

God of Our Fathers
(A Timely Study Directed to Fathers)
Exodus 20:1-6

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John and Janet Paton felt the need for serving God. They lived in a simple cottage on a small piece of land, but they successfully raised 11 children. This godly couple would have been unknown to the world, had not one of their sons become the famous missionary J. G. Paton. As a boy, he would often press his ear against the door of the little room where his father was praying, for he wanted to hear every word.

Many years later Paton praised his father by saying, "Never in temple or cathedral, on mountain or in glen, can I hope to feel that the Lord God is more near, more visibly walking and talking with men, than under that humble cottage roof. Though everything else were by some unthinkable catastrophe to be swept out of memory, my soul would wander back to those early scenes. It would shut myself up once again in that sanctuary closet and, hearing still the echoes of those cries to God, would hurl back all doubt with the victorious appeal, 'My father walked with God; why may not I?' There were 11 of us brought up in that home, and all of us (through dad) came to think of the church as the dearest spot on earth and the Lord's day the brightest day of the week."

The famous song "God of our Fathers" is often sung on Father's Day. Sometimes we sing it out of tradition without realizing the spiritual message behind it. As we apply it to fathers and dads in the family unit, we must conclude that God must be God in the lives of fathers or else the family will suffer. In this study, we are going to see how important it is for fathers to live out godly lives before all their children, so they can impact their children in a spiritual way and raise children that will live and count for God.

When we reflect upon the title of this very familiar hymn ("God of Our Fathers") we remember how important it is for fathers to allow God to rule their lives and present a godly example for their own children to follow, which in return will leave behind a spiritual heritage and legacy for future generations to follow. If God is truly God over the lives of the fathers (God of our fathers) they will leave behind a

testimony that reflects righteous living which can impact, not only their own children, but many future generations that stem from their loins.

A father that follows God impacts his children. As dads, we should want to have a lasting godly impact upon our children. We should want to leave with them a spiritual legacy to follow. This is what we see in the original Decalogue, or the Ten Commandments, as found in Exodus 20:1-6.

Exodus 20:1-6 is certainly applicable to fathers in a specific way for at the end of the commands which were given by the finger of God appears a warning and blessing stated in relation to fathers. "And God spake all these words, saying, I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments."

I want to apply these commands to fathers in this lesson because these verses end with the reality of how the lives of fathers can negatively or positively impact their children. In other words, if fathers obey what God is teaching in these commandments, then they will have a spiritual impact on the lives of their family and future generations. If they fail to be obedient to God, they can in some measure inflict their own iniquities on their children and descendants.

Now remember that the Ten Commandments are not the "Ten Suggestions!" They are God's moral commands for our lives. Within this text we discover what happens when God is truly God over the lives of fathers. When God is ruling over the lives of fathers, children will be impacted in a positive and spiritual manner. This is because of the example they set and the heritage they leave behind. Men, your physical genes are passed on to your children, but something far more important than your physical genes is passed on to our children; it is your spiritual genes!

Your children will generally follow your example, the patterns you have set, and how you have lived. Does that cause alarm for you today as a dad? It should not if you are really living for God and doing what is right! However, if you are not living victoriously and in obedience to God, then your children will be impacted adversely. Dad, your life is telling a story to your children every day and you are a molding a child by the life that you live, the example you set, and the decisions you make.

God wants to be God of the Fathers! In short, He wants to rule over the lives of the fathers, so they might present a godly example for their children to follow and leave behind a rich spiritual inheritance for their families, which can ultimately be passed on to future generations. This is what our text is teaching us. God of our fathers! Men, when God is our father, then our life will *show* it and our children will *know* it and we will leave behind a godly testimony and legacy.

It encourages my heart to know that God is for the Christian fathers and that He promises to bless our families if we follow His plan and purpose for our lives.

A father that follows God impacts his children in a spiritual way.

There are three ways a father can follow God.

1. A father should be freed from the power of sin (Exodus 20:1-2).

Exodus 20:1-2

“And God spake all these words, saying, I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.”

Dad, if you don't live free from sin's power, then you won't impact your children in a spiritual way. Children learn by example. Clean up your life! Do what is right. You will never regret it! If we remember the freedom we can have over sin and rebellion and live a life that is pleasing to God, we will impact our children in a positive and spiritual way.

The Bible says, “God spake all of these words.” Men, if you want to be liberated from some troubling sin then you must listen to what God says! You must be obedient to what God says. When God speaks, we should simply trust and obey!

The problem we have today as Christian men is that God is speaking but we really are not listening!

Hebrews 5:11 declares:

“Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing.”

Many times we don't advance in our spiritual lives because we are not listening to what God is teaching us! Don't become a concrete Christian whose mind is already mixed and set like concrete! Spiritual change and growth can only occur when we listen and act upon God's absolute standard of truth! Men, God is speaking through His Word, are you listening? Are you ready to correct some things in your life and make them right?

Exodus 20:2 is a liberating message:

“I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.”

Exodus is the book of redemption! The land of Egypt is where the children of Israel were kept in bondage for many years. They were slaves to the Egyptians. But God redeemed them and released them from this bondage and slavery. This is a typical teaching that reminds us how God has delivered Christians today from our own land of Egypt (the world system). To state it succinctly, we no longer must be a servant or slave to sin! Men, do we realize this today? We must reclaim this truth for our daily lives. The freedom God gave to Israel is repeated in the Old Testament.

Deuteronomy 5:6

“I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage.”

Deuteronomy 13:5

“And that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams, shall be put to death; because he hath spoken to turn you away from the Lord your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed you out of the house of bondage, to thrust thee out of the way which the Lord thy God commanded thee to walk in. So shalt thou put the evil away from the midst of thee.”

What a promise! Since we have been set free from the house of bondage (from the power of sin and Satan) we ought to live like it and put evil and disobedience out of our lives! God's redemption from sin's power demands a response from our lives. It should motivate us to live godly lives that honor Him.

The Bible reveals our deliverance as New Testament saints.

2 Peter 1:4 speaks of our positional deliverance from the world:

"Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust."

Philippians 2:13 speaks of our practical deliverance from the world:

"For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."

Today God lives within us. This means our bodies should be under God's control and we should seek to glorify His holy and righteous character in everything that we do.

As Christian fathers, we have been redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ from the house of bondage! Now we are to live like it! We are to let others, especially our children and wives, see the difference! Be light and be salt! Stop worshipping at the altar of your felt needs and all the other gobbledygook that is going on today under the disguise of Christianity. Surrender your body to God everyday! It's God's body – not yours! Men, you need to yield your body to the Lord (Rom. 6:13-14; Rom. 12:1-2). Don't allow sin to overtake your body. Don't allow lust and pride to control your life and body. We have been taken out of Egypt and should no longer look back to Egypt.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20

"What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost *which is* in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."

John Philips said:

"We have been bought at too high of price for us to go on the same way."

Oswald Chambers once remarked:

“We have a bodily machine which we must regulate. God does not regulate it for us. Until we learn to bring the bodily machine into harmony with God's will, there will be friction, and the friction is a warning that part of the machine is not in working order.”

Exodus 13:14 is placed within the context of fathers:

“And it shall be when thy son asketh thee in time to come, saying, What is this? that thou shalt say unto him, By strength of hand the Lord brought us out from Egypt, from the house of bondage.”

Men, it's our responsibility as leaders in the home to teach our children how to live godly lives that are free from the world's contamination. We do this by the personal example we set, the standards we make for our homes, and by the lessons we teach our children about God's holiness. Our children don't stand a chance without a godly example!

Deuteronomy 6:7

“And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.”

As a Christian father or dad, you have been liberated from sin; now live like it! Set the example! When we reflect upon our victory and God's ownership of our lives, we will stop worldly living. We will stop wanting to look like the world and live for the world, listen to the same things as the world, and no longer want to have the favor of the world. You are redeemed from sin's power - now live like it.

James 1:27

“Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.”

Men, we need to clean up our own personal lives and homes and go in a new direction if necessary. We need to and lead our families in the ways of freedom – not the ways of the world!

Deuteronomy 6:12

“Then beware lest thou forget the Lord, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage.”

Don't forget what God has done for you! Remember! He has redeemed you from spiritual bondage. You no longer must remain captive to sin. Let us never forget! When remembering and acting upon what God has done for us, we will keep our conduct pure and wholesome, and live in a way that glorifies God.

“Roll back the curtain of memory now and then
Show me where you brought me from and
Where I could have been
Just remember I'm a human and human's forget
So remind me, remind me dear Lord.”

Deuteronomy 15:15

“And thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in the land of Egypt, and the Lord thy God redeemed thee: therefore I command thee this thing to day.”

Deuteronomy 16:12

“And thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in Egypt: and thou shalt observe and do these statutes.”

Deuteronomy 24:18

“But thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in Egypt, and the Lord thy God redeemed thee thence: therefore I command thee to do this thing.”

Deuteronomy 24:22

“And thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in the land of Egypt: therefore I command thee to do this thing.”

Do you think God is trying to teach us something today with these redemptive reminders? Yes, God's people were repeatedly warned to never forget what God had done for them! He not only saves our souls from hell but also from the power of sin. Why should we never forget what God has done for us? The answer is simple. Remembering our deliverance from sin's power through Jesus Christ will

keep our hearts soft, grateful, and desirous of seeking a holy life out of gratitude for His grace!

Praise God we have been set free! As we reflect upon our freedom and redemption from sin, we won't want to continue in our disobedience and sin against God and His ways for our lives.

This is because grace teaches me to live differently and consecrate my life to God.

Titus 2:11-12 declares:

“For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.”

The disciplines of grace teach us to take action against worldly lusts and ungodly living. Grace teaches me how to change my attitudes toward others, how to say no to ungodly ways, how to dress, how to forgive others, and how to live a life that is pleasing to God. We should not be a victim of our circumstances and world in which we live. Men, don't plan to sin; plan to live victoriously. God has freed us from our past. God has given us the victory. We are free!

One lady told the story how some of her finches managed to escape from her bird cage. She had put the cage outside for the day and somehow the door came open and the finches flew out and landed on the garage roof. They were joyously singing while sitting on the roof. It's as if they were singing these words, “I'm free, I'm free.” After singing they flew away into the glorious sunlight. As a father, we don't have to live inside the cage anymore. God has taken us out of the cage and thrown away the key! We have been freed and liberated from sin to live a life that is now pleasing to God.

2. A father should put God first in his priorities of life (Exodus 20:3-5a).

Exodus 20:3-5a

“Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them...”

1 John 5:21 is the New Testament equivalent:
“Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.”

Colossians 3:5 tells us that “...covetousness...is idolatry.” In other words, when we covet other things or people that end up controlling our hearts and lives, we commit spiritual idolatry. Christians fail to realize that there are many 21st century idols that can overtake their lives and control them.

What are some idols that are overtaking the hearts of fathers?

a. The god of alcohol

Of course, Christians do not in a physical way worship the idol of Bacchus, the cloven-footed Greek and Roman god of wine and revelry. They had a god for everything during Bible times, but this particular god still exists in 21st century America and even in the lives of Christians. This is because people have fallen into the idolatry of alcoholism. Today many are worshipping the bottle and everything that goes along with it. There are millions of alcoholics in our country right now. I get tired of Christians playing around with strong drink, which the Bible condemns, the type of alcohol being served today is forbidden in Scripture. And what happens many times? Christians become bound, adversely influenced, and controlled to a substance that changes their lives and wrecks their families. There is a reason why the proverbs speak against alcohol consumption as a beverage.

Proverbs 20:1

“Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby (deceived by thinking that wine does not cause one to stumble) is not wise.”

Proverbs 23:31-33

“Look not thou upon the wine (*with the intent to consume it*) when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, *when* it moveth itself aright. At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder. Thine eyes shall behold strange women, and thine heart shall utter perverse things.”

Beware of the god of Bacchus in your life. Men, take heart to what God is teaching us and do not imbibe alcohol! Listen to God’s Word on this. If you go home, pour it down the drain, you will never regret it. It may just keep your son or grandson

from seeing a bad example and following in your footsteps. Don't socially drink in order to do business! You are setting yourself up for destruction! Drinking alcohol overcomes the lives of fathers, families, and finally destroys one's spiritual life. You don't need alcohol to escape your worries and help you deal with life; you need Jesus Christ and His sufficiency!

The liquor industry likes to tell you how much of the tax burden they carry, but actually they do not pay a fraction of the bill for the casualties they cause by their product. A lot of propaganda is being fed to this generation and large groups of people are being brainwashed. Whether or not people recognize it, they worship the 21st century god of Bacchus (a god of alcohol and strong drink). Men, don't bow your knee to booze! This god will fail you! Bow your knee to Jesus Christ and His lordship over your life!

2. The god of sex

Other people worship Aphrodite, that is, the goddess of sex. Many men have bowed their knee to this god. They are bound to fornication, adultery, pornography which wrecks their marriages and leaves scars upon their lives. Sex and lust is a god which can overtake our lives as men.

1 John 2:15-16

"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world."

Is there a way to remove ourselves from worshipping this Aphrodite god of the 21st century? Yes, the answer is found in proper planning and experiencing the power of Jesus Christ. Men, place parameters around your life. Boundaries are needed as we implement our freedom and liberty that God has promised us. You say, "I'm free in Christ" and I would reply to this, "Yes you are, now live like it. Don't be a fool. Don't set yourself up to sin. Place barriers and parameters around your life." This is the only way you can live free from the power of plaguing lusts.

As men, we must put in place some practical boundaries around our homes. For example, if necessary, block out your junk channels on the TV with codes that only

your wife knows how to undo. Also, get an internet block that cannot be undone. The same can be done on the iPhone. There are ways around many of the technological advancements, which by the way, are taking down many husbands and men today. The pornographic epidemic continues to grow as men become slaves to this sin.

Romans 13:14 gives us the practical preparation:

“But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.”

This means, as men, we should not set ourselves up for a fall! Don't place yourself in the position to sin. This means we must limit sometimes where we go, when to do something, how to conduct ourselves with members of the opposite sex. Practical barriers are important if we want to live out a life of victory.

A while back my wife and I were trying to watch how many carbs we ate. Not how many we actually eat but how many we don't eat! I remember walking down the cereal aisle in a nearby store. In case you don't know, cereal has a lot of carbs, especially the kind I enjoy. I was looking at the wheat cereal, but the problem was it had a blueberry, sugary flavoring on the top of the wheat. It was a carb in sheep's clothing! If you read the labels closely the carbs are calculated from only three fourths of a cup. That is a small amount! Anyway, my wife asked what I was doing walking down the cereal aisle! Bingo! That was my problem. I had set myself up for a carb-overload because I walked down the wrong aisle and began looking at cereal. As a result, I bought the cereal and ate two bowls of the cereal in one sitting – probably six cups!! I committed what I call – “carbolatry!”

Men, the moral of the story is this; do not set yourself up for a fall!

Of course, there are many other gods besides Bacchus and Aphrodite that you can worship today. Some people worship money (stock market) and revolve their whole life around it. Others worship sports and food. They are also bound to rock music which includes CCM (Contemporary Christian Music). Others are bound to tobacco. Tobacco rules the lives of many men today. They are bound to a substance instead of the Holy Spirit's power operating in their lives. Then there are the gods of hobbies, work, and making money (materialism and covetousness)

which keep people from God's House, God's purpose and plan for their life, and God's best for their family.

Matthew 6:24

"No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon."

We cannot serve God and mammon for money will get in the way of us serving and living for God. Men, do you have another god other than the true God of Heaven? Is there a god that is taking control of your heart and life today? Have you been bowing the knee to some god that is overtaking your love and commitment to Jesus Christ? I may not have mentioned your god. But you can be sure of one thing; if something or someone is keeping you from serving the Lord Jesus Christ faithfully and loving Him as you should, that something or someone has become a god to you. As a Christian, identify it, label it as a god, claim your victory over it, avoid it, get passed it, and go on living for Jesus Christ and doing what is right.

Remember that anything to which you give your time, heart, and soul, can very easily become your God. God says that we are not to have any gods before Him. "Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them."

As men and fathers, we must also tap into God's power to experience victory over the gods that are trying to overtake our lives.

- There is power through God's promises.

Psalms 119:11

"Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee."

Use the Word of God effectively and practically in your daily living in order to have victory over sin. Pray through it, cling to it, and effectively get your victory over the flesh through the truth and power of God's Word.

- There is power through God's presence.

Ephesians 6:10 states:

“Finally, my brethren (dads!), be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.”

The Lord’s victorious power operating in your life is the greatest barrier to forming other gods in your heart and life.

Galatians 2:20

“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.”

I don’t fight for victory; I claim victory! I live by faith in the victory that God’s son has already provided for me.

3. A father should pass on a godly example (Exodus 20:5b-c).

Exodus 20:5 goes on to say: “for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me.”

God warns fathers that they are not to become covetous or idolatrous in their living. It will ultimately bring shame upon their lives and the lives of their children.

Two reasons are stated for not committing idolatry.

- Because of God’s jealousy (5b)

God declares these words: “I the Lord thy God am a jealous God” (Exodus 20:5). You might say, “I thought jealousy is a sin.” Not godly jealousy!

Exodus 34:14

“For thou shalt worship no other god: for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God.”

Many other verses declare this same truth that God is a jealous God (Deut. 5:9; 6:15; 32:16, 21; Josh. 24:19). This means that God is zealous about devotion being

given exclusively and only to Him. There is to be no rivals to His rulership and lordship over our lives. God is jealous or zealous over the worship, devotion, affection, and love of His people. Anytime we sin against God by allowing other things to rule our hearts and lives, by substituting other gods in His place, we are causing God to be righteously jealous. What does God think when we covet lustful things and sin against Him? He probably says, “Why are you doing this? You are my child.” God is jealous over our lives. He wants to be the sole owner and Lord over our lives.

Jesus asked in Luke 6:46:

“And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?”

God is a jealous God. If I may borrow a phrase from Uncle Sam, God says, “I want you!” God wants all of you, not part of you, but all of you! You body, your today, your future! All of you!

“All of me not a part but all of me
All the heart and soul of me
Jesus, I surrender.
I believe, Lord, help my unbelief
On the altar now I lay all I am today.
So use me, Lord, use me anywhere at all,
Though my palace may be great or small
Let me fill it gladly.
Take my life be it poor or be it grand
Let me live it by Your plan. Shape it with Your hand.
As I am I come to Thee without one plea
Only that Thy saving blood was shed for me.
All of me through the ages yet to be
I surrender Lord to Thee
I surrender all of me.”

➤ Because of God’s warning (5c)

The text goes on to say, “visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me” (Exodus 20:5). This means that children will feel the impact when their original fathers or ancestors break

God's law. What God is teaching is this. As a general rule, disobedience breeds more disobedience. There are natural consequences of disobedience which are often passed on to the next generation. Children reared in an environment of idolatry and sin would imbibe and then practice similar idolatry or disobedience toward God.

The effect of a disobedient father was to plant wickedness so deeply that it took several generations to reverse ("unto the third and fourth generation"). This should strike alarm in our hearts today as dads and fathers. Our lives are a book that is being read and followed! How we live can have continuing effect on the lives of not only our children but grandchildren and their children! The effects of our lives live on in the lives of others. Dad, do you really care about your children? Do you care about the future generations that stem from your own loins? Does it make any difference to you? You ought to be ashamed of yourself, when you set your own children up for a life of servitude to worldliness and sin, simply because of your bad example.

As a dad, you need to immediately stop the bad examples and start the godly examples. Both the bad and good examples will live on according to what these verses teach. These verses should serve as both a warning and motivation for us as fathers. Right now we are considering the bad examples of a father.

Exodus 20:5 states the accumulative effects of a father's sin upon his children, but responsibility is always on the individual. In other words, children sin because they too are sinners. You cannot ride the same train and say, "Because daddy did this, I have his genes, and I am going to live like daddy."

A proverb circulated in Jerusalem (Jer. 31:29) and Babylon that the children were suffering for the sins of their fathers, and they were not accountable for what they were doing at the present time (Ezekiel 18:1-4). The prophets refuted this claim. Every person is responsible for his own sins. Although there are cumulative effects of sin (Ex. 20:5-6; Matt. 23:35-36), every person is still accountable for his own sin.

Some Christians use their parents as an excuse for developing the same sinful patterns in their own lives. Let me tell you why you sin. You sin because you love your sin more than Jesus Christ, who is to be your Lord and Master. You choose to

be loyal to sin instead of God (Romans 6:12-13). Don't pass the buck. Don't blame your parents when God has liberated your own life from sin. Nevertheless, the proverb is teaching that the way we live as fathers does have an effect or impact upon our children. Men, if we are living for sin and self our children will take notice! They often follow the examples of our lives.

Stories of old contended that no sin was ever committed whose consequences rested on the head of the sinner alone, that no man could do ill and others not suffer. One story illustrates it in this way: "A vessel sailing from Joppa carried a passenger who, beneath his berth (sleeping quarters), cut a hole through the ship's side. When the men of the watch rebuked him, 'What are you doing, you miserable man?' the offender calmly replied, 'What does it matter to you? The hole I have made is under my own bed.'" This ancient parable is worthy of the utmost consideration. No man is affected alone in his iniquity. In other words, no man can guess the full consequences of his transgression. This is what our text is saying. Our sinfulness and neglect are passed down to the future generations and God says it creates those who actually "hate me" ("them that hate me" – Exodus 20:5). Sin spreads like the flies of Egypt!

Bitter and angry was Jim as he shared his early childhood years to the chaplain. He relayed the story of a teacher asking his Grade 3 class to color a piece of paper that was cut out in the form of a necktie. This would be a gift for their fathers on Father's Day. But Jim, being rather clumsy and uncreative, messed up quite badly; yet, he was proud of his work. He could not wait to give the tie to his father, come Sunday.

On the way home, he dropped it accidentally in a mud puddle. It was slightly soiled, but it was still presentable. Father's Day came and he proudly presented the work of art--the necktie, to his father. His father, rather short-fused, became indignant. "What!" he cried, "Am I to wear this ugly thing today, for Father's Day? Am I crazy? Who taught you how to draw? It's all dirty as well? You stupid little kid!"

Hanging his head Jim ran away, burying his angry thoughts. Etched in his mind were countless other memories of his angry father. In time, he became bitter and cynical, much like his father. His father had passed on his legacy, but it was not the

kind of legacy that a father should pass on to his children. You have heard the expression, life begets life. Well, fruit begets fruit.

Well, God leaves us with a very positive and encouraging note at the end of our text. As bad as a bad example can be to our children and future generations, just the opposite can occur if a father sets a good example for his children. The children can experience God's blessing in their lives as they mimic and practice their father's godly example of obedience and living.

Exodus 20:6

"And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me (a godly offspring produced by godly fathers), and keep my commandments."

As bad as the negative influence of an ungodly life can be upon children, the impact of a godly life being experienced in the lives of children can be even greater!

A contrast is given between a good and bad example.

- The contrast pertains to length of days.

The bad influence extends to "the third and fourth generation" (Exod. 20:5) where the good example extends to "showing mercy unto thousands of them" (Exod. 20:6). In other words, the Lord's mercy (expressions of compassion and love) would extend even more to the descendants of righteous people who love and obey the Lord. In other words, a father's godly influence would give the Lord opportunity to express His mercy to a great host of people who follow the same godly example as the father did. It's as if God is teaching that the good outweighs the bad when a father's testimony reflects His character, and the father is obedient to Him and His ways. The lingering effects of righteousness will last far longer than the lingering effects of wickedness.

- The contrast pertains to character and conduct.

Here is another contrast. The bad influence of a father results in "them that hate me" (Exod. 20:5). However, the godly influence of a father results in children who love God and His ways ("them that love me" - Exod. 20:6). Children are impacted

either negatively or positively by the conduct and decisions of fathers. Let us never forget this.

God says that children who are raised with godly values in the home and who have loving parents will as a general rule “keep my commandments” (Ex. 20:6) They will follow the example and testimony of their father. Men, this should cause us to wake up and smell the coffee! If you want your children to follow God’s ways for their lives, then you had better be doing what is right. Set the example, lead as a dad, and leave your children with a godly legacy that will live on in their lives! The godly fruit will be seen in your children and the next generation! Your testimony of holiness for Christ and obedience to Christ will not die and go unnoticed but live on in the lives of your children. A father who lives for God can leave behind a legacy to His children of godliness, holiness, love, obedience, respect, gentleness, maturity, discipline, wisdom, responsibility, spiritual strength, and prayer.

One great example of raising a godly heritage is Jonathan Edwards, the Puritan Preacher from the 1700s. Jonathan and his wife Sarah left a great godly legacy for his 11 children.

At the turn of the 20th century, American educator and pastor A.E. Winship decided to trace out the descendants of Jonathan Edwards almost 150 years after his death. His findings are astounding, especially when compared to a man known as Max Jukes. Jukes’ legacy came to the forefront when the family trees of 42 different men in the New York prison system traced back to him.

Jonathan Edwards’ godly legacy was so different. His descendants included:

- ✓ 1 U.S. Vice-President,
- ✓ 3 U.S. Senators,
- ✓ 3 governors,
- ✓ 3 mayors,
- ✓ 13 college presidents,
- ✓ 30 judges,
- ✓ 65 professors,
- ✓ 80 public office holders,
- ✓ 100 lawyers and
- ✓ 100 missionaries.

Max Jukes' descendants included:

- ✓ 7 murderers,
- ✓ 60 thieves,
- ✓ 50 women of debauchery,
- ✓ 130 other convicts,
- ✓ 310 paupers (with over 2,300 years lived in poorhouses) and
- ✓ 400 who were physically wrecked by indulgent living.
- ✓ It was estimated that Max Juke's descendants cost the state more than \$1,250,000.

Our legacy of godliness or ungodliness lives on in the lives of others. This is what the Scripture is teaching to us as fathers ("visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments").

Dad, you only have once chance to raise your children. You had better make sure you are allowing God to be Lord over your life and setting the example for your children to follow and grandchildren.

I was at a graduation party one Sunday afternoon. I had some ribs that a certain brother had made on the grill. My wife wanted to know how to eat ribs and I taught her to eat them with her hands! Anyway, whatever topping, or rub was put on those ribs stayed on my hands all day long. I washed my hands several times in the afternoon, but the smell remained on my hands. At night, while I was playing the trumpet in church, I could still smell the ribs. When I was preaching, I could still smell the ribs. The effects of those ribs lived on. The same is true in relationship to the testimony of our lives as fathers. Our testimony lives on in our children's lives. Let us never forget this as dad.

The title of this study is "God of our Fathers." Once again, this means God wants to rule over the lives of the fathers, so they might present a godly example for their children to follow and leave behind a rich spiritual inheritance for their children, which can ultimately be passed on to future generations. God wants to be God and Lord over our lives as dads. This is what our text is teaching us.

Proverbs 17:6 speaks of something similar:

“Children's children (*the grandchildren of fathers*) **are the crown of old men** (*grandchildren who live for God bring honor to every grandpa!*); **and the glory of children are their fathers”** (*referring to the honor and respect children have for fathers who have set a godly example for them and raised them properly*).

We start with the grandpas and grandchildren. A “crown” symbolizes honor and dignity. The point is obvious. A godly posterity of grandchildren (“children’s children”) brings honor and dignity to older men (the grandpas), who have raised their own children right, and whose children have also raised their children right. And so on and so on! The cycle continues.

The phrase “crown of old men” who have grandchildren struck me. I usually don’t have a problem with that the Bible says but I struggled with what this text of Scripture was saying. Today I am 58 years old. I now have six grandchildren. This must mean that I am an old man!! I guess we can redefine “old men” just a bit – some are older than others!! Anyway, the crown or honor and dignity comes into a man’s life when his own children walk with God but also, when as a grandpa, he sees his grandchildren walking with God.

We end with the fathers of children. The Bible concludes by saying, “and the glory of children are their fathers.” Children likewise can be grateful for their fathers. The “glory” speaks of how the children can give honor and respect to their fathers when they have raised them correctly and taught them how to live a holy and righteous life filled with integrity.

Someone said:

“God does not believe in a generation gap!”

Children are to love and respect their father for who he is, what he stands for, and what he does. The younger generation should look up to the previous generation who has lived for God and set the examples of godly living.

One grown man gave this testimony: “When I was a small boy growing up in Pennsylvania, we would often visit my grandparents who lived nine miles away. One night a thick fog settled over the hilly countryside before we started home. I

remember being terrified and asking if we shouldn't be going even slower than we were. Mother said gently, 'Don't worry. Your father knows the way.'

"You see, Dad had walked that road when there was no gasoline during the war. He had ridden that blacktop on his bicycle to court Mother. And for years he had made those weekly trips back to visit his own parents. How often when I can't see the road of life, and have felt that familiar panic rising in my heart I have heard the echo of my mother's voice: 'Don't worry. Your Father knows the way.'"

Men, God expects us to know the way (the narrow way) and stay on the right path! We are to lead our families spiritually and make the right decisions for our family and children. God places it squarely upon our shoulders. Yes, we are to give options for our children as they grow older, but they are to be godly options! We are to set the standards for them and show them what God expects. Dad, you should know the way and it's your responsibility to stay on the road marked right and keep your family on the same road.

God of our fathers! Is God in control of your life as a father? Are your children seeing holiness, godliness, obedience, and discipline in your life as a dad? If God is in control of your life, your life will *show* it and your children will *know* it! This is true both today and in the generations that follow you. A father that follows God will have a tremendous, godly impact upon his children.

"A careful man I ought to be,
A little fellow follows me.
I do not dare to go astray
For fear he'll go the selfsame way.
I cannot once escape his eyes,
What e're he sees me do he tries.
Like me he says he's going to be –
The little chap that follows me.
I must remember as I go,
Thru summer's sun and winter's snow
I'm building for the years to be –
That little chap who follows me."