

Introduction:

- At the cemetery in Rossville Illinois, I noticed something about each of the graves as I walked to the place where my sister's finance would be buried last week. What I noticed is that there was a dash “-” on each gravestone.
 - That dash separates a persons beginning date and their ending date. The dash is small in size and looks somewhat insignificant, but in actuality, it represents great significance because it indicates the life that was lived in that span of time.
 - Your dash is an accumulation of how you live today, tomorrow, in five or fifty years or until the day, you die. I don't know about you, but I want my dash between my beginning and end dates to represent a powerful and lasting legacy.
- So this message this morning is about making that dash between the start and the finish of your life that much fuller. Dads, I want to be an encouragement to you today.
- Thirty years ago this November I became a father.
 - Wow, lot of joy in that day and days to follow but like most dads, I was buried in my own efforts to be a good father, and provider and I did not notice what else was going on. We all make mistakes as fathers, I know I made many. The problem is that we are not always aware, at the time, what the mistakes are. The more children you have the better you get ...I think.
 - It was only when my boys grew up that I realized some of the mistakes I made and understood what I could have done to be a better father. When I became a grandfather I really began to see much more clearly.
- How many of us think that if only we could do it all again we would get it right this time. I know what I would do differently and I think I know what the end result would be. I believe that each man does the best with what he has to be a good father. And I also believe that each man can do better at being a good father if he would apply himself to do so. IE. Rod Stewart, *OooLaLa, I wish that I knew what I know now / When I was younger.*

I. The Potential Of Our Mistakes

- A. I don't want to stand up here this morning and preach myself into despair any more than I want to heap condemnation on you as dads today. I do want us to see the potential impact of our mistakes upon our children.
- B. In the Abba Father series I did last august we spent time talking about the orphan spirit. It was in relationship to what we are without knowing God the Father and the change that comes when we do. Orphan spirit refers to a spiritual condition in which some children profess outwardly that they have a father, but internally struggle with the contradiction that they don't. To say it differently: outwardly they know they have a father but inwardly they are not sure. Deep down they struggle to really comprehend if they are loved by dad.
 1. It literally means bereaved (suffering from loss), abandoned, deprived.
 2. Inside the orphan feels abandoned, alone, isolated and afraid.
 3. The orphan lacks emotional identity and seeks to earn identity through his or her own efforts.
- C. Characteristics of orphan spirit.
 1. Don't feel like they belong. Have no roots. Therefore they seek places and people to belong.

2. Need recognition. Always trying to get attention. They appear to be needy, act needy or act out to get attention.
 3. Looking else where for something to fill that void. Song by Toby Keith: "Whose your daddy?"
Lyrics: Here you come knockin' on my door baby / Tell me what you got on your mind / I guess those college boys all went home for the summertime / And you're lookin' right, lookin' good, lookin' like a woman should / So why is it so hard to find / A place to lay your pretty little head down once in a while / You run on a little tough luck baby / Don't you sweat it / Everything is waiting inside for you / You know I got it, Come and get it / Who's your daddy, who's your baby? Who's your buddy, who's your friend? And who's the one guy that you come runnin' to / When your love life starts tumblin'? / I got the money if you got the honey / Let's cut a deal let's make a plan / Who's your daddy, who's your baby? Who's your buddy, who's your man?...you get the picture.
 4. Feel abandoned - Not important.
 5. Feel rejected. Not valued.
 6. Reject others before being rejected. This is a self protection mode to keep from being hurt by others.
 7. They try to earn your love by doing for you.
 8. They often begin to be filled with anger and demonstrate fits of rage.
 9. They lack self esteem.
- D. I am just glancing. I am not analyzing you or your family. I just want you to do a sober estimate of how you are doing as a dad. If you feel like you are failing know that failure is not the end. God is bigger than all your problems and bigger than all your fears. He is the overcome and you are in Him and He is in you so get and get ready to overcome!

II. Do Or Do Not

- A. I have picture of Yoda on my office door with a quote from Star War where Yoda is teaching Luke to use the force. I want to play a clip from the movie. IE. Video
1. To many of us as dads live in this place that Yoda speaks of.
 2. "I can't do it." It is to hard. I tried before...and failed. "Hear you nothing that I say?"
 3. "You must unlearn what you have learned." Our fathers may have failed, made mistakes, and let us down. And we are destined to do the same. But with effort and determination and by the grace of God and the power of the Holy Spirit we can make fewer mistakes!
 4. I'll try. "No! Do or Do not. There is no try." Just make the decision to be a better dad.
- B. "Do over" - An act or instance of repeating something, especially to improve or correct the earlier attempt. How many of you have ever wanted a 'do over' in life? Rather than focus on what I have done wrong as a father let me encourage you with what I would do more. And I suggest you do the same.
1. I would take more 'chill pills'. (calm down, relax). I am not talking about drugs that would be counter productive. I am talking about a deep breath and chill out. Two things help with this:
 - a) Laugh more - "*A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a broken spirit saps a person's strength.*" (Proverbs 17:22, NLT)
 - (1) Heb. Naka - to hit or strike. I would say this is a picture of person who is 'beating' themselves up for not measuring up or beating others up because they don't measure up.

- (2) As a dad it's easy to get caught up with all the stresses of jobs, childrearing, and get lost in everything you think you're doing wrong, but as a grandparent you can take a step back and observe the fun little things.
- b) Smile more - Like the gift of smiling. It's a great way to interact, communicate and share love. A smile can prompt a smile, which can turn into a giggle, extend into a laugh, and bring happiness to an entire room. It's no secret that a baby who experiences a lot of smiling and laughter will grow up to be happier than if they were to be left alone in a cot.
2. Affirm more. To state something of truth. Affirm a gift, character trait. Creates identity.
3. Encourage more - to build up, strengthen.
- a) Ro 1:12 *I want to encourage you in your faith.*
- b) *"So encourage each other and build each other up, just as you are already doing."* (1 Thessalonians 5:11, NLT)
4. Not be so uptight about the little things. Most of the time when we get uptight, we just want a break or we brought our work home with us, or we are afraid we are flunking as a dads.
5. I would love my wife more in front of the children.
- a) Security
- b) modeling/example
6. I would ask more often, "Do you forgive me?"
- a) Acknowledge what you did wrong.
- b) Acknowledge the feelings it stirred up in your child.
- c) Ask for forgiveness.
- d) Heals wounds and teaches.
7. I would serve more.
- a) It is how to be great. *"Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant."* (Matthew 20:26, NKJV)
- b) "No one will notice while you are alive so get over it."
8. I would be less selfish about, "my time, my stuff, my plans". Kids just want your attention.
9. I would watch less TV/social media and watch the details of my children's lives.

III. What Makes God Such a Good Father?

- A. He tells us we are valuable in tender ways. *"Look at the birds. They don't plant or harvest or store food in barns, for your heavenly Father feeds them. And aren't you far more valuable to him than they are?"* (Matthew 6:26, NLT) You are what matters most is what the word valuable means. Luke 15: Lost sheep, lost coin, lost sons. What was missing was valuable.
- B. He affirms us and who we are. He gives us identity and roots.
1. This is my son. And He brings me great joy. *"And a voice from heaven said, 'This is my dearly loved Son, who brings me great joy.'"* (Matthew 3:17, NLT) Ro 8:15 Gal 4:6 Abba Father.
2. I have a father! Every child wants to know that they have a father. 'Father' is used 17 times in the sermon on the mount.
3. I have a father and he is approachable.

- C. He knows all about me. Ps 139, Luke 12:7 the number of hairs on my head. He knows detail upon detail. It is up to us to find out the details of their lives. IE. Makyah always asks me, "How was your day PawPaw?" And she loves to be asked, "How was your day?" "What did you do today?"
- D. He thinks wonderful thoughts about me and tells them to me. Ps. 139
- E. He forgives often!
1. *"If you forgive those who sin against you, your heavenly Father will forgive you."* (Matthew 6:14, NLT)
 2. *"Then Peter came to him and asked, 'Lord, how often should I forgive someone who sins against me? Seven times?'"* (Matthew 18:21, NLT)
 3. *"Jesus said, 'Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they are doing.'" And the soldiers gambled for his clothes by throwing dice."* (Luke 23:34, NLT)
- F. He rejoices over me. *"For the Lord your God is living among you...He will take delight in you with gladness. ... He will rejoice over you with joyful songs."* (Zephaniah 3:17, NLT) Laughter and smiles.
- G. He loves unconditionally. Never do I have to earn His loves. Prostitute, tax collector, pharisee, demon possessed. 2 Peter 3:9 He wants none of us to perish.
- H. He gives me security and significance. Everyone wants to be loved, accepted and significant. The receiving of unconditional love, acceptance, forgiveness, value, and identity (I have a home, a place to belong, etc) gives me security and significance.
- I. God is good Father...learn from the best!

- Loved: Jn 15:9; Ro 5:5-8; 8:35-37; Eph 2:4; 3:17-19
- Accepted: Eph 1:5-6; 2:13, 19-21; Col 1:22; Gal 4:4-7; Ro 8:14-17; 12:4,5; 1 Cor 12:18-27
- Forgiven: Ro 8:1; Eph 1:7; 2 Cor 5:21; Col 1:12-14; 2:13-14; 1 Jn 1:8-2:2
- Important: Jn 15:5-8; 16; Eph 2:10'4:1-3; Ro *:28-29 1 Thes 2:4; 5:14; Phil 3:13-14
- Adequate: 1 Cor 15:57-58; Eph 3:20, 21; 6:10; Phil 1:6; 4:13
- Needed: Ro 15:1-7; John 13:34-35; 2 Cor 1:3-4; Gal 6:1-2; 1 Cor 12:4-7

Conclusion:

- Dads, the dash between your start and your finish is but a vapor. But you can pack it full.
- You choose how you live between your dates by the actions you take today, tomorrow and the years to come. Every day is a new canvas to paint the picture of how you want to be remembered in your dash. When you get to the end of your life what story will your dash tell?
- Pray for dads who want to put Jesus in their lives.

Extra credit:

- You will never become the man you were destined to be if you are always looking at who you use to be.
- Sometimes you have to laugh at yourself.
- Don't let the fear of what could happen stop you from pursuing what is possible.
- Achieving anything worthwhile in life takes effort.
- If you are still holding onto what you did yesterday then you will miss what you can do today.
- If you keep waiting for the perfect circumstances, you may look around and find time has passed you by.
- Do not let past mistakes, failures or successes prevent you from reaching your future potential for success.

