

1. This morning it is one of my great honors to celebrate the wonderful gift that I believe fatherhood is.
2. I believe that fathers are vitally important.
3. Some men act like the only part of fatherhood they are interested in is the making of a baby.
4. Some people act as if the presence of a loving father isn't all that necessary or important. But I don't believe that is true.
5. I believe **the presence of loving fathers is extremely important.**
6. Not the presence of perfect fathers, because fathers aren't perfect and never will be, but fathers who care enough to love and invest in the future of another.
7. My wife and I really enjoy watching Animal Planet, and the Discovery Channel, especially when they are highlighting all the different kinds of animals in the world.
8. I think we get a glimpse into the creativity of God and the immense capacity he has to create and be, when we consider how many different species of animals there are.
9. The reality is, there are so many species of animals that we simply can't count the number. I have heard estimates from as many as 2 million, all the way up to 50 million.
10. Scientists aren't sure because they keep discovering new species of animals all the time.
11. We watched a story of a group of scientists who floated down a river in Africa for 4 months, and during that trip alone they discovered 24 new species of birds and animals.
12. The vastness of what God creates is just a glimpse into how vast his knowledge and ability and capacity are.
13. And when I think of all the things God could have called himself. The one name that stands above all others is that of father.
14. The name he chose to capture his essence was father.
15. 67 times it is recorded that Jesus called God his father. And in Matthew chapter 6 we are told to relate to him and talk to him as our father.

16. And so today, it is with this knowledge of God as Father, that I want us to use to describe, not only how we are to relate to God, but how we can relate to others.

TEXT: Judges 17:6-13 In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as they saw fit. **7** A young Levite from Bethlehem in Judah, who had been living within the clan of Judah, **8** left that town in search of some other place to stay. On his way he came to Micah's house in the hill country of Ephraim. **9** Micah asked him, "Where are you from?" "I'm a Levite from Bethlehem in Judah," he said, "and I'm looking for a place to stay." **10** Then Micah said to him, "Live with me and be my father and priest, and I'll give you ten shekels of silver a year, your clothes and your food." **11** So the Levite agreed to live with him, and the young man became like one of his sons to him. **12** Then Micah installed the Levite, and the young man became his priest and lived in his house. **13** And Micah said, "Now I know that the LORD will be good to me, since this Levite has become my priest."

TITLE: The need for a father.

INTRO:

1. Before we spend a few moments here in this story, I want to be very clear, that when you go back and read this chapter later, you are going to find that the events surrounding what happened, and especially Micah himself, are pretty messed up.
2. Chapter 17 begins with Micah stealing from his own mother. Then he makes an idol, and he sets it up in his home and he worships it instead of worshipping God.
3. Micah was not the kind of guy who trusted the Lord. And yet there are a couple of things that I think are relevant to our lives.
4. So, this time in the history of Israel is marked by chaos. Verse 6 said that Israel had no king, and that everyone did as they saw fit.
5. I can assure you when you take leadership and order out of a civilization, what you wind up with is lawlessness and chaos.
6. And that is the setting of this story.
7. In verse 7 we find that a young Levite leaves his home and travels several days journey to the home of Micah.
8. A Levite was responsible for assisting the Priest as he served the Lord at the Tabernacle.
9. Levites maintained the Tabernacle and its furnishings, and they tore it

down and set it up each time this tent like church was moved.

10. When Micah meets the young man, so young in fact that Micah was old enough to be this man's father, he asks him where he is from.
11. And after some small talk, sensing this young man needed a place to stay, Micah offers this young man a very interesting opportunity.
12. Live with me. Be my father and my personal priest. I will pay you a small amount of money and give you your room and board.
13. And so, the young Levite takes Micah up on his offer.
14. I want us to focus for just a moment on the relationship Micah had with this young man, and the relationship the young man had with Micah.

The need for a father.

1. Judges 17:10 Then Micah said to him, "Live with me and be my father and priest,
2. There is great importance in what Micah asked this young man to be. He asked him to be his father and his priest.
3. Now, my first assumption would be that in this case, father and priest were interchangeable.
4. I know in some faiths today the priest is called father, but those faiths would not have been in existence at the time of this story.
5. I do not believe that the word father was just another word for priest.
6. I say that because in verse 5, before the young Levite arrived, Micah had appointed one of his own sons to be the priest in his house.
7. And in this case, the son is not called a father and priest. He is just called the priest.
8. So, asking this young man to be his father and priest was different.
9. I believe the request had to do with a need that Micah had in his life.
10. We know nothing of his natural father. The only thing we know of Micah is what we read in chapters 17 & 18. And in neither chapter is there mention of his natural father. Only his mother.
11. So, I do not believe it was by accident that Micah made the request that the Levite be his father and priest. He was looking for something more.

12. In verse 12 it says that Micah installed the Levite. There was a ceremony. Everyone in the home came together and this young Levite was given a special designation. He played a very specific role in the house, but more importantly in the life of Micah.
13. Verse 11 says that the Levite became like one of the man's sons, but I believe that was only one aspect of the relationship.
14. Micah had this longing for someone to speak into his life. To give him guidance and direction.
15. He longed for someone, a father figure, who could speak blessing into his life. To encourage him and motivate him.
16. This relationship is so special that in verse 13 Micah declares, now I know the Lord will be good to me since this Levite has become my priest.
17. Micah considered this relationship to be life changing. And that is exactly what a father is meant to do. Change a life for the better.
18. And just like Micah, no matter how old we get, I believe there is this God given desire to have a father figure in our life.
19. And the wonderful thing is that the death of a natural father. The absence of a natural father, is not the determining factor on whether or not our life can be blessed.
20. Even if you never met your natural father, you have a heavenly father who longs to hold you near. To comfort you when you blow it and miss the mark.
21. To guide you and give you advice when you need it. To be there with you and to assure you that you are not alone.
22. God is the perfect father that none of us ever had. And I am so grateful for that. Because my kids got a pretty flawed father.
23. My kids got a father with a lot of hurts, habits, and hang-ups. But they also have the opportunity, just like all of us, to catch a glimpse of what a real father is like.
24. And that is through relationship with God our heavenly father.
25. Whatever the longing in your heart. Whatever the void in your heart. Your heavenly father wants to fill that place with love and strength and peace, if you will only let him.
26. One of my favorite passages of scripture is found in Psalm 68:4-6 Sing

to God, sing in praise of his name, extol him who rides on the clouds; rejoice before him--his name is the LORD. 5 A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in his holy dwelling. 6 God sets the lonely in families, he leads out the prisoners with singing;

27. There are no fatherless Christians. There are no orphaned Christians.
28. If you know Jesus, then you have a father and a family.
29. God, our Heavenly father fills that need for a father. But he also does something else.
30. He calls us to...

Be a father to others.

1. Judges 17:11 So the Levite agreed to live with him, and the young man became like one of his sons to him.
2. So, Micah asks this young man to be his father and priest, and notice with me what the young Levite doesn't say.
3. He does not say...Well, I don't have any kids of my own, so I can't be a father to you.
4. He did not say...I don't have any experience as a father, so this relationship isn't going to work.
5. He did not say...Well, I am younger than you and I don't have anything to offer you or anything to give that would be of value to your life.
6. The young man agrees. He agrees to be a father figure to someone who was not his flesh and blood, but in whom he had an opportunity to make a difference.
7. I made this statement on Mother's Day, and I repeat it again today.
8. There are no second bests when it comes to the calling of fatherhood.
9. Being a father is not just something that biological fathers do.
10. Anybody who cares can be a father figure to someone else. All you have to do is offer yourself.
11. In the early 1990's I was asked to take a ministry position. I jumped at the opportunity. But before I became the leader of this ministry there was a transition period.
12. The person whose place I was taking was waiting for the right door to open for his life, and so for a couple of months, I got the chance to work with him kind of like his apprentice.

13. And I will forever be grateful to that man. In those couple of months, he made it his mission to help me succeed.
14. He pointed me in every direction that he thought would help me flourish, and he advised me to steer clear of things that would cause me hurt and pain.
15. Almost 30 years later, I still think of things he taught me. Almost 30 years later, the investment he made in my life is still paying dividends.
16. In fact, some of the things he shared with me I am now sharing with my sons, and with spiritual sons.
17. Just this week I had the opportunity to share some wisdom with one of my sons, and I was immediately reminded where I got that wisdom.
18. I got that wisdom from a man who cared enough to give me what he had learned the hard way, so I could go further than him.
19. I have not spoken to him in nearly 20 years. But he is still a part of my life. Thank you, Terry Colwell.
20. I'm speaking to anyone who will listen today. What impact are you missing out on all because you have mistakenly believed you have nothing to offer?
21. What relationships have you bypassed thinking you could never make a difference?
22. Be a spiritual father. Be a spiritual mother. Be a spiritual son or daughter. Be a spiritual brother or sister. Be a spiritual aunt or uncle. Be a spiritual grandparent.
23. Somebody needs you. And you have what it takes. Because your heavenly father has equipped you to share what he has given you.
24. You have a father and you have a family, and one of the most honorable things you can do is to invest in the lives of other family members.

Conclusion: Look at Sydney.

1. As we prepare to close today, I am going to ask you to physical and spiritually respond to this word.
2. I am going to ask you to do three things.

- Accept God as your father. Receive him as your father. Salvation or no.
 - Invite him to fill the longings and void places in your life.
 - Surrender your life to be a spiritual father or mother to another.
3. Salvation call. The first step in accepting God as your father is to receive his son Jesus as your savior.
 4. If you know Jesus as savior, talk to the father. No barriers. Accept His offer of fatherhood in your life.
 5. Ask him to fill the empty places in you.
 6. Submit to being used by the father to invest in another.
 7. Sydney lead.

Guidelines:

1. Before you leave today, I want to just touch briefly on what most of you already know.
2. As we progress into the next phase of re-opening services and ministries, I wanted to share with you the new guidelines given by our Deacons.
3. We are blessed in our region that we are not suffering the same spike in Covid-19 cases as other parts of the state are. And because of that, it gives our leadership teams an opportunity to provide more guidance moving forward.
 - Please do not enter/attend if you have had a recent fever, symptoms, or contact with a patient who tested positive for Covid-19.
 - Social distancing of 6 feet is encouraged.
 - A mask is not mandatory to attend a service. Please use your best judgment when deciding on wearing or not wearing a mask.
 - Please be understanding and considerate of others who might have different views on social distancing and wearing a mask.
4. I think you will find that these guidelines give you more opportunity to decide for yourself what is the best way to protect yourself and live your life.

5. That is only possible when we are understanding and considerate of how others want to handle social distancing and wearing a mask.
6. If you have questions, myself, and the deacons (have them stand) will be available after service to talk with you.
7. Closing prayer.