

“Fatherly Advice”

I Kings 2:1-4

Preached by Dr. Robert F. Browning, Pastor

First Baptist Church

Frankfort, Kentucky

June 18, 2017

Father’s Day

In honor of Father’s Day, I have chosen a text that focuses upon the advice David gave his son, Solomon, just days before David died. Upon David’s death, Solomon would become the next King of Israel as the mantle of leadership would be placed upon his shoulders, resulting in conflict with his brother, Adonijah.

David would be a hard act to follow. During his forty year reign, Israel experienced a period of unprecedented peace and prosperity.

Would the good times continue under Solomon’s leadership? What new threats would undermine their security? How would Solomon handle the challenges awaiting him? Only time would tell.

Don’t you think David wished he could be by Solomon’s side to help him deal with these challenges? I suspect he did.

After all, Solomon was not chosen as the next king because he possessed outstanding gifts or military prowess. To the contrary, he was born with a silver spoon in his mouth and lived a pampered life. David selected him because Bathsheba, Solomon’s mother, was so insistent.

Knowing all of this, David decided to follow Moses’ example of issuing a final blessing and challenge to his successor. David’s words to Solomon can be found in today’s text.

“I am about to go the way of all the earth,” David said. “So be strong, show yourself a man and observe what the Lord your God requires. Walk in his ways and keep his decrees and commands, his laws and requirements, as written in the Law of Moses, so that you may prosper in all you do and wherever you go, and that the Lord may keep his promise to me: ‘If your descendants watch how they live, and if they walk faithfully before me with all their heart and soul, you will never fail to have a man on the throne of Israel.’” (I Kings 2:1-4)

When you compare these words with a corresponding passage in 1 Chronicles 22:11-13, you pick up a sense of David’s final advice to Solomon:

Be strong, be wise and be faithful to obey all that Moses taught.

Live your life in full view of God and others by being a person of integrity, truthfulness and faithfulness.

Surround yourself with industrious, conscientious and loyal friends who will tell you the truth, bring the best out in you and help you make wise decisions so life will be safer and better for those you serve.

Stay away from people who bring the worst out in you and seek to use you for personal gain.

Don’t quit when you meet with resistance. This is not about you and your comfort.

Don’t give up when the long and winding road gets steeper.

Good advice and much needed, wasn’t it? I am confident you have similar advice you could share with someone traveling down their own long and winding road. Are you sharing it?

You don’t have to wait until you are drawing your final breaths to tell someone what you have learned from others and your own experiences. Neither do you have to be perfect before you can give sound advice. David certainly was not. I don’t believe there was a commandment he did not break, including murder.

Who would benefit from hearing or reading what you consider important? Why not jot it down and begin sharing it in word and by example when it is appropriate.

I began my list last week. Like David in today's text, I had my children and grandchildren in mind as I wrote, but this could appeal to a broader audience. Here is what I have begun writing.

I want my children and grandchildren to know how important it is...

...to love God and develop a close relationship with God. As much as I love my children, I cannot always be with them or meet every need they have. For this reason, I want them to know someone who can. This is why I want them to have their own personal relationship with God through faith in Jesus, a relationship nurtured through worship, prayer, study, a life of service and conversations with others about the mysteries of life and faith.

...to love and respect themselves. I want them to have a healthy self-image and be proud of who they are and how they are living. It is hard to love God and others when you are struggling with low self-esteem. This is why Jesus instructed his disciples "to love their neighbors as themselves." (Mark 12:31) A healthy self-image leads to healthy relationships.

...to live by the Golden Rule. All people are created in the image of God and are loved by God equally and unconditionally. Every person we meet needs to be treated with dignity, respect and compassion.

Each word we speak or every decision we make needs to reflect not only the heart and nature of God but what we would expect and need from others. Healthy families and communities depend upon everyone being fair and kind.

...to take care of themselves. My sixth grade teacher, Mrs. Sommers, said to us each time she passed out a geography test, "Now remember students, every person must paddle their own canoe."

There is no substitute for hard work and discipline. Sure, there are times when we need help from others, but no one does us a favor by doing for us what we should be doing for ourselves.

...to be mindful of those around them who are struggling. Jesus walked those dusty Palestinian roads during his public ministry so he could listen to people's stories and respond to them with compassion and grace. As his disciples, we must be as thoughtful, considerate and generous.

We have no greater calling than hearing pleas for help that others ignore. We are called by God to lift up the plight of the powerless and to tell the stories of those whose voices will never be heard. Advocacy runs deep in the veins of our religious ancestors, especially the prophets and Jesus. They made hope visible everywhere they went. We must, too.

...to take care of the world God created for us. Abusing our natural resources or exploiting them for personal gain grieves God. It reveals an immeasurable level of selfishness and greed, both of which are contrary to the values Jesus taught and modeled.

The world we inhabit is a gift. Take care of it so generations to come can enjoy it as much as we do.

...to live up to their potential. Few things will contribute to unhappiness more than wasted potential. Living with regrets is no fun.

Prevent this from happening by seizing every opportunity that will utilize your particular talents, skills, abilities and passions. You may not succeed at everything you attempt, but you will learn valuable lessons that will lead to success as you move forward.

...to develop an attitude of gratitude. Few things will contribute to happiness more than counting your blessings and saying thank you to God and others. Ignoring what you have and focusing upon what you want that you don't have will make you miserable. Self-absorption leads into a dank, dark, bottomless pit.

...to give. We are most like God when we give. We'll be no closer to God than when we respond to someone in need by sharing what God has provided for us. Generosity leads to indescribable joy. Giving is to our wellbeing what oxygen is to the body.

This includes supporting those who are doing God's work in places or ways I cannot. Ministry is expensive because the needs of people are overwhelming. All of us are called to do what we can where we are, but we are also called to send and support those who go where we cannot.

...to keep their promises. Broken promises break hearts and shatter dreams. Figure out ways to prevent this from happening.

Being trustworthy and dependable leads to healthy relationships. Being unreliable burns a lot of bridges.

...to think for themselves and make wise decisions. Blaming other people for poor choices will lead to more bad choices. Others influence us, but no one makes us do anything.

We are responsible for every decision we make and the consequences that accompany them. Be wary of slippery slopes. Trust your gut and turn around before you make a serious mistake.

...to learn. Develop a holy curiosity and a life-long passion for learning. Become comfortable with questions and uncertainty. Questions and doubts are not our enemies. A false certainty is.

Never forget every person we meet can teach us something, and every experience we go through can deepen our understanding of life. Let the answers you discover by listening and learning or through trial and error lead to new questions of your journey toward hope and wholeness.

Change your mind as new discoveries reveal what you did not previously know. After all, growth is the only evidence of life.

...to handle adversity and disappointment so they don't paralyze or break you. Both inevitably come. Accepting reality and finding healthy ways forward lead to maturity.

Perseverance is one of God's most empowering gifts. If Jesus could be faithful to God all the way to the cross in spite of the many challenges, detours and disappointments he faced, then by God's grace we can, too.

Adversity will never have the final word in our lives. God will, and it will be a good one.

"With God, all things work out in the end. If it has not worked out yet, it is not the end." I have passed this wise advice on to several people ever since a dear Atlanta friend shared it with me.

Trust God. God is always working behind the scenes on your behalf.

...**to resolve conflict**. This, too, will inevitably come. The sooner we develop the skills to communicate effectively so that everyone's issues are taken seriously, the better off we'll be. We'll avoid a lot of hurt feelings and painful heartaches by refusing to make a bad situation worse with our poorly handled anger or explosive temper.

...**to apologize**. Admitting mistakes is not a sign of weakness. It takes a confident and strong person to say I am sorry and to make the kind of changes that keep the same mistake from reoccurring.

Apologies can move a mountain of resentments. Many relationships can be repaired once we own up to our faults.

...**to forgive**. Holding grudges and seeking revenge will put a bitter person in a prison without bars. As a good friend once told me, "Acid in a bucket doesn't hurt the acid."

Pour out the acid and move on. Grace, whether received or granted, is the most liberating of God's gifts.

...**to laugh and enjoy life**. Laughter lightens heavy loads. It clears the mind and renews the spirit. It revitalizes us and gives us energy. Few things benefit us more than a warm smile or a hearty laugh.

...**to dream.** Dreams enable us to see over the hill. They excite us and compel us to stand up to our fears and to take risks. They bring the best out in us and draw us closer to God, who has always been a dreamer. They add spice, flavor and zest to life

“Where there is no vision, the people perish,” the writer of Proverbs wrote. (29:18)
Don’t let this happen to you. Dream on.

...**to live with a sense of wonder and awe.** Do not take life for granted or fail to see the beauty all around. Never let a day go by without its share of ooohs and aaahs. Every day is a gift from God meant to be appreciated and enjoyed. Let God know you are humbled by and grateful for his generosity.

...**to value relationships above all else.** Nothing in this world will satisfy your deepest needs. This includes the need for meaning, purpose, guidance, direction, peace, security, faith, hope, love, joy, self-confidence, fulfilment, forgiveness and eternal life. These are met only through healthy relationships, beginning with God and extending to everyone around us.

All the gold in Fort Knox cannot purchase one thing on the previous list or compensate for loneliness. Invest your life in people and make circles of friends everywhere you go by opening your heart, life and home to others.

I believe it is important to pass on to loved ones what we have learned by observing others or from our own experiences. Author Stephen King has said, “All that lasts is what you pass on. The rest is smoke and mirrors.”

Why not start your list today. Add to it as you continue to learn and grow. This is what I am doing.

Find creative ways to share it with those around you by engaging them in conversations that encourage them to express their ideas. Share the stories that led to your conclusions and invite others to tell theirs.

Bathe this project in prayer. This is one of the most important gifts you can give your family and friends now and after you have gone, as David said to Solomon, “the way of all the earth.”