

The Perfect Father

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Salem

Matthew 7:7-12

INTRODUCTION:

A certain man had two sons, and the younger of them said to his father... "Father, give me the portion of thy time, and thy attention and thy companionship, and the counsel which falleth to me."

- And he divided unto them his living, in that he paid the boy's bills and sent him to a select preparatory school, and dancing school, and to college, and tried to believe he was doing his full duty by the boy.
- And not many days after, the father gathered all interests and aspirations and ambitions and took his journey into a far country, into a land of stocks and bonds and securities and other things, which do not interest a boy. And there he wasted his precious opportunity to be a father to his son.
- And when he had spent the very best of his life and had gained money, had failed to find satisfaction, there arose a mighty famine in his heart; and he began to be in want of sympathy and real companionship.
- And he went and joined himself to one of the clubs of that country, and they elected him chairman of the house committee and president of the club and sent him to Congress; and he would fain have satisfied himself with the husks that other men did eat, and no man gave unto him any real friendship.
- But when he came to himself he said... "How many men of my acquaintance have boys whom they understand and who understand them, who talk about their boys and associate with their boys and seem perfectly happy in the comradeship of their sons, and I perish here with my heart hunger? I will arise and go to my son and will say to him... "Son, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight; I am no more worthy to be called thy father; make me as one of thy acquaintances."
- And he arose and came to his son, and while he was yet afar off, his son saw him and was moved with astonishment, and instead of running and falling on his neck he drew back and was ill at ease.
- And the father said unto him... "Son, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight. I am no more worthy to be called thy father. Forgive me now and let me by your friend."
- But the son said... "Not so. I wish it were possible, but it is too late. There was a time when I wanted to know things, when I wanted companionship and counsel; but you were too busy. I got the information, and I got companionship; but I got the wrong kind, and now, alas, I am wrecked in soul and body, and there is nothing you can do for me. It is too late, too late, too late."

As we take a moment this morning to consider this story, we know that although the story is fictional, the idea behind it, is all too real today.

- Some of us may have had a father who always gave us everything we ever wanted.
- They bought us an expensive bike, sports equipment, stereos and even automobiles.
- They worked so hard to buy us everything we wanted, but they were always too busy to give us what we really wanted... time.

Some of us may have had a father who let us do anything we wanted.

- We were given freedom to go and do and say whatever we thought best and were given the liberty to make our own decisions about what we were to do in life.
- Only thing is, we knew that we should make better decisions, but dad was never there to give the direction that we so badly craved.

Others may have had a father that was just the opposite and ruled the home with an iron fist and the discipline was harsh.

- The home life was so structured that even minor mistakes and accidents were not tolerated.
- The father was so quick to discipline that our feelings didn't matter and our opinions were irrelevant.

Here's a true story... J Paul Getty was at one time the richest man in the world.

- But J. Paul Getty Jr. rarely saw his father.
- In fact, he saw him only on rare occasions.
- When he was in high school, he wrote a special letter to his father.

- He had wanted to say some very important things to his dad.
- The letter came back to him from his father with all of the grammatical and spelling errors marked in red pencil.
- But there was no personal response from his father. Not one word.
- He summed up that experience by saying, “**I never got over that.**”

The point that I am trying to make is that none of us have a perfect dad.

- Even if your father was hardworking, nurturing, and kind hearted, I am sure that everyone here can think of something that your father could have done better.
- The thing is, nobody has offered a Fathers 101 course in high school, college, or graduate school.
- What is it that really prepares a person for fatherhood?
- There is no perfect father on earth as an example for us.
- But there is one Father that can prepare us to be a good father.
- There is one who is the perfect teacher of fatherhood who teaches His children the best way to live their lives.
- This morning I would like us to study a passage that exemplifies that God is the perfect Father.

Please turn in your Bibles to **Matthew 7** and let us take a close look at some of the characteristics of a perfect Father.

- Before we begin looking at this passage, I’d like for you to just think about the following question... In the history of the world, what man knew God better than any other man?
- Would we say it was Adam or Noah? How about Abraham, Job or David? Isaiah? Jeremiah?
- Or what about Peter or Paul in the New Testament?
- The answer, without any question... Is the son of God, who lived as a man!
- Jesus was the perfect Son to describe for us His perfect Father!
- With those thoughts in mind, please read with me the words of Jesus as he describes some of the characteristics of God the Father in **Matthew 7:7-12**...

7 "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.

8 "For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.

9 "Or what man is there among you who, when his son asks for a loaf, will give him a stone?

10 "Or if he asks for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he?

11 "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!

12 "In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you, for this is the Law and the Prophets.

As Jesus is just beginning His earthly ministry in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus begins giving mankind a description of God that they had never heard before.

- As we study this passage closer this morning, let us consider what we can learn about our perfect Father.

I. The first thing that we can learn in verses 7-8 is that GOD IS THE PERFECT FATHER BECAUSE HE ALWAYS LISTENS TO HIS CHILDREN.

Jesus makes reference to prayer and He encourages people to “**ask**”, to “**seek**”, and to “**knock**” on God’s door.

- When we do so, Jesus says that we will “**receive**”, we will “**find**” and God’s door “**shall be opened.**”
- God has an “**open door policy**” and He always listens and is always available for His children.

Occasionally, I will work on my lessons out of my home office and I have found that it is a little more difficult to do now that summer break is upon us.

- And I have got to admit that I do not carry the same open door policy as we see here in the scriptures.
- At one point, I established a couple of ground rules so that my train of thought would not be derailed by interruptions and distractions while I was working in my home office.

1. I have asked my daughters to exercise great restraint when it comes to approaching me during my working hours.
2. If they need something in the room where I am working, they are to knock on the door... wait three seconds... to enter quietly... to get what they need... and then to get out without saying a word!

You see... a human father may find it to be a hindrance for him to accomplish his task when his children ask him for his time.

- And, an earthly father does not always appropriately prioritize his time and a child can be neglected of the guidance and nurturing that they so badly need at a young age.
- The good news that we learn from **Matthew 7** is that our perfect Father's time is always available to us!

We can always go to Him with our troubles...

- We can say a word of prayer and know that He is listening and that He cares about the suffering and the difficulties that we are going through.
- We can go to the book of **Psalms** or the book of **Proverbs** and we can be reminded that we are not the only ones with troubles and we can know that He is there for us.

We can also go to Him for guidance...

- Again, we can open up the word of God and we can understand His will for us.
- We can learn how to please the father and to live a good life in peace and harmony with others.
- Here are the words to a song, that I believe you'll recognize... **“Trust in Him who will not leave you, whatsoever years may bring. If by earthly friends forsaken, still more closely to Him cling... Hold to His hand, to God's unchanging hand... build your hopes on things eternal. Hold to God's unchanging hand.”**
- The great thing about God's **“open door policy”** is that we can trust in Him and know that He will not leave us.
- We know that if we ask, it will be given to us... that if we seek, we will find... and that if we knock, the door will be opened to us.
- We have been tremendously blessed with the avenue of prayer, knowing that our heavenly Father is the perfect Father and that He always listens!

II. **There is a second thing that we can learn from verses 9-11, that is that GOD IS THE PERFECT FATHER BECAUSE HE ONLY GIVES GOOD THINGS TO HIS CHILDREN.**

Some fathers today will give their children lots of nice gifts, which teaches the children that the most important things in this world is our possessions.

- Earthly fathers will often give things to their children that they do not even intend to give
- They will give their children disrespect for authority because they do not show a respect for authority in their lives.
- They can give their children a hateful attitude because of the attitude they show to others.
- They can give their children despair, rather than offering hope for better things to come.

However, here in **Matthew 7**, we see that Jesus says that God will not give us a rock, if we ask for bread.

- And He will not give us a snake if we ask for a fish.
- Jesus actually implies that not even an earthly father would typically do these things for their sons, however He goes on in **verse 11** to say, **“If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!”**

For a few moments, I would like us to take a look at some of the things which our perfect Father has given to those in the past and will continue to give to His children in the future.

- To Adam and Eve, God gave all authority over the plants and animals.
- God gave Noah a chance to start over with a new and peaceful life.
- God gave Abraham a promise of many descendants and to his family the land of Canaan.

- God gave the Israelites freedom from slavery and ultimately he gave them the Promised Land.
- He gave Samson strength and to David he gave strength and courage to stand up against his enemies
- He gave Solomon wealth and wisdom beyond that of any other man in the history of the world.

The question is... What has our Father given us today?

- In order to answer this question, I did a series of word searches in the Bible using combinations of the words God, Lord, Give, Given, Gave etc...
- I came up with a very long list of passages in God's word that demonstrate all that He has given us and, frankly, there is not enough time today for us to look at all of the passages that I found.
- So what I would like to do is break it down into four categories.

1. First of all, God has given us Instructions...

The apostle Paul gave some advice to Fathers in **Ephesians 6:4** saying, "*Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.*"

- God has given us directions for life and a guidebook so that we understand His will.
- Paul also gave the young Timothy some advice, saying, "*Consider what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything.*" (**2 Timothy 2:7**)
- Our Father is not going to leave us in a situation where we have to question right from wrong.
- He didn't leave us high and dry with no way of knowing the truth!
- Even before the New Testament was written the very wise Solomon understood where wisdom came from... he said, "*For the LORD gives wisdom; From His mouth come knowledge and understanding*" (**Proverbs 2:6**)

God is the source of wisdom and understanding and He delivered His word to us through His son and His teachings.

- On several occasions, the apostle John quoted Jesus who said how important His words are.
- In **John 5:24** Jesus said, "*Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.*"
- In **John 8:31-32**, He said, "*If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.*"
- And in **John 8:51**, He said, "*Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word he will never see death.*" And again, in the very next verse... "*If anyone keeps My word, he will never taste of death.*"

The words of God through Jesus are extremely important for us to hear so that we can understand the truth.

- The only way to avoid eternal death and punishment is to heed those words and they will make us free.
- Our perfect Father has given us instructions.

2. Next, we find that our Father has given us unwavering consistency.

As a father on earth, I know how easy it is to spout out instructions on how my children should conduct themselves.

- However, there have been times when I will tell my children to do something a certain way and they'll reply by saying, "**But, dad, I'm just doing it the way that you told me to do it last week.**"

You see, one of the great things about God's word is that it never changes and it is always consistent.

- From the beginning **Genesis 1** all the way to the end of **Revelation 22**, God gives us a perfect and unchanging set of instructions.
- The writer of Hebrews said, "*Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. Do not be carried away by varied and strange teachings...*" (**Hebrews 13:7-9**)

Not only is His word consistent, but He is consistent

- He consistently rewards those who are striving to do His will, and he consistently punishes those who refuse to comply with His instructions.
- He “*is the same yesterday and today and forever!*”
- Our Father has given us unwavering consistency.

3. Another good thing that God has given us is strength.

One of the hardest things in life is the uncertainty of the future... Financial troubles... health troubles... Relation troubles... All of these things put an incredible amount of stress on a person.

- Some of you here today may be struggling with all of these pressures... However, we can take comfort in knowing that God will give us strength to keep on the right path.
- The writer of **Psalm 46**, begins the psalm by saying, “*God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change and though the mountains slip into the heart of the sea; though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains quake at its swelling pride. There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy dwelling places of the Most High. God is in the midst of her, she will not be moved...*”

God gives us strength to overcome our enemies.

- He gives us strength in overcoming temptations.
- And He gives us strength when dealing with hardship and difficult times.
- He is the very source of strength and we can always put our trust in Him.

The story is told of a group of botanists hunting specimens of rare mountain plants in the Scotland highlands.

- Plants were spotted 200 feet down a steep precipice.
- A young boy stood by watching the vain efforts of the men to get the plants.
- They offered him a goodly sum of money if he would go over the side on a rope and retrieve the plants.
- Naturally, the lad was afraid, and started to refuse.
- However, he remembered that his family could sure use the money.
- The boy said, “**I’ll do it, but only on one condition; that my father hold the rope!**”

The prophet Isaiah once said, “*I will trust and not be afraid...*” (**Isaiah 12:2**)

- Paul also spoke about strength in **Romans 8:31**. “*If God is for us, who is against us?*”
- And again in **Philippians 4:13** he said, “*I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.*”
- God has given us strength!

4. Our Father has also given us another very good thing... He has given us hope!

One of the greatest things that we can have in life is a confidence of what the future holds for us.

- Throughout the Bible we can see that God takes care of those who heed His instructions.
- In **1 Corinthians 15:57**, Paul told about something that God has given Christians... “*but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*”
- Paul also told the Thessalonians what God had given them... “*Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father, who has loved us and given us eternal comfort and good hope by grace, comfort and strengthen your hearts in every good work and word.*” (**2 Thessalonians 2:16-17**)
- He has given us “*eternal comfort*”, “*good hope*”, and “*grace.*”

The greatest hope that we could possibly have comes through the greatest gift that God ever gave... “*For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.*”

- God has given us more than we could possibly want or need... Paul said that God “*causes ALL things to work together for good to those who love Him...*” (**Romans 8:28**)
- And the writer of **Psalm 84:11**, says “*...The LORD gives grace and glory; No good thing does He withhold from those who walk uprightly.*”

- God is the perfect Father because He only gives good things to His children.

III. **This brings us to a final observation that we find in **Matthew 7:12...** and that is that GOD IS THE PERFECT FATHER BECAUSE HE SHOWS HIS CHILDREN MERCY.**

He treats us the way we would want to be treated and not the way that we really deserve to be treated... God shows us His incredible mercy.

I think that the apostle Peter summarizes it best in **1 Peter 1:3-7**, *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ...”*

SUMMARY:

This morning, we have seen that Jesus has demonstrated to us some of the characteristics of the perfect Father.

- We have found that God is the perfect Father because He always listens to His children and is always there for them.
- He is also the perfect Father because He only gives good things to His children. Those good things include instructions, consistency, strength, and most importantly, He has given us hope!
- And finally, we see that God is the perfect Father because He shows His children mercy.

CONCLUSION/INVITATION:

As fathers today, we can only strive to be the kind of father that God has been for us.

- As Paul instructed in **Ephesians 5:1-2...** *“...be imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us...”*
- God has given us all good things... however, those good things come to those *“who love Him”*... Those good things come to those *“who walk uprightly.”*
- He takes gives all good things to His children when they are obedient to His instructions.

Those instructions demonstrate that we must hear God’s word and believe that Jesus Christ was the Son of God.

- We must confess our sins and change our old ways.
- And we must be immersed in water for the forgiveness our sins... Only then do we come into contact with the blood of Christ, which gives us the victory that Paul and the others talked about.
- If there is anyone who has not taken these steps in your life, I hope that you will respond by coming forward as we stand and sing... please won’t you come.