

Sermon Notes – June 20, 2021
(with Rev. Dr. Don W. Bledsoe)

I'll be sharing today from the New Testament: I Corinthians 4:15. I think a very profound and powerful declaration that Paul made here. He said, "For though you have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have you not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel."

Before we get into the message today on "Principles of a Good Father," I just want to take a moment to let you know how much we deeply appreciate the privilege of being with you today. I have my lovely wife, Helen with me, of 42-years. I know we don't look like we could've been married for 42-years. We appreciate the comment and the compliment, but we have, and I am thankful for her every day of my life. God has blessed us to raise two beautiful children - a son and a daughter. Now, they are grown, gone, and have left the area. They are in their careers now -- one is a nurse practitioner and the other teaches college. We are very thankful for our children. Both were born here in Catawba County. We are thankful to be here. I appreciate Pastor Peggy for the privilege to come today - to minister the word of God. I pastored for thirty years and any time that somebody invites me into their pulpit, that is an honor, and I deeply appreciate her confidence in us to do that. Also, I want to thank the Trinity church family here today because I have been working with Trinity Reformed now with many different things that we've done down through the years -- Baccalaureate, Easter Sunrise. You have always been so inviting and welcoming - a beautiful church family here. Thank you for the privilege. We've had since 2002 to be able to work with you in many of these different areas of ministry, and we appreciate it very, very much.

I want to talk to you today about the "Principles of a Good Father." Fatherhood to me is an honor. I'll never forget when my first was born (Josh). That was back when they didn't do everything in one room - the baby was born in one room and then took to another room. They cleaned them up a little bit and then did the finishing touches down the hall. But,

I was able to put him in my arms. I was about 29 when my first child came. I will never forget looking at that little fellow and him looking at me with those eyes. But, suddenly “future” hit my mind. I had never seen “future” until then. I don’t know if you understand what I’m saying, but when I looked at him and he looked at me, I thought, “This little fellow is totally dependent upon me and his mother. Totally.” So, I carried him down the hall, was talking to him and telling him all these things. It felt like a long time, but it wasn’t. Thank God that the Lord blessed him to grow up to be a quality young man - the same with my daughter. But, let me just say something about fatherhood: It’s very special.

Today, I want to talk about the principles of a good father, because I think we need to understand that there are privileges of fatherhood, but there are also responsibilities of fatherhood. A lot of men want the privileges of fatherhood, but they do not want the responsibilities of fatherhood. Can I get an “Amen”? We know it’s the truth, don’t we?

It’s so important that you understand that when my children were growing up, there was a phrase that we had in the house that we said a lot, “with privilege comes responsibility.” When I was a little boy, I had a wonderful grandfather. My early years were spent on a farm. My grandfather thought, “If you’re big enough to walk, you’re big enough to work” - that was his mentality. At that time in our lives, back in the late 50’s early 60’s, we grew most of our stuff. We grew about everything we ate. A lot of people don’t know what “canning” is today. They think when you say, “can” you go down to the store and buy a can. No. If you wanted a fresh chicken (excuse the expression), you chased it down, it left the planet, and ended up on the table. That’s how I grew up, but I understood that, “with privilege comes great responsibility.” I think with every father that we have to understand that.

One of the principles of a good father is to be a faithful father. You don’t have to have a doctorate or be greatly educated; you don’t have to have all the bells and whistles; you just have to be a faithful father. Be there for your family. Be there for your children. In going back as my

experience as a father myself, I've had a very busy life - challenging. I've been in ministry for forty-eight years, pastored for thirty years. I am grateful for longevity. When you're a Pastor, you are almost married to that pastorate. It's almost like a marriage - you have to be ready 24-7. *What I said at that time was that I want to make sure that I don't get so engrossed with my pastorate that I forget about my wife and children. **"I do not want to win the world and lose my family."*** That was my heart's desire. I don't know how we did it, but every ballgame either Helen or myself was there - every graduation, we were there. The day I showed up at UNC-Greensboro, my daughter said, "Dad, I'm a grown woman now." I was still there. I'll never forget the first time that I called her "woman" and she said, "Dad, I can't believe it!" She called her mother and said, "Dad used the 'w' word!" But, I made sure that both of my kids saw my face at their graduations. My daughter went back to Duke for grad school. I made sure that Duke University saw this face, too! Why? ... because I wanted them to know that this son and daughter have a father that is in their life. *If I couldn't go to the whole thing, I still showed up for a little while just to let them know that their father was backing them up - their father was visible - their father was faithful.*

Fathers, let me tell you something. Don't worry about how much money you have or whether you can buy for them. Trust me, buying stuff isn't always the answer. When both of mine were in college, I could've done more for them, but I did not. I didn't because I wanted them to understand that they need to be responsible, also. It's important that we be faithful. We've been to so many graduations that we hope that's all for a little while. Was it easy? ... No. Was it challenging? ... Yes. **But, men, be faithful! Be faithful to those children. Be faithful to your family.** This is so important because as time goes on, they look back. My daughter called me this morning (and I'm going to try not to cry), she said, "You are the best, daddy." She touched my heart with her words. Those words were like gold to me -- treasures. Let me tell you something men: One of the best things you can have is for your daughter to call you and let you know that she loves you and she is so proud that you are her father. As the old saying goes, "If that don't do something for you,

nothing will.” I’ve always tried to be faithful – balancing ministry – balancing responsibility – balancing life.

The second principle is assurance. Fathers, be strong and also get you some other good men around you that can be a strength and a blessing to you. My father died in 1984 at age fifty-four (which I think is pretty young). I was left kind of void. Helen’s dad, Al was a blessing to my life. I was like a son to him and he like a father to me. Find somebody – not just peers – older than you that can speak into your lives. My grandfather was a strong man. He brought our family assurance. He worked on second shift and was a farmer during the day. When he walked into the room, no matter what kind of crisis was going on, this man brought us assurance in our hearts. We need strong men like that today that can stand up. Grandfathers and great-grandfathers are so important. I would like to share a story with you. This was back in the day when you could leave your kids outside while you went in to take care of business. A gentleman had to go into the bank and take care of some business with the teller. There was a bench outside and the son sat down. The gentleman said, “Sit right there. I’ll be right back. Don’t go anywhere.” He said, “I promise, daddy. Right here.” He went into the bank and while he was there, he didn’t realize that a storm had come up. Not bad, just raining pretty heavily. When he saw the storm, he ran out to his son. When he got the son under the umbrella, he asked, “Son, why didn’t you come in the bank?” He said, “Well, daddy, you told me to sit right here until you came back. I knew at full assurance that I could take you at your word.”

Men, never lie to your children. I know you might fabricate a few things or stretch a few things – the fish, the deer you caught, etc. Bring assurance to your family. There are things that I have withheld from my children, but have never lied. There is a time and a place for such things. God give us wisdom as fathers, in these areas, to know the time, place, and what to share with our children. **Be truthful and honest** – this is so, very, very important. Truth is almost vanishing today. It’s important that we live our life in truth, in integrity, and in honesty. Be transparent. Some people say, “You’re stepping on our toes, pastor.” But I am not

aiming for toes... I am aiming for your heart. I hope with what I'm sharing today, you will think about it. When you walk out of here, I hope you tell yourself, "Hmm. I am going to be a better father. I'm going to be a better grandfather. I'm going to be a provider. I'm going to be truthful, honest, and transparent." You have no idea how many men I have talked to that have said, "If only I had a father... If only." They have fathers that are living, but they never see them -- they are never around. Listen: ***We've got to step-up and be the men that God has called us to be -- to be those fathers and pour in to our children the values of faithfulness and assurance.*** "Train up a child in the way it should go." This is so important! Be there for your children! Even as you get older, you don't quit parenting. You know what happens? You just have to parent in a different way. Sometimes, mine will remind me that they are a grown man or a grown woman, but I remind them that they are still my little boy or my little girl in my heart. Always will be, and I will do everything I can to add value to your life, to be a strength to you.

My kids were preacher's kids growing up. I'd like to tell you another story that they shared with me one time. They said, "When my daddy says he's closing, don't believe him. Don't believe him -- usually he has seven 'in-closings'." I'm not going to give you seven 'in-closings,' just a few more principles. ***Not only do we want to be men/fathers of truth, but we want to be men/fathers of hope.*** For the past year, we have had to navigate some strange waters - all of us. It's probably been one of the strangest years in my life-time. Fathers, we are to be hope-dispensers. Bring hope to them. One of the definitions of hope is, "desire with expectancy." When my grandfather came in the room, he not only brought assurance, he also brought hope. When we would say, "It hasn't rained," he would say, "Don't worry! The crops are still coming in." He gave us hope. We're going to be able to make it. Everything is alright. When my grandmother died, he was hurting and aching on the inside, but he told us, "It's going to be alright." He hid his pain and grief to bring hope to his family. I am talking a lot about my grandfather today. He instilled all those things in me from way back in the 1960s. I still remember to this day that he used to sit me in the back of his pick-up truck outside and he would pour great wisdom into my heart and life. I

was just a little kid, but I still remember it to this day. He told me, “Son, honesty is the best policy.” He said, “Where privilege is, there is also responsibility.” It’s amazing how those things come back to you. How many of you have ever had a parent or grandparent who spoke things to you like that? At the time, you didn’t really understand... but as you get older, you do. Those things come back to you - and they will come back to your kids.

Finally, I want to say, “Be an encourager.” Be determined. Not only are you going to dispense hope, you are going to be an encourager. Do we need encouragers today? ... Absolutely. My daughter is a nurse practitioner who encountered about 1,200 hurting patients over this past year. People were scared. People were diagnosed with COVID-19. Family members were sick or dying. She needed encouragement. We all need encouragement. Thank God we are starting to see some light at the end of the tunnel. When someone says, “I need someone to encourage me,” I tell them, “You be the one to strike the match. If you want to be encouraged, encourage somebody. If you want hope to come your way, give hope to somebody else.”

I pray that every father and grandfather will leave here today with a new and fresh determination to be the father that is pleasing to the Lord. Leave a legacy. Be faithful to your family. Share assurance, honesty, hope, and encouragement with your children.