

Living with Urgency; Built for Significance

(Genesis 18:19a)

Introduction

Illustration: The crowd of men and women shivers in the cold while waiting for the morning commuter train. A driving rain has pushed them under a too-small shelter, with more commuters trying to join them each minute. One man notices the guy to the right of him sigh heavily several times as he's jostled by shoulders and elbows. "You all right?" he asks. The man sighs again and nods. "Yeah, I guess I'm OK. I was just standing here thinking, the problem with life is, it's so daily."

That man was right. Life is daily, and with it come problems, challenges, and responsibilities. From time to time, all of us have wished we had more than 24 hours in a day. It's easy to become so overwhelmed by circumstances that we end up simply going through the motions of trying to survive.

As fathers and husbands, we must realize this: If we're not careful, we will let the urgent take the place of the significant. Millions of people fall into this trap every day. This weekend, let's look at how we can avoid Satan's trap and begin living lives filled with significance.

To Be a Significant Father . . .

I. . . . Take Your Spiritual Responsibility Seriously.

A. Fulfill the description of a godly man.

Have you ever wondered if a job description existed for how to be a father? In today's passage, God tells us exactly what He wants a father to do for his children.

"For I have chosen him so that he will command his children and his house after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just" (Genesis 18:19, HCSB).

Notice two things:

1. There's nothing in God's instructions about making your child become a great athlete.
2. There's nothing about instructing your child in how to be popular.

Now, neither of those qualities is bad in and of itself. However, your primary concern as a father, according to God, is to do everything necessary to ensure your children know Jesus Christ and follow Him. How well are you following God's instructions?

B. Treat your children as a gift from God – Psalm 127:3.

Fathers, if you're not careful, you can fall into the same trap that's claimed the spiritual lives of families all around you. Satan whispers into your ear, "You need to be fulfilled; forget about others. Your children will be just fine on their own. Live for yourself." Remember, Satan is the father of lies! Your children won't be fine on their own. God has given them to you as a precious gift. Spend time with them; pray for them; let them know your values and encourage them to develop those values in their own lives.

C. You, *yourself*, are to teach your children about God – Ephesians 6:4.

Quite frankly, there is no substitute for time. Fathers, to make a significant impact on your children, you must decide to invest significant blocks of time with them. When Jesus trained the men who would carry on His work, He spent some time with all of His disciples, but much time with the group Jesus called His family – His apostles. He poured His life into them. Fathers, your children have been given to you as a gift and as a responsibility. God wants your sons and daughters to share Christ with the generations that follow your time on earth. Pour your life into them!

II. . . . Give Your Children Boundaries.

Illustration: It happened in Bradenton, Florida, earlier this year. Sheriff's officers said a 19-year-old man snatched a Starbucks customer's laptop and ran out of the coffee shop. Two people in the parking lot saw what was happening and gave chase. They tackled the young man and held him until police arrived. What possessed the 19-year-old to take such a risk? The would-be thief wanted to check his Facebook account and evidently thought it had to be done right then! Instead, the young man still has no laptop, but now he's in jail, charged with a felony.¹

We live in a culture where there are no boundaries. If you want something, you take it right now, regardless of the consequences. Anything goes and everything is accessible to your child through television and the Internet. Your family, your children, are surrounded by this type of thinking. God has made you a parent because your children come into this world not knowing values or safe boundaries. You must not abdicate your responsibility as a guide for your sons and daughters. Loving, but firm, boundaries give your child a sense of safety, stability, and a clear direction for future moral choices.

A. Firm boundaries guide a child toward lifesaving habits – Proverbs 19:18.

Imagine, for a moment, that your children are trying to cross a deep ravine. Sharp rocks and swiftly moving water await any misstep on the old, narrow, rickety rope bridge. Would you like for your children to cross the bridge with a firm, solid handrail to hold onto, or would you prefer that they attempt the crossing with nothing whatsoever on either side of them? This passage from Proverbs says correctly that consistent correction of your children can literally save them from death! In other words, your godly discipline creates firm boundaries that make them feel secure and also provide morals they can hold onto as they mature.

B. Loving boundaries bring peace to the entire family – Proverbs 29:17.

If your children only see Dad as the disciplinarian, you will have a difficult time molding them spiritually. Yes, discipline that is consistent is important. But your love, also shown in everything you do toward them, is also important. When you play with them and laugh with them, they will believe you love them. And when they know you love them, your children will be much more likely to listen to you.

III. . . . Model God's Love as a Father.

Illustration: A British father has run afoul of the law. In hearing the case, Judge Phillip Wassall said the 47-year-old's actions were unbelievable. What did the father do to cause such a reaction? On a road in southern England where the speed limit is 60 mph, he was caught speeding 122 mph on a motorcycle, with his 14-year-old son clinging to the back! A police video clocked the man tearing down the road. It also showed images of the man's son who was not wearing proper protective gloves or pants. The father won't be riding his motorcycle again anytime soon, however. The judge sentenced him to six months in jail!²

Some fathers teach the worst lessons to their children! This is tragic, because social scientists tell us children draw much of their ideas about God from their own earthly fathers. If you are loving, your children will have no problem believing in a God who loves them. On the other hand, if you say one thing and do another, they may become confused about God and end up rejecting Him. Make no mistake. You are built for significance! Your example will greatly influence your children for good or for bad.

A. Treat them with godly compassion, not out-of-control anger – Psalm 103:13.

Fathers, if your children were to give a description of how you react to daily situations in the family, what would they say? Would they describe you as a firm, but compassionate person, or would they say that your anger controls you? If you really want your children to learn the right ideas about God, you'll love them the way God loves you. When you do wrong and God disciplines you, there is never a question whether God still loves you. He is always waiting with open arms to welcome you back into His fellowship. Decide today, that what comes from your lips during difficult times with the children will always be God-honoring and a reflection of how the Lord treats you. Such an attitude will help mold your children in the right way for years to come.

B. Teach them God's commands by living them, yourself – Deuteronomy 4:9.

“You can't teach what you don't know.” It's an axiom that's proved true for thousands of years. Fathers, you can't simply take your children to church, tell them to believe what they hear, then live another way at home in front of them. Your daily life is a powerful example of either good or bad for your sons and daughters. If you don't know a lot about the Bible, begin reading it today. Better still, read the Bible with your family! Together, learn what God has to say about how to live. When your children see you making the effort to regularly read God's Word, it will impress upon them how important knowing the Bible is to their own daily life.

IV. . . . Leave Your Children with a Divine Sense of Urgency.

Illustration: I still get a lump in my throat thinking about it. Amy, my oldest child, and I were in the car on our way to take her to college. The daughter who seemed to have come into this world only a few days before was now leaving home. What would happen to her? How would she respond to the temptations out there in the world? As we talked about her future, Amy began reminiscing about the past. She talked of great family times and also some of our memorable arguments! But then she said, “You know, Dad, my favorite memories are of you reading the Bible early in the mornings back when I was real little. I'd come into the kitchen and climb up in your lap, then snuggle beneath your green robe. I loved smelling the coffee, listening to you talk about the promises of God, and feeling like I was in the safest place in the world.” Then she reached over, casually patted my arm and said, “I'm so glad I have a godly father.” Boom! Payoff! It was right about then that I realized how much kids watch us and model their lives after us. It made me more determined than ever to try to lead a life before my children that would please Jesus and teach them the right way.

A. The urgency to always seek God in everything they do – 1 Chronicles 28:9.

So many things clamor for our attention each day. Both you and your children are going to have to make important decisions about what is truly urgent – in other words, what gets your first priority, no matter what. Remember, your children are watching you. Your daily habits will help them determine what comes before everything else in their own lives.

B. The urgency to daily die to self and live for Christ – Luke 9:23.

“This is where the water meets the wheel. This is where the rubber meets the road.” Choose your own metaphor, just know that this last “urgent detail” is the most important of all. If your sons and daughters learn to daily follow

Christ's instructions in this passage, then you will have succeeded in truly being a godly father. Make sure they learn this lesson from watching you, Dad!

Illustration: Roy Rabadue and his family live in Bangor Township, about 90 miles northwest of Detroit, Michigan. In March of this year, Roy told The Saginaw News and WJRT-TV he was watching television one night in their home when he decided to make cookies. He told Joseph, his teenage son, to move from where he was lying on the floor and get up on the couch. Joseph promptly obeyed – fortunately for him. Shortly afterward, a pickup with a reportedly drunk driver at the wheel smashed into the home. The crash tossed the family's 52-inch television across the living room, landing where Joseph had been on the floor. The couch overturned, along with a chair where Rabadue's 12-year-old son, Jacob, was sitting. Neither was injured. A father's decision and his child's obedience saved a life.³

Fathers, you are living with urgency, but you are built for significance. Share your faith with your children. Share your faith with others in front of your children. This is one of the best ways to teach them to share their faith with others. Fulfill your God-given purpose by giving consistent, loving, godly instruction to your children. That instruction, also modeled by you daily, just might save your child's life . . . for all eternity.

¹ Sarasota Herald-Tribune, February 24, 2009, <http://www.herald-trib.com>

² AP Strange (Associated Press), March 02, 2009

³ AP Strange (Associated Press), March 06, 2009