

Fathers and Sons - A Message for the Family – Dallas Willard

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THEME

There is a desperate need to heal family relationships, especially between fathers and sons. The call for fathers to turn their hearts to their children is fulfilled in the New Covenant. Our Heavenly Father has turned His heart towards us and poured out His blessings. If we receive His blessing, we can allow the blessing to flow through us and begin healing our families and communities.

THE PROMISE

Malachi 4:5 Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet Before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. 6 And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the earth with a curse.

- Notice that the fathers' hearts are turned first, then the children respond.
- The "curse" here is the ruined lives from dysfunctional families.
- The Old Testament is a record of families, but the record is mostly one of failure. The hearts of fathers were not turned, so the promise is repeated in Luke 1 in the context of the Gospel of the Kingdom. Access to the kingdom of God is meant to change everything.
- We must see the importance of the family and that the family is in trouble today because it does work apart from God

THE IMPACT OF HEARTS TURNED AWAY

Children do not learn the most important things in life simply by being told. They need mentors who will spend time with them. Otherwise, they learn in the "College in Hard Knocks." They may survive but come away damaged and may spend the rest of their lives coping with hurts and misbeliefs.

THE WISDOM OF THE JUST

Luke 1:16 And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. 17 He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, 'to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,' and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

- The "wisdom of the just" is passed on when the hearts of the young are turned to their elders. When they desire their wisdom.
- Our society is not set up for this. Men's hearts are often turned to other things: adventure, success, looking good, being cool, respectability. Our hearts turn to what we are concerned about.
- In times past, men used to spend time together hunting, fishing and just being. There was time to pass on wisdom.

GOD'S FAMILY

The biblical concept of family is not just biological. Our Heavenly Father has brought us into His family. We are called to turn our hearts toward one another.

- Spending time out of obligation is not the same as turning your heart toward a person and does not bring health or healing.
- The wisdom of the just is the knowledge of God and his ways and comes through those described in *2 Chronicles 16:9* *For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him.*

There is no other way to get it except by being with someone who knows God. There is no way to give it unless we become people who know God.

HOW DO WE GET THERE?

1. Offer acceptance.

It begins with the acceptance of every person for who they are. Rejection is epidemic. Everyone feels it. Children feel it from the womb. There is only one cure, the acceptance we experience from learning to live in the kingdom of God day by day. It heals us. When we enter the kingdom and receive the love of Jesus, only then can we fulfill his command, "Love one another as I have loved you."

2. Overcome fear.

Fear dominates relationships between men. We are afraid to communicate, to be transparent, to simply be with one another through hard times.

3. Give Honor.

Exodus 20: 12 "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you.

Your own health is related to your ability to honor others, not just mother or father. What does it mean to honor? It means to be grateful that the person exists.

Php 2: 3 Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.

It requires humility; not putting yourself down but lifting others up.

It's hard to honor some people, especially parents who have wounded you. It's only possible from the perspective of the kingdom of God when you experience God's grace and acceptance. We confuse honoring with saying they didn't do anything wrong. No, you can still honor someone who did wrong, but you need to forgive them first.

I can be grateful for a parent if for no other reason than that they are the source of my life. When you cannot honor your father or mother, you are really saying something about yourself. Your life is not good. You are saying you cannot be thankful for your life. Being thankful for your life enable you to honor your father.

4. Receive healing for yourself

Hear God say, "It is good you exist. I treasure you. I give you worth in this world. Your life will count. You make a difference."

5. The power of blessing

The blessing does not come from you, but from God. If you don't bless your children, you are withholding the greatest gift they could receive. A father's blessing has been lost in our culture. The models of fathers on TV is diabolical and has damaged families and the ability of fathers to be a blessing. Sons also need to bless fathers.

Blessing others is an amazing way to witness. You have the power to put something on others. You are meant to be a stream of blessing.

6. How to bless – The Aaronic Blessing

Number 6: 24 "The Lord bless you and keep you;

God is our keeper!

25 The Lord make His face shine upon you,

This means He is present with you.

And be gracious to you; 26 The Lord lift up His countenance upon you,

This means He looks right at you.

And give you peace." '

Shalom is an overall state of well being.

27 "So they shall put My name on the children of Israel, and I will bless them."

You are not giving your blessing, but God's. This is how He put His Name on people.

7. Doing it

Many people find it hard to look another person in the eyes and say these, but this is where healing will come. God will show up in the relationship when you bless.

➤ Experiment with it. Practice saying it.

➤ Start with your parents and children.

God has given you the power to change people's lives, but it begins when you find your place at Jesus' gracious invitation in the kingdom and learn to bless.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Meditate on Malachi 4:5-6. How does this promise impact you? Can you describe a time when your heart was turned toward a loved one after being turned away? What was the outcome?
2. Can you put into your own words "the wisdom of the just?" Who have you received this from and describe what they taught you about life?
3. Dallas calls us to accept every person and then to give them honor. How do you respond to that idea? Why would your health depend upon honoring your mother and father?
4. On a scale of 1 to 10, how deeply do you think you have experienced the acceptance, love and grace of God? Are you deep enough into His goodness to pass on His blessing?
5. Have you ever spoken out or prayed the Aaronic Blessing over someone? Are you willing to try it now? Name someone now and pray out the blessing!

