

Podcast 231 Loving Our Children as God has loved us

We're in part two of loving our children as God loved us. Let's pray. Father, thank You for loving us and not only loving us quietly and behind the scenes, but loving us in many ways so we could see how You love us. And thank You for showing us how much and how wonderfully You loved Your Son. And I'm a father and Scott's a father and there are other fathers, and moms that are listening. We deeply desire that we'll be able to fix our eyes on You as we parent, not as we wish we had been parented or as people have told us we should be parenting, but I pray that You will help us to parent as You parented Your Son. In Jesus' name, amen.

A quick review. If you remember from the last episode we talked about there's three levels of parenting. There's the parenting where we reflect and parent like we wanted to be parented and weren't. Perhaps we didn't have the wonderful childhood experiences perhaps that we wished we'd had. Most of us want to do better with our kids. That describes the first level.

The second level is when we look at Scripture and we look at specific families in the Old Testament. We've already examined and gleaned wisdom from Abraham, David, Samuel and Enoch.

I believe the ultimate parenting example is to get our eyes on Jesus and learn from Him in two ways. These insights are based on the new commandment which begins in John 15:9: "As the Father has loved me so have I loved you." Then three verses later Jesus says: "As I have loved you, love one another." Our goal or mission as parents is to love our children as Jesus has loved us, AND to love our kids as Jesus was loved by His Dad. If we keep these two principles in front us we will do well.

I want to be as real and as practical as possible. As we make this recording, I have just finished my breakfast duties. I have become the breakfast maker in our home. Normally I make Johnny eggs and bacon, and sometimes toast. Today Sandy got up and remembered she had told him last night she was going to make him waffles, but she was running a bit late. So I made waffles. Jesus was also on breakfast duty when He made breakfast at Tabgha on the shore of the sea of Galilee. He made them fish. We didn't have fish for breakfast, instead we had waffles with strawberries. There is a funny application. Jesus loved His disciples by making breakfast and I love my son by making breakfast.

On a more serious note, what can I glean from observing how God the Father love His Son? One of the first things that we see in Scripture is how the Father showed up at significant events in the life of Jesus. And there's two significant events, but the most significant, I think is his baptism. And at his baptism. Jesus goes down into the water, John the Baptist baptizes him, Holy Spirit comes upon him, and then this voice of affirmation, which we've talked about many times on this show, but I love it and I'm going to read it in the NLT. Which says, "A voice from heaven said, this is my dearly loved son who brings me great joy."

I think about that verse a lot. And I think about number one, I want to be at my children's significant events. I want to be up there baptisms. I want to be at, things that they did when they were being homeschooled. I remember when Ethan was in a play, he and Isaac were both in a play in college, way down in Tennessee. We made the effort to drive there. So you want to be at significant events.

As I read that, I read three things. His dearly loved son who brings him great joy and the fact is that he was his son, he was dearly loved and he brings him great joy. And one of the ... Probably the best things I do and I'll be working on, I started praying about it yesterday because one of my boys has a birthday in three days and another one in 10 days. We've get two birthdays pretty quick here. And what we do in our home, we've been doing for a long time is my wife buys the cards and she spends time, this is on her agenda.

This is something that she thinks about and she doesn't just go in like I do and spend five minutes and grab the first card that looks good. She reads them and thinks about them and prays over them. So she buys a very appropriate card. She brings it home and sits on my desk. And before I write in it, I pray and I say, "Father, help me to see my son like you see him." Knowing that God sees on the heart, he sees differently than I do who sees pretty much with my eyes. And then I write them a letter, but I try to incorporate, I try to make it current, obviously what they're going through right now, but then I think about these three components. So glad you're my boy, I love you to pieces and you bring me great joy now. And some of that's from my own childhood where I always felt like I couldn't do enough and I had to do more.

I want them to know that they bring me great joy now, I'm glad they're my boy and I love him to pieces. And it's in that tone that I write this birthday card and I've noticed that my sons will stop opening all their packages and their gifts and their presents, we have a little birthday party, and they'll read that card. And I don't know if they keep them or not, but if it was me I would, because I would love to have a card like that from my dad. So you see, I'm kind of hitting a couple of different levels here. At one point I wish I had a card like that from my dad. That's level one. And I want my sons to have it. And then I look at Jesus and how he was loved by his dad and I want to love my sons the same way that God, the father loved his son.

I never want my sons to feel like they don't belong. I want them to be secure in the knowledge that I'm really glad that God gave them to me. I want them to have roots here. My wife and I have often said that we want to give our children roots so they can develop wings. So there you go. So that's two. Three, made breakfast shows up at significant events and makes them know that they're loved, they're part of our family and they bring us great joy. Another one that I thought of is that God the father taught his son. And we know that because in John 8:28 Jesus said to them, "When you have lifted up the son of man, then you will know that I am he and that I do nothing on my own authority, but speak just as the father taught me."

Now I've done this once, and I'll probably do it again because I'm editing a book and I'm rewriting it, but I don't think we ... I love the book of John. And one of the things in that book of John is there's a lot of conversation where Jesus says stuff about his dad and if you just do a word search, just look up in John and look up father, you're going to see that there's I think 100 references where Jesus talks about his dad. They had a great relationship, the father and the son. I mean, they loved each other, they're God. But still there's a lot of nuggets like this. And just as the father taught me, so Jesus is talking to these people and he says, "You know, my dad taught me something and that's what I'm teaching you. I don't do anything by myself. I speak just as my dad taught me."

Of course in Deuteronomy chapter six, God, the spirit through Moses says, "Teach your children diligently." And I want to remember that. I want to teach my children diligently. Just like God the father taught his son diligently, just like Jesus taught us. I mean, the gospels are full of teaching of Jesus passing on what he learned from the father to us. So that's what we want to do. We want to teach our children. And the next point would be we want to teach them all the time. We want to teach them when we sit in our house, when we walk by the way when we lie down, we rise up. Also found in Deuteronomy six seven but also found in the New Testament because the father was with Jesus. And that's another point we want to be with our kids.

John 8:29 says, he who sent me is with me. He has not left me alone. Now there's a part of Steve that I missed my dad when he was a traveling salesman for the first several years of my life. So there's a part of me that wants my children to not have to experience that. That's what I call level one and then there's the new ... I mean, the Old Testament, it says, "Teach your children when you're sitting in your house, walk by the way." Et cetera. But then there's, we get our eyes up when we look at Jesus and he is happy because he who sent me is with me. That's how his dad loved him. Then Jesus passes it onto us. In Matthew 28:20 he says, "I am with you always to the end of the age." And in Hebrews 13, I will never leave you nor forsake you.

We want to be with our kids and this is some of the marks of being a good dad. I want to teach them. I want to make them know that we're thrilled that they are part of our family. We want to be with them. We want them to know that they belong and we want it ... I don't know if this is painting a picture because these are things that I emulated, that I shot to do for my own kids. Perhaps we should have about 18 podcasts on what I wish I could do better and I'll mention some of those, but I still ... I have regrets. I remember one time I was speaking in another state and my son ended up being part of the geography. Was it called the geography bee or something? Back in the day, 13 years old. And I didn't even know that they had this thing and I was driving somewhere and somebody told me and they said, "Hey, there's a geography test going on today and if you pass this you get to go to the Capitol."

And I said, "Sure, let's pop in there." And Isaac, he's a pretty smart boy. And he went in there and he ended up winning the local competition. He took some tests and then he went up to the state Capitol and there he was on the stage with, I don't know how many other students. Killed me. I wanted to be there. But anyway. Okay. And we'll do one more and then we'll chat a little bit. Also in Hebrews chapter 13 there's a phrase that says, "The Lord is my helper. I will not fear. What can man do to me?" So the Lord is our helper. He doesn't leave us nor forsake us. He teaches us and we want to have our kid's back, and I want to have my kid's back. I want to help them every time I get a chance. Now, now that my kids are all adults, it's trickier because I don't want to be an enabler.

I don't want them leaning on me. I want them to be independent. I want them to stand on their own, but I still have opportunities to help them. I still have things I can do, but not ... I just try to step back so that I'm not creating too much dependence on me. I want them to stand, I want them to be strong and they are, but still I want to be there for them. And my dad was there for me and Matthew Sikh couldn't have got off the ground if my dad hadn't stepped in and said, "Hey, can I loan you some money to build those block molds?" And he took the initiative and I paid him back in a year, but I couldn't have done it without his help. And he's the one that we bought our house, I didn't have any credit, didn't have a job, painting houses, trying to get a map business off the ground. And my brother called one time and said, "Hey Steve, there's a house for sale near us. It's unfinished. I think you can get it at a good price."

"Well, there's no bank's going to loan me any money. Can you put dad on the phone?" I said, "Do you want to buy me a house?" And he said, sure. I didn't realize until years later he got a home equity loan on his house to buy me mine, and I paid him back in a couple of years. But I don't know when a bank would have been able to loan me the money and I would've probably been living in rentals for many years just trying to make ends meet. But my dad helped to get us on our feet and we paid him back. So we tried to help our kids with their education, help them with their first home. But these are all things that we want to be our kid's helpers because God is our helper ultimately. And that's the way he loves us and he's got our back and he promises never to leave us nor forsake us. And he promises to have our back. I've thought about my own dad and I try to focus on the positive, but I also recognize there were some lacks and it turns out every one of us has a dad who has positives and lacks. But that's one of the things I can remember is my dad was there for me. He and my mom used to drive up and watch me play basketball. He and my mom used to do this and that and they would drive all the way from Pennsylvania down to Georgia when we had kids to be with us. And so I don't know what it's like to not have a dad, but I can ... I'm getting it a little bit from stories like that because to someone that doesn't have it that and then they get a dad, amen. Okay.

Why don't we wrap this up with prayer? And father, thank you for being our dad. Thank you for always being with us, being our helper, teaching us, making us know that we're loved, and we bring you great joy. Thank you for showing up at significant events and thank you for giving us our daily bread. We sometimes call it breakfast, but thank you for being a wonderful dad. Help us to focus our attention on you and emulate you in our homes so that we can give our children a taste of what it feels like to have a dad like you. In Jesus' name. Amen.