

A Godly Man

Message for Sunday, June 16, 2019
by Bruce Fraser

Scripture: Philippians 2:19-30

Children's Message: from Luke 11:1-4
My father has died and is now with Jesus in heaven. But I still remember him. I remember how he would get up early in the morning before anyone else, and work in the garden before having breakfast.

I remember how when he came in, he would do the exercises he was taught when he was in World War II. He was still doing them every morning when he was seventy years old.

I remember how he would take time for people. One day, he and I were working on digging up the caragana hedge out front, to replace it with a wooden fence. A boy from down the street, about five years old, came over to see what we were doing. "What are you doing?" he asked.

Dad answered, "We're digging up these bushes, and we're going to put a fence in its place."

"Why?"

"Because the bushes need so much work. We have to keep cutting them back every few weeks. Otherwise, they'd grow over our heads."

"Why?"

"Well, that's how plants are. They just love to grow big and tall."

"Why?"

As the conversation went on, I marvelled at Dad's patience, taking time to talk with this boy, taking his words very seriously and giving him a thoughtful answer.

I remember the time I did something bad. Dad spanked me with a soup pot and broke the handle off!

I could go on with more stories about my Dad, things that I love about him.

You probably also have things about your father that you will always remember and treasure.

The most important thing of all is to know that you are loved. Even when you do something bad, even when you are punished, he still loves you.

That's important, because it teaches us what God's love is like. Even when we do something bad, and God is disappointed in us, God still loves us. And when we confess what we did wrong, God is always ready to forgive us. That's why Jesus taught us to pray, "Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us."

Message: A godly man ¹

Reader's Digest magazine had this story about a father.

No one is more cautious than a first-time parent. After our daughter was big enough to ride on the back of my bicycle, I bought a special carrier with a seat belt and got her a little helmet. The day of the first ride I put her in the seat, double-checked all the equipment, wheeled the bike to the end of the driveway, carefully looked both ways and, swinging my leg up over the crossbar, kicked her right in the chin. - Zachary Gibbs

I could tell lots more funny stories about fathers getting in trouble. But I don't need to do that. Other people have already done it for me. There are countless TV shows and movies based on a father character who is loveable but hopelessly inept. If you listen to CBC radio, you've probably heard Stuart McLean tell stories about Dave and Morley. This theme is even in comic strips; remember Dagwood and Tootsie?

Occasionally we find people who honour their fathers. One of my favourite quotes is this one, attributed to Mark Twain:

When I was a boy of fourteen, my father was so ignorant I could hardly stand to have the old man around. But when I got to be twenty-one, I

¹ The outline for this message is based on an article by Rick Warren.

was astonished at how much the old man had learned in seven years.

My aim today, though, is neither to make fun of fathers, nor to praise them. My aim is to challenge, not just fathers, but all men, to pursue a higher calling. I want to challenge you to be godly men: men who faithfully follow God.

Now I look around, and I see there are some women present here. Not only can you listen in, but for much of this message, if you change the pronouns, you can apply this to your own life as well.

We're going to look at the character of two men in the Bible: Timothy and Epaphroditus. We read about both of them in the second chapter of Philippians. Paul, who writes this letter, tells us the characteristics found in a godly man.

1) A godly man cares about others

This is how Paul describes Timothy:

Philippians 2:20-21, Good News Bible:

He is the only one who shares my feelings and who really cares about you. Everyone else is concerned only with their own affairs, not with the cause of Jesus Christ.

Timothy was thoughtful about other people. He genuinely cared about them. That is such a simple thing, yet it is incredibly powerful. You may have heard the saying, "People don't care how much you know, until they know how much you care."

Our culture is saturated with the message that life is all about you. Every ad you see on TV or read in a magazine or hear on the radio is based on this theme: your life will be better if you drive this car, wear this perfume, or use this laundry detergent. Just as a waterfall over time will cut a path through the rocks beneath it, so this relentless message of "Life is all about you" will shape our values. Unless you consciously choose to listen to a different voice.

Timothy wasn't one of Jesus' disciples, and probably never even met Jesus. But his mother and grandmother were Christians, and they told him about Jesus, about the things which Jesus taught and how Jesus lived. Because of their influence, Timothy chose to centre his life around Jesus. He

chose to listen to the message of Jesus. One of the results is that he learned to think about others, not just himself.

A godly man genuinely cares about others. Pride is a life focussed on yourself. Humility isn't thinking less about yourself; rather, it's thinking more about others. When you think about others, when you pray for them, when you listen to them, when you help them, that is the mark of a godly man.

2) A godly man is reliable

I've talked with some business owners in Stirling, and they tell me one of their greatest needs is for reliable staff. Integrity is a top priority, and next to that is skill. But first of all, the person has to simply show up at work!

One of my curling teammates, Aron, told me about the day his son had some friends over. Aron was talking with these young men, and couldn't believe it when one of them said, "If I don't show up for work, they don't have to pay me. So what's the problem?"

Compare that attitude with how Paul continues describing Timothy:

Philippians 2:22, Good News Bible:

And you yourselves know how he has proved his worth, how he and I, like a son and his father, have worked together for the sake of the gospel.

When Paul says they "worked together," he didn't mean they worked on a project one afternoon. Timothy worked alongside Paul for a number of years, travelling together to various cities, telling the good news of Jesus and establishing churches. If you read the book of Acts in the Bible, you'll know that this was not a sightseeing trip! They were mocked, beaten, and thrown out of town more than once. Timothy didn't flinch; he faithfully continued the work of the gospel. That's why Paul writes, "he has proved his worth."

A godly man is consistent, reliable, faithful. Someone you can count on. Someone you can trust to keep their word.

3) A godly man cooperates with others

As well as partnering with Timothy, Paul also worked hand in hand with Epaphroditus.

Philippians 2:25, Good News Bible:
I have thought it necessary to send to you our brother Epaphroditus, who has worked and fought by my side and who has served as your messenger in helping me.

There is something attractive in stories about individuals who have achieved success through their perseverance against all odds and opposition. While this makes for exciting Hollywood movies, that kind of life is a recipe for disaster. Life is much better when we are part of a team.

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12, Good News Bible:
Two are better off than one, because together they can work more effectively. If one of them falls down, the other can help him up. But if someone is alone and falls, it's just too bad, because there is no one to help him. If it is cold, two can sleep together and stay warm, but how can you keep warm by yourself? Two people can resist an attack that would defeat one person alone. A rope made of three cords is hard to break.

On our own, we are candidates for burnout and drop out. Friends are great, and Christian friends are precious. We can help one another, encourage one another, and challenge one another.

4) A godly man is dedicated

The final verse in Philippians 2 is powerful. Paul is describing Epaphroditus and his dedication to the work of the gospel.

Philippians 2:30, Good News Bible:
He risked his life and nearly died for the sake of the work of Christ, in order to give me the help that you yourselves could not give.

Godly men have deep convictions that direct their lives. We have lots of men who have opinions. Just listen to CJBQ's morning show, and you can't miss them. Or read the comments on some internet blog. An opinion is something you argue about. But a conviction is something you live by, and even die by.

I want to close with a story that demonstrates all of these qualities. A man named Doug Nichols tells about an episode in his life.

While serving with Operation Mobilization in India in 1967, tuberculosis forced me into a sanitarium for several months. I did not yet speak the language, but I tried to give Christian literature written in their language to the patients, doctors, and nurses. Everyone politely refused. I sensed many weren't happy about a rich American (to them all Americans are rich) being in a free, government-run sanitarium. (They didn't know I was just as broke as they were!)

The first few nights I woke around 2:00 A.M. coughing. One morning during my coughing spell, I noticed one of the older and sicker patients across the aisle trying to get out of bed. He would sit up on the edge of the bed and try to stand, but in weakness would fall back into bed. I didn't understand what he was trying to do. He finally fell back into bed exhausted. I heard him crying softly.

The next morning I realized what the man had been trying to do. He had been trying to get up and walk to the bathroom! The stench in our ward was awful. Other patients yelled insults at the man. Angry nurses moved him roughly from side to side as they cleaned up the mess. One nurse even slapped him. The old man curled into a ball and wept. The next night I again woke up coughing. I noticed the man across the aisle sit up and again try to stand. Like the night before, he fell back whimpering.

I don't like bad smells, and I didn't want to become involved, but I got out of bed and went over to him. When I touched his shoulder, his eyes opened wide with fear. I smiled, put my arms under him, and picked him up. He was very light due to old age and advanced TB. I carried him to the washroom, which was just a filthy, small room with a hole in the floor. I stood behind him with my arms under his armpits as he took care of himself. After he finished, I picked him up, and carried him back to his bed. As I laid him down, he kissed me on the cheek, smiled, and said something I couldn't understand.

The next morning another patient woke me and handed me a steaming cup of tea. He motioned with his hands that he wanted a tract. As the sun rose, other patients approached and indicated they also wanted the booklets I had tried to distribute before. Throughout the day nurses, interns, and doctors asked for literature.

Weeks later an evangelist who spoke the language visited me, and as he talked to others he discovered that several had put their trust in Christ as Savior as a result of reading the literature. What did it take to reach these people with the gospel? It wasn't health, the ability to speak their language, or a persuasive talk. It simply took a trip to the bathroom.

You'll never see this scene made into a movie. Yet it is more powerful, more exciting than any superhero epic. That's because you and I could never be like those superheroes. But we can see ourselves doing something like that man in India. We can identify with him.

Next Steps:

- Pray: Ask God to help you be more like him, more godly. Not God-like as in great and mighty, but God-like as in good and compassionate.
- Look for opportunities to live that way. Ask God to open doors for you.