

FATHERS DAY MESSAGE
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ALL PRO DADS

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Deuteronomy 1:29-31

Then I said to you, "Do not be terrified; do not be afraid of them. The LORD your God, who is going before you, will fight for you, as he did for you in Egypt, before your very eyes, and in the desert. There you saw how the LORD your God carried you, as a father carries his son, all the way you went until you reached this place

Ephesians 6:4

Fathers, do not frustrate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.

I love football – especially high school football...the Friday night-lights, the pep rallies, the band and cheerleaders, and the roar of the crowd. It was June 1984 – and like most high school football players, I was preparing for the upcoming season lifting weights, running sprints, and working on my passing game. I was entering my senior year as the starting QB, and was 1 of just 4 returning starters. We had just come off a great season the previous year – the best season in school history with a 9-3 record. Unfortunately, that team was full of seniors that had just graduated and to top that - our head coach decided to retire.

*So there we were, working out in the summer heat when one of my fellow teammates plants **that big seed of doubt**, “man, we’re gonna get killed this year – we only have 4 returning starters, we have a new coach we haven’t even met and right now there’s only 5-6 guys coming to these summer workouts. I’m thinking about not even playing”. He was right – there was reason to be concerned. Not to mention the teams in our conference were loaded with talent - we were predicted to finish 6th in a 9 team conference. I was apprehensive too - in fact, I was scared.*

The next day, I decided not to attend the summer workout...and my dad noticed. He said, “Son, aren’t you supposed to be at the school right now working out?” I said, “Well dad – my heart just isn’t in it – I’ve thought about not playing”.

My father said these 3 things and then walked away...

- 1. They need you son - you’re the team leader – they’re depending on you*
 - 2. How will you feel going to the games as a spectator?*
 - 3. Get over your fears and have a little faith – you never know what tomorrow will bring*
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Former pro-football player and super bowl winning coach Tony Dungy has formed an organization called ALL PRO DADS designed to instill Christian principles in fathers. (Go to their website and sign up for their free daily newsletter.) Coach Dungy felt this calling to minister to men in order to strengthen families, in order to strengthen churches, and in order to help save a dying world.

Looking back, I realize my father was an ALL PRO DAD. Let me share with you some thoughts about being an ALL PRO DAD...

FIRST...All Pro Dads honor God.

My dad led his family to church. He personified Ephesians 6:4 with love, encouragement, and discipline. I appreciate the boundaries my father put before me – it helped to shape my character and it certainly kept me on the right path.

David Murrow – founder of the CHURCHFORMEN.COM has researched and listed some quick facts about men and church...

- More than 90 percent of American men believe in God, and five out of six call themselves Christians. But only 1 of 6 attends church on a given Sunday. Why?
- The average man accepts the reality of Jesus Christ, but fails to see any value in going to church. Why?
- Men are less likely to lead, volunteer and give in the church. Why?
- Men pray less, share their faith less and read the Bible less. Why?

If you're wondering why men don't like church – I have a theory. **We're scared – we're scared to give up control, we're scared of uncertainty, and we're scared of complications. And we let this fear get in the way of experiencing everything God has to offer. Heck, most men still think tithing is a financial decision.**

Men do need the church – but more important, the church needs men. When a man is first to church, his family will follow him 93% of the time. The presence of enthusiastic men is one of the surest predictors of church health and growth. Attending church leads men to become more engaged husbands and fathers.

SECOND...All Pro Dads hold each other accountable.

Proverbs 27:17 says...as iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens the expression of his friend. This means God will use other men to build and shape your character and you will be transformed into a powerful weapon in God's hand – a man with whom God can do great things in the world.

Accountability involves permitting trusted friends to hold you to your commitment - to godly living. There are elements to this process. It's about praying for one another, encouraging each other, grieving and celebrating together, learning from one another's victories and mistakes. It means admitting struggles and coming clean about wrongdoing.

I truly believe it takes a village to raise a child, which means brothers - we need to rely on each other! A child that receives encouragement, love, and support from a group of Christian men has a better chance of staying on the right path, making good choices, and saying no to the worlds temptations.

My dad was part of a small group of 5-6 men who met every morning for coffee and a biscuit at Sunrise Biscuits in downtown Oxford. They talked mainly about politics, sports, and their wives and children - but I bet there was some faith-sharing going on too. Most importantly, they could lean on one another during difficult times.

LASTLY...All Pro Dads are TENACIOUS!

The word tenacity means to 'stick firmly to any decision, plan, or opinion - without changing it - without doubting it'. Tenacity is synonymous with stubbornness, resolve, and persistence. My dad was stubborn for the right reasons.

Men, we usually learn about tenacity when we're young. We discover that by keeping at it, we can complete a task that seems beyond us. Through sheer will power - or maybe because of a father's prodding, we face our fears, our uncertainties and accomplish our goal.

God knows that if we're going to go the distance with him, live life his way, become everything he wants us to be, and finally enter the gates of heaven...we've got to know what it means to stick with something and see it through to the end. As fathers or mentors, we have to be stubborn - we have to be persistent and never give up on our kids...because we know God has made the ultimate sacrifice and will never give up on us.

I think God wants us to be tenacious in our pursuit of holiness! He wants strong Christian men - men full of compassion who laugh, and love, and cry - men who'll face eternity and aren't afraid to die.

How many of you know about the warrior in 2 Samuel 23?

His name was Benaiah. Guess what he did?

Benaiah chased a lion and killed it. He was tenacious!

This story inspired Pastor Mark Batterson so much that he wrote a book about it...*In a Pit with a Lion on a Snowy Day*. Mark is the lead Pastor of National Community Church in Washington, DC. Listen to what he says...

Life is infinitely uncertain - God is infinitely complex. I think many people have the mistaken notion that FAITH reduces uncertainty. Nothing could be further from the truth...faith doesn't reduce uncertainty - FAITH embraces uncertainty.

We'll never have all the answers. Maybe a relationship with God doesn't simplify our lives - maybe it complicates our lives in ways that they should be complicated.

Turn to page 85...Mark says - "marriage complicates my life - my kids complicate my life - pasturing a growing church complicates my life - wealth will complicate my taxes and success will complicate my schedule. THANK GOD FOR COMPLICATIONS!"

Our Christian faith tells us that impossible odds set the stage for amazing miracles - that our biggest problem may be our greatest opportunity to witness God at work.

King David took a look at Benaiah's resume and noticed he chased down a lion and killed it. King David made Benaiah Commander in Chief of his army.

Impossible odds?

- Moses parted the Red Sea and led his people to freedom
- David struck down the giant Goliath using a slingshot
- Jesus fed 5,000 with only 5 loaves of bread and 2 fish

With God, all things are possible.

*So what's it gonna be Barker? Do you play it safe and become a spectator and sit with your parents in the stands - content with where you are and what you have in life? Or **do you chase that lion and embrace your fears and uncertainties** with a strong faith in Christ - knowing that when you give up control, Christ will be there to see you through...and maybe experience a blessing of having the courage to step out in faith.*

So that night, I prayed - "Okay Lord, I'm gonna stick with it. I can't do it on my own - I need your help. Please be with me, prepare me and protect me, and please help us to win a few games - amen"

Well - we had one of those Cinderella seasons...

- *we won the first conference title in the school's history*
- *went to the playoffs and thumped the #1 team in the state*
- *and came that close to playing for the state championship*

We finished the season 10-3. During the course of the season, the town rallied around the team sometimes chartering 7-8 buses for away games, providing cookouts for the players and coaches. News reporters and TV crews were on campus all the time. It was an unforgettable season, we helped put our small town on the map. And to think that I almost missed it?

My dad loved football. He loved coming to the games - got there early and was always waiting when I came off the field. And he was loud - standing on the top bleacher yelling "throw the ball, throw the ball". And at halftime, he and 4 other men would sometimes entertain the crowd with some good ol gospel singing. And I'm sure he loved meeting his buddies on Saturday morning to re-live the game.

Later in life, my dad informed me how concerned he was for our country, how we've gotten away from scripture and the church, how scary it is to raise a family in today's world?

*But now I think it's not as difficult - **if you're an ALL PRO DAD.***

Amen