

Joshua 24:14-18
James 1:19-25

June 19, 2022

Father's Day
God's Toolbox

Our lives are surrounded by tools... all kinds of tools. You've got hammers, pliers, punches, wrenches, sockets, saws, screwdrivers, and so on. There's spatulas, knives, scrubbing pads, paint brushes, and more. All great tools. Then there's power tools, like skil-saws, drills, lathes, table saws, planer-joiners, routers (I don't mean for Wi-Fi), welders, cutting torches (the "hot wrench"), grinders ... there's vacuum cleaners, dishwashers, washers & driers, irons, microwaves, ovens, and stuff like that. There are some really big tools like excavators, drills for wells and mines, cranes, bulldozers, tractors & combines. All these tools and more helped to build this great nation of ours. Tools of all kinds were used to build many wonders of the world: [the Golden Gate Bridge, the Tokyo Skytree or the Canton Tower, the Nurek Dam in Tajikistan or the Xiaowan Dam in China.]

The computer is one of the most common tools today and I suppose we could call our smart phone a tool. The computer is the tool I use to create the sermons that help people sleep on Sunday mornings.

Reflecting the One in whose image we are made, humans devise tools for various tasks and create new tools to meet new tasks. Our heavenly Father made us to be thinking beings, with a freedom to choose Him; able to make decisions according to His image implanted in us. We don't see ourselves as tools; we create and use tools!

Tools For Someone Or Something

Yet, in another sense each one of us is used by someone or something, though we don't always recognize it. Bob Dylan's song, "You Gotta Serve Somebody" ...
But you're gonna have to serve somebody, yes indeed
You're gonna have to serve somebody,
It may be the devil or it may be the Lord
But you're gonna have to serve somebody.

Many think they're masters of their own fate – free and independent of anyone or anything. I say: if you're not living for the Lord, you're really living for _____ that other one mentioned in the song. Here's the good news: if you're conscious of this fact, you can choose who you will serve. When you choose to become God's implement, you will fulfill your life purpose and be fully alive and fully free... because God made us for that. *Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labor in vain*, Psalm 127:1. Are you building the right things the right way in your life or are you wasting your time?

Instruments of Our Heavenly Father

It is noteworthy, as we celebrate Father's Day, that Jesus called God "Abba" - Father - Papa. This is no accident. He understood Himself as "the Son" of His heavenly Father. He consulted His Father and served the purposes of His Father. He knew where He was going and what He was supposed to do on this earth. Human fatherhood has Him as an example, a mentor and model, to follow. God, our heavenly Father, is a sure and certain guide. That is why it so important to know God.

We, as men and fathers, have a sure and certain mission on this earth. Do you know where you are going and what your purpose is, on this earth. You fathers, and men, what will you leave behind? I'm convinced God intends us to live up to the image He has planted in us and expects each of us to grow into more than what we are today. He can use us to further His kingdom.

We all have talents, aptitudes, experience, training, and education that make us useful workers for family, community, and God. Let me just make two points here:

- 1) God wants you to be in His tool chest, serving His purpose.**
- 2) God can use your skills, talents, and aptitudes for His great and eternal purposes.**

That doesn't mean He simply blesses whatever you're doing. Men are easily tempted to ambition, with great designs for their careers and fortunes, that seem bigger than God's work. The key to what you're doing is purpose and outcome. Is the result honoring God, even as you provide for your family, or help others? Is it helping to fulfill God's purpose to redeem humanity? Sometimes God sees that you can do something else even though you don't see how you can. Sometimes you wake up and realize you're not doing something that God made you for.

Made To Be Mentors

Whether you are a biological father or not, you have a role as a father figure in this church. "Men need a sacred role, one only they can fulfill. Fortunately, God gave men such a role. God calls every man to become a spiritual father... It's a role that's not well understood because, like the Trinity, it's more implied than spelled out in Scripture. But the example of Jesus and the apostle Paul are clear; spiritual fathering is the only way to bring believers to maturity in Christ." Part of Jesus' call was to be a spiritual father to the Twelve Disciples. Paul was called to do likewise with Timothy and Titus, whom he called his sons. The spiritual father is a living example for others to emulate. Jesus imitated his Father, and provides us a model to imitate and men need other men to model themselves after. The spiritual father, is more than a teacher, but also one who is willing to walk alongside other men and help them grow to maturity in Christ; while also being courageous and bold where

necessary. Men, we are to help people grow in Jesus' likeness. (Jesus is the Lion of Judah – let's not de-claw him!)

Many churches suffer when men do not understand this or live by it. Men are too often absent from church and Christian discipleship. Yet men, as well as women, have the responsibility to pass on to succeeding generations the truth about God our Creator, who revealed Himself to us in Jesus, who redeemed us from the darkness of sin. We are to help others build a firm foundation for life, not just so they can succeed in worldly terms, but so that they can also succeed on God's terms. This begins with our children. The results are eternal. *The father of the righteous will greatly rejoice; he who fathers a wise son will be glad in him, Proverbs 23:24.*

Men: we are influencers and role models, looking to the ultimate model of fatherhood, our Heavenly Father. Those who didn't have good fathers as they were growing up, can still look to God and godly men as examples to emulate

There is no greater legacy for a father to pass onto his children than his faith in Christ. Christianity is a matter of infinite seriousness, far more serious than economics or politics. Christianity can give the true initiation into the mysteries of life and death, of heaven and hell, of spiritual warfare and the destiny of the human race. Long before psychological and sociological studies, statistics and surveys, confirmed it, our Christian traditions have taught us that a father's guidance to his son or daughter is indispensable. Men can be taught to be men only by other men. Girls can be taught how a good man relates to women by good men. Men must show boys that Christianity is not a threat to masculinity, but a fulfillment of manhood and responsible fatherhood. Men must show girls that their heavenly Father loves them unreservedly and has a purpose for their life. Christian fathers should instruct their sons and daughters by word and deed. *Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says, James 1:22.*

Fathers and grandfathers, be regular in your church attendance, read your Bible and learn from it, this is how you provide a living example for your children and grandchildren. Surveys over the years have shown that fathers are the number one influence in the family for church attendance and participation, for both the boys and girls. After Jesus washed the feet of His disciples – doing the job of a servant – he said to them, *I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you... Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them, John 13:15,17.*

Unless you plan your life and set priorities, you'll be pressured by what other people think is important. Every day you either live by priorities or by pressures; there is no other option. Remember our priority in God's plan is to pass on the faith, a task of eternal significance. In each and every encounter we have with children, be they in our own family or our church's family, we plant eternal seeds. Let me share one example:

Crawford Loritts, Jr. served for 15 years as Sr. Pastor of Fellowship Bible Church, Roswell, Georgia. He is the host of two national radio programs, "Living a Legacy" (weekend) and "Legacy Moments" (daily). Crawford is President and Founder of "Beyond Our Generation" and is committed to encouraging and helping to shape the next generation of Christian leaders.

And, just as important, Crawford Loritts, Jr. is a loving husband and father. In all these things, Crawford Loritts, Jr. is upholding a legacy of love and honor passed down through many generations.

Crawford, Jr.'s great-grandfather was Peter Loritts. Peter was born into slavery over a hundred years ago in North Carolina. After the Emancipation Proclamation, Peter and his family began farming a small plot of land. Although Peter couldn't read or write, he loved the Bible, and he memorized the passages his children and grandchildren read to him. He also loved his family. He taught his children the value of integrity and faith. He held strong, positive values, and he made sure to pass those on to his children.

Peter's son, Milton, also became a man of character and integrity, and he raised his own son, Crawford, in these values. Crawford learned that quitting, going back on your word, and the like, were not acceptable in his family. Crawford grew up in Ku Klux Klan country, and he knew what bigotry and discrimination were like. Still, he learned not to hate others, but to treat others as individuals. He also learned to do his best at everything, no matter what the obstacles or prejudice that faced him.

Crawford passed these values on to his son Crawford, Jr., and today Crawford, Jr. is amused to catch himself sounding exactly like his father. He teaches his four children the same time-tested values his father taught him. He is a model of Christian manhood to his children, just as his father, grandfather, and great-grandfather were before him. And it is most likely that his children and grandchildren and great-grandchildren will carry on this blessed legacy for many generations to come.

Choose Today

As this example shows, dads and men: our greatest legacy is the values and faith we pass on to the generations that come after us ...choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve... We must be consistent in our choice of whom to serve. God wants us in His toolbox, and really that's the only place we'll do our best. We need to be consistent in taking in His Word – so that we're always following the correct blueprint as we build. How long does this take? It depends on you; the sooner you get started, the better. It's like building a house ... you do it board by board.

Whose tool are you and whom will you serve? Will it be someone or something, or will it be the One who made you for something - something big and important? God is reconciling the world to Himself, let's ask God to guide and

strengthen us to do our part. Put your life in the hands of God and you will build the greatest project ever. You'll build a life that lasts forever.

... choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve... But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord, Joshua 24:15.