

How Godly Dads Can Bless Their Children I Peter 3:8-9

On Father's day perhaps the greatest question every husband and father should ponder is, "Am I fulfilling my high calling from God to bless my wife and children?"

Today as we open to I Peter 3, we proclaim the incredible duty that God has given to husbands and fathers to bless those around them in their life and family.

God's Word declares that He has chosen husbands to lead their homes and marriages with Christlike love. Jesus showed us how to love by His example to His disciples. Part of what every born again husband and father will stand before Christ's Throne and explain is how he did at blessing his wife and family with Christ's sacrificial love.

Specifically husbands and fathers have the opportunity every day to BLESS their children (and wives) in three very crucial ways.

FATHERS WE HAVE A BIG CHALLENGE

Men, write these down, and ask yourself over the next few minutes, "Am I doing this?" Here we go:

- Godly Dads can bless their children (and wives) by their Time invested in them.
- Godly Dads can bless their children (and wives) by their Lifestyle lived out as a servant.
- Godly Dads can bless their children (and wives) by their Words of blessing, spoken aloud to those they love.

God will not ask how profitable his company was, how successful his investment strategies were, how well his building projects were, He will say, "I called you to be a blessing—how did you do at that calling?"

I Peter 3:8-9, please listen to our shared calling as I read from the NASB:

To sum up, all of you be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit; ⁹not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead; **for you were called for the very purpose** that you might inherit a blessing (NASB).

Our first challenge is learning to bless our loved ones with the time we invest in them.

1. Bless them by your time:

Have you chosen to bless those you love with your time? On my very first Father's Day as a dad, I was serving on staff as a new pastor in California. That day someone passed out to all of us a Father's Day tract. I read it, thought about it, and finally taped it into the front cover of my Bible until it wore out.

Now I have it typed and pasted there. Why? Because it is never too late to start doing what is right! And often listening to someone explain what they would do differently if they could helps us to start the same pathway ourselves. I listen carefully and try to learn from those ahead of me in their earthly pilgrimages. Do you know what? The changes they often share are so easy to implement even today. No matter where you are in the parenting process.

So here it is, let me read it to you:

"My family's all grown, and the kids are all gone. But, if I had to do it all over again, this is what I'd do:

- **I would love my wife more in front of my children.** [as God says in Proverbs 5:19, husbands should always be ravished by their love for their wife]
- **I would laugh with my children more — at our mistakes and our joys.** [a merry heart is like the best of medicine in Proverbs 17:22]
- **I would listen more, even to the littlest child.** [wise men are very swift to hear and very slow to speak is what God reminds us in James 1:19]
- **I would be more honest about my own weaknesses, never pretending perfection.** [we are to learn to always be transparent and walk in the light as we are instructed to do in I John 1:7]
- **I would pray differently for my family — instead of focusing on them, I'd focus on me** [God said that as His designated leaders in the church and home we are to take heed to ourselves and to our calling in Acts 20:28].
- **I would do more things together with my children** [God designed for dads to be a part of the whole day in their family's life from rising up, to eating, to going through the day, to bed time in His instructions left for dads in Deuteronomy 6:7].
- **I would encourage them more and bestow more praise** [As Paul says we are to be kind and tenderhearted in Ephesians 4:32 and as

we saw Peter added, we are called to bless those we love in I Peter 3:7-8].

- **I would pay more attention to little things, like deeds and words of thoughtfulness** [Jesus reminds us that if we are faithful in little things, we'll also be faithful in the big things in Luke 16:10].

And then, finally, if I had to do it all over again, I would share God more intimately [Paul said that spiritual leaders are to ask others to follow them as they follow Christ in I Corinthians 11:1] **with my family; every ordinary thing that happened in every ordinary day I would use to direct them to God.**"¹

So dads, we bless those we love when we invest in them not only our time, we can bless them by our lifestyle.

2. Bless them by your lifestyle:

Always remember the power of servanthood in the life of a believer.

Servants of God Last for Ever. The greatest husband is the one who is the greatest servant; and the best wife is the one who is the best servant; and the most wonderful children are those who have servant hearts—the same goes for the happiest marriages, and healthiest homes.

If you want to excel in whatever work you do, or relationships you have—be God's servant.

Today, each of us here, no matter what our age, are given an opportunity by God to be great in His sight. Greatness in God's sight is really all that ever will matter—here on Earth and forever.

Open with me to Matthew 20:25-28:

*But Jesus called them to Himself and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. 26 Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. 27 **And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave**— 28 just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."* NKJV

Now turn over to Matthew 23:10-12:

¹ From the Focus on the Family "Father's Day" tract.

*And do not be called teachers; for One is your Teacher, the Christ. 11 **But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant.** 12 And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted. NKJV*

Jesus says that the way up is down.
The way to the top is the bottom.
The way to greatness is servanthood.

Servants of God: Live for Others

So Jesus calls us to be the greatest possible people we can be for Him. He defines greatness in relation to servant hood. So the way we are great to God is to be His servant. Let's apply that principle.

- To be the greatest husband: be the greatest servant of God to your wife.
- To be the greatest dad: be the greatest servant of God to your family.
- To be the greatest son or daughter: be the greatest servant of God to your parents and your brothers and sisters.
- To be the greatest wife: be the greatest servant of God to your husband.
- To be the greatest mother: be the greatest servant of God to your children.
- To be the greatest Christian: be the greatest servant to God.

And how do we do that? How do we learn to live for others? The greatest example of how to serve others comes to us from the greatest servant of all, Jesus Christ. And as Peter reminded us, He left us an example of how to follow 'in His steps' (I Peter 2:21).

Servants of God: Look like Christ

Jesus said, greatest is the servant; and the greatest servant was Christ. How did He serve? His entire life was as a servant who served. Jesus knew and confessed that He did not come to be served, but He came to serve (Mark 10:45) and to give—give His life, give His love, and give His encouraging blessing!

- **He gave His life;** and so as His servants we are to be a living sacrifice.
- **He led His disciples;** and so as His followers we are to be servant leaders.
- **He encouraged His own;** and so as His servants we are to encourage and bless those we love and serve!

So the greatest thing in the entire world is serving God—it is what we shall be doing forever and should be doing now! This Father's Day, I am especially asking some fathers to be servants to their families. You will have the opportunity to serve them deeply by blessing them. Affirm and embrace a lifestyle of choosing to serve others first, instead of self.

This leads to the third and final way that dads can bless those God has given us in life:

3. Bless them by your words: This is the New Testament Ministry of Blessing Others

What was the last sight that all the disciples had of Jesus? Think back to the accounts in the Gospels when Jesus ascended into Heaven. What was He doing as He left? Have you ever noticed that little insight Luke gives us? Turn to Acts 1 and see the Ascension account in v. 8-9:

Acts 1:8-9 "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." 9 Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight.

So let me ask you, from reading this account of Christ's final actions before His ascension back into Heaven, what would you answer if I asked you:

What was Christ's Final Action on Earth?

We just read the account of Christ's ascension that all of us remember most often. But, there is a second account that gives some precious details we have often missed. Turn back to Luke 24:50-53:

*Luke 24:50-53 And He led them out as far as Bethany, and **He lifted up His hands and blessed them.** 51 Now it came to pass, **while He blessed them, that He was parted from them and carried up into heaven.** 52 And they worshiped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, 53 and were continually in the temple praising and **blessing God.** Amen. (NKJV)*

There it is, the answer to Christ's final action on Earth.

Those men would never forget walking with Jesus for 3 ½ year, they would never forget Christ's death, burial, and resurrection; but what would be riveted in their minds? It would be that incredible moment of the last time they saw Him here on Earth.

Their friend, their Savior, their most precious Lord of all left them in a most touching way. He lifted up His hands and touched them with His blessing! Think about that. Jesus was very careful what He did as He left His disciples, and the picture they would have deeply etched in their minds is Christ's loving, prayerful blessing raining down upon them as He was lifted upward and out of sight.

Those words of blessing raining down upon them must have been remembered over and over in the days ahead. Words have such power for good or evil.

The Powerful Gift of Blessing Those we Love

What kind of words do you “rain down” upon those you are speaking to in life? And what are those who listen to your words remembering? Are they “blessed” by what you said?

Please look again at what Peter told us in I Peter 3. After talking about the basic building block of society and the church (marriage and family) he concludes with an incredible postscript:

*1 Peter 3:8-9 Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous; 9 not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling (spoken curses), **but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing.***

In the New Testament a “blessing” we offer to a loved one is basically a prayer of encouragement for them. The New Testament Greek word (Strong’s # 2127 eulogeo) for “blessing” is a verb used 44 times in the New Testament that means:

“to praise [your loved one], to celebrate [them] with praises [that] invoke [God’s] blessings and consecrate [your loved one] with solemn prayers [that] ask God’s blessing on [your loved one] to cause [them] to prosper, to make [them] happy, to bestow blessings [that they be] favored by God.”²

So Peter basically says, “Sow words of blessing and you will reap a harvest of blessing.”

What a powerful motivation to primarily use our words, mouths, and voices to bless others in Christ's Name! And that is what we get from nearly every one of the 44 times the work “bless” is used in the New Testament (14 x in Luke).

Here are some of the key verses:

- **Blessing often involves touching:** *Mark 10:16 And He took them up in His arms, put His hands on them, and **blessed them.***
- **Blessing often points to the future:** *Luke 2:34 Then **Simeon blessed them,** and said to Mary His mother, “Behold, this Child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign which will be spoken against*
- **Blessing is usually hard but always very rewarding:** *Luke 6:28 “**bless those** who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you.*
- **Jesus ends His earthly ministry with the most vivid memory of blessing for His disciples:** *Luke 24:50-53 And He led them out as far as Bethany, and He **lifted up His hands and blessed them.** 51 Now it came to pass, **while He blessed them, that He was parted from them and carried up into heaven.***

²Enhanced Strong’s Lexicon, (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.) 1995.

52 And they worshiped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, 53 and were continually in the temple praising and **blessing God**. Amen.

- **Lest we miss it Paul repeats the habit of blessing as part of Christ's church's mandate:** *Romans 12:14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.*
- **There was a Spirit-prompted work of blessing in the early church services:** *1 Corinthians 14:16 Otherwise, if you bless with the spirit, how will he who occupies the place of the uninformed say "Amen" at your giving of thanks, since he does not understand what you say?*
- **Even Old Testament heroes of the faith made it their last act like Christ's would be in the future, they would stretch out their hands and bless those they loved at the end of their lives. Which means they probably had that modeled for them and embraced it in their lives, so it shows up at the end!:** *Hebrews 11:20-21 By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come. 21 By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, leaning on the top of his staff.*

In the early church there were many pressures, many burdens—but that was far outweighed by the sweetness of the fellowship of other believers. There were many who like Barnabas (Acts 4:36) were characterized by encouraging or blessing people around them.

*Hebrews 10:24-25 And let us consider one another in order to **stir up love** and good works, 25 not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but **exhorting³ one another**, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.*

Old Testament Blessings

One of the key descriptions of how God wanted His people blessed comes from the instructions to the priests. In the Jewish community the priests were the public servants, they inspected for disease, they protected the food supply, housing, dealt with domestic issues, and of course represented the people to God. In the New Testament we are to all be priests, and in a real sense, we are called like them to bless those around us.

Numbers 6:23-27 (NIV) "Tell Aaron and his sons, 'This is how you are to bless the Israelites. Say to them: ""The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the LORD turn his face toward you

³ In the verse above, the word exhort is the Greek word **parakaleo**. This happens to even be the name of God the Holy Spirit who is the Comforter or Paraklete. This word is found 109 times in the New Testament (# 3870 **parakaleo** verb) translated in the New Testament as 'beseech' (43x), 'comfort' (23x), 'exhort' (21x), 'desire' (8x), 'pray' (6x), 'intreat' (3x), and 'besought' (1x). All of that to say, that 74x this verb is used as a verbal expression. We are called alongside of other believers primarily to say things that encourage or bless them. The Greek dictionary even defines this word as; "to call to one's side for exhortation, entreaty, comfort, instruction, etc.; to admonish, exhort, to beg, entreat, beseech; to console, to encourage and strengthen by consolation, to comfort".

and give you peace.” “So they will put my name on the Israelites, and I will bless them.”

This idea of the blessing of the people was so woven into the fabric of the life of God’s chosen people of promise the Jews that they began to make a specific verbal blessing time to be part of the private family Sabbath meal.

One of the most moving Shabbat (Jewish Sabbath) traditions is the blessing over the children given on Friday night. There are many variations on how the blessing is made. The most common custom is for the father to put his hands on the child's head and recite the blessing. In some homes the blessing is followed by a kiss, and in other homes it is followed by personal words of praise as the father walks around the table and blesses each seated child.

Why should we learn to share a blessing with our families? Because a blessing shared, and the whole expression of love that it gives helps those we love know in a visible way that we love them. Blessing those we love is a memorable way they can remember feeling and hearing our love.

Do you ever remember your father telling you out loud, in a clear and loving voice that he loved you and admired some qualities he had seen in your life?

Those types of words just stay in our hearts for a lifetime. My own dad often told me how much he saw the Lord’s Hand in my life and what great things he believes God was doing in my life—and he said that regularly for the thirty-plus years he lived from my graduation from college, until his graduation for Heaven!

Following Christ's Example

This Father’s Day, commit to never forget Christ's final action on Earth to His loved ones.

He lifted up His hands and touched them with His blessing! Think about that picture they would have deeply etched in their minds is Christ's loving, prayerful blessing raining down upon them as He was lifted upward and out of sight.

Those words of blessing raining down upon them must have been remembered over and over in the days ahead.

Dads, we have a God given opportunity to rain down Christlike blessings upon our wives and children, flowing from hearts of love.

Blessing our wives and children follows Christ's example, and helps us to be remembered as husbands and dads who loved with Christ's love.