

LEAD THE CHARGE I Thessalonians 2:8-12

Happy Father's Day! There's a Father's Day card that reads... *"Dad, everything I ever learned...I learned from you...except one thing...the family car really will do 120 MPH!"*

My Son-in-law told me that he suggested to his family that they get him something for Father's Day that the whole family could get something out of. So they did...they got him a billfold.

How many of you remember the *I Love Lucy* show? It's still shown today on TV land and other stations. We remember Lucy for her comedy ... she was a hoot. Shortly before Lucille Ball's death in 1989, she did a remarkable interview with Merv Griffin. He asked her a very serious question: "Lucille, you've lived a long time on this earth and you are a wise person. What's happened to our country? What's wrong with our children? Why are our families falling apart? What's missing? Lucille Ball answered without hesitation ... "Dads are missing. Things are falling apart because Dad is gone." What a serious answer from a lady known for her humor.

What makes a great father? If I were to have you respond to that ... we would probably get several different answers ... but I suggest there is one answer that is the best one. **What makes a great father is a godly father!**

In our passage this morning ... **1 THESSALONIANS 2:8-12** ... **the Apostle Paul gives us 4 proposals for a godly father.**

Let's look at the text ... **1 THESSALONIANS 2:8-12** ... so we cared for you. Because we loved you so much, we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well. ⁹ Surely you remember, brothers and sisters, our toil and hardship; we worked night and day in order not to be a burden to anyone while we preached the gospel of God to you. ¹⁰ You are witnesses, and so is God, of how holy, righteous and blameless we were among you who

believed. ¹¹ For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, ¹² encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory.

You need to understand that this passage is not written by a father to his children ... it is Paul writing to the church in Thessalonica. But you also need to understand that when you pastor a church like Paul had the Thessalonian Church ... those people are like your children! So what has he to say in these 5 verses that is appropriate for us today!

The first proposal is ...

1 ... LEAD THE CHARGE WITH A GENUINE LOVE

The first proposal of a godly father is the ability to express genuine love ... to be able to share with your kids the fact that you love them! Notice what Paul says in **VERSE 8** of our passage ... **“We loved you so much.”** In the Greek those words expressed an intensity of love that never quits. Paul says, “It’s hard even to find words to express how much we really do love you.”

Expressing love does not come naturally for most American men, does it? I’m convinced that is the reason the Bible tells husbands to “love” their wives and to love their children ... because it is something that we have to work at ... something we have to learn how to do.

The Bible almost never tells wives to “love” their husbands because that usually comes naturally for them. Women are better at expressing love than men are! Instead, wives are told to “respect” their husbands, because sometimes that is hard to do.

Men, most of us have to learn how to love. That is true about the father and child relationship ... just like it is in any other kind of relationship! It does not come automatically!

A cartoon strip called “For Better or for Worse” once showed a dad coming into the room where his teenage daughter was sitting on the couch watching TV and munching on some popcorn. So he decided to sit down next to her and help himself to the popcorn.

As he sat there a little thought balloon appeared above his head ... “I remember when she was so young. I held her in my arms and loved her ... and it was wonderful. Now look at her. She’s all grown up and such a beautiful girl! I wonder what she would think if I held her like I used to and told her again how much I love her?” He finally concluded that she would be uncomfortable if he did that.

While he is thinking that his daughter was thinking “I wonder why Dad never hugs me anymore?”

Dads ... your kids want you to show that you love them. Hug your kids! Tell them that you love them! Make sure they know that for a fact!

2 ... LEAD THE CHARGE WITH A GOOD WORK ETHIC

The second proposal is an unselfish diligence. Paul says in **VERSE 9** of our passage ... **Surely you remember, brothers and sisters, our toil and hardship; we worked night and day in order not to be a burden to anyone while we preached the gospel of God to you.**

We have a responsibility as parents to teach a good work ethic to our children. And oftentimes, if our kids do not see a father who is a hard worker ... they will never learn to be a hard worker.

We teach a good work ethic in two ways:

- **First**, we teach by example, by just doing it and letting our children see that.
- **Secondly**, our children learn by doing. We give them the opportunity to do things & make their own mistakes & learn from the mistakes they make.

I am reminded of a story of a little boy who was not very artistic but was trying to draw a horse on a piece of paper. His father ... who was artistic ... watched while the little boy tried to draw. His father tried to help him. He started by giving him advice which really did not help much.

Finally, the father took the piece of paper, drew a beautiful horse and handed it back to his son ... saying “Here, that’s the way you do it.” The son turned and looked at his dad and said “But dad, I want to draw my own horse.”

Every child has to draw his or her own horse. And as parents ... we have to be wise enough to know when to step back and let them do that ... even if the end product does not look like a horse at all!

Dads ... have you ever given your son or daughter a job to do and they did not do it as fast as you wanted ... or maybe as good as you thought it should be done ... so you snatch the job away from them and do it yourself? What did your child learn? They learned one of two things ...

- either they learned that if they are slow-pokes or lousy workers that dad will do it for them
- or they learned that they cannot please their dad with their work.

Teach your child a good work ethic by showing them a good work ethic in your life and by allowing them to do a job ... without taking over!

3 ... LEAD THE CHARGE WITH A GODLY LIFE

The third proposal is genuine spirituality. In **VERSE 8** Paul said ... **Because we loved you so much, we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well.** And then in **VERSE 10** he says ... **You are witnesses, and so is God, of how holy, righteous and blameless we were among you who believed.**

Notice what he said in both of these verses ... “First of all, we preached the gospel of God to you. Secondly, you are witnesses of how we lived. In **VERSE 10** he goes on to say ... **We lived holy, righteous, & blameless lives among you. Our behavior was influenced by what we believed about Jesus.**”

God has commissioned you dads to be the godly leaders in the home. **And you're the spiritual leader of your home whether you realize it or not.** You will either lead your family closer to God or you will lead them further away.

David Murrow ... a researcher of men ... shared a recent study that showed how parents' religious habits were transmitted to their children. The bottom line is "In spiritual matters ... kids take their cues from Dad. If Dad does not go to church ... chances are very slim that the children will become

regular worshippers! If the kids see religion as "Mom's thing" ... they are more likely to be disenchanted. But if Dad leads by example ... children are 22 times more likely to become lifelong church members. On any given Sunday ... there are 13 million fewer men in church than women.

Dads ... you are the translation of the Bible that your kids understand!

You are the one that they read and follow! They watch you ... and they see what Christianity is all about! The problem is ... not every father is showing their kids what true Christianity is! Do you? If your kids lived just like you ... would they be living like Christ?

Are you the kind of father that carries his Bible to church ... looking very pious on Sunday ... and never pick the book up again until the next Sunday? Listen ... if that is true ... your kids are getting the message!

Are you the kind of dad that bows his head in prayer here at the church but never prays in front of your kids when you are in your home? Your kids are learning the lesson!

Are you the kind of father that tells your kids that God and His Kingdom is the most important thing to you on earth ... and then pass the plate by you without even thinking twice about financially supporting God's ministry? Your kids are watching ... and they are learning?

What kind of lessons are you teaching them? Are you showing them what a godly life is really like?

4 ... LEAD THE CHARGE WITH A POSITIVE INFLUENCE

Finally, there is the trait of positive influence. Paul writes in **VERSES 11-12** ... For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, ¹² encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory.

That is what a father does. He encourages and comforts and urges his children to live lives worthy of God. And it's all positive. But not every dad is a positive influence.

Listen to Brian's story ...

“I was just 12 years old when my Boy Scout troop planned a father-son campout. I was thrilled and could hardly wait to rush home and give my father all the information. I wanted so much to show him all I had learned in scouting, and I was so proud when he said he would go with me.

The Friday of the campout finally came, and I had all my gear out on the porch, ready to stuff it in the car the moment he arrived. We were all to meet at the school at 5 p.m. and car pool to the campground. But Dad did not get home from work until 7 p.m. I was frantic, but he explained that things had gone wrong at work and told me not to worry. We could still get up first thing in the morning and join the others. After all, we had a map. I was disappointed, of course, but decided to make the best of it.

First thing in the morning, I was up and had everything in his care while it was still getting light, all ready for us to catch up with my friends and their fathers at the campground. Dad had said we would leave around 7 a.m. and I was ready a half hour before that. But he did not even come out of his room until 9 a.m.

When he saw me standing in front with the camping gear, he finally explained to me that he had a bad back and could not sleep on the ground. He hoped I would understand and I would be a ‘big boy’ about it ... but could I please get my things out of the car, because he had several commitments he had to keep.

Just about one of the hardest things I have ever done was to go to the car and take out my sleeping bag, cooking stove, pup tent and supplies. And then, while I was putting my stuff away in the storage shed ... and when he thought I could not see ... I watched my father carry his golf clubs out and throw them in his truck and drive away to keep his ‘commitment’.

That is when I realized my dad never meant to go with me to the campout. I did not matter to him ... but his golfing buddies did.”

Dan Benson, in his book “The Total Man,” says that for every positive word that most dads say to their children, they say 10 negative ones. They’re really good at words like “Don’t” and “You can’t” and “Stop that,” and “No.” But they’re not very good at the positive words. Benson suggests that we could change the whole personality of our relationship with our children

if we just learned to be positive, and influence our kids in a positive way.

CONCLUSION ...

Fathers ... Paul spells out very specifically for us what it takes to be a good father ... if you give your children love ... if you give them a good work ethic ... if you display a godly life and if you are a positive influence ... then you have done your job well! Lead the charge men! Be the father God has called you to be.