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## Summer Family Reunion

Part 3 – Father’s Day 2023

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Father’s Day is a special day. We say that we declare that we love our fathers. We are grateful for this day because we also believe that in our culture, the family is under attack. There is an enemy among us who wants to destroy the family. We believe that the father being a central part of that family is a target of that enemy. So, we believe it’s important to celebrate these roles that we have as fathers.

We also acknowledge that for some of you, this is a first for you. It’s the first Father’s Day without your earthly father. And we know that is a hard day. It’s going to bring with it some pain, some happy memories, and some sadness. So, we mourn with you in that. After the last service, a friend told me that his father passed away on Thursday. He said, “He’s good; he’s with the Lord.” But we know those situations are all around us. We acknowledge you and we pray for you and with you in your loss.

We also acknowledge that there are some father figures that may not fit this box of what we would typically think of a father, like someone who is helping raise a child, maybe a grandfather who is helping raise a grandchild or a step father who has stepped in where a biological father is absent. So, we acknowledge you and we are grateful for you and the role you are playing in the lives of these children that need a father figure in their lives. We are grateful for you, and we acknowledge you as well.

As I said, we have roles that we believe are God-given role. Moms and dads, you have different gifts and talents, don’t you? Dad’s, we have a different gift set, and talent gift set than mom. Something you are not going to hear at Woodland Hills on mother’s day is “Mom, you’re awesome, we cherish you, we love you.” And then on Father’s day, “Dad, you need to step it up.” We love our mothers, we love our fathers, we celebrate the roles, but they are different.

Mom’s, you tend to be a little more nurturing. And when new parents welcome a new baby, mom tends to be natural with the nurturing part. And then at some point, maybe mom hands the baby over to dad and baby gets the same expression as dad. Kind of like, *neither of us know what we’re doing here. This could be trouble.* One of the reasons that Dad might have this expression is because he knows that this (diaper changing) is going to be part of his tasks. Again, men tend to handle it a little less well than women. Maybe bring some extra equipment along the way for it.

Dads, we don't multitask as well as moms do; let's face it. Not long ago, my wife, Kari, was coaching our daughter, Kaylin, in a volleyball game. She was the team's coach. I had one job and that was to watch our five-year-old, Mason. We are at the Rec Plex and that partition that drops down between the courts is where Kari is with the team. I'm across the way in the bleachers. Mason was with me. I'm talking to a couple of other dads and as I'm kind of paying attention to the game as well, I see my wife coaching the team. She's like, "Stephanie, get up in the net." "Kaylin, get back; you're in the back row." "Travis, where's mason?" I had one job to do. Women are better at multitasking. We have different gifts, different talents, and that may make moms a little bit nervous when you leave the baby or the children home alone with us. That may be because mom's, we're just going to tell you when you leave the kids with us, this is the kind of stuff we do with them. You have to know, Mom, when you leave and we're at home with them, we have one goal in mind, and that is that you return to the same number of living children as when you left.

One of my favorite dad memes that I've seen was a dad that said, "Why is it that my daughter and wife can never find a hair tie and I can't not find them?" So, dads, if you're left with a daughter and the situation comes up where she can't find a hair tie, never fear because we are capable of many things. You've heard the saying, "You need two things in life – Duct tape and WD40." I want to add a third – zip ties. Zip ties can fix so many things. Zip ties are great,

When it comes to different things that come up, we have our different gifts and our different talents, moms and dads, but I love this mug, because it kind of sums it up. "When all else fails, call Dad." Why is that? Because dad's fix things. We fix things. Sometimes to a fault. We're not asked to fix something, but we've fixed it anyway. That's ingrained in us; it's given to us by God that we want to fix things. Mom, you know that dad fixes things because there have maybe been times that you've uttered the words, "We're going to settle this when your father gets home." I think I heard my dad laughing. We know what that means, right? I heard those words and I remember thinking, *Mom, we should settle it now. Let there not be any unresolved anger between you; we need to settle this now.* Because dad is going to fix it isn't he.

Dad's fix things. Sometimes, he fixes things with tools, sometimes he fixes things with a gentle word, sometimes he fixes things with a hug, sometimes he fixes things with his physical strength. Sometimes, he fixes things with a twenty-dollar bill. Sometimes, it takes a whole lot more than a 20-dollar bill to fix the problem, but he fixes things. Dads, we fix things; it's in our created nature. It's in our God-given strength and in our role, and we embrace and we accept the role that God has given us. We declare here at Woodland Hills, as men of Woodland Hills, as fathers, as father figures, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord," As our primary gift that God has implanted to us to lead out spiritually, leading our family as well. We embrace them and we do our best.

We do the best that we can. We've got to know that as we look to our own earthly father and the experience that we've had with him. And we know that really when it boils down to it, he was doing the best he could. He is doing the best he can. I'll take a moment to acknowledge though that there are some who your dad certainly was not doing the best that he could. We hear you and we see you and we pray for you in that. We'll talk about that here a little bit more. But as we understand that our dad is and was doing the best that he could, we have to remember that we have to have grace.

We have to have grace because as we fathers are doing the best that we can, we understand that our father was doing the best that he could, and grace is of utmost importance. Have you ever noticed that we tend to grant the least amount of grace to those that we love the most. Our family, right? Our parents, your children, your siblings, your spouse. For whatever reason, you hold them to a higher standard than you would hold anyone else. A stranger or coworker or someone else hurts you or offends you in such a way and you're able to just let that go. But for whatever reason, it seems we hold our loved ones to a higher standard, including our dad. Even an unreasonable standard sometimes.

So, parents that are grown now, do you remember when you were a kid and you thought your parents knew what they were doing? And then you had kids and you realize you don't know what you're doing, so wait a minute. They didn't know what they were doing either. Therefore, we can understand we must give grace for things from the past and things that have taken place.

My dad, Jim Brawner, I'm forever grateful for him and the father that he was and is and the grandfather he is now. He was our biggest cheerleader growing up, in life and school and sports and everything we did. I know there are some parents that are a little overly cheerleading maybe, but Dad had this knack of keeping us in balance. I would be out on a field playing a sport. I'd do something well and then I'd hear, "Way to go, Trav!" I could hear his voice among sometimes thousands of other voices. But then sometimes when I'd maybe get a little cocky, and maybe act a certain way, I would also hear his voice, "Nope!" Biggest cheerleader, biggest accountability, a wonderful balance.

As kids, we desire boundaries. My wife, Kari, says this all the time. She can remember as a kid, just looking for boundaries and hoping that they were there because kids need and want boundaries. There are so many things that kids need and so many things that kids want. My father did something that is, as a matter of fact now, I understand to be researched back. He wasn't doing it because of any research. He was doing it because he's a good dad. He was saying things to us that we needed to hear. Research has shown... I learned this after we had kids, and it was something that I was doing simply because it was done for me. Research has shown that kids need to hear primarily two things from their parents. 1) I love you. 2) I'm proud of you.

Now, here's the important thing, Fathers. Between the two parents, the one they need to hear it from and want to hear it from the most is Dad. They need and want to hear I love you and I'm proud of you from their dad.

Now, I don't know if you know this, but raising girls is a little different than raising boys. Amen, Dad? A zip tie can fix anything though. In that same research, there happens to be something else that was proven and that was that daughters need to hear something extra besides I love you and I'm proud of you. And that's really simple – "I think you're very pretty." It's true; they need to hear it. Now, it's very important for us to instill in them that their value is not in their looks. Their value is in Christ. But nonetheless, it's important and our daughters need to hear this. So, after we had two boys and I realized that girls are different and I knew that this needed to be said, in our tuck-in routine,

I would get down in our daughter, Kaylin's face, I would tell her, "Kaylin, I love you." She'd say, "I love you too."

I'd say, "Kaylin, I'm proud of you."

She'd say, "Thank you, Daddy."

I'd say, "Kaylin, I think you are very pretty."

She'd say, "Thank you, Daddy."

And then she got to the point though where I don't know if she was getting uncomfortable because of the repetition, but she felt like she needed to return the compliment.

So, one night, it was, "Kaylin, I think you are very pretty."

Thank you, Daddy.

Daddy. "

Yes, Kaylin." "I think you have very strong muscles."

"Thank you, Kaylin."

The next night it was, "Daddy."

"Yes Kaylin."

"I think you're very smart."

"Well, thank you, Sweetheart."

The next night, "Daddy, I think you have very strong breath."

"Thank you, Dear."

We do the best that we can, don't we dads? Father's Day may bring pain for some of you for a lot of different reasons. Maybe your father was abusive. Maybe your father wasn't even there and you wonder who he even is, where he is. Maybe you're the mother raising kids on your own, and as we talk about and celebrate Father's Day, it's a painful thing because the father of your children is absent or the father of your children not only hurt you, but he hurt them as well. If that's you, then we want to remind you that doesn't break God's design. It doesn't negate God's design for marriage and for families.

Sin is in the world because of the brokenness that you experience and it's very, very important that you don't harbor bitterness and resentment and anger because of that experience. That's hard to hear but Jesus said, "You must forgive 70 times 7." Is that a number? No. It's hyperbole. You must continue to forgive and that can be very, very hard. We want to encourage you that as we say that to those who have been abused, hurt, or otherwise, we want to be very clear about something. As we are to forgive over and over and to never quit forgiving, that is because our friend Gary Smally said it many times before. "If you harbor bitterness and anger against someone who has hurt you, it's like drinking poison hoping that they get sick." It's only going to eat you from the inside out. It does nothing to fix the problem.

Forgiveness is so important, but here's the other thing we want to be very clear about for those that are in relationships that are abusive or whatever else. There is a big difference between forgiveness and trust. You are to continue to forgive, but no one is going to ask you to continue to trust. What do I mean by that? No one is going to ask you to continue to engage in a relationship or a connection with someone who is going to continue to hurt you in ways that they have before.

You must forgive, but you do not have to continue to trust. There is a big difference there. It's just like with a former spouse, or anyone else who has hurt you. Forgive. God still gave us these roles as spouses, as fathers. And he still desires that. Just because our sinful nature has broken some of those relationships, we forgive. Why is that helpful or why is that important? Because as we look at the relationships in which we've been hurt, we realize that if we are looking to that relationship and that person as our source then our source is misplaced. In the same way that we can misplace our spouse as our source of life and our source of hope, that can be misplaced in the same way placing our source of life and our source of hope in an earthly father can be misplaced. We can't misplace our source of hope in the same way that he is not the enemy. Your spouse is not the enemy, they are not your source... Your father is not the enemy and he is not your source of hope and of life.

You see, you didn't choose your earthly father, right? As kids, generally, you don't get to choose who is going to be your father. We've heard this many times – You can choose your friends, but you can't choose your family. You don't choose who your father is going to be. Some kids wish they could. When you hear the words, "But so and so's parents..." What do you say? "I'm not so and so's parent. God didn't give you to them, he gave you to me."

There are two ways that a child can become someone's child. It's really simple – by birth or by adoption. The birth is obvious. Born into a family. When there is an adoption that takes place, there is a family or parents or a parent that says to a child, "You are now part of this family. You get all the benefits of being a part of this family. That adoption says to the child, "You are my child." And beyond that, what that does for that child is that gives that child a home. When we hear the word home, we know that home brings with it a sense of comfort and a sense of peace and a sense of safety. So many things that come along with being told "You are mine, and this is now your home, this is your family."

Let's talk a little bit about some things that are true about you. We're going to start with one that is true about everyone. And that is that every single one of us is an image bearer. We've gone through this before and we've talked about it so many times and in detail. But the thing that is true about every single person is that they are a human being with eternal value, created in the image of God, knitted together in their mother's womb, fearfully and wonderfully made. From the moment of conception, that's every human being and it's hard to believe about some people and the things that they've said and done. But that is his truth.

Now, child of God. We aren't born naturally, physically as a child of God. We are born into iniquity and born into the sin condition. So, to be a child of God, we have to be adopted into the family of God.

Let's look at these two truths separately. First about being an image bearer. Genesis 1: 27 says, ***So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.*** At the moment of your conception, God gives you his image. That is true about you no matter what, whether you are in the family of God, whether you are a follower of Jesus or not. That is true about you.

Then, what does it take for man to be a child of God? Joh 1: 12 says, **12 Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his (Jesus) name, he gave the right to become children of God— 13 children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.** That's why many of you growing up, including me, heard the phrase *born again*. You were born at a physical birth and then born again into the family of God. That is God, at that moment, saying, "You are mine. And now, you have a heavenly home that awaits you with perfect peace and perfect comfort with perfect physical condition. You have a home. You're part of the family, you are mine and now you have a heavenly home that awaits you."

What's interesting is that our relationship with God changes at the moment of our salvation. We go from image bearer, into the family. We go from where God, who is unchanging... God the Father is unchanging, he is the Father, but he's not our father until we become a child of God. Then he is our Father. He says, "You are mine." And we can say, "He is ours." That relationship changes at that moment. And maybe from an earthly father, you've never heard the words "I love you and I'm proud of you," but you need to know that your heavenly Father says it all the time, all through scripture.

Psalm 139: 13-14 – **For you created my inmost being. You knit me together in my mother's womb. 14 I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made.** That's how much he loves you. That's how much he is proud of you. You are his masterpiece. All of the rest of creation he simply spoke into existence and then every single one of you and me, and everyone around us, he knitted together in their mother's womb. He didn't just speak us into creation, he knitted us together in our mother's womb. No matter the baggage, no matter the problems that you've had, no matter your past failures, he welcomes you into the family if you confess with your mouth that Jesus Christ is Lord, believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, in that he says, "you are mine."

Now, some of the families that I have some of the highest respect and admiration for are families that invite into their family, that adopt children that have problems that are at risk kids or have maybe physical problems, have maybe or psychological problem that they have to deal with. And the parents that bring them in are inviting that into their family and the difficulties that it's going to bring. I admire that because that's going to be a lot of work, right? Not every adoption is that way but there are some that are and I have a great admiration for the families those children are in. I think the biggest reason that I do is that if you look to your left and you look to your right, you are going to see a person that is a problem child. Every single one of us is a problem child who was welcomed into the family of God. He welcomes us in. We become part of the family and all the baggage we bring with us. He says, "come. You are mine. It doesn't matter." "But, God what about...?" "It doesn't matter. You are mine. You are now part of this family, the family of God."

Romans 5: 6-8 says, **6 You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. 7 Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. 8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.**

When I was in my residency training, there was an attending doctor, Dr. Wayne Berryhill, who had five kids. At the time, I thought that was a bunch of kids. We had two and now we have four. I remember very distinctly an interaction we had because he and I knew each other's faith and he was a mentor not

only in my training but also just in my life. I knew he had five kids, and he was just an incredible leader of his home and his wife had seen this kid at their church who was four or five years old and needed a home. I remember him talking about how they were considering adopting this kid. I thought, *Oh my goodness*. I said, “Dr. Berryhill, you’ve got five kids and you’re talking about adopting another one?”

He said, “Travis, you’re a Christian, right.” I said, “Yes.” He said, “Do you realize that the very essence of your faith and your salvation rests in adoption?” That affected me at that moment and forever more. Not just in the way that I interact with my family but also in the way that I understand my faith. I’m a problem child. I’ve got a lot of baggage. There is a lot that I deal with from the past and going to in the future.

And God says, “You are mine. It doesn’t matter.” He doesn’t have too many kids. He doesn’t have a limited amount of space. He says, “The family is as big as you want it to be and you are welcome.” You have to know that God desires that everyone should come to faith and everyone should reach repentance, lest anyone should suffer. Even the most troubled kid that you think that you are. Christ died for us and that’s how we can come to faith and to a right relationship with the Father.

This verse is probably the most popular verse that is introduced to every child, one of the first that we memorize. John 3:16 – ***For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.***

Now, the thing we have to understand about this is that this is Father’s Day and we’re talking about fathers and sons and we understand God the Father and God the Son. We may get this picture of God the Father of a war general patting his son on the back and saying, “Get out there and fight this battle, son.” But we remember that we understand and believe and know to be true that God is three in one – Father, son, and Holy Spirit. Jesus said, “The Father and I are one.” So, when we get this picture of maybe of a father sending his son out to battle we have to understand this was God doing battle himself. He wasn’t sending someone else to do it; this was God himself died in atonement for our sins. Jesus is and was and will always be fully God and fully man.

Dads, I’m going to ask you a rhetorical question; don’t raise your hand. How many of you would die for your child? That’s a hard question, but you know the answer. There is not a single one of us that wouldn’t take the proverbial bullet or jump on the grenade or fall on the sword, whatever, for our child. We understand that when we see that our kid is sick or hurting or having problems of some kind, even emotional. What is it that you often think or pray? “Lord, if there is any way that I can take this, please let me.” You feel that because that is one of your God-given gifts, which is to protect that child, and protection mode kicks in.

Also in residency, one of the most gut-wrenching things that I would do is when I would have to go onto the pediatric cancer ward and see a kid in the midst of chemo therapy with hair gone, withering away and parents sitting at the foot of the bed, particularly dad because I can identify as a dad and knowing the thoughts and the prayers of that dad. “Let me take this. Let me be the sick one. Let me be the one that has to deal with the treatments and everything else.”

Then we read Matthew 7: 9-11 – **9 “Which of you, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone? 10 Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? 11 If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!**

Think about that. The feeling that we have as an earthly father that *I want to do that for my child*, pales in comparison to the love that our Father has for that child, making us realize how important it is to make sure our children understand that I’m a broken father, but in heaven, you can have a perfect father. Our love and devotion pales in comparison.

Dads, we fix things though, don’t we? We do the best we can. We fix things. Do any other dads struggle with getting their kids dressed? Again, we have our different strengths and weaknesses. I am what you would call wardrobe challenged even for myself. Getting the kids dressed is a whole different story. Again, you’ll notice problems happen when my wife leaves town. I’m bringing the kids to church and I get our five year old... He was just over one year old at the time. I’m getting him dressed and the problem is I go to his closet... and I’ve learned over the years that things should match or they should at least go together. Ladies, there is a distinction, right? The difference between things matching... Guys, I don’t know. And I still don’t get it.

I’m in his closet and I’m like Okay, does it match, does it go together? I don’t even know what that means. I’m digging to the back of the closet. I’m like, “This is a perfect outfit. It looks like it was put together.” So, I take it out and I put it on him. This was in October, and it turned out to be his fourth of July outfit. The women are the only ones laughing. The guys are like, “So.” It matched, it went together; it was perfect, right? I made the mistake during church of sending my wife a picture of him to which she said, “He didn’t wear that to church, did he?” Yes, he did. We do the best that we can.

We fix things, right. One of my favorite stories that I’ve heard of a teenaged daughter that posted on social media years ago that she was driving home, trying to make curfew. She got a flat tire, so she calls her dad. What did her dad do? He got out of bed, put on some clothes, drove to where she was and changed the tire and then drove home.

She just praised the way that he did it. He didn’t complain, he didn’t say, “You should have left earlier,” he didn’t say whatever else... He just took care of it. Because dads fix things. Was that easy? No. Try getting me out of bed to go change a tire after I’ve been in bed for however long. That’s hard. Dads, we have to do hard things. And we need to know that sometimes it is hard to say things that our kids need to hear – I love you, I’m proud of you, and for your girls, I think you’re pretty. That can be hard, but it’s needed. They need to hear these things.

And sometimes, we fix door knobs, we fix appliances, for those that are able, and sometimes we help in fixing broken hearts – the hug, the kind word that can maybe help fix a broken heart. But most importantly, we understand that only God can truly fix a broken heart. God fixes things too. He is going to make all things new, but we know that for the time, things are still broken.



John 16: 33 says, **33 “I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”** He has fixed it. He has given us a heavenly home where things are fixed as he brings us into the family and says, “You are mine.”

So, on this Father’s day, I want to just encourage you and also mothers as well. If you feel like you’re failing, feel like you have too many short comings, that things just aren’t going like you would like them to, Maybe you have a child that’s a difficult child that you butt heads with, whatever else is going on. You may think, *Am I the right parent for this child? I just can’t do this.* You need to know that God doesn’t make mistakes. God gave you that child because God knows that you are the right parent for that child. God has given you gifts and talents. God has given you to them. God does not make mistakes.

On this Father’s Day, may we all be grateful for the good and extend grace for the difficulties? There is a perfect Heavenly Father who loves you and is proud of you and wants to declare to you that you are his.

If you’ve never heard from God, “You are mine because you have placed faith in Christ,” we would encourage you that our prayer team is going to be down front. They would love to pray with you or answer any questions you may have about that. But we would hope that you would move from I love you and I’m proud of you to hearing God say, “You are mine.”

Father, we love you and we’re grateful on this Father’s Day, for the perfect Heavenly Father that we have in you. We’re grateful for your Son Christ and the way that we can be brought into the family through him, through his blood, and through his sacrifice and through our confession and belief.

We pray for the fathers here and the father figures, Lord, that you would give them strength in fulfilling the role that you have given them and the special task of raising these kids. Lord, we pray for those that are hurting, for those who have lost a father in the past year and for those who have had experiences of hurt when the word father is spoken. We pray for them and their healing that they would come to a saving knowledge of you, if they don’t have it, that they would be healed spiritually and that they would know that they are loved.

We love you, we give you praise in Christ name. And everyone agreed and said... Amen.