

Father's Day Tribute

Good morning and Happy Father's Day! I trust this morning there were some bedside breakfasts cooked, "World's Best Dad" mugs awarded, and best of all, some promises made of an afternoon nap?... *My dad has* to be the most difficult person to shop for: no matter *what* the occasion, when I've *ever* asked my dad, "what do you want for Christmas, or your Birthday, ...Father's Day?" the answer was always the same: "good kids." I learned *later* that what he meant was "Godly kids", and it took many years after *that*, after being a father myself, before I realized what a father's heart means by this. It's the same yearning God has for *us*. *1 John 3:1* says, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God:" And *Jeremiah 29:11* says, "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 a hope and a future.'" It's no mistake, either, that God describes his relationship to us as being "Our Father". God *always* intended that an *earthly* father's love would help us understand *His* relationship with *us*. Yet today the role of a father is so distorted, and the responsibility of being a father is so diluted, that this "beautiful picture of love" that God intended, is *often* very broken. And the truth is that many people's personal experiences with "a father figure" were *anything* but "loving". So, if we're going to have any clue as to the true nature of a father's love, it seems worthwhile to reflect on God's Word, and how *It* describes the attributes of a Father's love.

Father's love is **respectful**: *Revelation 22:17* says, "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

Maybe your experience has been with a controlling, manipulative, or unfair father, the kind of guy that doesn't listen to reason, that forces his agenda, that always criticizes, or puts you down, or makes you feel like you're not good enough. *God's love* is *not* like this – God's love is patient and kind, and He doesn't force us to love and obey Him, but waits for us, and still loves us *anyway*, no matter what.

Father's love is **merciful and kind**: *Psalms 145:8-9* says, "The Lord is gracious, and full of compassion; slow to anger, and of great mercy. The Lord is good to all: and his tender mercies are over all his works."

Maybe *your* experience with your dad was even worse...maybe he's always driven by anger, fueled by rage, ...or maybe he abused you. Our God has heard your cries...and He has felt your tears...He *never* intended for us to have to endure these evils, but rest assured: *our God* is a Redeemer, a Restorer of *life*, a Refuge in times of trouble. And God *doesn't waste pain*; He uses it to mold us more into His image. And the trials that we endure, can become the special access *He gives us* to support someone else who may be going through the same thing. *Romans 8:28* reminds us that "*all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.*"

Father's love is **faithful**: *Lamentations 3:22-23* says, "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness."

Maybe you had a dad that didn't seem to care about his marriage, or his family, a dad that *cheated* on your mom...and left *you* with a broken home. Not God; *our God* is faithful, He doesn't leave, He doesn't quit, He *doesn't* give up on us.

Dads, maybe it's been pretty tough around the house lately...maybe the nagging never stops and kids never shut up, and what ALWAYS sounds better than dealing with all of *that* is "a night out with the boys" or "a little 'me time' at the bar" ...or at the strip club...or with that girl at the office... *You* have been called, by an oath *you* made to the Almighty God, to be faithful to your wife, to love your kids, and to create a sanctuary for the family that the Almighty God has given *you*. How you choose to show up, or not, matters A LOT. So, if you're struggling right *now*, I pray you put down your pride, your ego, your "manliness" enough to just ask for help! Get plugged in to a band of Christian brothers that are going to support you, encourage you, and help you walk through whatever it is with *integrity* and *honor*.

Father's love is **attentive**: *Isaiah 49:15-16* says, "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me."

Maybe your dad just didn't care. He wasn't around that much, something else was always more important, you never felt like you *really* got a chance to know him, or he just never really took the time to get to *know you*.

Dads, maybe there's too many commitments, too much to get done around the office, too many sports games to watch, and maybe, quite frankly, *you* didn't ever want to be a dad in the *first place*. It's time to take a look at your priorities, men. It's time to make some changes that you *know* your family needs. It's time to realize that the time you get to make a difference is *so short*! And even if *they* seem uninterested, God has chosen *you* show up for *them*, the same way *He* does for *us*. God's love, a REAL Father's love, is always available, always accessible, always engaged.

Father's love is **supportive**: *2 Thessalonians 2:16-17* says, "Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, Comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work."

Dads, maybe you're at your wits end – those "beautiful little babies" are *now* teenagers...and they don't listen, they don't obey, they think you're stupid, *church* is stupid, your *rules* are stupid, and you *know* this reckless course is heading for disaster! Can I encourage you?... Stay... Stay steady, stay loving, stay *ready*. Children rely on their dad, more than *ANY* other relationship in their lives, to show them stability, support, security, soundness, strength, and a bunch of other "S" words I'll think of later...

Hey, maybe you *ARE* the teenager! And maybe *I* have *no idea* what *you* have to put up with, maybe your parents don't hear you, don't seem to see you, don't seem to *get you or anything* about *your* life! Can I encourage you?...talk to Diego, our youth leader... Really, though! Find the support you *KNOW* you need from some people that *get it* and are gonna love you with *God's* kind of love, through it *all*. And, I say this now as an old guy that has had some time to reflect: don't ever forget *Exodus 20:12* "Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee."

Father's love is **consistent**: *Deuteronomy 31:8* says, "It is the Lord who goes before you. He will be with you; he will not leave you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed."

Maybe it's been some time since you've heard the pitter-patter of little feet, or had to figure out how you're gonna make it to soccer practice *and* band rehearsal...and you *miss* it...you miss *them*. The kids are just too busy trying to get ahead, or they have little ones of their own now and they just don't have the time anymore. Maybe you had a falling out and things got really bad, and you're not really sure how to fix it, ...or if you'll ever see them again...

Or maybe it's *your* dad that seems to always have time to golf or travel the world, but never makes time for the grandkids. Or maybe dad left a long, long time ago, and you feel *really* stranded trying to figure it out on your own. God's love doesn't leave. God's love doesn't forsake. God's love sticks.

Father's love is **endless**: *Jeremiah 31:3* says, "The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee." And then, also in *Psalms 136:26* it says, "O give thanks unto the God of heaven: for his mercy endureth for ever."

Maybe...you'd rather not talk about it..., and quite frankly *hate* this "*holiday*", because...you *lost* your dad. Whether it was an illness, an accident, or he just got old and it was time – he's gone, and it *still* hurts, and the grief seems *unbearable*, but *you* manage...*most* of the time...except when someone decides to "bring him up," ...and OF COURSE, *TODAY*! God's love is the same yesterday, today, and forever. We will *never* have to say goodbye or see Him leave; we have the promise of an *everlasting love* that extends *eternity*, and the hope of a day when we will be with Him forever and always!

Father's love is **available**: *Romans 8:39* says, "Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Maybe you've been blessed, like I am, to have a great dad, a dad that exemplified the character of God and tried as best as humanly possible to demonstrate the same sort of love that *God* has. If so, THANK GOD for this *beautiful* blessing, that so many other people have missed out on. And if so, don't forget to tell your dad just what he's meant to you. Thank you, dad, I love you.

No matter which of these father scenarios you relate to today, know that *there is* a Heavenly Father whose love is *perfect*. The Almighty God is *desperately* in love with *you*! He wants you to call Him "Abba", ...*"daddy"*... He wants to *know* you, and *guide* you, and show you life, *abundant* life! And if you've already discovered this, and you've accepted His salvation through the sacrifice of Jesus, and *truly* believe that He *is* the Father He says He *is*, then it begs the question: "How do we thank Him for this? How can we show *Him* that we love *Him*? How can we bless *Him* today?" I expect all the dads can relate to this – it makes *our* Father happy when we *obey* Him...when we obey His Word. Simply put, in *John 14:15*, "If ye love me, keep my commandments." Obedience is as much an expression of our worship as the loudest note we could ever sing. Surrendering to the Holy Spirit is a choice we make, day by day, moment by moment, but when we choose to listen to His Word *and* His still, small voice, we honor Him...we "make Dad proud." I pray as God reveals who *He Is* and His infinite love for you, that it draws you closer to His Arms.

Today we're going to praise our "Good, Good Father", and, in your own heart today, I encourage you to embrace the perfect Father, Dad, Pops, Pepe, Papa, Daddio, Dada, Daddy...Abba.

- With Love, From Michael & Nathan Herrera