

Blessed

Happy Father's Day! I love being a dad. I have three children: Micah, Eden, and Elijah. They bring a lot of joy to my life. They keep me on my toes. They make me laugh. They make me tired too. I'm simultaneously the one who wrestles, jokes, and laughs with them while being a steady, calming force in our household. It's an incredible privilege to be a dad. It's also an incredible responsibility. There are a lot of things that I want to teach them. Many of which I feel completely unqualified to teach anyone. It's my job to teach them how to love and follow Jesus, how to love their mom, and how to put on deodorant so they aren't stinky kids. I'm so grateful for Abi. As many of you know, she is super mom. She is incredible. She brings so much to the table, and our family would be in big trouble without her. Mommy will hold you while daddy will say, "Walk it off." We need and love mommy. At the end of the day, though, the spiritual development of my children rests with me. I'll never forget the way Matt Chandler put it. He was talking to men, and he said, "If Jesus comes knocking on your door to talk to someone about the spiritual direction of your family, He isn't looking for your wife." I think about that a lot.

I think a lot about the things I want for my children. The blessings I hope they inherit, the lives I hope they'll choose. So much of what I think about comes down to trajectory. Am I helping them choose the right path? Are they aimed in the right direction? Am I helping set the trajectory of their lives in such a way that they'll be blessed by God? I can't make all of the choices for them. I can't make them choose to follow Jesus and love other people the way He wants them to love them. They have to make their own decisions. But it is my responsibility to point them in the right direction.

Have you noticed that they watch everything? It's not as simple as sitting down and having a conversation with them about this stuff. It has to be a way of life for me. We've all heard that more is caught than taught, and it's true. It can't be, "Do as I say and not as I do." If I take every opportunity to miss church to go to other places with them, I'm teaching them that church isn't important. If I don't read my Bible, I'm teaching them that it doesn't matter. If I don't pray with them, for them, and for others, I'm teaching them it's not a big deal. I have to model the life I want them to have. If I want them to receive God's blessing because of the lives they live, I have to live that life myself. I have to live my life for the glory of God and put myself in a position to receive the blessings He has promised. That works out pretty well because, let's be honest, I'd like to receive God's blessings as well.

We:

We're all chasing blessings in life. We want them for ourselves and our kids. We want to leave a legacy that will last for generations. We're actually going to spend several weeks talking about that very soon, and I can't wait to unpack that with you. The question isn't, "Do we want blessings," but "Which blessings are we chasing?" Are we chasing after money, possessions, security, status, fame, and achievement, or are we chasing after the blessings of God? Some may push back and say, "Well, God can give us those things." That's correct. He can give us all of those things. But are those things make us happy, or will they ultimately leave us empty? Today, I want us to lock on this idea: Too many of us are aiming at the wrong target. When we aim at the wrong target, it doesn't even matter if we hit it. We settle for temporary or counterfeit blessings, but they ultimately lead to death. We're all scrambling around trying to juggle seventy-five different goals, worried that we'll mess it up and ruin everything. What if there is a better way?

God:

God has told us how to be blessed. How to be happy, content, and all of these other things we're chasing. If you have your Bible, open up to Psalms 1:1-6 (NIV). Here is what we read:

'Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers, but whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on his law day and night. That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither— whatever they do prospers. Not so the wicked! They are like chaff that the wind blows away. Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous. For the Lord watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked leads to destruction.' - Psalms 1:1-6

The word blessed here is the equivalent in Hebrew to the word Jesus uses in the New Testament in Matthew 5. Blessed, or happy, is the person who doesn't take the advice from those who don't love God, who doesn't surround themselves with people who aren't following God, and who doesn't spend their days in the company of those who mock God. This person chooses their circle carefully. Does that sound like it describes you? This matters because the people that are closest to you shape the course of your life. They either push you closer to God or pull you further away from Him. As a parent, you may put a ton of thought into the kinds of people you want to be in your kid's life. You encourage them to choose the right friends because you know how it will impact their lives. But do you do the same for yourself? The qualification to be in your inner circle should be more than, "Well, we both like football," "We're both into design," or "We work in the same building."

We've talked about this before: I'm not saying to be mean to these people or ignore them completely, but they shouldn't be the people who have permission to speak into your life. But you can't base your life on the people you aren't going to hang out with. It's not a matter of just cutting out a bad influence.

The second part of this passage says that to be blessed, you should delight in the law of the Lord and meditate on it day and night. This blessed person's anchor is the Word of God. They know it better than they know their politics and their sports. It's more important to them than those things combined. Why? Because it's how they get to know their Father, and their relationship with their Father is the most important thing in their life. Inside the Word of God, they find financial counsel, guidelines for relationships, how to deal with stressful situations, freedom, and forgiveness. They are filled with the Word of God, and as a result, they are like a tree planted by streams of water. We're not saying they face no hardships. The storms of life still rage, but their roots run deep, and they remain strong.

The alternative is to chase other things. The Psalmist draws a stark contrast between these two lives. You can choose to ignore everything I just said. You can surround yourself with people who don't love Jesus and who are pushing you to chase after the things of the world. Here is what the Scripture says will happen: Instead of being like a tree planted by a stream, the wicked are like chaff that the wind blows away. When it gets hard, everything falls apart. In the end, they will find themselves empty and alone, facing God's judgment without the intervention of Jesus. These are two very different lives. You get to pick which one you want to live, but you can't pick both.

You:

There are two paths before you, and you must choose one of them. They might not seem very different at first. Because you can choose to spend your life chasing after money and security, and you might even get it for a little bit. There are a lot of people who don't love Jesus and have a lot of money. Their life might look pretty good from the outside. But you're here right now because you're thinking bigger. You're thinking about eternity. You're thinking about your eternity and the eternity of your kids or your family. You're not going to settle for a temporary blessing because you know how fragile that can be. You're looking for the blessing of God.

So here is my encouragement to you, based on what we've been looking at in Psalms 1: *Guard your circle and fill your heart with God's Word.* Don't allow just anyone to speak into your life. Choose those people with care. You will notice a major difference when you

surround yourself with people who are genuinely chasing after Jesus. You'll be happier. You'll be blessed. Surround yourself with people who love Jesus more than anything, and see if your life doesn't improve dramatically.

Fill your heart with God's Word. I challenge you to spend more time in your Bible than you do watching or reading the news for the next week. Same thing for your team or your movie or your book series, whatever it is for you. Spend more time with Jesus than you do on those things this week. Give me one week of this and then come back and tell me next week if your life wasn't more peaceful. Tell me you weren't happier spending time with your Father. You'll find peace, hope, love, and joy in the pages of Scripture. You'll encounter the heart of your Father. You'll encounter the One Who actually has the power to deal with the things you are stressing over right now. You'll encounter the One Who has the power to bless your life.

Jesus was talking about all of the things we stress about in life in Matthew 6. What are we going to eat? What are we going to drink? What are we going to wear? How are we going to take care of ourselves? If He was preaching that message today, He might include, "What about my 401k? What about my mortgage?" Do you remember what He said? He said not to worry about any of those things because your Heavenly Father knows what you need and loves you. He takes care of the birds of the air, and He loves you more than He loves them. He said this in Matthew 6:33 (NIV),

'But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.'
- Matthew 6:33

He said you're aiming at the wrong target. Focus on the Kingdom and let God handle the rest of it. It doesn't mean that money is evil. It doesn't mean you should quit your job. It means your life's primary focus should be building the Kingdom of God. When you do that, God will take care of you, and you will live a blessed life. Do you know what a great first step in this process would be? Guard your circle and fill your heart with God's Word.

We:

We're going to be people who put this into practice. We want to leave a legacy of faith and fulfillment to our families. We're going to teach our kids that the best thing they can do in life is to follow Jesus with everything they have. We're going to leave an inheritance, but it's going to be so much more than finances. But it starts with us. We have got to live our lives for Jesus each and every day. We've got to trust Him to provide what we need while we're

busy building the Kingdom. He is faithful, and we will be too. I consider it an honor to build the Kingdom alongside you all. May Jesus bless our lives, and may the legacy of faith that we leave extend from generation to generation.