

# Lessons from disaster Dads

Message for Sunday, June 15, 2014  
by Bruce Fraser

**Scripture:** Various passages from Genesis, Judges and more

## Explanation before the Scripture reading:

We are going to read Psalm 51 in the Bible. It's a prayer, written by David, the King of Israel. He had just murdered a man, so that he could take that man's wife for himself. It was a secret, and he thought he could get away with it; but God made sure that the truth came out.

David wrote this prayer immediately after that. He was ashamed of himself. He confessed his sin to God, and asked God to forgive him. God did forgive him, although there were still serious consequences for his crime.

**Children's Message:** (following the reading of Psalm 51)

Briefly remind children of the Scripture: King David had murdered someone. He was guilty of a terrible sin, and felt awful about it. He prayed for God's forgiveness.

I read about a father who punished his 3-year-old daughter for wasting Christmas wrapping paper. The family didn't have much money, and when he saw that she had used a whole roll of that expensive gold wrapping for a single present under the Christmas tree, he was furious and sent her to her room for the night.

The next morning, the little girl brought the gift to her father and said, "This is for you, Daddy." He was embarrassed by his overreaction the night before; but he blew up again when he found that the box was empty. He yelled at her, "Don't you know that when you give someone a present, there's supposed to be something inside of it?"

The little girl looked up at him with tears in her eyes and said, "Oh Daddy, it's not empty. I blew kisses into the box. All for you, Daddy."

The father was crushed. He put his arms around his little girl, and he begged her forgiveness.

That man kept that gold box by his bed for years. Whenever he was discouraged, he would take out an imaginary kiss and remember the love of the child who had put it there.

I tell you that story just for this one thing: we all make mistakes. Dads, Moms, pastors, school teachers, and yes

even children – we all make mistakes. The key is that we ask forgiveness, and start over again.

**Message:** "Lessons from disaster Dads"

## 1) How not to be a Dad (or a Mom)

In my personal devotions for the last few months, I've been reading in the Old Testament. One thing has struck me: most of these people were complete disasters as parents! Over and over again I read of dysfunctional families where there is favouritism, pride, lying, scheming, adultery, fighting and even murder.

Here are a few examples. See if you can match the fathers with their descriptions.

- A) Noah (Genesis 9:20-25)
- B) Abraham (Genesis 16:1-5; 20:2)
- C) Isaac (Genesis 25:27-28; 27:1-45; 33:3-4)
- D) Jacob (Genesis 37:2-35)
- E) Jephthah (Judges 11:30-40)
- F) David (2 Samuel 13:1-29; 15:1-10; 16:22; 18:33)

- 1) This father especially loved one son, while the mother favoured the other son. The brothers grew up as rivals. When one cheated the other out of his inheritance, they became bitter enemies, and didn't reconcile for twenty years.
- 2) In thanks for a great God-given victory, this man vowed that he would sacrifice as a burnt offering the first thing he saw when he got home. When he returned, the first thing out of his house was his little girl – his only child – running to welcome him home.
- 3) Although God promised to give this man and his wife a child, they doubted God's word, and took matters into their own hands. The wife got her husband to have sex with her female servant. When the servant became pregnant, the two women started feuding. Their sons carried on the feud, and their descendants still do to this day.
- 4) This father lavished beautiful gifts on his favourite son, while doing little for his other children. The other sons hated their brother so much they plotted to murder him, but finally sold him as a slave.
- 5) This man's son found him drunk, naked, and passed out. When Dad found out the son had made fun of him, he placed a curse on the son's entire family.
- 6) This king's son raped his half-sister, who was a daughter of the king; but the king did nothing about it. Another son, who was spoiled and incredibly vain, murdered that brother, stole the kingdom from

his father, and slept with his father's concubines (raised the kids really well, eh?).

[Instead of me giving you the answers, you can look up those Bible passages yourself, and see how many you got right.]

Wow! All this is in the Bible – a book we read to learn morals and values!

## 2) Hope if you've already messed up

Also interesting is that all these people are considered heroes of the faith: they are all listed in Hebrews 11, the honour roll of the Bible. David is called the greatest king Israel ever had, and is described as someone “after God's own heart.” Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are revered as the founders of the nation of Israel. And yet every single one of them did things to wreck the lives of their children.

And perhaps the most interesting of all is that God was able to use these people, despite their flaws, to build a nation through whom he would bless the whole world.

I take that as a sign of hope for all of us. There is not one person here who has never made a mistake. The Bible says:

**Romans 3:23, New International Version:**  
For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

There may be some of us here who have made terrible mistakes, with devastating consequences. If that's you, I want you to know two things.

### a) You can find forgiveness in Jesus Christ

That verse above continues:

**Romans 3:24-25, Today's English Version:**  
But by the free gift of God's grace all are put right with him through Christ Jesus, who sets them free. God offered him, so that by his blood he should become the means by which people's sins are forgiven through their faith in him.

No one is beyond hope. God loves you, just as you are; that's what grace is all about. God is ready to forgive you, and to welcome you back to him. All you need to do to receive that forgiveness is to commit your life to Jesus Christ.

### b) It's never too late to change

God offers us a second chance. And a third, a fourth, a four hundredth...

The Bible says,

**Romans 1:16, New International Version:**  
I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes.

When we allow God's power to work in us, amazing things can happen. I have heard people tell of their marriages restored – even after a bitter divorce, parents and children reunited after being estranged for decades, enemies reconciled. Prayer is the key: lots and lots of prayer. And then acting in faith, by reaching out to that other person. Once you've experienced the miracle of God's grace in your life – his amazing love – you find you have more than enough to spread to others.

It may be that the other person is no longer around: has died, or cannot be found. But you can still change. Jesus healed all kinds of people when he walked the earth. Jesus still heals people today: broken hearts, memories consumed with guilt or bitterness or sadness.

It may be that you were the child of a disaster Dad or Mom, and there's a gulf separating you now. What I've just said applies the same for you: you can pray for your Mom or Dad, and then act in faith: reach out to that person. You may need to first pray for your own inner healing, before you're ready to face that person.

**3) The most important thing about parenting** (also the most important thing about baking, about **fixing cars**, about serving customers, about *anything!*)

**Matthew 22:37-38, New Revised Standard Version:**  
Jesus said, “ ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the greatest and first commandment.”

Job # 1 is for you yourself to be committed to God, putting God first in your life. That's what happens when we follow Jesus Christ, for he is God. Everything else follows from that decision.

Mother Teresa was well known as the founder of a religious order which helped the outcast and the dying. This spirit of serving others appealed to many, and thousands of people have joined her order.

Charles Colson, in his book *Loving God*, tells about one volunteer who was frustrated by all the rules that are part of being in a religious order. All the time required for prayer, Bible reading, prayer, worship, and more prayer was taking him away from his goal. “My vocation is to work for lepers,” he complained to Mother Teresa. “I want to spend myself for the lepers.”

Mother Teresa looked at him, then smiled. “Brother,” she said, “your vocation is not to work for lepers. Your vocation is to belong to Jesus.”

If you’re a Dad or a Mom, you may be giving all you’ve got to being the best parent you can be. That sounds good and noble; but actually you’re neglecting the most important thing of all. Your first calling is to be a follower of Jesus Christ. And as part of that, one of the greatest privileges you have is to introduce your children to Jesus, and tell them about his life, his love for them, and how he wants to be in their life, too.

### **Next Steps:**

- Make or renew that commitment to put God first in your life. You can say this prayer in your heart with me.

### **Prayer:**

Lord Jesus Christ,  
I thank you that you came into this world to show us God’s love.

I am sorry for the things that I have done wrong in my life. Please forgive me. I now turn away from everything which I know is wrong.

I thank you that you died on the cross so that I can be forgiven and set free. Thank-you that you offer me forgiveness and new life. I now receive that gift.

Please come into my life by your Holy Spirit.  
Fill me, and be with me forever.

Thank-you, Lord Jesus. Amen.