

Hymns: 3 Amazing Grace 8 Great Is Thy Faithfulness 38 Fairest Lord Jesus

Scripture: Psalm 128

Big Idea: Greatest Father

Who remembers the old TV show *Father Knows Best* with Robert Young, or how about *Leave it to Beaver*, or *Ozzie and Harriet* from the early years of TV sitcoms? Each portrayed a respected father, provider, leader, teacher, and protector.

The next phase in TV fathers took over in the 70s. Do you remember *The Brady Bunch*, *Happy Days*, *The Partridge Family*, and *All in the Family*? In each, the father's role and respect for him was diminished, and the family became in various ways something a bit less traditional.

From there, TV sitcoms devolved to become increasingly perverse until today the new shows offered *push* and *celebrate* perversion at every turn while **mocking** traditional family values.

Today, we're going to look at arguably the most successful dad in history. Can you guess who that might be? He's in the Bible. But if you use Google to search for that person, it will not supply you the correct answer. A top Google search lands you on History.com which gives the following list:

1. Charlemagne
2. Czar Nicholas II
3. Mark Twain
4. Cicero
5. Charles Darwin

Based on that list, I'm surprised they didn't include Satan. For many years, Bill Cosby held the distinction of "America's Dad" – of course until his spectacular fall from grace. You may have heard he was in the news just a few days ago with a couple more lawsuits filed against him.

No, our greatest dad had sterling character qualities and gave of himself for his family. He poured the word of God into his son through example and on the job to nurture the greatest man in history. That should be a big clue. Now let's open God's word and learn about this special father.

First of all, he had a great pedigree. He was a descendant in Israel's official royal line. This information is spelled out in Matthew 1:1-16 starting at Abraham and proceeding down through King David, King Solomon, King Rehoboam, skipping down to King Josiah, and eventually to him.

In Matthew 1:19, our greatest dad is called "a just man." That means he was upright, righteous, virtuous, and obedient to God's commands. Basically, he was a **good and godly person**. Based on that and his behavior, we can draw a number of inferences. The verse also says, he was very **considerate** of his espoused wife. In v. 24 he demonstrated his **faith in** God and **obedience to** God by following the instructions of God's messenger and even doing the very difficult thing of abstaining from intimate relations with his new wife for nearly a year.

Eight days after Jesus was born, this little family made their way six miles up to Jerusalem and went to the temple for the circumcision of the new Son as prescribed in the law. (Luke 2:21-24). Magi from the east came to their house to worship Jesus and give Him precious gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh (Matthew 2:11).

Shortly after this, the angel of the LORD instructed this father to take his family and flee to Egypt. Again, he **immediately and faithfully obeyed** (v. 13). When the coast was clear, the angel of the LORD again appeared to this faithful dad and husband and directed him return to Israel. On his way back to Judea, God warned him in a dream to move on from there (v. 22). He **obediently** took his family to Nazareth of Galilee and settled there (v. 23). By now, someone should be able to name this great dad.

That's right, we're talking about Joseph, the stepfather of Jesus Christ. The Bible contains very limited information about Joseph. We've already covered most of it. But in the brief glimpse that the Word of God reveals of him, we see a great man of God and an exceptional father. I'm looking forward to meeting Joseph in glory as well as Adam, Eve, Jesus, and loved ones who have passed on ahead of us. Anyway, let's return to our story.

We've already seen the character of Joseph described and in action. But what exactly did a godly father do back in that culture? Have you ever **heard** of the Shema? The word actually means to *hear*.

Deuteronomy 6

[4] **Hear**, O Israel:

The LORD our God is one LORD:

[5] *And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.*

[6] *And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be **in thine heart**:*

Don't just memorize them, but apply these words to your life.

[7] *And thou shalt **teach them diligently unto thy children,** and shalt **talk of them***

*when thou **sittest** in thine house,
and when thou **walkest** by the way,
and when thou **liest down**,
and when thou **risest up**.*

In other words, teach these words to your children at every opportunity and occasion.

[8] *And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes.*

Here it's saying to make these words always and only in the forefront of your mind.

[9] *And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates.*

Make these words a banner to all who enter your property.

The Shema continues to Deuteronomy chapter 11. We'll summarize sections of this chapter in the interest of time:

Deuteronomy 11

vv. 13-17: Advises to entirely follow the LORD and be blessed, otherwise if you turn from Him you will be cursed.

vv. 18-20: Repeats the directives given in Deuteronomy 6 to submerge yourself in the word and proclaim it.

vv. 21-25 Promises peace and prosperity for following the LORD.

vv. 26-29 God's blessings and cursings should be proclaimed on the adjacent mountains Gerizim and Ebal.

You recall from our study in Joshua half of the tribes of Israel assembled on Gerizim and recited God's blessings and the other half assembled on Ebal and recited God's cursings.

The last section of the Shema comes from:

Numbers 15

[37] And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

[38] Speak unto the children of Israel, and bid them that they make them fringes in the borders of their garments throughout their generations, and that they put upon the fringe of the borders a [cord] of blue:

Have you ever wondered how the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well in John 4 knew that Jesus, a stranger to her, was a Jew? This blue cord on the garment border likely tipped her off.

[39] And it shall be unto you for a fringe, that ye may look upon it, and remember all the commandments of the LORD, and do them; and that ye seek not after your own heart and your own eyes, after which ye use to go a whoring:

*[40] That ye may remember, and do all my commandments, and be **holy** unto your God.*

[41] I am the LORD your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: I am the LORD your God.

Joseph, in obedience to God's word, taught it to his children at every opportunity. That at least in part explains the mastery Jesus had for the truth of God – even in his youth. We're told in Matthew 13:55 that Joseph was a carpenter and in Mark 6:3 that Jesus also practiced that trade. Jesus became the apprentice of Joseph in the trade as was customary back then. Even today, it's quite common. I'm an example myself. My dad was an electrical engineer. I followed in his footsteps into that same profession.

So think of this scenario. Joseph is working with his hands at his trade. His son is watching him and looking up to him as little boys do. Joseph guides his young son to help him fashion wood into useful objects. Along with this work comes a pride of accomplishment, and Jesus slowly learns the skill of carpentry from his father.

But Jesus also hears the word of the LORD as Joseph works. Joseph likely sings Psalms, and Jesus learns them as well. He quotes scripture like the Shema that we read as his father followed its directives. My guess is that from the gifts given to the baby Jesus, Joseph would have purchased for Jesus a copy of the Word of God. This would help explain the knowledge and grasp of scripture that Jesus demonstrated.

Do you remember the incident when Mary and Joseph took Jesus to the Passover feast? Let's take a look:

Luke 2

[40] And the child [Jesus] grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him.

Notice Jesus grew physically, mentally, and spiritually. How did this happen? His parents nurtured the child, and very likely as we learned His earthly father had a lot to do with filling Him with wisdom from the the word of God.

*[41] Now **his parents** [Mary and Joseph] went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the passover.*

Here's another example that Joseph respected and followed the directions given in the word of God.

[42] And when he [Jesus] was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast.

[43] And when [the feast was over], as they [headed home], the child Jesus [stayed] behind in Jerusalem; and Joseph and his mother [did not realize] it.

Oh-oh! It's tough to lose track of your child.

[44] But they, supposing him to have been in the [caravan], went a day's journey; and they sought him among their kinsfolk and [people they knew].

[45] And when they [did not find him], they [returned] to Jerusalem, seeking him.

*[46] And it came to pass, that **after three days***

The three days may refer to the total number of days Jesus was separated from His parents.

they found him

Imagine being Mary and Joseph – three days! I'm sure those were some hard days and sleepless nights.

in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions.

[47] *And all that heard him were **astonished** at his **understanding** and answers.*

[48] *And when they [Mary and Joseph] saw him, they were **amazed**: and **his mother** said unto him,*

Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us?

*behold, **thy father** and I have **sought thee sorrowing**.*

Perhaps, they had red eyes from lost sleep and crying. They may have even still had tears in their eyes.

[49] *And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? [Did you not know] that I must be about my **Father's** business?*

[50] *And they understood not the saying which he spake unto them.*

Jesus played on His mother's reference to His earthly stepfather and reminded them of His higher calling.

[51] *And he went down with them, ... to Nazareth, and was subject unto them:*

[52] *And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.*

Notice even after He was twelve, His growth both mentally as well as physically continued. As His parents gave Him physical nourishment, we can be sure they also continued nurturing Him mentally and spiritually. Joseph again would have taken the lead role in this until Jesus finally left home.

Despite their upbringing and growing up with Jesus, their oldest brother, we learn in John 7:5 that even Jesus' own brothers did not believe in Him. And what about His neighbors?

Matthew 13

[54] *And when he [Jesus] was come into **his own country**,*

He was in his ministry phase at this point.

*he taught them in their synagogue,
insomuch that they were **astonished**, and said,*

[Where did] the **wisdom**,
and [...] **mighty works** [of this man come from]?

[55] *Is not this the **carpenter's son**?
is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, ...*

[56] *And his sisters,
are they not all with us? ...*

Notice here that they just said that Joseph is still with them. He was still alive after Jesus began his earthly ministry. This is the last sure reference to Joseph being alive. Mark 6:3 names Jesus' four brothers plus says he had sisters (perhaps also four). That means of course, Joseph had many children under his care.

[57] *And they were **offended** [by] him.
But Jesus said unto them,
A prophet is not without honour, [except]
in his **own** country,
and in his **own** house.*

As we saw, His **brothers** didn't believe in Him and neither did his neighbors.

In Matthew 12, we learn that Jesus was teaching crowds by the sea of Galilee when his mother and brothers urgently tried to interrupt Him. They had come from Nazareth about 15 miles away. He refused to give them audience. They very well could have been trying to get him to come heal Joseph or attend Joseph's funeral. We know by the time Jesus died, Jesus assigned John to care for His mother – implying that Joseph was no longer around (John 19:26-27). We'll end this study with one more surprising observation about the Bible's account of Joseph. Nowhere does the Bible include any words spoken directly by him.

Application

Now here's something else surprising regarding this Father's Day story. Jesus plays a very interesting role here. While as we have seen, He was the son of a great father (Joseph), He also was Joseph's Father! Jesus said, if you have seen Me, you have seen the Father (John 14:9). Jesus was the embodiment of God the Father in the flesh. The Jews wanted to stone Jesus for saying *before Abraham was, I AM* (John 8:58). And what can we say about His love for us?

I John 3

[1] *Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God:*

You may have noticed that this verse has been put to music.

In the next chapter (v. 8) John plainly tells us that *God is love*.

May each of us follow the example of Joseph with not only our children, but our grandchildren, and great grandchildren as we rejoice in the love that our heavenly father has for us.

*Now unto the king eternal, immortal, invisible the only wise God be honor and glory forever and ever.
Amen. (I Timothy 1:17)*

© Ron Harrod, 2023.

This document may be reproduced for noncommercial use only.