

Psalm 71
Father's Day 2023
June 18, 2023

Fathering for the Long Haul /A Father's Job Description

Main Point: This psalm is a great help for fathers. It gives something of a father's job description. Fathers have great power—like the power of a long gentle rain—to point their children towards Jesus (vs. 18-19).

SI:

It is a personal lament
David has faced and is facing many troubles, many hard things

How I got here for a Father's Day theme. Big picture – David looking back to his childhood, and forward to his old age.

Intro:

What do children need to hear from their fathers?
That life is hard
That God is a Rock of Refuge (1, 3,
That they can't save themselves (throughout)
That God's way is upside-down to the world's (vs. 7-11)

The job description of a father –
To keep the main thing, the main thing. God and His rescue plan are the main thing.
That's what David does here. He tells it like a gentle rain. He goes back again and again, letting it slowly sink in, going to God who has rescued, redeemed, given him hope and assurance.
This is not everything on a father's job description, but it is the main thing.

So lean, laugh, and tell.

Lean (v. 6) –

Some hesitation as a father myself – I don't do any of these like I should, and neither do any of us, this is part of the lean.

State the obvious – this is a prayer – what does it mean to pray? I'm weak. I need help. God is strong. Let's go to Him.

“O God, O my God” 11 times. This isn't OMG as a shout of shock or a hashtag for attention, this is worship, throwing yourself onto the only refuge that can rescue.

Rock/refuge/fortress/rescuer – I think this may be why life is so hard for believers. So that God can prove to us that He alone is all we need and that He alone is all sufficient. How did David learn this? How did he learn to lean?

Through the hardness of life.

Through the attacks of his enemies.

Through v. 20 – “You have made me see many troubles and (bitter) calamities”

So fathers – give yourself permission to learn through failure instead of running from any possibility of failure, and give your kids this permission, too.

Why? B/c we learn to lean when we learn to fail. You, your personhood, your soul is not a failure... you just bumped up again against the fallen world – you will fail at things... I mean, some of the most highly paid people in the world are MLB baseball players and if they succeed 30% of the time (bat .300) at the plate they are superstars. They have learned to accept failure as a big part of the job.

This is where what Jesus has done for us makes a soul-level, emotional level difference. He was perfect in order to earn God’s favor for all those who trust in Him.

And He, although perfect, willingly put Himself in your place to suffer the penalty for your failures.

If you allow His record to become yours, then – wait a minute, what? – Jesus’ record, Jesus’ perfect obedience can become mine? - yes, this is what faith means – if you lean on His record, then you will be forever inoculated against the sweet poison of moralism! Wait, what?

Moralism is the anti-gospel of “be a good person b/c it’s all up to you, and you can earn your own standing with God.”

Everyone has something on which they lean – whether self or something outside of self that offers comfort, peace, assurance, freedom – this is the human condition.

Fathers, fathering for the long haul means demonstrating and modeling what it is to lean on God and to see Him provide – especially in the midst of enemy attack.

ILLUS of Matt 14

Jesus sends the disciples on ahead on their boat on the Sea of Galilee

A strong wind is against them all night

Jesus appears, walking on the water toward them.

Peter – If it’s really you, call me out on the water with you.

Ok, come on out.

But when he saw the wind, he was afraid, and started to sink. He cried out, Lord save me, and Jesus immediately grabbed him and steadied him, asking him, ‘why did you doubt?’ This is again Jesus proving that He is to be trusted, especially in the storms of life.

ILLUS of losing my job one time when we had 3 kids and 1 on the way and the pressure of providing for my family – my friend who said, who provides for your family? You? Who ultimately cares for your family way more than you? And He did, in remarkable ways.

Fathers feel the responsibility of caring for and providing for their family – but who ultimately cares for and provides for your family? And how does He do that?

By you leaning hard on Him.

So lean again, go again, and again, to the Rock, the Refuge, the Fortress.

When you lean like this, you will respond like David – laughter/ praise

2. Laugh / Praise (which leads to tell v. 14-15)

Laugh. (v. 6 again, v. 23) / Praise –

6 times David says he praises God.

Praising is rejoicing.

You praise what gives you joy, comfort, relief, rest.

When what you are leaning upon gives you what you are longing for, you can't help but praise it. When your team wins the championship, you give all the more time and money to invest in praising your team!

So fathers, laugh. Laugh as praise, wonder, joy overcoming you.

This is kicking in the teeth the enemies of shame and derision. (see v. 7)

I love v. 7 (portent: a sign of something ominous, terrible)

Spurgeon quote – “The believer is a riddle, an enigma puzzling the unspiritual; he is a monster warring with those delights of the flesh, which are the all in all of other men...

Few understand us, many are surprised at us. Here is the answer to our riddle. If we are strong, it is in God. If we are safe, our refuge shelters us; if we are calm, our soul has found her stay in God.”

So vs. 8 >

David in awe, wonder, laughing wonder, how can this be? Can you ask that God would get you there? That He would show you His power that He uses to bring blessing to His children who trust in Him?

Laughter brings lightness to life and to troubles.

Parenting is hard.

Laugh at yourself, your mistakes, your kids mistakes. It is so satisfying when I attempt Dad jokes and I get the eye roll from my kids.

Laugh instead of condemn. Laugh instead of scorn. Validate their fallenness by acknowledging it through laughter instead of feeding it through scorn and shame and ‘do better-ness.’ Laugh at the ridiculousness of the good news and how it still seems too good to be true. How can this be? SLOW (see espec v. 19)

Rejoice in the Lord, always. This is a way to do that.

As you laugh, as you praise God and His mighty works on your behalf, then you will tell.

3. Tell (v. 15, v. 24) (espec in comparison to what you deserve and have earned)

Tell >

v. 15 > To tell of the mighty acts of God means to tell of His way of making the world right again, of how reconciliation happens, of how purpose in life is found, of how contentment is found, peace, assurance, accomplishment.

These guys in vs. 10-11 are tapping into the lie – the same lie told by the serpent in the Garden and that we are all still susceptible to... that God has forsaken you, doesn't love you, doesn't want what is best for you, and that His law is burdensome and against your freedom.

How to defeat the lie?

Keep telling the truth – yes, life is hard, yes you are broken and can't fix yourself, and yes, Jesus is that powerful and good and strong to overcome even death... so guess what? This is what it means to be a Christian – this is normal

Go to what your Father has done for you through Christ. God has given everything He has – His own Son to die for us and His Spirit to live within us to remind us. And this is the job of fathering.

A real-world example: your kid messes up big time. The temptation to shame himself is super strong. How could you do that? What he needs first from his father is a hug. I love you anyway and always. Nothing you could do could ever change that. My love for you is not dependent upon your behavior, but on the fact that you are my child. Now, Dads are good at fixing things, so... what happened? How did this happen? What can we learn from this?

If we don't go back again and again to what God has done through Jesus and major on the healing that He purchased for us that is ours by grace through faith, then we default to moralism and do better next time and that drives them to idols for comfort and purpose.

Tell of your own story – v. 18 - kids love to hear stories of when you were a kid... Of your own struggles to believe, of the myriad of things God has brought you through (v. 20) and especially,

Tell your own faults – one of the most powerful gifts we can give to anyone, especially our own families, is the gift of repentance. I'm sorry. I messed up. I hurt you. I need Jesus, too.

David pointing to Christ – how? All those things that cause you to cry out for help? All those things in life that are hard? All of those that tempt you to shame yourself, call

yourself stupid, feel like you are alone, or to go to your own resources? Jesus faced all of that, too. And He leaned perfectly on His Father, but His Father ended up abandoning Him. So that He will never abandon us. Jesus was left utterly and completely alone on the cross. He was forsaken for us. And then – v. 20 - Jesus was resurrected for us.

How are you telling? Not just on Sundays. Not just quoting the preacher. Tell it like a long gentle rain – like David here, over and over, consistent, calm, easy to drink in. This is fathering for the long haul.

Conc: So when you are confronted again with the truth that life is hard, when you mess up, when your kids mess up, remember that is God's way to lead you to lean harder, to laugh more, and to tell again the glorious good news that Jesus' perfection is yours, your penalty was His, and His Resurrection is and will be yours forever. This is fathering for the long haul.

Bene: Jude 24-25