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Remember, They Are Following You

1 THESSALONIANS 2:10-12

Introduction

1. As I look around the room this morning, I see many fathers, but I also see many children, both sons and daughters.
2. Some of you who are sons and daughters have children and perhaps even grandchildren of your own.
3. No matter how old you are, I dare say that your father, if he is still living, remembers the first time he held you in his arms.
4. Men, let me ask you this morning, what were your thoughts when that little bundle was passed to you for the first time?
5. Were you afraid, anxious, that you might drop that son or daughter who was so small?
6. Were you filled with pride as you looked at that little one and said to your wife, this is our daughter (son)."
7. Were you overwhelmed with the responsibility suddenly placed upon your shoulders?
8. What was your greatest desire for them then?
 - a. Was it that they might become successful in some arena of life?
 - b. Was it to see them get a good education, a good career, and eventually have a family of their own?
9. What is your greatest desire for them now?
 - a. For many of you the answer to that may depend upon where they are in their lives at present.
10. Is it possible that your most heartfelt desire for your children is that each one receive the "***crown of righteousness***" which Paul said the Lord would award on the day of His return (***2 Timothy 4:8***), the same crown that Peter referred to as "***the unfading crown of glory***" (***1 Peter 5:4***) ?
11. Men, the most difficult task you will ever seek to accomplish in this life is that of guiding your children toward heaven.
12. Every other task, no matter how difficult, will pale in comparison.
13. It is the one task I would encourage you to ask God every day, "Please, don't let me mess this up!"
14. This morning, I want to share with you something which the apostle Paul wrote to the Christians in the city of Thessalonica.

15. In this passage, Paul wrote of the behavior which he, Timothy and Silas demonstrated toward the believers in Thessalonica.
16. He also wrote of the methods they used to motivate the Thessalonians to *"walk in a manner worthy of the God who [had called them] into His own kingdom and glory"* (v. 12).
17. This morning, I would like for those of us who are fathers to consider these same behaviors and methods as we seek to train up our own children in what Paul called the *"discipline and instruction of the Lord"* (*Ephesians 6:4, ESV, NASB95*).

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I. Our Behavior Before Our Children

"You are witnesses, and so is God, how devoutly and uprightly and blamelessly we behaved toward you believers" (*1 Thessalonians 2:10, NASB95*)

A. DEVOUT

1. The behavior of Paul, Silas and Timothy toward the Christians in Thessalonica demonstrated the utmost moral purity.
2. They put into practice what Peter exhorted those Christians, who had been scattered throughout Asia Minor, to live out in their lives (*1 Peter 1:15-16*).

"but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; because it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."" (*1 Peter 1:15-16*)

3. Do our children see in our actions a devotion to God?
4. Do we conduct ourselves in a way that seeks to imitate our heavenly Father?

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B. UPRIGHT

1. Not only was the behavior of Paul and those with him holy, but it was righteous or upright as well.
2. Their goal was for their behavior to measure up to what God expects and requires of His servants.
3. Do our children see us consistently behaving in a way that is right and just and fair.
4. In *Psalms 15*, the psalmist David asked a question about who is

acceptable before God.

5. Listen to the behaviors he listed:
 - a. *"He . . . walks with integrity, works righteousness (does what is right), and speaks truth in his heart" (v. 2).*
 - b. *"He does not slander with his tongue, nor does evil to his neighbor, nor takes up a reproach against his friend" (v. 3).*
 - c. He *"honors those who fear the Lord; he swears to his own hurt and does not change" (v. 4).*
6. Our children are always quick to point out something which they believe is not right or fair.
7. Do they see us as their fathers always trying to do what is right.
8. If you have a father who has lived out these traits before you, the best way you and honor him is to imitate him.

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C. BLAMELESS

1. Finally, their conduct was irreproachable — one able to stand up under their critics scrutiny because they did what was right.
2. Wouldn't you like for God to declare you blameless?
 - a. This is what He said about His servant Job.
 - b. Three times in the book which bears his name, we find these words:
 - 1) *"that man was blameless, upright, fearing God and turning away from evil" (Job 1:1).*
 - 2) *"Have you consider My servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil" (Job 1:8; 2:3).*
3. In *Ephesians 1:4*, Paul wrote that this was God desire for us *"before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him (Christ)."*
4. Does this mean that we who are fathers are perfect and do not sin?
5. No, we recognize that each of us are sinners cleansed by the blood of Christ.
6. What it does mean is that when we fall short, and we will, we confess our sins to God and apologize to those whom we have hurt with our sins, and that includes our children.

[The purpose of such behavior is to live before our children a life which honors the God we serve. There is still something else we must do before our children. We must strive to motivate them toward a lifestyle *"worthy of the God who calls them into His own kingdom and glory"* (v. 12).

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II. How Do We Motivate Our Children Toward Such Conduct?

"just as you know how we were exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you as a father would his own children" (1 Thessalonians 2:11, NASB95)

A. WE EXHORT THEM

1. The word Paul uses here comes from a Greek term which means to call or summon someone alongside.
2. In *Acts 2:40*, Luke records for us that Peter, in his very first sermon, *"kept on exhorting them* (those gathered in Jerusalem on Pentecost), *saying, 'Be saved from this perverse generation!'"*
3. In *1 Corinthians 1:10*, Paul wrote to a divided body of believers in Corinth and said, *"Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment."*
4. In *1 Corinthians 4:16*, he added, *"Therefore I exhort you, be imitators of me."*
5. To better understand this concept of exhortation, imagine a coach who knows his or her players capabilities.
6. During practice the coach will nudge and sometimes push the players who aren't reaching their potential to work harder.
7. At game time, that same coach will challenge the players to dig down deep and give a little more.
8. As fathers, we know that Satan will place obstacles and difficulties in their pathway throughout their lives.
9. We exhort, nudge, even challenge them to *"be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might"* (*Ephesians 6:10*).
10. We exhort them to *"put on the full armor of God"* so that they *"may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil"* (*Ephesians 6:11*).
11. Why? Because we don't want them to be lost.

Slide 6**B. WE ENCOURAGE THEM**

1. If you go back to *Acts 17*, and read the brief account of Paul's initial ministry in Thessalonica you find that he had tremendous success at the beginning.
2. However, in only three weeks he encountered so much rage at the hands of the Jews that he had to be smuggled out of the city for fear of his life (*Acts 17:10*).
3. But, when you look here in *verse 11*, you find a man who speaks of "*encouraging*" the Thessalonians.
4. If you look at the last chapter of this letter, *1 Thessalonians 5:14*, you find Paul saying, "*encourage the fainthearted.*"
5. All of us at one time or another have needed encouragement when we were discouraged, someone to cheer us up.
6. Men, many of our children need us to encourage them:
 - a. Look them in the eye and tell them you believe in them — tell them, "you've got this".
 - b. Put your arm around them and let them know you are right there with them.
7. Many of our youth are having to put up with things of which I would never have dreamed.
8. Satan is a master at discouraging them.
9. It is hard for them to remain "*steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord*" when it seems they are the only one fighting the good fight.
10. They need us to be in their corner, come what may.

Slide 7**C. WE IMPLORE THEM**

1. "Implore" is not a word I use very often, if at all.
2. Some other words used to translate the word which Paul uses in the original Greek are words like insist, plead, urge.
3. If we were to go back and read Paul's letter to the Thessalonians in its entirety, we would find that Paul knew that without Christ, these Christians in Thessalonica were lost.
4. Because of this, he pleaded with them to do that which was for their highest good.
5. He knew what was right for them and worked to lead them through the maze of emotions and conflicts they encountered which could cause them

- to lose their focus.
6. Men, our children must themselves navigate their own maze of emotions and conflicts which could cause them to lose their focus.
 7. Because they are our own flesh and blood, their decisions can either uplift or break our hearts.
 8. For this reason we plead with them, implore them, to make the right decisions which will lead them closer to God.
 9. Though Jesus doesn't reveal it in the parable, but I believe the father of the prodigal son pleaded with his younger son not to leave home.
 - a. "Son, you know this is your home and we love you, please don't leave."
 - b. "Son, you know that your mother and I will worry about you every day until we again see your face."
 10. I believe this to be true, because if the father had berated him, I don't think he would have ever considered coming home.

Conclusion

1. What is it that I want you fathers to walk away with today?
2. Your children are God's gift to you. They are worth more than all the money you will acquire in your lifetime.

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3. As I said at the beginning of this lesson, the greatest task to which you can give yourself is that of guiding them toward heaven.

"so that you would walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory." (1 Thessalonians 2:12, NASB95)
4. If you are a Christian here today and your life is not being lived in such a way as to lead them in that direction, I urge you to repent and ask God to guide you in making the necessary changes in your life.
5. If you are not a Christian, there is no better gift which you can give to your children than that of obedient faith to God.
 - a. Are you willing today to change course and confess Jesus as your Lord and Savior?
 - b. Will you come to Him so that He might wash away your sins?
6. If we can help you in either way, will you not come today?