

“What Did Your Father Teach You?”

John 15:9-17

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He taught me how to tie a fishing hook onto a line, water ski, grill a steak and play Rook. He taught me the importance of a sense of humor and a sense of direction. He taught me the value of hard work and reliability. He taught me how to handle adversity and disappointment.

My dad taught me a lot of things, just as my mother did. I was fortunate to have two loving parents who provided a wonderful home for my brothers and me. Not everyone does, which grieves me.

Evidently, Jesus had this kind of home, too, and I know he was grateful. Perhaps this was why he referred to God often as “Father.” Without a doubt, this was a way of complimenting Joseph and revealing his close relationship to God.

One of the places you will find Jesus refer to God as Father is in our text, which is a part of the farewell discourse as he gathered with his disciples in the Upper Room the night he was betrayed and arrested. We examined this text a few weeks ago, and I pointed out the number of times Jesus used the word, love: nine.

He commanded them to love one another, especially after his crucifixion. He knew it was the only thing which would keep them together. A thousand things would try to pull them apart after he was no longer with them. However, only one thing, love, would keep them connected and focused upon their mutual mission.

Tucked away in this text is a sentence I want to focus upon on this Father’s Day. **“I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because everything I learned from my Father I have made known to you”** John 15:15.

You know what impresses me the most about this verse? It is the humility of Jesus. The teacher is also a student and openly acknowledges it. I sense no arrogance, only a hunger to learn more so he could share more.

I am also comforted by the relationship Jesus had with God. I sense it was one of intimacy, respect and trust.

What do you think Jesus learned from his heavenly Father? I think he learned about life, faith and relationships.

I believe he learned what was important and what was trivial, what was genuine and what was counterfeit, what to hold on to and what to let go.

I think he learned how to love and work with imperfect people.

I think he learned the value of good friends, encouragement, gratitude, generosity, honesty, self-discipline, sacrifice, hope and forgiveness.

I think he learned how destructive selfishness, greed, jealousy and fear are.

I think he learned how powerful and relentless temptation is and how much he needed God's help to resist it.

I think he learned to seize every opportunity to help someone who was struggling by listening to their story and helping them carry their burden.

I think he learned to trust God, even in the darkest hours of the night, and never give up.

No wonder Jesus called God, Father.

How do you think Jesus learned these things? Like most of his peers, he took faith seriously. He studied the ancient scriptures and prayed. He worshiped faithfully. He reflected upon his own experiences. He conversed with others about the mysteries of life and faith. He observed good role models like Mary and Joseph, along with other family members and friends. He listened to wise counsel.

What did he do with what he learned? He shared it with his disciples. "Everything I have learned from my Father I have made known to you," he told them as he neared the end of his life.

Why did he do this? He wanted to take their relationship to a different level, a more intimate one. "I do not call you servants any longer," he said as he looked around that table, "but friends."

This expression of love and trust changes relationships. When people mutually share what they have learned from God and others, barriers come down and bridges of goodwill and understanding are built. Intimacy truly grows in this fertile soil.

Who needs to know what you know? Whose life would be better if you shared what you have learned down through the years and listened to what they have learned? How would this help you, along with your children, grandchildren, friends and neighbors?

Popular author Stephen King has written, "All that lasts is what you pass on. The rest is smoke and mirrors."

Let me encourage you, especially parents and grandparents, to do something this week. Start writing down the things you have learned about life you would like to pass on to your children and grand

children. Keep a running list and jot down ideas as they come to mind. I think you may be surprised at how much you have to share.

Then, seize every opportunity to share and model the things on your list, even as you add to it from what you continue to learn about life. I don't think it will be long before you see the difference you are making.

Following is a list of entries in my journal that I shared with the congregation on Father's Day.

I want to teach my children 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. I want them to know someone who can, though. This is why I want them to have a personal relationship with God through faith in Christ that is nurtured through Bible study, prayer, worship and service.

I want to teach my children to love and respect themselves. You cannot love others until you love yourself, according to Jesus. I want to do all I can to instill in my children a healthy self-image by treating them with the same respect I want them to have for themselves.

I want to teach my children to live by the Golden Rule. I want them to embrace diversity and treat all people the same way they want to be treated, with respect, dignity and compassion. I want them to be honest, reliable, dependable and trustworthy. I want them to fulfill commitments and keep promises to the best of their ability, just as they expect others to do.

I want to teach my children how to take care of themselves. I want them to study and work hard, be good managers of their resources and learn the value of self-discipline. I want them to discern the difference between needs and wants, as well as right from wrong, so they will not be controlled by selfish desires and debilitating addictions.

I want to teach my children to take care of God's world. I want them to be good stewards who use their time, talents, resources, energy and influence wisely. When they leave this world, I want them to feel they have made it better by having been here.

I want to teach my children to live up to their potential. I want to help them see the talents, skills, abilities and gifts they have possess and encourage them to maximize their use by identifying their passions and pursuing them with all their heart. I also want to encourage them to take risks, learning from their mistakes and building upon their successes.

I want to teach my children to be life-long learners. I want them to embrace curiosity and a willingness to change their mind, beliefs and behavior when their understanding is broadened.

I want to teach my children to develop a spirit of gratitude. I want them to notice the things others do for them, big or little, and express appreciation for those kind deeds.

I want to teach my children the value of giving. I want them to realize it is more blessed to give than receive, and the more they give, the happier they will be. I want them to understand that

selfishness is the deadliest of sins and generosity the grandest of virtues because nothing reflects the nature of God more clearly than giving.

I want to teach my children to value freedom, individually and corporately. I want to encourage them to think for themselves and make no alliances which would keep them from being and doing their best. At the same time, I want them to pursue justice and to be ready at all times to promote human rights by being a voice for those who have no influence or power.

I want to teach my children how to make wise decisions. I want to show them how to weigh pros and cons, looking at the short and long term consequences, so they can make healthy choices. I want them to understand decisions between two good choices will be their toughest. Everything good is not good for them, so they must learn how to prioritize and focus. In addition, I want them to know any decision they make which does not reflect the nature of God will hurt them and others. There are no exceptions.

I want to teach my children how to handle adversity and disappointment. Both will inevitably come and usually by surprise. I want them to be able to handle problems so they will not panic or be paralyzed, but will be strengthened by them.

I want to teach my children how to resolve conflict. This, too, will be inevitable, so I want to teach them how to listen, reason, communicate and compromise.

I want to teach my children how to apologize. I want to teach them admitting mistakes is not a sign of weakness, but of strength, and saying, "I'm sorry," is an indication of maturity.

I want to teach my children to forgive. I want to show them how unhealthy it is to hold grudges and seek revenge. Furthermore, I want them to understand that damaged relationships can be repaired with those simple, yet powerful words, "I forgive and want to work this out."

I want to teach my children to laugh and enjoy laugh. Life is heavy, but laughter lightens the load. I have heard that a hearty laugh is the equivalent of a week's vacation. If this is true, I want my children to go on a lot of vacations while at home or work.

I want to teach my children to live with a sense of wonder and awe. I want them to see beauty all around them and marvel at the way everything works in harmony to sustain life.