Benson, in his book "The Total Man," says that for every positive word that most dads say to their children, they say 10 negative ones. They're really good at words like "Don't" and "You can't" and "Stop that," and "No." But they're not very good at the positive words. Benson suggests that we could change the whole personality of our relationship with our children if we just learned to be positive, and influence things in a positive way.

THE THIRD INGREDIENT WAS THE ATTRIBUTING OF A HIGH VALUE

Notice what Isaac says in vs. 28, "May God give you of heaven's dew and of earth's richness - an abundance of grain and new wine."

He's saying, "You're special, so God will give you the best He has to give."

We're constantly being told that we should teach our children to have a good, positive self-image, to build up their self-esteem. So it is important to teach the child, "You're so valuable that God even came into our world and died on the cross for you."

But it's not just by words. We teach high value in a number of ways. A lot of times when a child comes, we're so busy. We have one eye on the TV and one eye on them, and we can't concentrate on what they're saying.

So when a child comes to talk to you, turn off the radio or TV set. Lay aside the newspaper, and look them in the eye. You'll see wonder after wonder when you look into a child's eyes, sparkling with excitement. They have so many things they're anxious to tell you. So look at them, and listen to what they have to say!

That communicates value. "You're worth something. You're more important to me than the ballgame or newspaper. You're an extremely valuable part of our family. I'm glad God gave you to us. And whenever you have something you need to talk about, I'm here to listen to you."

THE FOURTH INGREDIENT WAS THE PICTURING OF A GLORIOUS FUTURE

In vs. 29 Isaac says to Jacob, "May nations serve you and peoples bow down to you. Be lord over your brothers, and may the sons of your mother bow down to you. May those who curse you be cursed and those who bless you be blessed."

Isaac is helping him to raise his sights and see that his future is bright.

That is an important responsibility of parents, isn't it? We all know that passage in Proverbs that says, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it."

We've always made a spiritual application there, "Teach them the things of God and when they're old they will not forsake them."

But there is another application. We're to help our children find their niche, discover who they are, and why they've been made. God made them special. So as they're growing up, help them understand their gifts and talents, and what they're best suited to do in life. Counsel and guide them to become the kind of person God wants, and made them to be.

The mistake most of us make as parents is we try to get our children to become what we want them to be, other than what God made them to be.

John Dresser wrote a book titled, "If I Could Do It All Again." In it he shares 8 things that he would do differently if he could go through his years of being a father all over again. Here is what Dresser wrote:

1. "First of all, if I could do it all over again, I would love my wife more, because by loving my children's mother more, I would create an environment of security in our home."

2. "Second, I would laugh more. I would relax and enjoy my children and laugh at their antics. I would spend more time with them and enjoy being a father."

3. "Third, I would present a more realistic model for them to follow. I would be honest with them about myself. I would let them know that I understand, and that they can come to me when they fail, because I have been there as well."

4. "Fourth, I would listen to what they say. I would listen to their pains and problems and worries and concerns. I would listen when they wanted to talk to me, because now I realize that if I listen to them when they are small, and to their little problems, then when they are big, and have big problems, they will still come and talk with me."

5. "Fifth, I would stop praying so much for my family, and start praying more for myself, that I might be the right kind of father, realizing that when I become the right kind of father, my children will probably be the right kind of children."

6. "Sixth, I would pay more attention to little things. I would begin to appreciate the touch of love and the word of encouragement. So many times we fathers are quick to criticize their failures, and so slow to praise and encourage them when they do something right."

7. "Seventh, I would create an environment of belonging. I would want my children to know that they belong, and that they are important family members, because I realize that there are going to be people saying to them, 'Join this and join that.' But if they have a solid identity in the home and in the family they will not easily be led astray."

8. "Last, but certainly not least, I would make God an intimate friend of my family. I would use His name freely. I would communicate to them that He is involved in all our family decisions. I would want them to see me pray and read God's Word and search for His direction and leadership.

I think this is the mortar that holds a family together - A meaningful touch, a spoken message, attributing a high value, and picturing a glorious future.

This morning, God is the perfect parent who has conveyed to us all the ingredients of His blessing in just one verse of scripture. "For God so loved the world that He gave His

only begotten Son. Whosoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life."

This morning we offer God's invitation. A loving Father reaches down to touch us, speak to us, tell us how valuable we are, and help us see the glorious future that we have in Him.