

## Storm Strong Families “Need a Rudder”

*Scripture urges men to lead by loving*

Good morning, everyone, and an enthusiastic “Happy Father’s Day” to all of us together.

If you are a father, a grandfather, a great-grandfather (either biologically or otherwise), I invite you to stand for just a few moments, and together as men read one of the most important passages of Scripture we are called to model and to disciple our families in. Please stand with me men and let’s read Proverbs 3:1-12.

*<sup>1</sup>My son, do not forget my teaching,  
but let your heart keep my commandments,  
<sup>2</sup>for length of days and years of life and peace they will add to you.  
<sup>3</sup>Let not steadfast love and faithfulness forsake you;  
bind them around your neck; write them on the tablet of your heart.  
<sup>4</sup>So you will find favor and good success in the sight of God and man.  
<sup>5</sup>Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding.  
<sup>6</sup>In all your ways acknowledge him, and He will make straight your paths.  
<sup>7</sup>Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD, and turn away from evil.  
<sup>8</sup>It will be healing to your flesh and refreshment to your bones.  
<sup>9</sup>Honor the LORD with your wealth and with the firstfruits of all your produce;  
<sup>10</sup>then your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will be bursting with wine.  
<sup>11</sup>My son, do not despise the LORD’s discipline or be weary of his reproof,  
<sup>12</sup>for the LORD reproves him whom he loves, as a father the son in whom he delights.*

Four men are in the hospital waiting room because their wives are having babies. A nurse exits the delivery room and approaches the first young man, “Congratulations!,” she beams, “You’re the father of twins.”

“That’s odd,” answers the new dad. “I work for the Minnesota Twins!”

Shortly thereafter, a 2<sup>nd</sup> nurse emerges to approach the second guy, “Congratulations!,” she giggles, “You’re the father of triplets!”

“That’s weird,” the 2<sup>nd</sup> young dad answers. “I work for the 3M company!”

Within minutes, 3<sup>rd</sup> nurse bursts through the door and approaches a third, “Congratulations!” she almost shouts, “You’re the father of quadruplets!”

“That’s strange,” he respond with registered shock. “I work for the Four Seasons hotel!”

Suddenly, the other three hear a groaning.

They turn to see the 4<sup>th</sup> expectant dad, thumping his head against the wall. “What’s wrong?” the others ask.

“Me? I work for 7 Up!”

You recognize a joke like that is dated, principally because it depicts husbands waiting in a separate room while their wives are toughing it out, by themselves, in the delivery room. Today, virtually every young dad is in there with his wife, praying with her, coaching her breathing, offering his loving leadership.

But there was a day – not all that long ago – when the role of the dad in the home was largely and regularly ignored. In a piece entitled “The Importance of Fathers,” Dr. Ditta M. Oliker recalls:

The world began to radically change with the social, economic and technical changes of the 20th Century and, with those changes, came a basic change in the structure and function of the family -- with a consequent shift in the authority of the father. His influence was increasingly seen as minor, even negligible, and his importance was defined by how well he provided for the family.

[Even the] new field of psychology. In fact, psychology became part of the problem. Research studies did not place much importance on the role of the father. His influence on the development and growth of his child was reported as "insignificant". [When used, the word] parent was [synonymous] with “mother” -- and father, if mentioned, was equivalent to other influences.

Only a small number of parent-child studies investigated the father's role, and the few studies that were done at that time focused on the father's involvement *as reported by the mother*. For example, in a number of studies that used over 2,000 parents who responded to questions about parenting, not one father was interviewed. An indirect result of the lack of research data on fathers was the implied assumption that fathers weren't interested in fathering

“These days,” she continues...

...neither the general public nor psychological researchers, see the father as an equivalent to "other influences". The professional journals, as well as the Internet, are filled with articles reporting results confirming the importance of the father.<sup>ii</sup>

Here's today's storm-strong family truth:

***Storm-strong families find a rudder in a father who embraces his unique role, filled with the Spirit of God.***

Allow me to unpack this by addressing what fathers who are rudders – filled with God's Spirit – provide. First, they are

**Men/dads who provide the rudder of family-steering relational faith 1 John 2:11-14, 15-17**

<sup>12</sup> I am writing to you, little **children**,  
because your sins are forgiven for his name's sake.

<sup>13</sup> I am writing to you, **fathers**,

because you know him who is from the beginning.  
I am writing to you, **young men**,  
because you have overcome the evil one.  
I write to you, **children**, because you know the Father.  
<sup>14</sup> I write to you, **fathers**, because you know him who is from the beginning.  
I write to you, **young men**, because you are strong,  
and the word of God abides in you,  
and you have overcome the evil one.

I have long been fascinated with this picture of the family of God. It is so true to life in the church.

In God's family there are new believers, "children," who delight in the life-changing truth that God has forgiven all their sins "for his name's sake," i.e., because Jesus the Savior has wiped them out on the cross. They know the Father as a gracious forgiver.

In God's family, there are also young, strong believers, "young men," who are learning the power of the word of God in them to overcome the evil one. They know the Father as the powerful word-giver.

And, in God's family, there are also "fathers," Christians who have walked with God a long time, haven't given up, haven't deserted to the world, have come to know God well and are anchors, tribal chiefs, in God's family. They know the Father as the eternal, from everlasting to everlasting One. They are the spiritual rudders of the church. The other day, it took me less than 5 minutes to list over 80 individuals, most long-married couples, who've been and are CCC's our *long-walk-with-God fathers*.

### Men/dads who provide the rudder of intentional discipleship

Hebrews 12:4-11 (cf. Proverbs)

<sup>4</sup> In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. <sup>5</sup> And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons?

"My son, do not regard lightly the **discipline** of the Lord,  
nor be weary when reproved by him.

<sup>6</sup> For the Lord **disciplines** the one he loves,  
and chastises every son whom he receives."

<sup>7</sup> It is for **discipline** that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? <sup>8</sup> If you are left without **discipline**, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. <sup>9</sup> Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who **disciplined** us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? <sup>10</sup> For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he **disciplines** us for our good, that we may share his holiness.

<sup>11</sup> For the moment all **discipline** seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

Like a regular chime, there is a word that sounds through these verses. It's the word *discipline*. In the original, "paideia," or "the upbringing, the training, the consistent instruction required to develop a growing child into a mature adult." Actually, the word *discipline* means "to create a disciple." John Rosemond explains:

*The literal meaning of the word discipline is "to create a disciple." From that point of view, discipline is the process by which parents transform a willful child into a willing disciple—someone who will look up to them, trust them, subscribe to their values, and follow their lead. This is not accomplished by manipulating consequences, but by providing each child with effective leadership.<sup>iii</sup>*

Clearly, over and over again, the Scriptures this training, this discipline, as the mission of the father. Or, if I may put it quite frankly, good brothers, it is insufficient for any of us who are fathers to say, "Well, I leave that up to my wife." Please extract that from your thinking and your vocabulary. Your calling as a father is a greater calling.

This may involve a paradigm-shift for you; you may even recoil at what I've just said. But what else would you conclude when you read God's Word, especially when you drink in the Proverbs?

**4 Hear, O sons, a father's instruction**, and be attentive, that you may gain insight,  
<sup>2</sup> for I give you good precepts; do not forsake my teaching.

<sup>3</sup> When I was a son with my father, tender, the only one in the sight of my mother,  
<sup>4</sup> he taught me and said to me, "Let your heart hold fast my words; keep my commandments, and live.

<sup>5</sup> Get wisdom; get insight; do not forget, and do not turn away from the words of my mouth.

<sup>6</sup> Do not forsake her, and she will keep you; love her, and she will guard you.

<sup>7</sup> The beginning of wisdom is this: Get wisdom, and whatever you get, get insight.

<sup>8</sup> Prize her highly, and she will exalt you; she will honor you if you embrace her.

<sup>9</sup> She will place on your head a graceful garland; she will bestow on you a beautiful crown."

<sup>10</sup> Hear, my son, and accept my words, that the years of your life may be many.

**<sup>11</sup> I have taught you the way of wisdom; I have led you in the paths of uprightness.**

<sup>12</sup> When you walk, your step will not be hampered, and if you run, you will not stumble.

<sup>13</sup> Keep hold of instruction; do not let go; guard her, for she is your life.

<sup>14</sup> Do not enter the path of the wicked, and do not walk in the way of the evil.

<sup>15</sup> Avoid it; do not go on it; turn away from it and pass on.

<sup>16</sup> For they cannot sleep unless they have done wrong; they are robbed of sleep unless they have made someone stumble.

<sup>17</sup> For they eat the bread of wickedness and drink the wine of violence.

<sup>18</sup> But the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, which shines brighter and brighter until full day.

<sup>19</sup> The way of the wicked is like deep darkness; they do not know over what they stumble.

<sup>20</sup> My son, be attentive to my words; incline your ear to my sayings.

<sup>21</sup> Let them not escape from your sight; keep them within your heart

- .<sup>22</sup> For they are life to those who find them, and healing to all their flesh.
- <sup>23</sup> Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life.
- <sup>24</sup> Put away from you crooked speech, and put devious talk far from you.
- <sup>25</sup> Let your eyes look directly forward, and your gaze be straight before you.
- <sup>26</sup> Ponder the path of your feet; then all your ways will be sure.
- <sup>27</sup> Do not swerve to the right or to the left; turn your foot away from evil.

27 times in Proverbs,<sup>iv</sup> the “my son” call from a father to his children echoes. May I get embarrassingly practical here? Guys, do we have intentional conversations with our kids? with our grandkids? You say, “Well, we go to Cyclone games together. We go fishing. I go to all their games. We go to the lake!” Yes...and all that is well and good.<sup>v</sup> Doing things together is great. How about intentional conversations...not speeches...but conversations about the subjects we find in Prov.4:

- The unique importance of God’s Word
- The prize and protection of God’s wisdom
- The pathway and the outcome of the wicked
- The sun-shining brightness of living righteously
- The importance and practice of guarding your heart
- The right use of our mouths
- Focusing on the right path
- The hatred of evil and what displeases God

Storm-strong families have men in them who invest in knowing God (a crucial rudder for a family) and who intentionally create disciples through the time they invest with their children.

**Men/dads who provide the rudder of engaging love**  
Ephesians 6:4

Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but **bring them up** in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

If you’re looking at this powerful verse, please notice the words “bring them up.” Better translated **nourish**. By the way, the same word the Spirit uses in 5:29 to describe how we are to **nourish and cherish** our wives. It means to “amply supply”. Here (6:4) to “nourish in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.” Not surprisingly, Warren Wiersbe simplifies when he writes,

*When the Supreme Court handed down its ruling against required prayer in the public schools, the famous editorial cartoonist published one in the Washington Post showing an angry father waving a newspaper at his family and shouting, “What do they expect us to do—listen to the kids praying at home?” The answer (Wiersbe goes on) is yes! Home is the place...*

*A father must **not provoke** their children – discourage them by saying one thing and doing another; by always blaming and never praising, by being inconsistent and unfair in discipline, by making*

*promises and not keeping them, by making light of problems that to children are very important.*

*A father must **nurture** them – provide for them not merely physically, but emotionally and spiritually. Develop in them important qualities.*

*A father must **discipline** them, **instruct** them, and **encourage** them.<sup>vi</sup>*

And if you're surprised that Paul actually calls out the "fathers" here, don't be. It's intentional, and confirmed by all that we continue to discover about our vital role. Dr. Anna Sarkadi, in postdoc work at Uppsala University in Sweden, was studying children. But all of the questionnaires that had been used previously were exclusively given to the mothers.

She suggested that they give the questionnaire to fathers, too. "Why?" her adviser asked. "Are they important as well? To answer him, she searched the scientific literature for a review of studies on fathers' contributions to their kids. She couldn't find one. Her new study, which appears in the current edition of *Acta Paediatrica*,...

Sarkadi found that the mere presence of a father in the home reduced aggressive behavior in the kids. But **it was active and regular engagement with the kids** that reduced the risks of behavioral and psychological problems and boosted cognitive development.

"Father engagement really seems to have an effect where it's most needed," she told me. "What's the most common problem among teenage girls? Depression. And boys? You have delinquents." Those are precisely the problems that father engagement helps reduce.<sup>vii</sup>


## CONCLUSION

#17

Dads who are "rudders" ..

- A family-steering, anchoring **relational faith** in God.
- An **intentional disciplining** of your kids
- A **engaged loving**

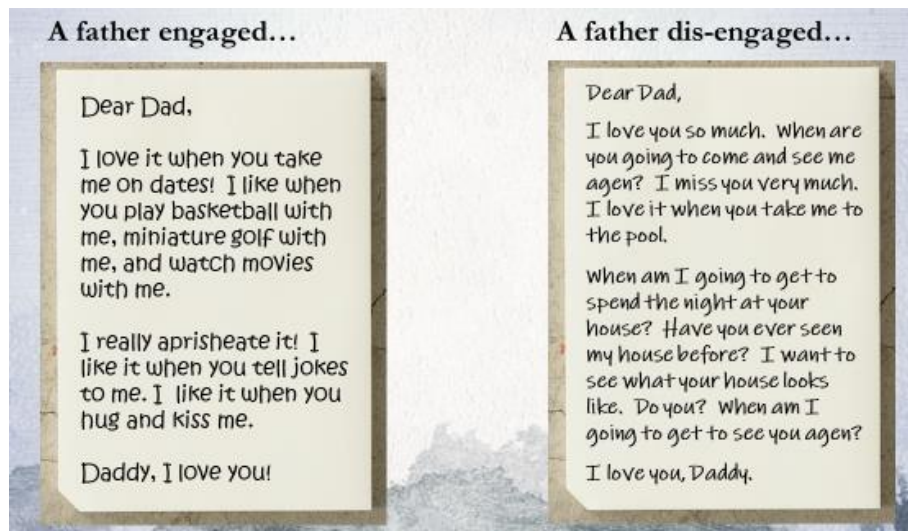
...the elements of storm-strong.



May I say this to all of us here today who are fathers or grandfathers or even great grand fathers. So many of you are doing such an outstanding job with your families. You know God, you're following Christ, you are sacrificially loving your wife and intentionally disciplining and praying for your kids. You are engaged. And yet there are others of you listening today who haven't stepped into that life-giving role. It's time for you to do so. Storm-strong families need Holy Spirit empowered dads.

Fathers who get it and humbly start stepping up. When you do, you can get connected with a lot of brothers in this outfit that are doing the same, and the momentum/impact can be remarkable.


I close by showing two letters, both written by third graders.



A couple of steps...

(1) Right now, **tell God in prayer** you are ready to make some changes

(2) This morning (or soon), **raise your flag**. "I could use some help..."



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<sup>i</sup> Submitted by Daniel C., Urbana, Ill., <https://boyslife.org/features/2017/20-funny-jokes-for-fathers-day/>

<sup>ii</sup> The Importance of Fathers Is Father's Day Real?, Published on June 23, 2011 by Ditta M. Oliker, Ph.D. in *The Long Reach of Childhood*

<sup>iii</sup> John Rosemond, *Parenting By The Book*, "Chapter Ten: Leadership Discipline," p. 206.

<sup>iv</sup> From Russell Moore *The Storm-Tossed Family: : How the Cross Reshapes the Home* -- This warfare is not just cosmic or social but decidedly personal. In the Proverbs, a father warns his son that adultery could appear to "just happen" when in reality it is a strategically conceived plot, the coaxing of a hunted prey into a slaughterhouse (Prov. 5-7). Perhaps you have noticed this in your own life. Just when it seems that your family situation is what you would like, or what God would like for you, something unhinges. It would be easy to blame this on the external pressures and temptations around us. We can say that technology is too difficult to navigate, that the culture is too sexualized, or that "people just don't respect the family like they used to." The Bible allows no such nostalgia, however, showing us the perils to the family in every generation outward from Eden.

We have different points of vulnerability, not just in our internal lives but also in our families. For some, the pull is to abandonment. For others, the pull is to infidelity. To others still, the pull is to selfishness or negligence. There are powers at work who know your vulnerabilities and those around you. You cannot fight such battles with your intelligence or your willpower. Such spiritual warfare must be met, at every point, with the gospel. The gospel informs our place in the family because the gospel redefines two points at which the devils rage the most: our identity and our inheritance. When Jesus taught us to pray, the first words on his tongue were "Our Father." That is, before anything else, a statement about who we are. Jesus is the son of the Father, language that situates him in his eternal relationship to God (John 5:18-23),

<sup>v</sup> Believe me, I've done the funerals. I've seen all the pictures. I've officiated at plenty of funerals where there are countless pictures running on a loop for all to see of going on this vacation, being at the lake cabin and on the lake, going to all the games...and yet when you ask the kids and the grandkids about the relationship with God that they learned from their father or grandfather, so very often you get a hung head or a blank stare. Activity together does not equal the creating of a disciple.

<sup>vi</sup> Warren Wiersbe, *Be Rich: Gaining the Things that Money Can't Buy* -- Ephesians, (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 1979, 2009), 165-167.

<sup>vii</sup> "The Attentive Father," An involved father means better outcomes for kids. Published June 20, 2008 by Paul Raeburn in *About Fathers*  
<http://www.psychologytoday.com/collections/201205/fathers-day/the-father-effects>