

One time a little boy was asked to define Father's Day and he said, "Its just like Mother's Day, only you don't spend as much on the present." Favorite sayings of dad: Go ask your mother! Just wait 'till I get home! When I was your age... I used to walk to school in the snow! I'm busy right now. I heard this past week about a father being asked who was in charge at his home. He answered, "Well, my wife bosses the children. My children boss the dog & cat, & I can say anything I want to the geraniums. Fatherhood may have changed a bit in our society, but I don't think God's perception of what the father is to be & do has changed. So this morning I'd like for you to turn to the story of Isaac, bestowing a blessing on his son Jacob. In this blessing we can learn some important truths. May all Fathers today not just pass on blessings to their children, but rather, "Be a Blessing to your children!"

As you may remember, Isaac & Rebecca had twin sons, Esau & Jacob, who were not anything alike. Esau was an outdoorsman with hairy arms & hands & he loved hunting & fishing. Jacob was more of a homebody, & spent a lot of time with his mother. Now in the 27th chapter of Genesis, their father, Isaac, has grown old & blind, & he decides it is time to pass on the blessing to his oldest son. Now a Jewish father's blessing was a formal passing on of the father's honor & authority to his oldest son. And since the oldest son was assuming the leadership responsibilities of the family or tribe, he also received a double share of his father's possessions. So the bestowing of the blessing was a very important event indeed.

In vs's 2-4 Isaac tells Esau, "I am now an old man & don't know the day of my death. Now then, get your weapons - your quiver & bow - & go out to the open country to hunt some wild game for me. Prepare me the kind of tasty food I like & bring it to me to eat, so that I may give you my blessing before I die."

So Esau leaves, & while he is gone, Rebecca seizes the opportunity to secure the blessing for Jacob, who was her favorite. She quickly prepares some tasty food & tells Jacob to put on Esau's best clothes. To help fool blind old Isaac, she puts goat skin on Jacob's hands & arms to make them feel hairy. Then she sends him in with the food to ask for the blessing.

Now the blessing that was given is found in vs's 27-29. "So he went to him & kissed him. When Isaac caught the smell of his clothes, he blessed him & said, 'Ah, the smell of my son is like the smell of a field that the Lord has blessed. May God give you of heaven's dew & of earth's richness - an abundance of grain & new wine. "May nations serve you & peoples bow down to you. Be lord over your brothers, & may the sons of your mother bow down to you. May those who curse you be cursed & those who bless you be blessed." After he received the blessing from his father, Jacob left. Shortly after, Esau came in with the game that he had killed & prepared, & was ready to receive his father's blessing.

Listen to vs's 33-34. "Isaac trembled violently & said, 'Who was it, then, that hunted game & brought it to me? I ate it just before you came & I blessed him - & indeed he will be blessed!' When Esau heard his father's words, he burst out with a loud & bitter cry & said to his father, 'Bless me - me too, my father!'" As we examine the blessing that Isaac bestowed upon Jacob, we observe four ingredients that ought to be present in every home today. But if those ingredients are absent in the home, then too often the child ends up like Esau, steeped in

bitterness & anger. The first ingredient was a meaningful touch. "Jacob went close to his father Isaac, who touched him." Vs. 26 says, "Then his father Isaac said to him, 'Come here, my son, & kiss me.'" Now this is not an isolated incident in scripture. Almost every time a blessing is bestowed in Hebrew culture, it involves touching - the laying on of hands, a kiss, an embrace - something that conveys acceptance & love. The 10th chapter of the Gospel of Mark says that people brought children to Jesus so that He could touch them. Jesus took them & placed them on his knee, & laid His hands upon them, & the Scripture says, "He blessed them." Jesus knew exactly what children need to feel loved & accepted. So He touched them & blessed them.

It's important to do that in our homes, too. When children are very small you can't communicate love with words because they don't understand words yet. But the best way to communicate love to a very small child is to demonstrate it by touching them, cuddling them, & holding them close. Jacob was 40 years old when Isaac touched him & kissed him to convey the blessing to him. And no matter the age, I think it is important to continue to communicate love & acceptance & affection in some meaningful way. Still to this day, I give my daughter a big hug when I see her or when she leaves. The first ingredient of the blessing was a meaningful touch.

The 2nd ingredient was a spoken message of affection & love. Listen as he blesses his son in the last part of vs. 27, "Ah, the smell of my son is like the smell of a field." Now I suppose that today's child would not consider it a compliment to be told, "You smell like a field. I just wanted you to know that." But to an old outdoorsman like Isaac, who thought he was speaking to Esau, the smell of a field about ready for harvest was a great smell. It was a compliment, a positive message that communicated his love & affection.

You see, too often parents are quick to criticize & remind children of their mistakes. "You dummy, why did you spill the milk?" "You're lazy." "You're too fat." Words of criticism that really don't accomplish much. All they do is cause a child to withdraw. I think there is room for constructive criticism. But it's more important to communicate love through words that say, "You're worth something. You're such a good little boy or girl. I'm glad that God gave you to us. You're better than any Christmas present I could ever receive. Father's Day is special just because you're here."

Those are words that communicate acceptance & love. And they need to be spoken over & over again, even when our children stumble & fall. Don't wait until the last minute to do it. The 3rd ingredient of the blessing was the attributing of a high value. Notice what Isaac says in vs. 28, "May God give you of heaven's dew & of earth's richness - an abundance of grain & new wine." He's saying, "You're special, so God will give you the best He has to give." We're constantly being told that we should teach our children to have a good, positive self-image, to build up their self-esteem. So it is important to teach the child, "You're so valuable that God even sent his Son into our world & died on the cross for you." Draw your value in that you are child of God. See yourself as God sees you.

But it's not just by words. We teach high value in a number of ways. A lot of times when a child comes, we're so busy. We have one eye on the TV & one eye on them, & we can't concentrate on what they're saying. So when a child comes to talk to you, turn off the radio or

TV set. Lay aside the newspaper, & look them in the eye. You'll see wonder after wonder when you look into a child's eyes, sparkling with excitement. They have so many things they're anxious to tell you. So look at them, & listen to what they have to say! That communicates value. "You're worth something. You're more important to me than the ballgame or newspaper. You're an extremely valuable part of our family. I'm glad God gave you to us. And whenever you have something you need to talk about, I'm here to listen to you."

The 4th ingredient was the picturing of a glorious future. In vs. 29 Isaac says to Jacob, "May nations serve you & peoples bow down to you. Be lord over your brothers, & may the sons of your mother bow down to you. May those who curse you be cursed & those who bless you be blessed." Isaac is helping him to raise his sights & see that his future is bright. That is an important responsibility of parents, isn't it?

That means that as fathers, we encourage our kids to be all they can be. Do whatever they do to the glory of God. If they are happy working at a factory job, and they are giving it their all that's great. I remember my mom saying, that she believed in me. Whatever I decided to do in life, she was behind me. When you think of it, our kids do have a glorious future. Every day, they have a Savior who walks with them and will never leave nor forsake them. They have the promise that all things will work together for good. They have a wonderful assurance that at the end of life's road, they will be in real place called heaven.

Now obviously Isaac was not the ideal father. He made his share of mistakes. He was supposed to give this blessing, as well as the blessing of the future Savior Jesus to his Son Jacob. And yet he wanted to give it to Esau instead, his favorite son. He directly disobeyed God when he played favorites. In addition, Jacob practiced deceit and treachery to get this blessing from his father. Two sinners. A Father and a son.

As I look at my fathering skills, and you look at yours today fathers, we have made mistakes. I still feel badly to this day, that when my daughter was growing up, I was married to the church 24-7. Church matters always came ahead of family. I did not spend that quality time that I should have with my daughter. Fathers, we have fallen short. But that is where the descendant of Jacob and Isaac has come to our rescue. Jesus was willing to put his life on the line for us. You might say, to take the bullet that should have hit our heart and killed us eternally. By His death on the cross, we who were incompetent fathers, are now viewed as competent and righteous fathers in the sight of God. Our sins of selfishness, harsh words, and uncaring spirit were paid for by Jesus. We now are part of a family that will be together forever.

So let's move forward today fathers. Past mistakes have been forgiven. Today, let's love our wives like Christ loved the church and gave himself for it. The best thing we fathers can do for our children is to love their mother. Today, let's be a spiritual example in the home. That means worship on Sunday is something important to us, and our kids see that in us. Like it or not, the example we set about God, & the church, & spiritual things will make an indelible impression upon them. Today Fathers, let's look to spend real quality time with our kids. Turn off the TV and halt that hobby or work project and spend time with your kids. As our Heavenly Father has been a blessing to us, "Be a Blessing to your children.!" Happy Father's Day.