

**Sermon:** *A Father's Connections*  
**Text:** *Matthew 10:24-39*  
**Date:** *June 15, 2008 AM*  
**Place:** *Jesup First UMC*

Bill Cosby says the first thing his daddy says when he walks in the door is: *"Now, let me see how much money I have for my darling grandchildren."* He says: *"And this is the same man who when I was a child and asked him for money, told me his life story: how he got up at 4:00 in the morning and walked 23 miles to milk 90 cows. And since there were no buckets, he carried the milk in his little hands for 8 miles to the nearest can. And he did all this for 5 cents a month. And the whole point is: I never got my 50 cents. So, as soon as dad is gone, I snatch that money away from my kids, because that's my money."*

Father's Day! The Bible tells us: **"Honor your father."** What a difference that is from the message the world is preaching today. The only people our culture honors are celebrities. In fact, if you listen to the loudest voices in our culture, you might just think fathers don't really matter, that women can do just fine raising a family on their own. And so, that's what some women are choosing to do. And then, you have some men who are fathering children and walking away, leaving mama to raise the kids on her own. And some men live in the same house and bring home the bacon, but don't even know their children.

And so, in the midst of this culture, the church is called to preach the truth, to send out a message, loud and clear, that fathers are crucial to the health and well-being of the family, that fathers are needed, and that God has a plan for the family that includes fathers as a loving provider and the head of the house.

Today, I want to talk with dads. Men, nobody else has the potential for influencing children like you do. Nobody! God has set fathers apart as the head of the family. And God has called fathers to be the one who molds and shapes our families and sets the course for the next generation.

I really believe that. I believe that daddies can change the face of our nation. But for this to happen, fathers must be connected in at least three ways.

## **1. WE MUST BE CONNECTED TO GOD.**

Do you know that children get their view of God from their fathers? The way a father treats his kids, speaks to his kids, and disciplines his kids plays a major role in shaping their understanding of who God is and how God acts. If daddy is always critical, Junior grows up thinking God is judgmental. If daddy is neglectful, Junior grows up thinking God really doesn't care. But if daddy is always there, always supportive, always loving, even in his discipline, Junior grows up knowing God is an intimate and caring heavenly Father.

They watch us – what we say and how we live – and they form their understanding of God based on what they see and hear from us. That's why it's important for us to be connected to God. They must be able to see the Fruit of the Spirit – love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, and self-control – in our lives. They must be able to see God in our lives if we ever

want to see God in theirs. If daddy goes to Church and preaches one thing, but comes home and lives another, Junior will see it and it will impact his life forever. Fathers must be connected to God.

## **2. WE MUST BE CONNECTED TO OUR FAMILIES.**

A great example of a man who was connected to his family is Joseph. You know, we don't give Joseph enough credit. We honor Mary, Jesus' mother, but we almost ignore Joseph. But when Jesus was born, Joseph was there. When Jesus disappeared in Jerusalem, Joseph went looking for Him. When Jesus was dedicated, Joseph was there. And chances are Joseph did for Jesus what every Jewish father did for their sons: he taught Him the law and took Him to the synagogue.

Joseph was there! And more than that, Joseph was involved. What a tremendous influence that must have been on Jesus! They connected and Jesus followed in Joseph's footsteps and became a carpenter. Fathers, you can't underestimate the importance of connecting with your family. From 1960 to 1990, the percentage of kids not living with their biological father jumped from 17% to 36% and by 2000, the figure had jumped to 40%! And the effects have been horrendous:

- **63% of youth suicides are in fatherless homes.**
- **90% of runaway teens are from fatherless homes.**
- **85% of children with behavioral disorders are from fatherless homes**
- **80% of those who commit rape come from fatherless homes.**
- **71% of high school drop outs come from fatherless homes.**
- **75% of teen drug abusers come from fatherless homes.**
- **85% of teens in juvenile prisons come from fatherless homes.**

Friends, it is time that godly, Christian men stand up and take back the family. It's time that somebody begins to show the rest of our culture what fatherhood really is. And who can do that better than the Church? We have the handbook on fatherhood!

We must connect with our families, but more than that ... we must connect in ways that nurture our family. Recently, we have seen a blurring of the traditional roles within the family. And so of this has been bad, but some of it has been very good. Today, fathers aren't just breadwinners and disciplinarians. Fathers nurture their kids too. Now, some daddies are having a little trouble with this. I saw a program recently where fathers were placed in a playroom with their children while the mothers watched through a one-way mirror. And the point of the experiment was to teach the kids that if something went wrong, daddy could take care of their bumps and bruises too.

When I was up for Elder's Orders a few years ago, I had to answer a series of 26 questions that evaluated my theology. And after I had finished writing this massive document, I was called before the Board of Ordained Ministry to defend my answers. And I'll never forget that day. I walked in and

sat down across from three people – two pastors and a lay person. And I was so nervous that I couldn't breathe; my heart was pounding.

And one of the pastors said: *"Tucker, it's so good to meet you. We've looked over your work and everything is in order. We really only have one question for you. What's your understanding of God?"* I said: *"Well, I don't know what you mean."* And he said: *"We noticed in your answers that when you spoke of God, you always referred to God in masculine terms, but you never mentioned the feminine characteristics of God. Do you ever think of God as a nurturing God?"* I said: *"Oh, yes sir, but you see: I grew up in a home where I was nurtured by my father and I don't necessarily think of nurture as a feminine characteristic."*

We must connect with God and we must connect with our families.

### **3. WE MUST BE CONNECTED TO THE CHURCH.**

Do you remember the story of the Philippian Jailer? He fell down in front of Paul and said: "What must I do to be saved?" And Paul said: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved, you and your household." And that same night, salvation came to an entire household because of the influence of a father.

That tells me fathers can have a tremendous spiritual influence on the family. Have you ever noticed how many women come to church without their husbands? Look, here is an evangelism training moment for our Church: if you really want to reach the family, if you want more families with children in the church, target daddy! People used to say: *"Of, if we could just reach the children, eventually the parents will come."* That's not so true anymore. Today, it goes like this: *"If you can reach daddy, you will reach the family."*

You know, the church is suffering from a lack of godly men, men who will pray until they touch the throne of God, men who will make the church a priority and work in the church for the glory of God. A lot of men have turned the church over to the women. Now, I'm not saying anything bad about women, but men, I believe with all my heart that God has called us to be godly men and leaders in the Church. And I believe when children see daddy connecting to the Church and making it a priority, then they will follow in your steps and do the same thing.

Fathers, we need to be connected to the Church.

Praise the Lord for those godly fathers who are making a difference in the lives of their children. Listen, the best way to make a difference in the world is to make a difference in the life of your kids. And the best way you can do that is to be connected to God, to your family, and to the Church.

Well, have you ever noticed that Father's Day is just a little different from Mother's Day? On Mother's Day, mama gives the kids a list of things she wants and says: *"Go, get the money from your dad."* And mama gets everything she wants. But on Father's Day, daddy gives the kids some money to buy his present. And they go out and buy a pack of underwear, bring it home, divide it, and wrap it individually. And then, they keep the change.