

Podcast 237 Fathers and Kidz, 7

I thought last week was going to be our last episode on loving your kids well and being a father to your family. However I started making a list of character qualities of the perfect dad and get our eyes on what God the Father looks like and chew on His attributes.

The idea of meditating or pondering on a subject like a cow chews its cud, has been helpful for me. David said he meditated on God's word day and night. Scripture is one of the few documents that's deep enough to think about for a long period of time while continually receiving new insights. It's not like a piece of chewing gum that you chew it and pretty soon it's lost it's flavor. But it is the inspired Word of God.

You know that I've been working on the discipline of coming into His presence with singing, giving thanks, and then blessing His name and praising Him for who He is. I've been spending several minutes a day thinking about a particular character quality of God.

Let's pray.

Father, help us today to focus on You and what you're like and not simply what You directed us to do or some good ideas that we can observe and discern and grab from how we watched Jesus and how He's loved us. Help us to just pitch our tent, so to speak, on You and on Your character. Give us ears to hear what You're saying to us today and give us eyes to see something we haven't seen hitherto, but particularly help us to get a glimpse of our Heavenly Father, whom we know no man has seen except Jesus. For in seeing Jesus, we see You. We want to see you both, and we hope to see God differently today. In Jesus' name. Amen.

The Father of the Prodigal Son and the Sad Older Brother

In Luke chapter 15 we have the story of the prodigal son who was returning home. His father saw him from afar. He ran to him. He lit up when he saw him. He embraced him. He killed the fatted calf and he produced a feast.

So we see a welcoming father. We see a gracious father. If you were the prodigal son and you were coming down the street and you saw your dad, what do you see in this account? I think I would see tears in his eyes. I think I would see joy mingled with the tears. We might see relief. I'd see his arms spread wide. And I see generosity when he kills the fatted calf.

All of these things this son did not deserve, but we're not going to talk about that. We're just looking at what kind of a guy this father is that was big enough to overlook what his son did and just focus on the fact that his son was coming home. That is an amazing dad right there.

The second thing we see is that when the celebration is going on and we observe the servants running off to the elder son and telling him what's going on. The elder son is upset. Word reaches the father that the elder son is not happy. However the dad, instead of responding carnally, seeks out his elder son and listens to him and then patiently says, "Son, everything I have is yours and you are with me always." He just draws him in.

Now we see the father is patient. He listened. He didn't jump to conclusions and he was affirming. What a guy. This guy represents our heavenly dad. I hope that the more that we focus on what God is like, the more we're going to be like Him.

Come to Me

Matthew 11:29, Jesus said, "Come unto me all you that are weary and heavy laden." I want to just focus on the 29th verse that says, "Learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart and you will find rest for your souls." We're going to learn from Jesus. He is a teacher and yet He's a meek teacher and His teaching produces the rest when we listen to Him. He doesn't get us all amped up and feeling condemned. His yoke, His teaching, is doable.

Chastening Dad

In Hebrews 12:5-10, "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by Him. For the Lord disciplines the one He loves, and chastises every son whom He receives. It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, that we may share His holiness."

There are a couple of thoughts here. God loves us enough to discipline us. He teaches us what's right and what's wrong. He disciplines us. He saves us from ourselves. He chastises every son of His. He wouldn't do this if He didn't care. We have a caring father. We have a father who will treat us like one of his boys. This is how all of His sons for thousands of years have been treated.

When we are feeling disciplined perhaps and even chastened, we can number one, give thanks. Thank God that I'm His son and He loves me enough to discipline me. That is perhaps a different perspective, but God knows what we need and God disciplines us. We've got a strange view in our culture today of discipline, but we have lots of unbiblical views. God says, if you really love your kids, you'll discipline them.

God loves us enough to discipline us. His discipline is perfect and is just, for God is absolutely just, and He is completely fair.

Scott:

I was flipping to Psalm 23 because I thought you could just go through that Psalm verse by verse. The Lord is my shepherd. I shall not be in want. He is restoring our soul and He restores our soul. Then I flipped over to Psalm 25 and it says, no one whose hope is in you will ever be put to shame. He doesn't bring shame upon His children either. There's so much in there, you could just go through the Psalms and find all kinds of passages that apply to God as father.

Steve:

Amen. That's it. You've got the right thing going in your soul, Scott. Nice job. Lets continue in the Psalms. I love the Psalms. They are filled with descriptions of God. You mentioned Psalms 23 and 25. I'm going to close with a big chunk of Psalm 103. It helps me to recall who is the one that's writing a lot of those Psalms. It's either David, or it's people that have been influenced by David, the sons of Korah, Asaph and others. David knew God and he loved God. He saw God differently than other people saw Him. Thank God that we have David's writings and his journalings.

Psalm 103 begins with, "Bless the Lord O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his Holy name. Bless the Lord O my soul and forget not all his benefits." And now he starts describing God. "Who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases." Amen.

"Who redeems your life from the pit." The other day I was giving thanks for something and I felt that God was telling me, "Don't forget to be thankful that you're My son." Remember when Jesus sent His disciples out to heal the sick and raise the dead and preach the gospel. They came back and they were pumped. Perhaps they reported, "We were able to help so many people and all these wonderful miracles happened." And then Jesus said, "Ah, but don't rejoice over that. Rejoice that your names are written in heaven." I thought to myself, even if nothing else is going my way today I can rejoice that my name is written in heaven. Whether things go well or or whether the sun is shining or not shining, I can always rejoice that my name is written in heaven and my life has been redeemed from the pit.

David continues, "Who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy, who satisfies you with good so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's. The Lord works righteousness and justice for all who are oppressed. He's merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love."

I think we mentioned the characteristics a couple of podcasts ago. That expression, "merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love" is

quoted by about five different characters in the Old Testament. It must be that they meditated on it, because that's how God introduced himself in Exodus when he said, "The Lord, merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love."

Back to Psalm 103, "He will not always chide, nor will He keep His anger forever. He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor repaid us according to our iniquities. As far as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is His steadfast love toward those who fear Him. As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us. As a father shows compassion to his children, so the Lord shows compassion to those who fear Him. He knows our frame. He remembers that we are dust."

Every one of those verses is rich and full of meaning. "He shows compassion." That father on the road, greeting the prodigal son, showed compassion. At the same time it says, "He knows our frame, He remembers that we are dust." I remember one day I was trying to drink some more caffeine to keep myself moving and green tea was the vehicle of choice. I generally keep pushing myself and this day I felt the Holy Spirit say, "It's okay to rest." And then I remembered that scripture, He knows our frame. He knows that I run out of gas pretty frequently. He knows that I have a tendency to push too hard. It was so comforting to understand that He knows my frame. God knows our frame and he's compassionate.

Psalm 145

"I will extol you, my God and King and bless Your name forever and ever. Every day I will bless You and praise Your name forever and ever. Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised. His greatness is unsearchable. One generation shall commend Your works to another and shall declare your mighty acts. On the glorious splendor of Your majesty and on Your wondrous works I will meditate."

Do you see David meditating on God's glorious splendor and on the works that God has done?

"They shall speak of the might of your awesome deeds and I will declare your greatness. They shall pour forth the fame of your abundant goodness, and shall sing aloud of your righteousness. The Lord is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. The Lord is good to all and his mercy is over all that he has made."

If we just go to bed at night, as a dad, and wake up in the morning thinking, God is gracious. God is merciful. God is slow to anger. He abounds in steadfast love. He's good to all and His mercy is over all that he has made. If we chew on those attributes and meditate on them, I really believe that it will have an impact on us.

Not only will we act differently, we're going to know God better and we're going to love him more. Hopefully our kids will notice and say, "Wow, Dad's been gracious

lately. He's slower to anger and he's good to everybody and just plain merciful." Perhaps I can't picture my kids saying merciful, but I can see them saying, "He's good to everybody and he's slow to anger."

The 17th verse reads, "The Lord is righteous in all His ways and kind in all His works." If you asked me, give me the top three characteristics of God, I would put 'patient' in there. I would put 'kind' in there. And I would say God is 'near.' Verse 18 says the Lord is near to all who call on Him, to all who call on Him in truth.

"He fulfills the desire of those who fear Him. He also hears their cry and saves them. The Lord preserves all who love Him, but the wicked He will destroy." God is a preserver. He hears us. He fulfills the desire of those who fear Him. These are all characteristics of God. My hope is that in just talking about them and meditating on them, that they will have a really positive fruit emerge in my life.

Pray-er

God is a prayer. When I don't know what to pray, I find myself leaning on the Lord's prayer and sometimes I pray the whole prayer. Other time I emphasize, especially for those in my family, "Father, give us this day our daily bread," in faith believing that that'll have everything that they need for that day. Not only physical bread but spiritual bread, or life-giving bread and encouragement. Then I follow this prayer up by asking God to "deliver us from evil." Then I ask God to have His will "be done on earth as it is in heaven."

It is also a huge comfort knowing that Jesus is praying for us. I sometimes wonder that He is praying. But sometimes when I don't know what to pray for myself, I say, "Amen Jesus to what you are praying for me." He knows us. Not only does He know our frame, we could read Psalm 139 and it would remind us how intimately and completely He knows us. He formed us in our mother's womb. He created us in his image.

He knows what we're going to say before we say it. He knows what we're going to think before we think it. And with all that knowledge, He is ever compassionate. He is forgiving. He's always loving. He's continually abounds in loving kindness. Ephesians say that He chose us before the foundation of the world.

God is not a squelcher.

How's that for a word? Isaiah 42:3 says "a bruised reed, He will not break, and a faintly burning wick, He will not quench."

He's a compassionate burden bearer.

Isaiah 53 says, "Surely He has borne our sins and carried our sorrows." So it's not like God's in heaven looking down saying, "I wonder how they're going to respond

to all that's going on." He's right there with us. When we weep, He weeps. When we are hurting, He's hurting. It says in Isaiah, "in all their affliction He was afflicted." Isn't this a wonderful dad?

I have a really good friend. One time he was by himself and beyond words, He was sobbing. Everybody in the home was in bed and he was downstairs praying and grieving. My friend looked across the room and saw Jesus sitting and weeping. I have no doubt that this was a valid picture for it is thoroughly biblical. As we have read, when we weep, and when we're afflicted, He's afflicted.

I think God's doing a lot of suffering right now during this pandemic. He's in the hospitals and He's working side by side with the medical staffs. He's a healer. He's compassionate. He's abounding in steadfast love. He's good and He's our dad. I'm happy to meditate on Him and focus on His character.

I believe that I'm going to be a better dad to my kids if I can emulate our Heavenly Father. I had a pretty nice earthly dad and there's a lot of things that I've done because he did them for me. I also have a Heavenly Father and I want to emulate Him. I want to be compassionate like He's compassionate. I want to be kind, patient and good to everybody I come in contact with.

Let's pray.

Father, thank you for being our Father and thank you for giving us glimpses of your character, of what it means to be a father. Help us to have what it takes to pitch our tent so to speak and think of you for 15 or 30 seconds and to think of what it means to be compassionate, slow to anger, merciful, good to all and we could go right down the list of your attributes.

Thank you God for praying for us. Thank you for being our Father. Thank you for disciplining us. Thank you for giving us our daily bread and thank you for delivering us from evil. We worship you, our good and merciful Father. Thank you for sending Jesus to reveal the Father to us. The fact that we can even have this conversation and see the things that we're seeing is a testament to the work of Jesus who's revealed you to us. Thank you, Spirit of God in Jesus name for helping us to see the Father and the Son. Amen.