

**Title:** Journey of the Generations

**Scripture:** Deuteronomy 6.1-9

**Theme:** As Fathers there are three gifts that we can and should give to our Children: The gift of the Word, of Prayer and finally of faithfulness and staying power.

**Introduction:**

Happy Father's Day all you Dads! Before we dig into the scriptures today, a few pictures.

I sent this to Allie and said that it reminded me of Coop. She texted back and said: "Don't laugh that's happened." The reason he wants Mom and not Dad you ask? Dad's too busy doing this. So now here are a few pictures of my grandson's (mis)adventures.

It happened at 3:05 am - July the 20th - 1988. It will be a day I will never forget. Lisa gave birth to our first child. A beautiful 7 pound 12 ounce little girl who would forever change our lives. I was a Dad. A dad of a little girl no less. Terrified as to what I had gotten myself into, I stared into those eyes and I knew nothing would ever be the same. This gorgeous little girl, with a cowlick that encompassed her entire head was now my responsibility. Every parent has that defining moment in their life. We look into the eyes of the little one we created and find that this is what life is really all about. Four children and now two grandchildren later, I have found that the responsibilities grow. They do not become less.

The greatest responsibility we have is to raise our children. The moment we become parents, we find that twenty four hours a day, seven days a week for pretty much the next eighteen years we will be the go to person. Even during those teen years where we find that through no fault of our own, we have become the people who know absolutely nothing about just about everything. With that said, let's dig in.

The Jewish festival of Passover, probably the most important festival for the Jewish people centered around the Seder meal. What was and is still unique about it is that the meal was scripted in such a way that the children around the table would ask questions about what each item represented or why they do what they do as part of the meal? One of the key reasons for doing this was to remind and teach the next generation about the great Exodus story of liberation from slavery in Egypt. They were in fact commanded by God to do so.

*You shall tell your child on that day, 'It is because of what the Lord did for me when I came out of Egypt. ' [Exodus 13.8 NRSV]*

As the family gathered and the table was set, the Father (traditionally) would have his white robe on and all the family would be seated. Then the story of the Exodus would begin. What is interesting is as the children would ask questions about why they did certain things and what the

elements stood for, Dad would stop and take the time to give them an answer about their God and what he had done. Passing down to the next generation by telling stories from different portions of Torah. All so the next generation would know where they came from, why they believe what they believe and most importantly that YHWH, their God is the one and only God.

If I could have the Dutil's come down please. I have taken some liberty to re-write our text today and would like Keegan, Barbara and Christopher Dutil to read it for us.

**If you would please stand.  
(Open in prayer)**

The Scripture which they just read for us this morning is known as the Shema. That daily prayer of the people of Israel wasn't just something that was said because it sounded nice when recited in Synagogue. It was a call to remember the promise. The promise of a journey which started with Abraham. One which he handed down to his son and then he to his. Through the generations all the way to now, the people of Israel celebrate God's promises and his deliverance.

I have spoke on this before but I want to say it again, that it seems being a man in the world today is sometimes painted as a bad thing. I want to challenge that notion today. Because that is the story that the world offers, but it's not the one that the Scriptures declare. We talked last week about the Image bearer and how we all have value. Well Dads, today is the day we celebrate you and the role you play not only in the world, but most especially in your home. There are three gifts I believe that we can and should give to our children. We see them in the passage of scripture which was read for us. I'm calling them the Gifts of the Father:

The first one is the Word, the second is Prayer and the last one is the gift of staying power and faithfulness.

Now I understand that we all come from different backgrounds. A good many of us, and I say us because I am one, who come from broken homes and some of you may even struggle with the concept of Dad. Some come from a home where Mom and Dad have been together forever. I want to say to all of you, that doesn't matter. We are made up of all kinds of families. God is in the midst of everyone of them if we allow him to be. So I tell you these apply and are important no matter what your family make up is. The first gift that we as Dads can give is:

### **1- The gift of the Word:**

Daniel was a young man when he and his friends were pulled away from their homes and shipped some 900 miles away to live among a culture which had no reference for his God. Over the course of 70 plus years Daniel and the people of Israel lived among the Babylonians. Toward the end of the exile we find Daniel searching the books and trying to understand what God was doing.

*...in the first year of his reign (King Darius), I, Daniel, perceived in the books the number of years that, according to the word of the Lord to the prophet Jeremiah, must be fulfilled for the devastation of Jerusalem, namely, seventy years. [Daniel 9.2 NRSV]*

After 70 years away from home he knew where to go. That was no accident. Daniel, now quite an old man, had within him a reference point that was instilled in him in his youth. Some commentators put Daniel somewhere in his mid-eighties at this point. So in reality, he has lived almost all of his life away from his home land and away from the temple he knew as a child.

With Zondervan publishing and Oxford University Press still a few years in the future, nice printed bibles did not exist. "Books", as Daniel references here were actually scrolls. One similar to the one you see here on the slide. As with any young Hebrew child, Daniel would have been brought up celebrating the passover meal as well as attending Synagogue every Saturday to hear the scriptures read. If a Synagogue was very lucky they may have more than one scroll to read from, but typically they would have one. That one copy containing one of the 39 books of the Old Testament, would be shared with other Synagogues from time to time so they would all at some point read from the different scrolls. So memorization of God's word was very important. Unlike today, Daniel and his family would have memorized entire passages of the Scriptures. They could recite and remember the Word even when they had no access to the scrolls. The gift and sacredness of the Word of God was a vital and important part of daily life. They didn't have an app for that. In Psalm 119, what many call the Psalm of the Word, the Psalmist writes:

*With my whole heart I seek you;  
do not let me stray from your commandments.  
I treasure your word in my heart, (or I store it up)  
so that I may not sin against you.  
Blessed are you, O Lord;  
teach me your statutes.  
[Psalm 119.10-12 NRSV]*

That had an entirely different meaning to them. Some of us have multiple copies of the Bible and multiple versions to reference. However at that time, some folks may have never been able to even pick up a copy of the scriptures, let alone own one. So, they stored his word up in their hearts because it was the only copy that they would have had.

It is not clear in scriptures where Daniel's Father ended up. It is safe however to read between the lines here. I would have to believe that Daniel himself found a love for God's word by seeing his Father's love for God's word. You see, my Dad always had a saying: Do as I say, not as I do. The problem with that is I have yet to meet a child who does what I say more than doing what I do. Our kids watch everything we DO and mimic it. My grandson is a papa-coy. Portuguese for Parrot. So you best be careful what you say around him. Even if he knows he ought not to say it, if you did it must be ok. Children learn how to respond and react and live not by what I have said as much as by what I have done myself. I suspect Daniel had a Mom and Dad who were firmly

rooted in and living daily by the Word of God. There is no other explanation for what he does when he is on his own in a foreign country and he resolves not to eat from the king's table. He is simply doing what his Father would have done.

Dads: One of the gifts you can give the next generation is the gift of God's word. If you want your children to read it, are you? If you want your children to live it out, are you? There are times, usually between age 11 to 18 where our children will test us. They will challenge us and will explore our beliefs for themselves. They may come across as disinterested in God's word and the only place they will read it is in and through our actions. Even when they seem to not be paying attention, trust me they are. Daniel was in the word and lived the word because his parents did.

I want to challenge you Dads, I love you and this is why I challenge you, be in the word. Find the time to show your kids how important reading the scriptures are. When you are challenged with issues at home and at work learn to respond in a way that brings the Word of God to life. Your kids will see that and understand that it is alive, real and active. Encourage them to be reading it as well. They may fight you on this and they may not always like it. However, if they see how we read it and try our best to live by it that will set the example. So that brings me to gift number two:

## **2- The gift of prayer:**

This is so very important. Again quickly back to Daniel our man of the hour:

*Then I turned to the Lord God, to seek an answer by prayer and supplication with fasting and sackcloth and ashes. I prayed to the Lord my God and made confession...*

[Daniel 9.3 NRSV]

What a powerful statement. Daniel was a man of prayer. He knew where to find the answers. When he was lost and confused about what God was doing, he searched the scriptures and then went into prayer.

How do we give the gift of prayer to our kids? It starts around the table. Even the simple prayer of giving thanks at dinner. It demonstrates that we speak to God in the same way we speak to each other. Our kids may think it's goofy and sometimes they may roll their eyes and pretend like it's annoying, and it probably is to them. They may even continue to grow up giving the impression that it doesn't matter. But be faithful. Not only to pray but to tell them what you are praying for and ask them what they need prayer for. It has been my experience that while kids say no or act like they don't care and pay attention, they do. It is good for them to know that while they are dealing with challenges, we are in prayer for them.

I heard a story once about this big tough guy soldier. One day in the heat of the fight, many of his friends were hit and went down. He, his commanding officer and a couple buddies made it into a fox hole. He was given orders to go out and get his friends who had been shot. His response was,

"Yes sir." The Co. took off, he looked at his watch and didn't move. His buddies looked at him thinking that was rather odd. Time went by and his Co. returned, saw that he hadn't gone and angrily ordered him again to go. 'Yes Sir' was his response. Again he looked at his watch and didn't move. Finally after a bit more time went by, all of a sudden with bullets flying all over the place he jumped up and ran out into the heat of battle and brought back his buddies.

When the battle was over and they were settling in, his Co. came to him and wanted to know just what his issue had been. He looked at him and said: 'Before I left home my Mother handed me a Bible and inside on the front cover she wrote me a note that everyday while I was gone she was setting aside these specific times to pray for me. Sir- I'm not a believer and I had no desire to disobey your orders, but I wasn't going to leave that fox hole until I knew my mother back home was praying for me. I knew with her praying I would be OK.'

A big tough guy soldier, armed to the teeth won't leave the fox hole until he knows his Mom back home is praying for him. Now I know that it was his Mom but I challenge you Dads, it's time we teach our children that real men pray. They get on their faces and pray God's blessings and covering for their families and homes. Our kids are watching and they will remember. Give them the gift of prayer. Pray with them, pray for them and let them know you are doing so. I promise you, when God answers and they know you have been praying for them, things get real for them in a hurry.

Daniel prayed because his parents prayed. He trusted God to answer because he always had. Daniel is one of the greatest examples of the third gift we give our children:

### **3-The gift of Staying power and faithfulness:**

For 70 years, Daniel went through trial after trial. He trusted God and prayed even when it was illegal and he was thrown in with the lions. As a result he continued to be blessed instead. You see Daniel had been rooted in the word and found there that God would not leave or forsake him. He was confident in prayer and knew that God would hear, answer and deliver, even in the midst of what looked like certain doom.

This is a tough one. So bear with me. With a culture that has a fifty percent divorce rate and many more single Moms and Dads on top of that statistic, I understand - we all come from different family units. When my parents divorced we were almost the only kids in the entire school who came from broken homes. So I understand more than most the pain and the hurt from living in situations like that. So wherever this finds you Dad, it is there where you need to stand your ground. It is there where you need to be faithful, to all of the children in your life. There is no greater gift than to have a man, who regardless of how tough things get, or how confusing life may be, that they stay the course. I get it that sometimes that seems impossible. I want to encourage you - do the best you can. God knows your heart and your struggles as a Dad. I confess, I had to learn this trait from someone other than my father. God honors even the

perceived messes. If we can look at them as opportunities for us to bless, grow and feed into the lives of those whom God puts before us, he will honor our faithfulness.

When I moved to Vermont almost 30 years ago, I was leaving a less than ideal situation. My Dad was never really the best example. Unless being the best example of a bad example counts. So when I met my wife I really didn't know what to make of her father. A career military man, stable, loving and firm. I can only imagine what his thoughts were when she brought me home for the first time. Actually I don't have to anymore. Being a Dad myself, I am quite confident those thoughts crossed my mind more than a few times over the years as my girls were growing up. I learned a lot by watching how he treated my Mother-in-Law, cared for his kids and even me. It got to the point where I was eating at their house so much that he wanted to claim me on his taxes. Never a complaint though. When I messed up, he would let me know it as if he was my own Father. He did it in a way that built me up. He taught me everything I know about working on cars and we have spent a good many nights changing oil, brakes and even an entire transmission. Not once has he ever said 'No, I don't have time for you.'

He has shown me what staying power and faithfulness looks like. He has been my example of what a Father ought to look and act like. He is one of the greatest men I know. I am who I am today because of him. So never think what you do goes unnoticed Dads. You are begin watched, even by those who are not your kids.

Being a Father is the second toughest and greatest job men are called to. Being a husband is the first. Part of the gift of staying power and faithfulness for our kids is how we handle our wives. Our sons will do what we do! When they get older, what is engrained in their brains and on their hearts will be what we did. If we want our sons to be good husbands and fathers, we need to BE that. If we want our daughters to have good husbands and fathers for their children, show her what that looks like. So when the time comes you will be the standard by which that young man is measured.

Hey Dad-

The gift of the word, the gift of prayer and the gift of faithfulness and staying power are the best things you can give. Andrew was telling me about how they borrowed the fog machine so they could make part of the video we saw this morning. At one point in the filming he, along with the other boys had filled their truck with fog. The "Hey Dad" comment was made by one of the other boys just when Mike was getting home and able to hear it. So as any good dad he responded with: "what?" It was then that he saw his truck filled with smoke and was like: "What did you do?!" Part of the joys of being a dad!

There are many stories that I could share regarding my kids, but I want dinner this afternoon, so just a couple thoughts in closing.

Be the Dad! Our kids have enough friends, and anyone of you with teens knows, you aren't one of them. Make the hard decisions- but do it in love. Say yes as much as you can so when you say no, its not that big of a deal.

Understand that the time you have with these kids will go by quicker than you could ever imagine. Soon enough, it will be high school and then college or work and marriage. It is then that the journey of the generations starts. You think as they grow and move out and start lives of their own that your family gets smaller. Nope. It gets bigger. Lisa and I have two sons in law and two grandsons. More people to pray for, to talk to and hopefully set examples for. As a Dad I want to pass on what my Father in Law gave to me.

When Boo (Miles) and Coop show up here during the week for Mops set up, they knock on my door, come in and hop up onto my lap. Everything stops when I hear "Papa" can I? I open either "Forest Flyer" or another of Miles' favorite the "Bible app." The questions start - Hey Papa, what does that mean? Who is Jonah? Look at the Arc.

With that, the journey continues. Happy Fathers Day.

**Have the worship team and prayer team come down**

**Close in Prayer.**