

“CHAMPIONSHIP FATHERING”<sup>1</sup>  
 (John 5:19-20)  
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**[PROPS NEEDED: (#1) Father’s Day Video]**

[LaGrange First U.M.C.; 6-18-17]

--I--

1. **[WATCH VIDEO: "A Father's Day Tribute: Happy Father's Day"** from SermonSpice.com  
**(Time -- 2:04)]** What one word or phrase best describes *your* father? And why?

A--Whether present or absent, involved or disengaged, loving or apathetic, fathers leave an indelible mark on their children.

B--And unfortunately, for a growing number of children in America today, the mark left by their father is one best described by the words *absent, uninvolved, apathetic, or too busy*. For example, consider that...

1--1/3 of all children in America live apart from their biological father

2--20 million live in a home with NO father or father figure at all

3--And that nearly 40% of all children born today are born to single mothers.

C--So, as we celebrate and honor fathers, we must at the same time recognize the crisis of fathering that exists in America today, and that -- regardless of what kind of father *we* had growing up -- that crisis affects us all.

2. Now, think about your own father (or if you father was absent... someone who was *like a father* to you) -- what is one great thing he gave to you? And what thing(s) did you want most *from* him?

A--Well, the National Center for Fathering asked that question to several thousand men and identified 3 qualities that define what we're calling "***Championship Fathering.***"

B--These are basically three attributes of fathering that are essential in order to meet the deep felt needs of our children, and we find a biblical basis for them in Jesus' own description of the relationship with *his* father in today's scripture from John 5.

[(MG Service ONLY) Read Text from NRSV: John 5:19-20]

--II--

4. First of all, according to both the National Center of Fathering survey and today's scripture, "Championship Fathering" requires **LOVING**.

A--The first half of Verse 20 explicitly says that "*the Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing...*"

1--So, we have here the indication that loving our children (and their mother, I might add) involves not just *saying* we love them, but also *communicating* that love and commitment in clear, concrete ways (i.e., Vs. 20 says "*showing...*").

2--And we love them NOT for what they do (or don't do), but *simply because they're ours!*

B--And so, loving our children means that we...

1--...Take time to *BE* with them (really BE with them, responding to their emotional and physical needs).

2--It means that we love them through our *behaviors*: encouraging and affirming them, praising them for things they do well, verbally expressing affection for them, and taking time to listen (*really* listen) as they express concerns. <sup>2</sup>

C--And yet, scripture also teaches that loving our *children* ALSO means that we love and respect their mother (our spouse):

1--...To seek ways to strengthen our relationship with her, to respect her role and authority in our children's' lives,...

2--...To collaborate and be a team working together in child-raising, and even to learn how to put our children's needs ahead of potential relationship challenges.

D--Loving our children, you see, involves more than just feelings of affection about or towards them -- it involves doing, being, and showing love in clear and tangible ways.

5. But the second half of Verse 20 in today's scripture and the fathering survey both say that "Championship Fathering" also requires a second attribute: **COACHING / GUIDING**.

A--Proverbs 22:6 says "*Train children in the right way, & when old, they will not stray*" <sup>3</sup>

B--In other words, part of being an effective father (or effective parent, for that matter), is the lifelong shaping our children's character through loving *discipline* (e.g., "*coaching/guiding*"; what the Proverbs verse calls "*training*").

1--It may start out in highly directive manner when our children are young (e.g., "*Johnny, don't touch the stove because it's hot!*") but should evolve into more of a process of coaching/wise guidance when they're older (e.g., "*Here's how I handled that challenge when I dealt with something similar*").

2--Yet, however it's done, coaching/guiding means involving ourselves in our children's lives enough that we can not only know and appreciate *their* gifts, talents and needs, but also have insight into where *our* wisdom and experience can give them tools to help grow into Godly men and women.

6. And then finally, "Championship Fathering" also requires effective **MODELING**.

A--In Verse 19 of today's scripture, Jesus says that "*the Son can do... only what he sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, the Son does likewise.*"

1--In other words, the love, compassion, and forgiveness shown by Jesus while on earth was simply a reflection of that which was modeled by his heavenly Father.

2--And so it is with us in our earthly fathering -- we're to be models (i.e., daily examples) to our children of the values & behaviors we want to pass on to them.

B--Modeling means living with the constant awareness that those who look to us as their father (or to be a father figure in their lives) are influenced by what we *do* as much as (or even more than) by what we *say*.

1--It means we need to be consistent and predictable in our treatment of others, that we model effective crisis behavior, always try to set the right example for them to follow, & avoid words and behaviors that we don't want them learning.

2--And if we want them to grow up to be Godly men, then it also means we model behaviors and practices that grow our *own* spiritual lives as well: we attend worship regularly; we pray, read our Bibles, and do our devotions daily; and we discuss the Bible & spiritual & moral values with our children and their mother.

C--You see, the modeling of our *own* lives is one of the greatest influences we have on our children -- as Jesus did with *his* Father, they will do what they "see" us doing & being.

--III--

7. Now, of course, not everyone here still has children in their home. And more than half of us here are not even male! But effective fathering is not confined only to men, or to children in the home:

A--Fathers with grown children can still influence them as adults.

B--Those who're grandfathers can practice these qualities with our grandchildren.

C--If you're estranged from your father, maybe today is the day for you to begin letting God help you reach out to mend the hurt/pain of that broken relationship.

D--*ANY* man (father or not) can commit to being a positive male role model for one of the 20 million children in America who're living with no father or father-figure at all in their lives -- i.e., we can speak blessings and be a father-figure to the fatherless in our neighborhoods and schools. <sup>4</sup>

E--And women, you're not left out of this, either: you can encourage the men in your lives and under your influence either to recommit or to take up the challenge to be the fathers and father-figures that the children of our world need.

8. So... **LOVING, COACHING, and MODELING** -- three qualities that both scripture and culture tell us are needed for "*Championship Fathering*."

A--Hopefully you experienced these qualities from your father (or from a father-figure) while you were growing up.

B--But even if you didn't, it's not too late for us as men *and* women to demonstrate them either with our own children *or* with children around us who have no active father or father figure in their life, and who need a word of blessing and hope from us.

C--So today, as we seek to honor and call out the "*Championship Fathers*" of our lives, may we *all* commit to sharing God's love and grace with the children of our neighborhood, community and world.

- 9 [PRAYER and call to commitment]

#### **ENDNOTES:**

<sup>1</sup> The outline (and many points) of today's message are shared from a sermon outline of the same name from The National Center for Fathering on their website at [www.fathers.com](http://www.fathers.com).

<sup>2</sup> This was modeled by God the Father himself in Matthew 3:17.

<sup>3</sup> Read also Deuteronomy 6:6-7 that describes a type of "coaching/training/discipline."

<sup>4</sup> Read James 1:27; Psalm 68:5.