

Sermon Notes for November 21, 1999

**The Sermon on the Mount
“A Biblical Understanding
of Your Heavenly Father”
Matthew 7:9-11**

Introduction

A. The Critical NATURE of All Fathers

1. In just three decades, **from 1960-1990, the percentage of children living apart from their biological father has more than doubled, from 17% to 36%.** It is now estimated that by the turn of the century, **50%** of all American children may go to bed at night without being able to speak to their father.
2. **Fathers spend an average of only 38 seconds a day being totally attentive and 20 minutes being partially attentive to their children’s needs.** Associated with these changes are the rising teen-age suicide rate, which **has tripled in the last 20 years, and the increasing incidence of delinquent behavior, which will bring one of nine adolescents in the U.S. into a courtroom this year.**
3. In his book The Dad Difference, Josh McDowell reveals that there seems to be a parenting gap. **The average teen in our churches spends only 2 minutes a day in meaningful dialogue with his dad. 25% of these teens say they never had a meaningful conversation with their father—a talk centered on the teens’ interests.**
4. **Charles Francis Adams**, 19th century political figure and diplomat, kept a diary. One day he entered: **“Went fishing with my son today—a day wasted.”** His son, **Brook Adams**, also kept a diary, which is still in existence. On that same day, Brook Adams made this entry: **“Went fishing with my father—the most wonderful day of my life!”**
5. In his men’s seminar, **Dave Simmons, a former cornerback for the Dallas Cowboys**, tells about his childhood home. His father, a military man, was extremely demanding, rarely saying a kind word, always pushing him with harsh criticism to do better. The father had decided that he would never permit his son to feel any satisfaction from his accomplishments, reminding him there were always new goals ahead. When Dave was a little boy, his dad gave him **a bicycle, unassembled**, with the command that he put it together. After Dave struggled to the point of tears with the difficult instructions and many parts, **his father said, “I knew you couldn’t do it.”** Then he assembled it for him. When Dave played football in high school, his father was unrelenting in his criticism. **In the backyard of his home, after every game, his dad would go over every play and point out Dave’s errors. “Most boys got butterflies in the stomach before the game; I got them afterwards.** Facing my father was more stressful than facing any opposing team.” By the time he entered college, Dave hated his father and his harsh discipline. **He chose to play football at the University of Georgia because**

its campus was further from home than any school that offered him a scholarship. After college, he became **the second round draft pick of the St. Louis Cardinal's** professional football club. Joe Namath (who later signed with the New York Jets), was the **club's first round pick that year.** Excited, I telephoned my father to tell him the good news. He said, **"How does it feel to be second?"** Despite the hateful feelings he had for his father, Dave began to build a bridge to his dad. Christ had come into his life during college years, and it was God's love that made him turn to his father. During visits home he stimulated conversation with him and listened with interest to what his father had to say. **He learned for the first time what his grandfather had been like—a tough lumberjack known for his quick temper. Once he destroyed a pickup truck with a sledgehammer because it wouldn't start, and he often beat his son.** The new awareness affected Dave dramatically. "Knowing about my father's upbringing not only made me more sympathetic for him, but it helped me see that, under the circumstances, he might have done much worse. By the time he died, I can honestly say we were friends." What most folks don't know is that Dave Simmons took his own life.

6. **Max Jukes** lived in New York. He did not believe in Christ or in Christian training. He refused to take his children to church, even when they asked to go. He has had 1,026 descendants; 300 were sent to prison for an average term of 13 years; 190 were public prostitutes; 680 were admitted alcoholics. His family, thus far, has cost the state in excess of \$420,000. They made no contribution to society. **Jonathan Edwards** lived in the same state, at the same time as Jukes. He loved the Lord and saw that his children were in church every Sunday, as he served the Lord to the best of his ability. He has had 929 descendants, of these 430 were ministers; 86 became university professors; 13 became university presidents; 75 authored good books; 5 were elected to the United States Congress and 2 to the Senate. One was Vice President of this nation. His family never cost the state one cent but has contributed immeasurably to the life of plenty in this land today.

B. The Critical PROBLEM With Our Fathers

1. Baby boom generations with military, non-emotional fathers
2. Future generations simply may not understand how to be emotionally attached to their children.
3. **THUS** many children don't have a very good model of what it means to be in a relationship with any father, much less our Heavenly Father.
 - a. So we stumble in our going to our Heavenly Father.
 1. Is He harsh, unattached, even militaristic?
 2. For many of us, our fathers have only been our providers.
 - b. This concept of our Heavenly Father **PREVENTS** us from **FREELY** coming before the Father; a **MUST** for the Christian **ESPECIALLY DURING COMMUNION.**
 - c. Also, some of us confuse our Heavenly Father with our earthly fathers because we have seen our earthly fathers act so inconsistently.
 1. Can our Heavenly Father really **be trusted?**

2. If I submit to Him, will He be **fair** to me.
3. **Does He have “something” up His sleeve?**

I. The Love of Our **EARTHLY FATHERS**

A. Even the Earthly Father **LOVES His Children**

1. What happens to you when you **become** a father?
 - a. **David** - 3:47 a.m.; June 20, 1978
 1. An instant bond
 2. I would die for that child **AT THAT MOMENT!**
 - b. **Beth**
 1. Saw a lump behind her knee - “tumor-like”
 2. It was a broken bursa sack - later drained by the doctor
 - c. **Brad**
 1. Baseball - handled poorly; I have never been so mad.
 2. Recent golf experience - worse on me than him.
2. What happens to our thinking as a father?
 - a. We want them to have the best of everything.
 - b. We will spend money **THAT WE DON'T HAVE** on our kids.

B. Even the Earthly Father **PROTECTS His Children**

1. Avoiding **PHYSICAL** danger
 - vs. 9 - “If his son asks for **bread**, will give him a **stone**?”
 - a. Often bread resembled a stone found in Israel.
 - b. Perhaps at a dimly lit dinner meal, the father “slipped” a rock into the bread basket and the son broke his tooth on the rock.
 - c. What kind of a father would **DO THAT**?
 1. **MOST** of us have gone the **OTHER** way with:
 - a. Braces
 - b. Teeth whitening
 2. Me - College - broke a tooth after years of braces
2. Avoiding **SPIRITUAL** danger
 - vs. 10 - “Or if he asks for a **fish**, will give him a **snake**?”
 - a. There are one of two possible interpretations here -
 1. That Jesus is talking about an actual snake:
 - a. That a snake would be coiled and bite him
 - b. Unexpectedly?
 2. It is more probable that the snake Jesus is speaking of is an eel.
 - a. According to Jewish law in Leviticus 11:12 - an eel could not be eaten. “Everything in the waters that has not fins and scales is an abomination to you.”
 - b. Would a Jewish father give to his Jewish son something that:
 1. was forbidden to eat
 2. and thus useless to eat.
 - c. If **ANYTHING**, we want to **BUILD UP** our children spiritually - not tear them down.
 1. Me, as a spiritual father to my children:
 - a. I want them to be spiritually mature.

- b. I have discipled my oldest son David and plan to disciple my other son, Brad - is my **RESPONSIBILITY**.
 - 2. And I want my children to **AVOID ANYTHING** that is spiritually harmful to them.
 - a. I pray for them.
 - b. I warn them.
 - 3. Avoiding **MORTAL** danger (from the book of Luke)
 - Luke 11:12 - "Or if he asks for an **egg**, will give him a **scorpion**?"
 - a. There is a light colored scorpion that, when asleep, resembles an egg.
 - b. Would any father trick his child by substituting a scorpion instead of an egg that could potentially kill his child?
 - 1. Have you ever **LOST** a child?
 - a. Woodward family - two twins - lost one when a man lost control of a car in **THEIR FRONT YARD**.
 - b. Beth, after being born, got choked; a nurse had to be summoned who suctioned her.
 - 2. **THAT** is a parent's **GREATEST FEAR!**
- C. **Even the Earthly Father PROVIDES For His Children**
 vs. 11a - "If you, then, though you are **evil**, know how to give good gifts to your children . . ."
- 1. **LOOK AT WHAT WE GIVE OUR KIDS!**
 - a. **IF ANYTHING**, we are **GUILTY** of giving our **KIDS TOO MUCH!**
 - 1. Clothes
 - 2. Cars
 - 3. Money
 - 4. Vacations
 - b. We are **THE GENERATION** that has given our children **EVERYTHING!**
 - 2. And Jesus says - **AND WE ARE SINNERS!**
 - A. We are sinful and **NOT** godly.
 - B. But we are **TOTALLY DESIROUS** of showering our kids with stuff!
 - 1. Christmas is coming
 - 2. Our Christmas times.
 - a. We start at Thanksgiving - the official day to begin Christmas with Christmas music.
 - b. We save with a Christmas Club Account.
 - c. My wife and I just got back from three days in Atlanta **CHRISTMAS SHOPPING** for our kids!

II. The Love of Our **HEAVENLY FATHER**

A. **WITHOUT A DOUBT, Earthly Fathers Love Their Children**

- 1. This is the **OBVIOUS lesson** that Jesus is making in this text.
- 2. And **NO ONE** would ever doubt that.

B. **BUT WITHOUT A DOUBT, our Heavenly Father LOVES HIS CHILDREN MORE.**

- 1. First of all, we must establish that we **ARE** His children.

- a. Many of **US** have a hard time with that:
 - 1. Perhaps because we didn't have a very good earthly role model,
 - 2. we have a hard time seeing God as anything but God, the ruler.
 - b. **CATHOLICS** have had a hard time with this.
 - 1. Franco has revealed that the typical Catholic sees Mary as the mother of the church.
 - a. So to her they go.
 - b. **THAT** is why she is in such a critical place - no Son would refuse the request of his mother.
 - 2. But that has distanced the closeness of the Father in the Catholic mind.
 - c. The **JEWS** had the same problem.
 - 1. Jesus, as a Jew in Mark 14:36, used the term relating to His Father as **ABBA** -
 - a. a tender term of endearment
 - b. daddy
 - 2. However one scholar, Jehoikim Jeremias, after extensive searching of ancient Jewish prayers, never found the word Abba in any of their prayers.
 - d. As **PROTESTANTS**, we are not much better.
 - 1. Either because of the lack of closeness to our own earthly fathers.
 - 2. Or a theological misunderstanding - **JESUS DESIRES TO SET THE RECORD STRAIGHT AS TO HOW WE ARE TO RELATE TO OUR HEAVENLY DADDY!**
2. What does that **mean** that we are His children?
- a. We are **CALLED HIS SONS AND DAUGHTERS.**
 - 1. Yes, we have been **ADOPTED** as His children, **BUT WE ARE HIS CHILDREN!**
 - 2. My brother Dudley has an adopted daughter -
 - b. We have **ALL THE RIGHTS AND PRIVILEGES OF A SON OR DAUGHTER.**
 - 1. When I went into my own house - the refrigerator -
 - 2. It was my **HOME!**
 - c. Our adopted Father is **OBLIGATED** to take care of us.
 - 1. As any earthly father is legally responsible to take care of his adopted children,
 - 2. our heavenly Father is legally and spiritually responsible, **ACCORDING TO HIS OWN WORD**, to take care of us.
 - d. He loves you **MORE** than you love your own children
 - 1. **MUCH MORE!**
 - 2. That's why He doesn't give you **EVERYTHING** you ask for.
 - a. Not because He is a **COSMIC KILLJOY**,
 - b. but because He loves you more than you love yourself.
 - e. He wants you to **CRAWL UP** into His lap - today.

1. All battered and bruised,
2. with dirt all over your face and clothes,
3. just coming back from stealing money from your neighbor's purse or throwing a ball through your neighbor's window.
4. Yes, there must be repentance, but He **STILL WANTS YOU TO COME.**
5. What did Jesus say when His disciples rebuked the children who **WANTED** to be with Him - "allow them to come, for to such belongs the Kingdom of God."
DON'T DOUBT THE FATHER'S LOVE FOR HIS CHILDREN

•**John Stott** - "The trouble is that for many of us it seem too simple, even simplistic. In our sophistication we say we cannot believe it, and in any case it does not altogether tally with our experience."

•**Paul** says in Galatians 4:6 - "Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, 'Abba, Father.'"

•**Roger Simms**, hitchhiking his way home, would never forget the date - May 7. His heavy suitcase made Roger tired. He was anxious to take off his Army uniform once and for all. Flashing the hitchhiking sign to the oncoming car, he lost hope when he saw it was a black, sleek, new Cadillac. To his surprise the car stopped. The passenger door opened. He ran toward the car, tossed his suitcase in the back, and thanked the handsome, well-dressed man as he slid into the front seat. "Going home for keeps?" "Sure am," Roger responded. "Well, you're in luck if you're going to Chicago." "Not quite that far. Do you live in Chicago?" "**I have a business there. My name is Hanover.**" **After talking about many things, Roger, a Christian, felt a compulsion to witness to this fiftyish, apparently successful businessman about Christ.** But he kept putting it off, till he realized he was just thirty minutes from his home. **It was now or never.** So, Roger cleared his throat, "**Mr. Hanover, I would like to talk to you about something very important.**" He then proceeded to explain the way of salvation, ultimately asking Mr. Hanover if he would like to receive Christ as his Savior. **To Roger's astonishment the Cadillac pulled over to the side of the road. Roger thought he was going to be ejected from the car. But the businessman bowed his head and received Christ, then thanked Roger. "This is the greatest thing that has ever happened to me."**

Five years went by, Roger married, had a two-year-old-boy, and a business of his own. Packing his suitcase for a business trip to Chicago, he found the small, white business card

Hanover had given him five years before. In Chicago he looked up Hanover Enterprises. A receptionist told him it was impossible to see Mr. Hanover, but he could see Mrs. Hanover.

A little confused as to what was going on, he was ushered into a lovely office and found himself facing a keen-eyed woman in her fifties. She extended her hand. **“You knew my husband?”**

Roger told how her husband had given him a ride while hitchhiking home after the war. “Can you tell me when that was?”

It was May 7, five years ago, the day I was discharged from the Army.” “Anything special about that day?” Roger hesitated.

Should he mention giving his witness? Since he had come so far, he might as well take the plunge. **“Mrs. Hanover, I explained the gospel. He pulled over to the side of the road and wept against the steering wheel. He gave his life to Christ that day.”**

Explosive sobs shook her body. Getting a grip on herself, she sobbed, **“I had prayed for my husband’s salvation for years. I believed God would save him.”** “And,” said Roger, “where is your husband, Mrs. Hanover?” **“He’s dead,”** she wept, struggling with words. **“He was in a car crash after he let you out of the car.**

He never got home. You see—I thought God had not kept His promise.” Sobbing uncontrollably, she added, **“I stopped living for God five years ago because I thought He had not kept His word!”**