

Aaron Kuehnrichel - Our Father

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Good morning and a very happy Father's Day to every father to be every father, every grandfather, and every father figure listening today. So today we're going to spend approximately an hour together thinking about fathers, the best father of all the fathers in scripture, and what it means to be a father who reflects God's character to the next generation.

So what we're going to cover this morning or this afternoon now is a quick review of part one, Our Heavenly Father looking at Jesus the Father's reflection, some of the fathers of scripture, four pillars of fatherhood, and then we're going to close with honoring our natural fathers.

So part one, Our Heavenly Father, Compassion, love, discipline and obedience are the sections we're going to cover.

So of all the fathers we know, none are as good as our Father who art in heaven, and we are told scripturally that God is love. 1 John 4:16 says, and we have come to know and have believed the love which God has in us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.

Scriptures also tell us of three great demonstrations of his love for us, and as we go through our service today, see if you can itemize them. At our conclusion, I will identify them and see if you find the same three that I thought I shared. So let's look at our father's compassion. Psalm 103:13 on the screen.

Just as a father has compassion on his children, so Yahweh has compassion on those who fear him, and Luke 15, verse 20 says, so he rose up and came to his father, but while he was still a king, still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, ran and embraced him and kissed him. Now you recognize this as being from the prodigal son parable. Psalm 103:13 tells us God has compassion on those that reverence him, even if technically not as children, and I believe we all recognize mankind as God's children in one sense.

But I think the scripture is really referring to a covenant relationship. Though natural Israel was in a covenant relationship under the law, in other God's care, he did not consider them as sons, and brother Max talked about sons and servants a couple weeks ago, and that privilege is for the gospel age church who enter into a life and death covenant relationship, and to those he gave power to become sons.

John 12:36, while you have the light, believe in the light so that you may become sons of light. These things Jesus spoke and he went away and he hid himself, and he was 12 8. But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. So we want to take a quick look at three examples of God's love expressed.

So let's start with the prodigal Son as mentioned in Luke chapter 15, verse 20. So the Lord chose this image deliberately to show how God responds to a returning sinner. The Father did not wait at the door with a lecture, did not stand there with an I told you so. The Father sees from a distance, meaning that he was watching. He runs, which is undignified for a man of his station, but he ran anyway, and he embraces before he says anything.

God's compassion moves before we finish turning around. Compassion moves towards suffering in response to need. Mercy moves towards guilt in response to failure. A father who reflects God's

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character does both. He stoops to meet his children in their pain and refuses to let their worst moments define them permanently.

Both are essential to godly fatherhood, and both find their source in the same father who modeled them. First, let's look at another example of compassion.

Psalm 68:5 says, the Father of the fatherless and a champion of widows is God in his holy habitation. In Genesis 21 this is referring to Hagar and her son, and God heard the voice of the boy, and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, what is the matter with you, Hagar? Do not fear, for God has heard the voice of the boy where he is.

Arise, lift up the boy and hold him by the hand, for I will make a great nation of him. Then God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water.

God is not only the father of those who have earthly fathers, he is also father to those who have none. When we speak of our Father's compassion, a second example is how God dealt with Hagar and her son. Now Hagar was an Egyptian slave woman, not of the covenant, not of the promise, not of Israel. She had been cast out into the desert of Beersheba with her son. Their water was exalted, and she fully expected to see watch her child die.

So she laid him under a bush so she would not have to be witness to it, and she walked away, and God heard the boy's cry. Not Abraham's prayer, not a petition from a person standing. God heard the cry of a slave woman, slave woman's dying child in a desert, and God answered personally, spoke tenderly, what is the matter with you?

Opened her eyes to provision already present, and promised the boy a future.

A third example of God's Compassion is Lamentations 3:22, 23. The loving kindness of Yahweh indeed never ceases, for his compassions never fail they are new every morning. Great is your faithfulness, and so we see a third example in the captivity of Judah. Now, Lamentations 3:22 and 23 was written by Jeremiah in the wreckage of Jerusalem's destruction and captivity, a moment when God had every right to say, I told you so.

Instead, the prophet finds compassion that has not run out. God's compassion is not rationed by our failure. It is described here as new every morning, refreshed, renewed, meaning it does not carry yesterday's disappointment into today.

Now we're very familiar with this verse John 3:16 For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him shall not perish, but have eternal life, and this is the supreme demonstration of love in all of Scripture. God did not send a messenger. He did not send a prophet. He sent his Son, the most precious thing he possessed.

And love can be measured by the price of the gift or the price of giving, and here we see a gift given of immeasurable value.

First, John 4:19 tells us that we love because he first loved us. So God models love to us indirectly. We see what love is by examples of giving, sacrifice, care, selflessness, etc. We see these modeled to us by those who try to live morally, whether they believe in God or not. We see this modeled to us by our brethren, and we in turn learn what love is, and then we try to express it to others.

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Romans 5:8 says, But God demonstrates his own love toward us, and that while we're yet sinners, Christ died for us, and what makes this extraordinary is the timing. God did not wait for us to clean ourselves up. He did not wait for us to earn his favor. He did not wait for us to prove ourselves worthy.

He acted while we were still enemies.

Human love typically responds to lovability. If you want to be a friend, be friendly. God's love creates it. This grace is in its purest form, love extended to the undeserving at infinite cost, without any conditions attached.

First Timothy 2:3-6 this is good and acceptable in the sight of God, our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the full knowledge of the truth. There is one God and one Mediator also between God and man, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all the witness for this proper time. This is the legacy Standard Bible Translation Paul tells us more about God's love for us. In his first letter to Timothy, A ransom is paid to free someone who could not free themselves. That's what a ransom is.

God saw humanity in a condition it could not escape, bound by sin and its consequences, and rather than simply declaring the debt canceled, he paid the debt.

This kind of love is not love that looks away from the problem. It is a love that enters into the problem, absorbs its full cost, and walks out the other side, carrying the individual who is trapped.

Proverbs 3:11-12 says, for whom Yahweh loves, he reproves even as a father the Son in whom he delights and 126 of Hebrews for those whom the Lord loves, he disciplines, and he chastises every son whom he receives. Now God doesn't discipline out of anger, in frustration, or for the desire to punish. He disciplines because he is invested in the outcome, and only a father who deeply loves his child cares enough about who that child is becoming to correct the path that they are on. Hebrews 12:6 makes the connection inseparable. For those whom the Lord loves, he disciplines, meaning the presence of discipline is itself evidence of belonging and not rejection.

A father who never corrects his child has not freed that child he has literally abandoned him or her to their own worst instincts, which is the opposite of what love really is. Therefore, God's discipline is not the withdrawal of love but its most purposeful expression of love, the refusal of a perfect father to let temporal comfort cost his child eternal character.

Now let's look at our response. Love and Obedience 1 John 2:3-6 by this we know that we have come to know him if we keep his commandments, and then Luke 16:10 he who is faithful in very little things is faithful also in much or the greater things. The ultimate indicator of our faith is whether we love God with all our hearts, our mind, and our soul, and we keep his commandments with or without adversity. In difficult times and in the easy times, we are told scripturally that God is love.

1 John 4:16 we have come to know and believe that the love which God has in us God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. Because God shows his love toward us or for us, we then know how to love, and can show our love for him through the way we obey.

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Luke 16 tells us that if we're faithful in least of things, we're going to be faithful also in the greater things, and this tells us that faithfulness and unrighteousness are developed character traits. By extension, then, so also is obedience, and love becomes the motivator to be obedient in every aspect of life, not just the small things, not just the easy things, but in everything, and Christian obedience is possible.

When divine grace and human freedom converge at that intersection is where obedience becomes possible. Someone who is saved by grace through faith in Christ will certainly obey God because they want to. In fact, disobedience indicates the absence of real faith.

Though obedience is not a prerequisite for salvation, it is a necessary fruit of salvation. But obedience is difficult, and what makes it difficult is that it almost always demands fidelity in the small things of our lives. It's easier to practice fidelity in the big things than to defer in the little things. It's hard to be obedient because what we typically want from God is the grand vision, the master plan.

But what we typically get from him is just the next step or two down the road. He limits how far we can see, and he says, trust me, our willingness to take that next step or two is, in the final analysis, really the true test of our obedience.

So let's move on to our next section. Let's talk about Jesus as the Father's perfect reflection. Now, you'll notice that Jesus is right dead center in that diagram, and that's where he should be in our lives, in the middle of everything that we do, centered around it in everything that we do.

So he embodies the Father's compassion. Just two words say everything there is about the compassionate heart of the Father who made visible by our Lord Jesus. So when we hear or read the words Jesus wept, that's a doorway into the heart of God. Actually, when he stands at the tomb of Lazarus, he does not deliver a eulogy. He doesn't make it a teaching moment.

What does he do? He just weeps. He enters the sorrow of those that he loves.

That's the Father's compassion. As an example, The apostle Paul, as a follower of Christ, encouraged all to follow Christ. He communicated this by example, by letter, by visit, and in conversation, and he considered himself a spiritual father to others. We know that Barnabas, known for his encouragement, also is such an example.

So fathers, we need to encourage, to strengthen, to support and to love our children in their endeavors, in their difficulties, and to encourage godly behavior. As long as we live. We're not just parents until they leave the door out on their own. Were parents all their lives.

John 15:13 says, Greater love has no one than this. That one laid down his life for his friends.

We all know that Jesus could have refuted the scribes, the Pharisees, the priests, and the high priests. He could have walked away with his life in his hands. He had legions of angels at his command. He could have, but he didn't because the cost was too great. He would let down his heavenly Father.

And the life of the world depended upon his commitment to this very decision.

So our Lord Jesus also teaches, as the Father would teach. Deuteronomy 6, 4, 7. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, and soul, and then you shall teach them diligently to your sons,

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and you shall speak of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way, and this is just an excerpt, but we are told that we should teach these commands diligently to our sons, and we shall speak of them when we sit in our house and when we walk by the way, when we lie down and when we rise up.

You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as phylacteries between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your heart and on the houses. So the Shema takes its name from its opening word in Hebrew meaning hear or listen, and consists of this verse right here. Deuteronomy 6, 4, 9. Hear, O Israel, Yahweh is our God, Yahweh is one, and you shall love Yahweh your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and with all your might.

That prayer is the oldest prayer central to Judaism, and it was the prayer Jesus himself quoted when he asked which commandment was the greatest mark, 12-12-29. What makes it powerful in the context of fatherhood is God does not simply command love for himself and leave the method that we choose to use to love open. He immediately instructs fathers to keep these words on their heart, to teach them diligently to their sons, and to speak of them when they sit in the house and when you walk in the way, when you lie down and when you rise up, and this clearly indicates that the transmission of faith from one generation to the next was never meant to be institutional or relegated to Sunday school or occasional, but personal, constant, and woven into the fabric of our everyday, ordinary lives. The Shema is actually more than a creed to be recited.

It's more than those simple verses. It is really a method of parenting. It's G D's blueprint for how a father keeps faith alive in his children. Not just formal instruction alone, but through a life so saturated with love for God, like a dripping sponge that it overflows naturally into every conversation, every walk, every meal and every bedtime.

So we are called to be imitators of God. Ephesians 5:1, and how our children view us as fathers is the lens through which they begin to see their heavenly Father, and the love they have for us, or the dislike or the disgust or the disrespect that they have for us transfers. Because that's the lens that they look at the heavenly Father through.

And it determines how they interpret, how they understand, and how they interact with our Heavenly Father.

So let's take a little bit of time and look at some of the fathers in scripture.

And just real briefly, we're going to talk about three the fathers of Israel, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Now, when you look at Abraham's life, if you had to summarize it, and I tried to do this, of all the experiences Abraham had, this is my one sentence conclusion. Abraham put God first.

And what it meant to me was that I should trust and obey even when I do not understand why. Abraham was told to leave. Ur travels up to Haran, his father in law dies. He moves down to Israel. The land's before him.

The next verse says, he's down in Egypt because there's a famine in the land. Well, God led him a thousand miles to get into the promised land. In one verse, he's down in Egypt. Well, Abraham had a reason for going, but he learned through his life experiences to put God first, to trust and obey, even when not able to understand why. So Abraham raises Isaac.

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When you look at the life of Isaac, Isaac was a man of peace. He was very wealthy, and whenever he was contested for a well that he would dig, he would pick up and move on, and Isaac never left the promised land. Abraham did.

Jacob did. But Isaac never left. So in Isaac's life we see acquiescence quietly, confidently, and Isaac lets God work things out. That's a lesson for us.

Let God things work out. Let God work things out on your behalf.

And Isaac raised Jacob, and you know the story of Jacob. He struggled when he's going to leave after his parents sent him away because of his brother looking to kill him. Before he leaves the land, he goes to Bethel and he creates an altar and he worships, and he says, if you bring me back safely, I'll make you My God.

20 years pass. He's with his wife's brother, the brother in law, Laban. Laban's attitude has changed. Jacob's become wealthy. Laban has not.

Laban's jealous. Laban means ill. So Jacob picks up his household and he leaves, and the angel of the Lord comes to Jacob and says, don't you even say one thing about my servant Jacob. So Jacob comes back, but he still has to face an issue.

His brother is still waiting there for him. He fled because his brother promised to kill him. Now he's coming back into his own territory again, and he has to face Esau, and he does, and Jacob learns that the spiritual birthright is far greater than any earthly advantage.

And that's all we're going to say about those three fathers. There are many others you could draw upon, and maybe you've read the book or heard about Jehonadab, and there's a whole other set of lessons with him. But let's look at part four. Four Pillars of Godly Fatherhood.

So we're going to cover these four. A father prays. A father inspires and teaches. A father loves unconditionally. A father disciplines in love.

So, Pillar one, the Father prays. Now there's a good account in Judges, chapter 13, verse 8, and this is recorded by Manoah, who is the father of Samson.

O Lord, please let the man of God whom you send come to us again that he may teach us what to do for the boy who is to be born. So Manoah and his wife are told they're going to have a son, and the messenger of the angel, Lord, departs, and Manoah says, I don't know how to raise this boy. Help me.

Manoah's first question is not about the child's greatness. It's about the father's responsibility. Teach me. Teach us what to do.

The father prays. Continued. Here's just a short example of story. A son is saying his good night prayers with his father, and the son says, dear God, make me the kind of man my daddy is.

And the dad gets up and he leaves, and in a quiet moment of his own time, he says, he prays, dear God, make me the kind of man my son wants me to be.

So things that we as a father might pray. Lord, give me wisdom to know what to do, what not to do, and courage to do it. Lord, help me to leave a noble godly legacy for my children and for others.

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Lord, bless our children and their posterity and help them to serve you without fail. Lord, make our home a place of joy, peace, rest and refuge. Lord, help me to love my wife well so that our sons and daughters know and see what love really looks like.

So the quote on the screen is, where a man belongs is at the bedside of his children, believing in devotion and prayer. Where a man belongs is up early and alone with God. Seeking vision and direction for the family, The Father inspires, encourages and teaches in the account of the prodigal son. When the son came back, the father didn't lecture him.

He ordered a celebration. Our children must know that we love them despite whatever they may do, and much has been written about the parable of the prodigal son, and there are many lessons made. But the greatest of them is our father loves us unconditionally.

I mean, we as fathers should love also. We should acknowledge our love for our children even during trying circumstances, poor judgments and poor decision making, and it's not just on their part. It's also we have to love them because of our poor decisions and our trying circumstances and the wrong decisions that we might make. They must know that we love them despite what they may do or what we may do.

And the affirmation of love is a tremendously powerful thing.

I had an example that taught me a very good lesson. When I was a young man, our daughter, oldest daughter Teresa, was 13 years of age, and out of the blue, I just walked up to her and I said, teresa, you know that I'm supposed to like you, and I do, and you know that I'm supposed to love you, and I do. But what I really want you to know is that I really like the young lady you're becoming.

And she smiled and then she turned and she walked away, and I'm standing here as a father watching her walk, and she's not walking. She's kind of floating. Her whole attitude and demeanor is just kind of floating away.

As I watch her, I'm thinking, why did it take me so long to realize the power of such an affirmation, that simple thing. I really like the young wave that you're becoming.

So I have ever since tried to use that judiciously and carefully because I don't want to wear it out.

The effect of our love or the absence of our love on our children can have a tremendous impact. There's a past article in the Vancouver sun newspaper referring to a study that had been conducted, and it said a father's rejection more strongly predicted four classes of child behavior than a mother's rejection. The four classes are behavioral problems, substance abuse, depression, and overall maladjustment. A father's love more strongly predicted satisfaction and well being and acted as a better buffer against substance abuse and Depression.

That's how powerful the effect of a father can be on their children.

So a father loves unconditionally.

I think I got them out of order here. So, Ephesians 6:4. Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger.

Actually, I got the slide title wrong. A father disciplines in love.

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Make sure I'm on the right slide here. Yep, that's where I should be.

And the word discipline is a Greek word, *paideia*, and it means training rules, consistent consequences in a context of love. It doesn't mean just spanking. It means training rules, consistent consequences in the context of love, and the word instruction. Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline.

And instruction means verbal counsel, such as, if you keep doing that, here is where it's going to lead you. The goal in parenting is development of character, not submissive compliance. We're raising adults. We're not just managing children.

God never disciplines out of anger, frustration, or the desire to punish. He disciplines because he's invested in the outcome, and he cares enough about who that child is becoming to correct the path that they are on.

And we should be doing the same.

A father's love is the first glimpse a child gets of how God sees them. Unconditional, protective, and forever.

Children need fathers who are more concerned with their character than their comfort, and fathering is a marathon, a long and trying journey. We must be disciplined if we hope to finish.

Okay, I missed the slide. So let's talk about something that we haven't talked about yet, and under those four pillars, there's something that's supporting all those four pillars, and that is humor and laughter in the home. Proverbs 17:22 says, A joyful heart is good medicine, but a broken spirit dries up the bones, and Ephesians 5 says 5, 3, 4, that we should avoid filthiness and foolish talk, of course, jesting, which are not fitting, instead of that, we should give thanks.

So humor is one of the quietest but most durable forms of love a family can practice. It diffuses tension before it hardens into resentment. It makes correction easier to receive because correction isn't delivered as a verdict, and it turns the ordinary friction of a shared life. Burnt dinners, traffic, sibling squabbles, parental disagreements, and the shared memories instead of shared irritations.

In a marriage, laughing together is one of the most reliable signs that two people generally like each other and that they still generally like each other, not just love each other because of obligation or love each other because they have to stay together for the benefit of the children. Couples who can laugh at their own mistakes tend to recover from conflict faster because humor signals we're still on the same side, even if we disagree.

Proverbs 31:25 describes a woman of noble character as one who smiles at the future. Strength and laughter standing together, not in competition with each other. It's not one or the other, it's close together, and for children, a home with laughter and joy tends to feel safer than one without, because a father and a mother who can laugh, especially at themselves communicate that perfection isn't the price of belonging. You don't have to be perfect to be part of the family.

You just have to be family. Laughter doesn't compete with reverence or discipline. It simply makes both reverence and discipline easier to live with. In the day to day, which is where most of our actions take place, family life happens day to day. Scripture does draw one boundary worth naming, and that's the Ephesians 5 verse I mentioned.

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Avoid filthiness and silly talk or coarse jesting and favoring a household where humor builds people up rather than tears them down, and the Bible's vision is not humor instead of seriousness, but humor that knows its place or knows its season. Ecclesiastes 3:4 combines a time to laugh and the same verse, as it says, a time to mourn. Now, a father who can hold both light enough to laugh and steady enough to grieve gives his children something that neither one of those alone give them. It simply is a place where emotions are allowed to be honest.

A home where you can be who you are, you can be serious, and you can be funny.

So let's spend a minute on a darker side of parenting as a father, and that is the slide. You see, fathers do not provoke your children's anger.

Now, provoke means to rouse to wrath, to provoke, to exasperate, to make them angry.

Have you ever made your children angry? Have you ever had them so exasperated they walk away, or so exasperated they hang up on you?

So how are some of the ways that we do this? Well, we can do it by physical or verbal abuse. We discipline in anger and not in love. We push achievements beyond their reasonable bounds. We set a bar that's so high they cannot attain it.

Or we hold that always as if you want my love, you have to perform. We withhold encouragement. A child needs correction but or and they also need to be praised. We have a favorite. We have favoritism, comparison, wounds the child on the losing side and over inflates the child.

That's favored. It's a lose lose for both of them. Sometimes we overprotect. Instead of guiding, we try to control, we try to micromanage, and we forget that experience is the best teacher. So we have to let our children experience and we make our love conditional.

You have to do certain things you have to be. Certain things you have to do be you have to act. All those things are conditions. Before I give you my love, that's not Our Heavenly Father While we are yet sinners, Christ died for the ungodly.

Like I said, this is the darker side of parenting.

So let's close with a little bit of time talking about how we honor our fathers. In Deuteronomy 5:16 we're told, Honor your father and your mother as God has commanded you, that your days may be prolonged and that it may go well with you. If you remember the mother commandments is exactly that. Honor your father and mother.

In Proverbs 23:24, the Father the righteous will greatly rejoice, and he who sires a wise son will be glad in him. So we honor our fathers by listening to and heeding what they have to tell us. We honor them by imitating them in righteousness. Ephesians 5:1 says, Beloved children, imitate your Father. We trust that their love, even if unexpressed, is still real and still deep.

Some of us may have parents that didn't tell us they love us. Some of it's because of their personality, some of it's because of culture and others, we've heard it all of our lives. But whether it's expressed or not expressed, their love for you is probably very real, probably very deep.

So earlier I asked if you could identify the three great demonstrations of our Heavenly Father's love for us. Here they are.

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John 3:16, the supreme demonstration of love in all of Scripture. The gift establishes what God gave.

The cross. Romans 5:8 God demonstrates His love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died. The cross establishes when before we deserved wasn't withheld until we earned it. In the last verse, first Timothy 2:5:6 who gave himself as a ransom for all.

This verse tells us why it was necessary and how completely it was paid. Together they form a complete picture. God loved, God acted first, and God paid in full.

So in our short time together, this is what we've tried to cover as we traveled. Talked a little bit about our Heavenly Father and His example. Talked about how Jesus imitates the Lord Jesus. So we can see Jesus, we can read about Jesus. We can handle him.

We can touch him through the written word, and it's not the same way with our Heavenly Father. So Jesus reflects him towards us. We looked at three fathers who learned about obedience, acquiescence, and about the value of the spiritual.

We talked about the four pillars of fatherhood, and what supports all of them is the humor and the joy and the laughter that you can bring into your house that eases the situations and tensions of life, and then we talked a little about how we honor our fathers. So we close with a blessing for every father, mother, son or daughter in our midst today. May you be blessed by our Father in heaven. May you be blessed because of your natural fathers.

And if you are a parent or parental figure to others, may you be blessed that sacred calling and be the blessing to those whom you love. Psalm 103:13 says, Just as the Father has compassion on his children, so Yahweh has compassion on those who fear him, love him, reverence him, respect him. In Ephesians 6 children, obey your parents in the Lord. Honor your father and mother and fathers. Do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

And may you have a wonderful time this afternoon with all of your families.