Genesis 22:1-14, John 4:46-54

“Dad”

Well, happy Father’s Day to all of you men and those of you who play and have played a father’s role in your life. Today is our day to raise up and honor those men who are role models for those around them and to determine that we will follow suit. For Mother’s Day we saw Derborah and how she was the epitome of a Mom, today we get to see two dads who are dealing with providing for and protecting their children, sons to be specific and we ask the question what is our primary responsibility as dads. What is our primary role: it is actually that God will provide and allow him to do that and take control of our lives. Let’s see how we can learn that lesson in Scripture today.

**READ**

I feel like I need to give an update on week 2 of driving with Rachel. She really is doing well, but last Monday evening I had to use all of my fatherly skills while she was. We at the wheel. The girls had just finished a basketball game and it was around 10 at night, dark. Rachel was driving on one of those windy dark roads that are so prevalent around these areas. All of a sudden, a rabbit darted out in front of the car. I was so proud of her, she didn’t swerve suddenly into oncoming traffic. She didn’t slam on the brakes and create a dangerous situation, she just calmly gripped the wheel as we heard a slight thud on the left tire. We prayed for the 627 bunnies that were now fatherless and I had to console Rachel all the way home. I earned my dad stripes that evening.

Scripture is absolutely full of examples of fathers, but I am sorry to report that they don’t tend to be the best examples. You have Lot who offers his daughters to the men of the village, you have Jephthah who promises to God that if he gives him the victory the first person to greet him he would sacrifice, expecting servant to come out. Instead his daughter does and he follows through on his promise and sacrifices his daughter.

So to find a perfect or at least a very good example of a father in Scripture you have to weed your way through the not so good examples. We have found a couple of people today in Scripture who seem like good examples, although as we will see Abraham has a bit of a questionable side to him as he throws, or at least allows Ishmael, his son, to be thrown out in the wilderness to die. We have a very conflicted track record with fathers in Scripture.

This past week Creflo Dollar, who is a very well known evangelist and pastor of a megachurch, was in the news for beating his daughter. It made headlines and it reminds us that not even church workers or Christians in general are immune to bad parenting, or being bad fathers. There is a seminal work on the history of Missions with the focus on missionaries and their families and it is called from Jerusalem to Irian Jaya by Ruth Tucker. It gives the history of 2000 years of missionaries and their families. As I was reading the book it seemed like story after story told of missionaries completely neglecting their children while pursuing God’s work. But what does Timothy say about a church leader? Your work at home and with the children and with your wife has to take precedence over your work in the church.

Both of our Scriptures lift up two fathers whose focus tends to be on their children today, but in different ways. And as we make our way through these Scriptures the main theme that keeps popping up is the need that any parent or person should have, but since it is father’s day we are focusing on you dad, of seeing the foundation of their faith has to revolve around the truth that God provides and is in control.

Men, be honest, doesn’t the notion that someone else is in charge of you family, or in control of your family, doesn’t that fly right in the face of your instincts? I’m taking care of my family. If the floors need to be sanded, I’m going to do it, or if the bathroom floor needs to be ripped up and replaced, I’m all over that, because I can do it. If there is a crisis I’m going to take charge. We are all guilty of a Bob the builder mentality where we chant in unison: We can fix it, yes we can.

Both of these Scriptures you find fathers who have matured enough to realize that ultimately they are not in control, but God is, and their actions after that realization reflect a complete trust in God. That is where we need to be men.

Have you ever noticed that there is a tremendously disproportionate amount of women who attend church in comparison to men? Why is that? I would guess because men are raised with an ideal of self-sufficiency and self-provision that runs contrary to trusting and relying on God. So men, we have a bit of a disadvantage here. Culture is telling you that you can and should do it on your own and that it is all up to you and if you don’t do it then nobody will, and I’m telling you from this Scripture that it isn’t up to you at all, it is up to God.

Let’s look at Scripture. Abraham’s track record we went over, but you need to know how much he loves his son Isaac in order to understand the magnitude of what happens in these verses. Look at vs. 2 and you will catch a glimpse of who Isaac is to Abraham in God’s words: Take you son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love. Abraham loved Isaac so as we see the rest of the story there should be no doubt in your mind that he would do anything for him. But God tells him to sacrifice him, to kill him.

They walk for 3 days, about the same distance we walked our first day in Moscow. But this is a 100+ year old father and his teenage son. But the reason why Abraham is able to do this is found in vs.8, Abraham believes so strongly that God will provide. Why do you think that Abraham has not doubt about that? Because Isaac is a direct result of that provision. Abraham’s willingness to sacrifice Isaac displays his incredible trust in God.

One of my favorite scenes from this Scripture is found in vs.5 where he tells the help that he and his boy are going off to worship for a while. If God providing is what Abraham has to recognize as a dad, and if that is what we need to focus on too, then he does. But just think of what impact that whole experience had on Isaac. Once he recovered from the shock, I’m sure he was able to see someone in his dad to emulate.

I had a dad who loved Jesus. He loved all of his boys and his wife, my mom, unconditionally, and we all knew it. Some of my best memories involve basketball and tennis and loving to compete with him. But I also loved to hear him preach because it really seemed that his face glowed when he spoke about him from the pulpit. And not once was there ever a doubt in my mind that we would be taken care of because God provides. My dad used to say that to me all the time.

Not all of us have had dads that have taught us about God’s provision. Maybe they worked themselves into a frenzy trying to provide because they were never sure who would if they didn’t. One of the primary lessons we are to learn from our dads is that God provides. And if we didn’t learn that at a young age from our earthly fathers, then learn it today from your eternal father.

One of my most vivid memories of a father and their child was in Honduras. We were once again walking to a village that was unnamed. When we arrived a man came up to our nurse and said he needed her help. He had been praying that someone would come and help, and he had no idea we were supposed to come. He pointed to his daughter who was about 10 and she was just lying in the dirt immobile. Her eyes would blink periodically. The nurse looked at her for a moment and realized that she was completely over come with worms. She gave her medicine and the worms left her body. We left the scene with the dad holding his little girls in his arms and she was smiling. She hadn’t smiled for months. She was going to be okay.

In John we find a similar tender story but it contrasts somewhat with what we find with Abraham. Even though both stress the provision of God, this roman official has a different reality. Let’s look at John. Don’t get your hopes up. We are in chapter 4 today but only because it is a story dealing with a father. We’ll be right back in chapter 1 next week.

The setting is a man of power and importance has just walked 20 miles to see Jesus to have his son healed. We don’t know at all where his faith is. But his desperate crying out in desperation seen in vs. 9: Lord, come down before my little boy dies. How many of you have children well into their adulthood and they are still your little boy or your little girl? That is the literal translation here in the Greek, the only time that this diminutive is used: my little boy. You get this guy, he is absolutely desperate. He doesn’t know what to do so he goes and does something by seeking Jesus out and Scripture says begging Jesus to heal his little boy.

Jesus uses this as a teaching opportunity to the crowds who might be listening in. He speaks about signs and wonders and how that’s all they really wanted, but the dad here wants nothing of that. Jesus, whatever, just heal my little boy. Jesus says, okay, he’s healed. No mud, no magic words, no earthquake, no signs or wonders. Nothing. Can you give me some kind of warranty on that? The official turns around and the Scripture says in vs.50 that he believed in Jesus’ works.

We don’t know if he believed in Jesus, but he at least believed in Jesus’ words. I’ve done it, you can take that load off your shoulder, go home. For someone used to being in charge, this couldn’t be easy. In fact, most commentators say this is a parallel to Matthew 8 and Luke 7 where you have a centurion who is lifted up by Jesus as having extraordinary faith because of his trust in God that Jesus could and did heal his son.

You know, we all need that type of faith. But dads, we especially do. Because what happens as a result of the healing of his son and the belief of this man? Look at vs. 53, the entire household believed. Now women, I know very well you tend to hold more than your own in raising your family in the faith. But let me talk to the dads for a moment. Come on, huddle up here for a minute. You have to believe that God will provide for you. Stop being so stubborn in doing things your own way and not God’s way. Because the faith of you household depends on it. It depends on it. Amen.