

# A FATHER'S GREATEST GIFT

## JOHN 8:12-20

Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life."

The Pharisees therefore said to Him, "You bear witness of Yourself; Your witness is not true."

Jesus answered and said to them, "Even if I bear witness of Myself, My witness is true, for I know where I came from and where I am going; but you do not know where I come from and where I am going. You judge according to the flesh; I judge no one. And yet if I do judge, My judgment is true; for I am not alone, but I am with the Father who sent Me. It is also written in your law that the testimony of two men is true. I am One who bears witness of Myself, and the Father who sent Me bears witness of Me."

Then they said to Him, "Where is Your Father?" Jesus answered, "You know neither Me nor My Father. If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also."

These words Jesus spoke in the treasury, as He taught in the temple; and no one laid hands on Him, for His hour had not yet come.

Today is Father's Day, and in case you've yet to get Dad a special gift, I've got a few ideas for the ole boy.

Here are six great gift suggestions for Father's Day...

And in the event any of my eighteen family members are listening, I'd be proud to own any of the following...

6) Recliner Saddle Bags. Everything Dad needs this when he mounts the barcalounger for his afternoon nap.

And speaking of naps, 5) A Power Nap Head Pillow. This is complete protection for any napping position.

4) Breakfast Sandwich Maker. You no longer need to stop for an Egg McMuffin. You can now make your own!

3) An Outdoor Popcorn Popper. Dad can now pop his kernels over an open fire or even in the fireplace.

2) A Make Your Own Lure Kit. Now dad can go to the lake and impress his fishing pals with personalized bait.

And last but not least, 1) An Electric Broom. Tired of sweeping up debris; then bending over to collect it - *no more!* Dad can suck it up in his new vacuum broom.

*Wow, that's six great gift ideas for any dad!*

Yet this morning, rather than talk about gifts **for** dads, I'd like to talk about **a father's greatest gift to his child.**

Which brings us dads back down to reality. Oh, it's a nice diversion for a father to consider what gift he might receive *from his child*, but the far more common expectation is what a dad is required to give *to his child*.

And our text today speaks of a father's greatest gift.

Let me set the stage...

John Chapter 8 takes place immediately following the Feast of Tabernacles. This was one of the three major Jewish feasts, which was observed in the fall of each year.

It commemorated God's provision for Israel in the wilderness. At night, the Hebrews slept under the stars *in tabernacles or*

*booths*; a reminder of what their life was like for the forty years they wandered through the desert.

But each evening during the week-long feast, the celebration in Jerusalem moved into the Temple. Four giant menorahs were erected in the Court of Women, or what John calls “**the treasury.**” This was the area in the Temple that contained the offering boxes. It saw heavy traffic as folks gathered there to make their contributions.

The four candelabras used for the feast were enormous. They were 100 feet tall with four branches and five lamps full of olive oil set ablaze each night.

The lamps were so bright the city glowed. Like a modern shopping mall, the menorahs generated enough ambient light to illuminate Jerusalem’s neighborhoods.

The spectacle reminded Israel of God’s presence - the “**fire by night**” - that guided them for their forty years of wandering... And each night of the feast, worshippers would come to the Temple waving their fiery torches, playing their music, and dancing before the Lord in celebration of the light of life He brings to our dark world.

And it was the next day, against that backdrop, as the priests were taking down the menorahs, that Jesus rose in the same spot and declared, “**I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.**” What was symbolized the seven prior nights, Jesus had made a reality. God’s presence was with them, no longer as a nighttime fire, but now God’s presence was a person whose name was Jesus.

In the Temple no less, *the heart of Judaism*, Jesus made this bold claim. In fact, He used the name of God.

“Yahweh” is the Hebrew verb “to be” or “I am.” Jesus calls Himself “I am...” And He shouts, “I am the light of the world.” As the nighttime fire guided Israel, Jesus is “the light of life” - God’s light to guide the entire world.

This was how Messiah was known. He was to be the light of the world. Jesus was claiming to be the Savior.

And this was just one of seven such statements Jesus made that John records in his gospel. **Jesus knew who He was...**

Four times in Chapter 6 Jesus said, “I am the bread of life.” In John 10 He says, “I am the door of the sheep.” Again in Chapter 10, “I am the Good Shepherd.

In Chapter 11, “I am the resurrection and the life.” In John 14:6 Jesus says, “I am the way, the truth, and the life.” And in Chapter 15 Jesus declares, “I am the true vine.” *Make sure you have been grafted into Jesus...*

Not just here in John 8 when He says, “I am the light of the world,” but seven times Jesus makes an “I am” statement. He was proclaiming to be God. He was the promised One - who had come from God to do the work of God - in shepherding Israel and in saving the world.

### **Jesus knew who He was and what He came to do.**

And this was important, since His identity and purpose were being challenged. In John 8, Jesus’ claims were opposed by a religious sect called the Pharisees.

In verse 13, they tell Jesus, “You bear witness of Yourself; Your witness is not true.” In a Jewish Court, for a claim to be

credible it had to be affirmed by at least two or three witnesses. *Here, the Pharisees accuse Jesus of speaking for Himself. It's His word against theirs. From their perspective, He had no one testifying on His behalf.*

Yet Jesus says in verse 14, He doesn't need anyone. His word is authority enough. **"Even if I bear witness of Myself, My witness is true..."** When a light shines for all to see, you don't need anyone to testify that it exists.

But if Jesus wanted to call a witness to testify on His behalf, He had ample support. For Jesus tells them, verse 17, **"It is also written in your law that the testimony of two men is true. I am One who bears witness of Myself, and the Father who sent Me bears witness of Me."** Jesus is saying if I need witnesses, I have two: *God the Son* is one witness, and *God the Father* is another.

And it was as if the Pharisees were just waiting on Jesus to mention His father, for they immediately ask Him, verse 19, **"Where is Your Father?"** And rest assured they said it with a sneer. It was their Father's Day surprise. It was like asking Him, **"Whose Your Daddy?"** They were questioning Jesus' paternity. Apparently, the Pharisees had done some research. They'd hired investigators to look into Jesus' background, and they were now aware of the rumors surrounding His birth.

*Born of a virgin? You got to be kidding.* They were unwilling to believe Mary had supernaturally conceived.

Thus, when they speak of **"Your Father"**, they mean Joseph, but Jesus is speaking of His heavenly Father. He says, **"You**

know neither Me nor My Father. If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also.”

And notice, throughout this exchange Jesus appeals to His relationship with His Father to support the claims of *who He was* and *what He had come to do*. This is why He says to the Pharisees in verse 14, “For I know where I came from and where I am going; but you do not know where I come from and where I am going.” It was Jesus’ relationship with His Father that gave Him His bearings - that enabled Him to know the truth about Himself - **where He was from and even where He was going.**

Jesus had an internal compass. He knew both His **origin and destiny**, and this is what kept Him on track. He was grounded in the truth that came from His Father.

I’ve heard it said, “The three most important realizations in life are knowing who you are, knowing where you came from, and knowing where you’re going.”

Jesus gleaned all three from His Father, and that’s where our kids get the same insights - **from their dad.**

The Bible teaches when Jesus was conceived, God became a man. The *eternal Son of God* became a *child of time*. The divine became human. Yet how much of His infinite knowledge did Jesus carry with Him to earth?

Surely, as an infant the baby Jesus *learned* to speak. Luke 2:52 sums up His childhood, “He increased in wisdom and stature.” I assume that means He had to study in school. He memorized Scripture. Yet *how did the divine intermingle with the human?* We’re not sure.

One major event in Jesus' life was His baptism. It was His Father in heaven's affirmation. When Jesus came up from the water - the dove of the Spirit came upon Him, **as the Father spoke from heaven - "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."** This confirmed where He had come from - *a heavenly throne*, and it set the stage for where He was going - *an earthly cross*.

And no sooner had Jesus risen out of the baptismal waters that God's Spirit led Him into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. *And recall the first temptation?*

Don't say, **"turn these stones to bread."** Because there was an earlier temptation. Satan told Jesus, **"If you are the Son of God turn these stones to bread."** **"If you are the Son of God?"** Satan wanted Him to doubt His identity and try to prove Himself rather than trust in God's Word.

And it's the same with us, Satan tempts us to doubt who we are and who God made us to be and live a life of striving and confusion rather than abiding and faith.

**This is why the most important gift a father can give to his child is the knowledge and assurance of where he or she came from and where he or she is headed.**

It's called **"stability" - emotional security.** And it's something fewer and fewer children today possess.

**In a sky with no North Star, how do I plot my course. If the map has no coordinates, it's worthless. And this is what our world has done. It's removed the fixed points.**

We've negated marriage and redefined family. Today, you can deny your God-given anatomy and choose your own gender.

It's truly anything goes. **And for a while, it's fun to play with no boundaries, until you fall off a cliff!**

For life does have predetermined rules. There is a true north. And your kids need to know the standards. This is a dad's job - to give his children reliable bearings.

Just to know that I as a human am not the result of accidental biological circumstances... that my ancestor was not a chimpanzee who learned he could stand on his hind legs... or worse, that I'm not the offspring of an electrical reaction in a primordial soup... But that I am the idea of a loving Creator God who has purposes for me - *this truth can instantly alter the trajectory of a life!*

And this is the job of a father, to instill this realization in the mind and heart of his child. To show his child that there is a God. That God loves him and has a plan for his or her life. This affirmation gives human life value and meaning. It sets us up for morals and respect for others.

Without this affirmation, it's all just a guessing game. Life becomes a wild goose chase without the goose.

Recently, I read an article on *The Focus On The Family* website, entitled, **"The Real Job Of Dads."** It begins, **"A dad's primary, underlying job isn't control. It's to validate his children."** And to **"validate"** means **"to give value"** or **"to prove one's worth."** This is a father's job.

A father's involvement in the life of his children proves to them the legitimacy of their place in the world. A mom has carried her child in-utero. Her continued involvement is expected. But for a man to devote himself and his resources to that child's



protection and welfare gives the child significance. Without dad, the child feels a lostness.

I've heard it said, "It's not a father's job to teach his daughter how to be a lady, it's to teach her how a lady should be treated." A daughter learns to interact with the world around her through her interactions with her dad.

And a dad's validation is especially vital to a son. A boy desperately wants to be approved-of by another man. If he doesn't get that validation from his dad, he'll seek it elsewhere - from a peer, or coach, or activist. A father's validation is crucial to a young man's maturity.

A father's acceptance is a strategic influence. Over their lifetime, he validates his kids in multiple ways. Even as a grandpa, his impact remains, if not grows..

As we raised our kids, I stressed to them that they were both made *in God's image* and *in our image*.

They were an Adams, *and that meant something*. We made being an Adams a big deal. It comes with a calling. There're certain things Adams do and don't do!

I taught **my boys** that Adams' never quit. We're not afraid of hard work. We don't give up when the going gets tough. We stick with it to the end... Kathy taught **our daughter** Adams' girls don't let their emotions control their actions. They stay grounded... **Adams'** go to church. It wasn't an option. You're an Adams so you go to church... We created an identity that challenged our children to live by the values we felt were important.

And it's now interesting to hear our sons telling their kids, "*You're an Adams and this is what Adams do...*"

In Little League, we even have an Adams number. At one time or other, all the kids were #14, which had been my jersey number in High School. It's amazing, that today without my coaxing, my kids are now having my grandkids wear #14. Being an Adams means something

Even the daughter-in-laws are into the validation.

A few years ago my sons and I were able to play golf together, and I found four caps that read "Adams Golf." I passed them out on the first tee. We wore them that day.

I think I'm the only one who wore his afterwards. The boys thought it was corny, but I know they all wear *Adams* in their hearts... For I made it my job to carve out for my family a healthy, affirming, and inspiring identity.

**A dad's real job is to validate - that is, bring value to his children's lives - and he does it in a thousand ways...**

A dad validates the legitimacy of his child's feelings when he stops to listen to them... he validates his child's place in the world when he acknowledges and spends time with him or her... he validates their efforts when he gives them his approval... he validates a talent his child might possess when he provides them an opportunity...

And to validate, you don't have to pretend your child is smarter or stronger or more talented than they are.

Modern parents are so worried about their child's self-esteem they often lie to their child, and exaggerate their giftedness, and

feed their arrogance. In the name of self-esteem, we can turn our children into spoiled brats.

No, true validation won't come from being told they're better or best... Even if they are, they won't be for long.

True affirmation comes by bestowing on my child the glory that comes as a creature made in God's image and loved by God enough for Him to die in their place for the forgiveness of their sins. That's ultimate validation.

A father's job is to steer his child in a Godward direction - to plant a biblical compass in the heart of his child. Children are live wires that need to be grounded.

They need to understand that life is God's gift. And the parameters He's set are for our good and His glory.

I like the quote from the [Focus On The Family](#) article I mentioned earlier, because it reminds me that my job as a dad isn't to control, it's to validate. *And often I get the two confused...* At times, I withhold validation to control or manipulate my child's behavior. Or I'll give them validation only when they fulfill my selfish expectations.

And without realizing it, I'm creating little **human doings**, rather than **human beings**. The only validation some children receive is for *doing* things dad's way, rather than them *being* who God created them to be...

Here's what can happen... A dad fails to validate his kids, and as a result, he ends up trying to control them.

Take Julie, the teenager who rarely spent time with her dad *thanks to his busy job and frequent trips*. Her dad felt guilty and

bought her an expensive laptop. He thought he was showing her love. But his daughter was desperate for a man's attention, and since she couldn't get it from her dad, Julie used *his gift* to post sexually suggestive photos to get the male attention she craved.

And here's the kicker, when her father found out what Julie had done, he got angry and took away the laptop.

Instead of validation, he resorted to control. He thought he was loving his daughter, but her needs went unmet.

And this gets repeated by dads over and over. Our goal is not to control our kids. I'm not trying to run my child's life. I'm trying to help them realize their God-given place in the world and reach their full potential in Him

This week I ran across an interesting observation that illustrates the outcome of a validating parent. Someone said, "The evidence of good parenting is a child who has no desire to be famous." In essence, a parent has done something right if their child feels no need to sprout their wings, or find themselves, or sow their wild oats, but like Jesus, they know *who they are* and *where they're going*.

Real validation is reminding your child of God's image in them. The glory of their maleness or femaleness - the unique beauty of who and how God made them - the value they possess as the object of their Savior's sacrifice - and the possibilities expressed in God's desire to walk with them... They are human beings made to fellowship and walk with God. Life is a reason to rejoice!

I've heard it said, "It is important that we know where we come from, because if you do not know where you come from, then you don't know where you are, and if you don't know where you are, you don't know where you're going. And if you don't know where you're going, you're probably going wrong." And we have a country full of kids today who are headed the wrong way.

For I hope you realize, the world today doesn't care about the healthy development of our kids. It doesn't see children as made in God's image and loved by a Savior.

Society today views people - *your children* - as voting blocks, as categories, as consumers, as political pawns - to use and manipulate for personal and selfish gain.

Notice what Jesus says to the Pharisees in verse 15, "You judge according to the flesh. I judge no one." It's sad that today's world as never before "judges according to the flesh." Kids are judged by superficial standards. They're pressured by arbitrary and irrelevant measures.

In his "I Have A Dream" speech, Dr. Martin Luther King uttered the immortal words, "I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character." What a noble aspiration, yet in many ways we are as far from being that nation today in June 2021 as we were in August 1963. Tragically, for our woke culture, it remains all about the color of our "flesh."

In the eyes of modern Pharisees, judgments are still made "according to the flesh." Today, if you're white, it's assumed you're a racist. If you're black, you think you're oppressed. If

you're Asian, you're good at math. If you're Hispanic, you might be illegal. If you're a man, you're a misogynist. If you're a woman, you want to break the glass ceiling... *Rather than learn a person's name and get to know their underlying passions and principles, it's easier to stick a label on them and pigeon-hole a person.*

This is why stereotypes are the tool of the bigot. By fostering assumptions based on **"the flesh"** or outward characteristics, you can dehumanize people you don't like. You can separate how you treat them from how you think you should be treated. You can justify a prejudice.

It's interesting, Jesus says in verse 15-16, **"I judge no one. And yet if I do judge, My judgment is true; for I am not alone, but I am with the Father who sent Me."** Jesus could've judged, for He had access to the all-seeing and unclouded eyes of God, and had He judged, His rulings would've been just by virtue of His own innate justice.

But Jesus said, **"I judge no one."** Unlike this world, He **"judged no one according to the flesh."** In other words, He cared about people so much He loved them enough to look beyond their appearance, or their category, or their group - to the thoughts and intents of *their* heart.

And yet people didn't treat Jesus like He treated them.

This was the mistake the Pharisees made with Jesus. They definitely **labeled** Him **"according to the flesh."**

Rather than get to know who Jesus was and what made Him tick, they stereotyped Him and canceled Him.

They answered the question, *Could He be the Messiah?*, by generalizing, rather than getting to know Him. And over the course of His ministry, they slapped all kinds of labels on Jesus. He was a Sabbath-breaker. *He didn't keep their laws...* He was uneducated. *He had no rabbi and hadn't attended their approved Yeshivas...*

They labeled Him a Galilean. *Prophets didn't come from Galilee...* He was from Nazareth. **Nothing good** came from Nazareth... They figured Joseph was His father, *thus He didn't have the proper pedigree...*

As long as they could label and typecast Jesus, they could dismiss Him. **But the folks who followed Him and got to know Him ended up believing He was Messiah.**

Yet despite how they treated Jesus, He intended to live a different way. He said, **"I judge no one... according to the flesh."** Jesus used a different standard for validating people. In John 10, He calls Himself the Good Shepherd who knows each sheep by name. Jesus understands our idiosyncrasies and our peculiarities.

Prejudice paints a person with a broad brush, but love paints by numbers. It recognizes the nuances of a person and chooses the shades of color carefully. Love understands that each of us is God's special creation.

For just as the Creator makes no two snowflakes or fingerprints identical, no two people are exactly alike.

Recently, I read a quote from an Arab actor, **"At times, stereotyping happens not because of any nefarious reasons but rather because people don't know who you are or where you**

come from, so they go for the broad strokes about you, your culture, your faith, all that.”

People are too selfish with their time and effort to really get to know you, so *they go for the broad strokes*.

And this is why as parents we should be different. Like Jesus, a good dad avoids the broad strokes and pays attention to the details of his child’s personality and perspective. He spends time getting to know his child, and he helps that child get to know God. A father should be a man on a mission - he is pointing his kids to Jesus.

Not only does a father remind his child of *where he’s from*, but he also aims him toward *where he’s headed*.

Phil Callaway recalls the date, May 31, 1986, when he found himself face to face with his firstborn son. He touched his tiny fingers. Counted his toenails, all ten. He looked into his son’s eyes. They were blue like his dad’s.

Phil writes, “*That’s when it hit me. I heard a voice that said, “Callaway, for the first 25 years of your life you’ve been a hypocrite. You’ve been close to the church but far from God. You are holding in your arms the one person you’ll never be able to hide it from. If you think this little guy won’t see it, you’re naive...”* If you ask Phil Callaway when he became a Christian he’ll tell you, May 31, 1986.

That night he prayed, “*God, make me real. I want my son to hunger and thirst for righteousness, and I want him to learn it from me.*” Today, Phil gives the following advice to young dads, “*If you want your son to love God, you love Him first. If you want your son to obey God, you obey Him first.*” Did you know that kids are born with a baloney meter? They detect fake a



mile away. A dad can be flawed and still do his job, but he has to be genuine.

Phil realized the truth every dad needs to understand; you can't take your child any farther than you've been yourself. Said another way, "Every father should remember that one day his son will follow his example, not his advice." A dad's life needs to validate his faith.

Because of His Father's influence, Jesus could say, "I know where I came from and where I am going..." And this is the greatest gift we can give our children - not just an identity, *but a destiny* - a goal, an objective, a reward.

We can stretch a tape across the track and point our children to the finish line. Of course, as they get older and become adults, whether they choose to run the race or finish their heat is up to them. There comes a point where that's beyond the parent's control, but I can be sure my children know what the trophy looks like - *what a victorious Christian life looks like in real life!*

This is why I want to finish well. I don't just want to tell my kids how to finish, I want to show them - and in a manner that helps them realize it's truly worth the effort.

As one man put it, "My father didn't tell me how to live my life. He lived his and let me watch him do it." A good dad etches an example in the heart of his children and grandchildren that they'll never lose sight of or forget.

Over the last year as I've cared for my elderly parents, I've seen up close and personal the rigors of aging. As some of you know, getting old is not for the faint of heart.

People tend to grow cynical and get grumpy the older they become. That's not how I want to end my life. I want to stay alive to God. Live by faith not by fear. Love more lavishly. As Paul said in 2 Corinthians 4:16, "Our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day." That's how I hope to finish my race.

In his classic tale, *Alice In Wonderland*, author Lewis Carroll puts the following words in the mouth of the mischievous character, the Cheshire Cat, "If you don't know where you are going, any road will get you there."

Listen to that again, "If you don't know where you are going, any road will get you there." This could be the anthem of our modern world. We no longer seek God. We no longer trust His Word. We no longer look to Him as the answer to our questions and the solution to our problems. We no longer know *where we're going*, and because of it, we struggle down roads that lead nowhere.

And it's from this aimlessness that we need to rescue our children. Especially our young men. Boys need purpose, goals, ambition, and it comes most often from a father - at least a father-figure. A boy needs a man in his life to walk in confidence, to know what love requires, to do what's right when everyone else is doing what's wrong. He needs a man who has been through the fire himself to lend him the steel he needs to endure it.

*A son gets his bearings and a daughter feels secure when they walk with a man who knows where he's going.*

Brian May is the lead guitarist for the rock group, Queen. He's considered one of the best guitar players of all time, and he's played the same guitar since 1963.

At the time, May was looking for an electric guitar but had no money. So he and his dad decided to build one.

Harold May was a craftsman and electronics engineer, and what he and Brian achieved was a masterpiece.

It took two years to make their unique guitar. The neck consists of wood from a 100 year-old fireplace. It has worm holes that were filled with matchsticks. The guitar's body was made from a strong oak table. Even mom's knitting needle and buttons are part of the instrument.

It all creates a tonal quality unlike any other guitar.

May's "Red Special" as he calls it, may be the world's most famous electric guitar. But for me, what makes the *Red Special* so *special* is it represents what can come from a father and a son, and the bits and pieces of life.

This is what I'm after with my kids and grandkids.

I ran across a great quote that fits in with May's guitar, "I believe what we become depends on what our fathers teach us at odd moments when they aren't trying to teach us. We are formed by little scraps of wisdom."

This is why I plan to stand by my kids, and hang with them, and stay involved in the comings and goings of their families - in hopes that I can grab some of what life holds and blend it together with my devotion to Jesus.

I want to leave my family a gift. I want them to know *where they come from* and *where I pray they're going*.

We learn from John 8 that even Jesus, the Son of God, was profoundly effected by His relationship with His Father. Thus, if Jesus was influenced by His Father; then dad's today can have a serious impact on their kids.

My final thought is from verse 20, "**These words Jesus spoke in the treasury...**" And the words that dropped were treasures themselves. How rich we'll all be if we know *who we are*, *where we come from*, and *where we're going*. Dad, let's give those treasures to our kids!