

## **FATHER'S DAY**

### ***“Setting Your House In Order”***

#### **Deuteronomy 11:18--22**

There's a new book that hit the marketplace not long ago that every man in this auditorium needs to read. It's entitled ***“What God Does When Men Lead”*** and is sub-titled ***“The Power and Potential of Regular Guys.”***

God has a history of taking regular guys—guys who nobody ever thought of as leaders until God got a hold of them—and raising them up to do incredible things.

Think about **Gideon**. When the angel of the Lord came to him and said, ***“The Lord is with you, mighty warrior. Go in the strength you have and save Israel out of Midian's hand,”*** Gideon replied, ***“How can I save Israel? My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my family”*** (Judges 6:15 New International Version).

He was anything but a leader—the least of the least! Yet God raised him up to become a powerful military leader, a deliverer, one of the great Judges of Israel.

Think about **David**. When the prophet Samuel came to Bethlehem to the home of Jesse to anoint one of his sons to become the future king of Israel, Jesse didn't even invite David, his youngest son, to the party. He figured, ***“He's just a kid, a keeper of sheep, a ‘Common Joe,’ anything but a leader.”***

I mean David's older brothers were impressive looking, skilled, talented, charismatic. ***“Surely God has chosen one of them,”*** thought Jesse. But as he paraded all seven of the older sons before the prophet, Samuel just had to shake his head and say, ***“No, no, no. Not this one. Not that one. Not that one. Is this all of your sons? The Lord hasn't chosen any of these to be the leader of His people.”***

And Jesse says, ***“No, this isn't all. There's one more—the youngest, David—but he's out tending the sheep. I don't think he's the guy***

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*you're looking for.”*

But the prophet said, ***“Send for him. We won't start the party until he comes.”*** And when David walked into that room, the Lord whispered into the ear of the prophet Samuel and said, ***“He's the one. Anoint him.”***

He looked like anything but a leader. But years later as the psalmist reflected upon Israel's history, he wrote this about David. ***“He (God) chose David his servant and took him from the sheep pens; from tending the sheep he brought him to be the shepherd of his people Jacob, of Israel his inheritance. And David shepherded them with integrity of heart; with skillful hands he led them”*** (Psalm 78:71-72 New International Version).

Think of the prophet **Jeremiah**. When God spoke to Jeremiah and said, ***“Before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as prophet to the nations”*** (Jeremiah 1:5 New International Version), Jeremiah just shook his head and said, ***“No way!” Ah, Sovereign Lord, I do not know how to speak; I am only a child. You've got the wrong man. I'm not ready or equipped for this.”***

But God said to him, ***“Do not say, ‘I am only a child.’ You must go to everyone I send you to and say whatever I command you. Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you and will rescue you, declares the Lord”*** (Jeremiah 1:7-8 New International Version).

Jeremiah took God at His Word and become one of Israel's most passionate and powerful prophets. God has this history of taking regular guys and raising them up to do incredible things. That's what I want to talk about this morning on this **Father's Day**, June 15, 2008.

I believe every man has the potential to be a godly leader who shapes the world for good. Now let me encourage you to not shy away from this word “leader.” We have a tendency to do that. We're a lot like Gideon and Jeremiah and Moses.

We tend to think, ***“Well, God, I'm not a leader. I'm not eloquent. I'm***

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*not an up-front kind of person. I'm not smooth and glib and persuasive. I'm just one of those persons in the crowd. I'm a pack mule. I don't soar—I just kind of plod along. I don't have a lot of power or prestige or prominence. What difference can I make?"*

I want you to listen to how **John Quincy Adams**, our nation's 6<sup>th</sup> president, has defined leadership. He wrote, *"If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more, and become more, you are a leader."*

I believe God calls each one of us to be a leader—a leader in our homes, a leader in the work place, a leader in the church, and a leader in the community.

Listen to what God inspired **Moses** to say to the men of his day. Please take your Bibles and turn to the book of **Deuteronomy**, the **11<sup>th</sup> chapter** and we are going to be reading with the **18<sup>th</sup> verse**. This is kind of like Moses' farewell speech to the people of his day.

He had been their leader for 40 years. He had been the one who had helped deliver them out of slavery in Egypt, who had helped them to be victorious over all of their enemies, who had led them in battle, who had guided them through the wilderness, who had pleaded their cause before God, and who led them to the very shores of the Promised Land.

He was getting ready to turn the reins of leadership over to Joshua, but before he does that he pours out his heart and his mind and his soul to the people whom he has loved so much. He wants them to be successful and so he gives them some final words of instruction before handing the reins of leadership to Joshua.

So listen to what He says.

**Fix these words of mine in your hearts and minds; tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Teach them to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.**

**Write them on the door frames of your homes and on your gates, so that your days and the days of your children may be many in the land that the Lord swore to give your forefathers, as many as the days that the heavens are above the earth.**

**If you carefully observe all these commands I am giving you to follow—to love the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways and to hold fast to him, then the Lord will drive out all these nations before you, and you will dispossess nations larger and stronger than you.**

Deuteronomy 11:18-23 New International Version

Moses, speaking under inspiration and the anointing of the Holy Spirit, was calling for every man in the whole nation to be a spiritual leader in his home and in his community and in the whole assembly of believers.

You know, we just love to point out from time to time the failures of the leaders in our nation. We talk about a "leadership vacuum" in government and in business and in education and in the religious world. We say, *"Where are the Abraham Lincoln's and the John F. Kennedy's and the Bo Shembechler's and the D. L. Moody's? We need some guys with visions and integrity to get things back on track in this world!"*

But, listen, God's plan for the message of Christ to be communicated to a lost and dying world is to be carried forth by ordinary followers of Jesus Christ. Jesus said to His disciples, common ordinary men, fishermen, laborers, unschooled and educated, for the most part: *"Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you"* (Matthew 28:19-20 New International Version).

*"But, Jesus, we're just a bunch of ordinary guys. We're not leaders. Shouldn't You be talking to people in positions of leadership and power and authority? Shouldn't you be talking to the High Priests and the scribes and the scholars—people with all of this education and skill and standing?"*

But Jesus says, in essence, *"No, I'm talking to you. My Kingdom will rest upon the shoulders and the commitment and the response of*

*common, ordinary followers.”*

So here is my question for every man who is present in this auditorium on this Father’s Day: **Is your house in order?** Have you responded affirmatively to God’s call to be a leader in your home and in your church and in your community?

*There’s an interesting story in Scripture involving Hezekiah, the King of Judah, and Isaiah, one of the great prophets of the Old Testament—the man who wrote more prophecies concerning the coming of the Messiah than any other prophet.*

Let me read the story to you from Scripture. I’m reading from **Isaiah 38**, the **1<sup>st</sup>** verse. **“In those days Hezekiah became ill and was at the point of death. The prophet Isaiah, son of Amoz went to him and said, ‘This is what the Lord says: Put your house in order, because you are going to die; you will not recover”** (New International Version).

*Now how would you like it if the preacher came to your house some day and gave you this message from God? It would cause you to think, wouldn’t it? **Is my house in order?** It caused Hezekiah not only to think but to pray. The Bible says, **“Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and prayed to the Lord”** (Isaiah 38:2 New International Version).*

He prayed that his life might be extended and that he would recover from this illness...and God answered his prayer and sent the prophet Isaiah back into Hezekiah’s house to tell him that God had seen his tears and heard his prayer and was going to add 15 years to Hezekiah’s life. And, He did!

It’s one of the great stories in Scripture of answered prayer. Well, God has not given me that message to deliver to any of you, so you can relax. But I do think that message is so pertinent for us to reflect upon this Father’s Day – **Is my house in order?** *Am I being the spiritual leader God has called me to be...in my home, in my church and in my community?*

At the heart of all of this is this question about the relationships in our lives. **How is it with our relationships in life?** **First of all,**

**relationship with God; second, our relationship with our family and others; and then third, our relationship with the things of life, our possessions.** *Are we using the things we have to truly enrich the lives of others?*

I believe God’s call to men to be spiritual leaders involves at least three things and I just want to set them before your eyes and your minds this morning before we close.

**First of all, God Calls Us To Know Him In A Personal And Intimate Way.** God created in every human heart a longing for spiritual intimacy with Him. That’s what Saint Augustine meant when he composed that immortal little prayer – **“You have made us for Yourself, O God, and the heart of man is restless until it finds rest in You.”**

The first priority in life is to know God and to live in a loving, trusting, intimate relationship with Him. And God has promised that those who seek Him with all their heart will find Him and know Him.

Let me give you a verse of Scripture to hold on to—especially for those of you who are seekers. Maybe you’re not sure about what it really means to follow Jesus. Maybe you’re not sure about the Bible and absolute truth and what it really means to be born again. But your heart has been drawn to God. You’re searching and seeking and trying to find your way, but you just have all of these questions about God and salvation and Christianity.

Let me give you a precious verse of Scripture for you to take home with you today. Hold to it! Claim it! Trust in it! Here’s the verse – **1<sup>st</sup> Chronicles 28:9.** **“If you seek him, he will be found by you”** (New International Version).

First of all, God calls us to know Him in a personal and intimate way. *Do you really know Him as the Savior of your life?*

**Second, God Calls Us To Submit To His Authority And Be Conformed To His Image.** God’s Word says to us in **Romans 8:28,** **“We know that God causes everything to work together for the good of**

*those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them.*

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*For God knew his people in advance, and he chose them to become like his Son, so that his Son would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters”* (Romans 8:28-29 New Living Translation).

As we grow in our knowledge of Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit begins to work in us to restore His image in our lives—that image that has been marred by sin.

At the very time of creation, God said, *“Let us make man in our image, in our likeness,”* (Genesis 1:26 New International Version) and He did. The Bible says, *“So God created man in his own image; in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them”* (Genesis 1:27 New International Version).

But because we, as human beings, began listening to the wrong voices in life—to the voice of Satan, the serpent, the Evil One, instead of to God—sin entered into this world and into our lives and into our hearts and into our minds so much so that this image of God has become marred and stained and tarnished and distorted.

I mean apart from Jesus we are nothing like God. He is compassionate and gracious but we are critical and judgmental. He is merciful and forgiving but we are calloused and vindictive. He is patient and faithful but we are impetuous and wavering. He is gentle and kind—*“a bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out,”* says the Bible in **Isaiah 42:3** (I like the way the *New Living Translations* puts it, *“He will not crush those who are weak or quench the smallest hope”*—but we are harsh and insensitive.

So when we come to Christ, God through the Holy Spirit begins to gradually conform us to the character and image of Jesus. That’s what we’ve been talking about the last 6 weeks. God’s plan is to make us holy, to make us like Jesus, to conform us to the image of Christ.

God says, *“Be holy, because I am holy”* (1<sup>st</sup> Peter 1:16 New International Version) and we begin to understand that we can never do that in our strength

or power. It can only happen as we submit ourselves completely and fully to God’s authority over our lives.

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*“God, it’s not what I want—it’s what You want. God, I can’t run my life successfully, I’ve tried. You run my life. You guide my steps. You set the agenda. Not my will but Thine be done.”*

Here’s the second important part of being a true spiritual leader in our homes and in our churches and in our communities—God calls us to submit to His authority and be conformed to His image. Let me ask you: *Do you really know Him as the Lord of your life?*

**Third, God Calls Us To Be Involved In His Work.** *What is His work?* To be involved in the redemption of His creation! Listen to the words of **Ephesians 2:10**. *“For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do”* (New International Version).

We live in a fallen world and God has called us to help Him reclaim the territory held by the enemy and to be involved in the redemption of all creation. God wants you to be involved in His work as spiritual leaders.

There are people all around you who are broken, who are hurting, who have fallen victim to Satan’s lies, who are spiritually lost. We have been *“created in Christ Jesus to do good works”*—to reach out to the lost, to bring hope to the hopeless, to be the *“aroma of Christ”* in the midst of all the stench of evil and corruption.

Let me ask you, dad: *Are you actively involved in His work?* Are you being the spiritual leader at home you need to be? Are you being the spiritual leader in the life of the church that you need to be? Are you being a spiritual leader at work, in your neighborhood, with the other fathers on your son’s or daughter’s little league team?

God does incredible things when men really lead. He takes regular guys and raises them up to do incredible things. ***Is your house in order? If not, what a better time than on this Father’s Day to commit yourself to really set your house in order?***

