

# Father's Day 2019

Pastor James Foley – Shared Sunday, June 16, 2019

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**Main Theme** – Considering the lessons of serving as a foster-father & varied applicable principles.

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## WORSHIP & PRAYER

## WELCOME & ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **Regular Events**
  - Women's Ministry – Tuesday Evening, July 9, from 6:30–8pm
  - Men's Breakfast – Saturday Morning, July 13, from 9–10:30am
- **Special Events**
  - Teen Challenge Sunday – Scheduled for Sunday, June 30 (Outside Service)

## MORNING OFFERING

At this time, I want to call forth our ushers.

-Thank you for your faithfulness in giving to the Lord/His work

-Your giving fuels the work of Christ in and through this church

**NOTE** – Allow me to once again note that ONLINE GIVING is available (website)

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- **CHILDREN DISMISSED FOR CHILDREN'S CHURCH**
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## INTRODUCTION

As always it is wonderful to see you. I do look forward to these moments of corporate worship and instruction. I pray that you are ready to receive what the Lord has for you today. Please have your Bible at the ready and be prepared to take some notes.

## SETTING THE STAGE PT. 1

Happy Father's Day! This morning it is my honor to offer a Father's Day message to this assembly.

Fathers – today we CELEBRATE you. Whether you are a father biologically, adoptively, spiritually or beyond, we pay tribute to you, your work and your ongoing influence. We HONOR you as unique creations that reveal the particular genius and the nature of the Lord.

Fathers – today I want to SPEAK to you. Though this sermon will touch upon principles that speak to the WHOLE of the church (i.e., regardless of age and gender), I want to talk with YOU men of God in particular.

**NOTE** – I want to bring forth a word that is simple, straightforward, and somewhat UNIQUE when compared to years prior. Allow me to EXPLAIN what I mean by unique. I took some time to review my Father's Day sermons from the last number of years and I noticed something INTERESTING:

- Every sermon was based upon lessons I learned from my earthly FATHER (instruction/example)
- Every sermon was based upon lessons I learned from observing OTHER men who were fathers

**KEY** – NO sermon was based upon MY experience as a father/father-figure (because up until this past year I had NOT had any experience as a father/father-figure). Of course, this has changed greatly, as I have had the joy of serving as a foster father to the most precious little girl. May the Lord continue to establish His perfect will in her life!

Thus, this morning I want to speak from MY heart and from MY experiences as a FATHER...

## SETTING THE STAGE PT. 2

**KEY** – I'll be the 1<sup>st</sup> to say my experience as a foster dad is somewhat DISSIMILAR to a typical dad:

- Whereas you may have 2–3 children → 20–30 may end up passing through my home
- Whereas you may have 9-mos. to prepare for a child → I may get 24-hours of lead time
- Whereas you may be able to forecast the gender/ethnicity → I have a Forrest Gump exp.

“Life is like a box of chocolates—you never know what you are going to get.” –Forrest Gump

**NOTE** – I could go on and on noting the DIFFERENCES between fostering v. biological/adoptive fatherhood (some would be FUNNY – some would NOT). But there are THREE areas of POTENTIAL DISSIMILARITY that I want to address this morning.

I'm going somewhere with this. Please give me the best of your attention and follow along closely

## STEWARDSHIP

To begin, serving as a foster parent requires an enhanced sense of STEWARDSHIP.

**NOTE** – As a foster parent, I am continually reminded that the child in my home is NOT mine. Rather, I am a manager—a caretaker—a custodian of that which BELONGS to another. Despite what my heart FEELS in terms of bondedness and connection, MY little girl was and is never MINE.

**KEY** – Rather – she belongs to a biological set of parents and is a ward of the state.

-I operate as one who is CALLED upon to house, feed, dress, nurture, comfort, raise, discipline, instruct and love a child who in NO WAY belongs to me with all the energy and commitment of a traditional parent.

**NOTE** – Failing to do so will result in the DISCIPLINE and JUDGMENT of the state of Massachusetts.

Therefore, foster parents live with an acute sense of stewardship – caring for the child of another.

## **TRAUMATIZATION**

Continuing on, serving as a foster parent requires a willingness to deal with VICTIMIZED children.

**NOTE** – There is a UNIVERSAL truth that connects every child in the foster system (regardless of age and ethnicity). Every child in the system is the victim of some form of TRAUMA. Of course, not all traumas are created equal in a sense – but they are all REAL...

- Perhaps it was the trauma of being removed from their biological family and home
- Perhaps it was the trauma of being neglected by their biological parents (unkept/unfed)
- Perhaps it was the trauma of physical abuse and/or sexual molestation (heinous violations)
- Perhaps it is the emotional trauma of having biological parents that are MIA/no-shows (visits)

**KEY** – But every child in the state's foster care system (approximately 11k) are victimized and will have to navigate the difficulties and the BAGGAGE that comes from such traumatization.

### **1) This Is A Reality That Every Foster Parent Must Contend With:**

- The classes required for DCF licensure outline the myriad ways children can be victimized
- The classes required for licensure outline the ways in which these traumas can & do manifest
- Foster parents are informed of the particular traumas experienced by prospective foster children

### **2) This Is A Reality That Every Foster Parent Must Minister To/Address:**

- Foster parents work to heal the pain and hurt through love, compassion and real nurture
- Foster parents work to provide a safe environment where hurt children can grow and 'thrive'
- Foster parents work to instruct their children in healthy and functional ways to navigate this life

Thus, foster parents must work to address brokenness – directing children to health and function.

## **LIMITED TIME**

Finally, foster parents live with a heightened awareness concerning TIME.

**NOTE** – Since the goal of DCF is lawfully and nearly-always reunification (15–22 months), you learn to live with the fact that you have a child only for a VERY LIMITED amount of time. It is SO finite.

- You only have so much time to positively impact and influence the child
- You only have so much time to make an impression in the wet cement of their heart
- You only have so much time to build/repair a foundation that might be suitable for life/living

**KEY** – You only have so much time and so many opportunities to nurture, comfort, encourage, train, instruct, impart, pray with and love before the state removes them from your care (i.e., before your stewardship moves to a close).

**NOTE** – We were notified last week that our foster daughter will be returning home on July 1, at 9am. We must function with the reality that our time with her is so finite and, thus, PRECIOUS. Once it is gone – it is gone FOREVER.

-We only have so many more times to do those things most take for granted (e.g., feed her, play with her, teach her how to talk, read her favorite book, etc.). TODAY was the last Sunday she will worship with us in this Sanctuary, as she is away next weekend and the final Sunday will be outside.

-It is a hard thing to consider the finality of time

-It is a hard to consider all of the “lasts” we are experiencing

-It is painful to wish for more time – knowing that it is NOT in our power

**KEY** – But I can tell you it is greatly impacting what we do with the time that we have. WISDOM.

## **TRANSITIONS**

**NOTE** – As I say these things, it is POSSIBLE several thoughts might be going through your mind:

### **1) “Knowing This – Why Would Anyone Ever Want to Become A Foster Parent?”**

I can understand this sentiment. If we were not childless and longing for a family, I do not know if we would ever have gone in this direction. But, being where we are now (despite the pain), I would not undo it. This has opened up an incredible area of ministry and personal growth. This is one of the hardest seasons I have ever had to face, but God is doing some of His best work.

**KEY** – And it will yield reward...

#### **Matthew 25:40 (NIV)**

40 ... Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.

#### **Hebrews 6:10**

10 God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them.

**KEY** – PLEASE do NOT pity Misty and me. What we have experienced is wonderful and we would NOT trade our year in for anything. This pain will give way to great joy – and we know that God has great things in store for us (time and eternity).

**NOTE** – I AM praying for the Lord to call up more Christians to foster (11k children in need...)

Thus said, you may also be thinking the following...

## **2) “I’m Glad That The Things Pastor Shared Are Not True Of My Experience As A Father/Parent!”**

**Q. But is this true? No.**

**KEY** – This is where the potential dissimilarities between my experience and yours DISSIPATE.

LET’S DELVE IN...

### **STEWARDSHIP**

FIRSTLY, let us again consider the theme of STEWARDSHIP...

**NOTE** – Yes, being a foster parent requires an acknowledgement of STEWARDSHIP (i.e., you are the caretaker and custodian of another person’s child). **Q.** But is it really any different for those of you who are biological or adoptive parents? NO! In the end YOU are still but a steward.

-YOU serve as the manager, caretaker and custodian of a child that ultimately and entirely belongs to the Lord. It is a MISTAKE to think of your child as “your child” (in a possessive way). Despite what your heart feels in terms of bondedness and connection, your son or daughter was and is never truly yours – they BELONG to Him.

#### **Psalm 24:1a**

The earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it,  
the world, and all who live in it...

-You are to operate as one who is called upon to house, feed, dress, nurture, comfort, raise, discipline and love a child who has been entrusted to you. What a sacred privilege and obligation.

**NOTE** – Failure to do so will be accompanied by the discipline/pot. Judgment of Heaven’s Judge. i.e., We all exist as stewards – we are called to faithfully utilize/cultivate what God has given to us – and we will be called to ACCOUNT one day!

#### **Matthew 25:14–19**

14 “Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his wealth to them. 15 To one he gave five bags of gold, to another two bags, and to another one bag,[a] each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. 16 The man who had received five bags of gold went at once and put his money to work and gained five bags more. 17 So also, the one with two bags of gold gained two more. 18 But the man who had received one bag went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master’s money.

19 “After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them . . .

**KEY** – We know how this story goes! Let us allow it to inform and impact our parenting.

-Many Christians would be far better parents if they took this principle to heart. Your highest calling is NOT to raise a Red Sox/Pats fan; it is not to educate them and prepare them to be productive and successful citizens. It is to INTRODUCE them to Christ and LEAD them to/TRAIN them in the ways of salvation!

**NOTE** – This requires diligence and effort FAR BEYOND what many are offering...

-Keep skipping church; keep showing up late; keep giving them an iPad instead of opening the Bible with them – One day they will mimic your example. Is that what you truly and really want?

## **TRAUMATIZATION**

SECONDLY, let us again consider the theme of VICTIMIZATION...

**NOTE** – Yes, being a foster parent requires a willingness to receive, love and work with children who have experienced trauma and have the baggage to show for it. **Q.** But is it really any different for those of you who are biological or adoptive parents? NO...

**KEY** – Did you realize that every child born on this planet (regardless of the best parentage) has the ultimate DEAD-BEAT DAD who has inflicted great harm? What do I mean by this? Everyone connected with Adam (our ultimate earthly parent) inherits two terrible things (i.e., faces two traumatic realities):

- 1) GUILT** – We stand condemned by virtue of our connection with him (estranged from God)
- 2) DEPRAVITY** – We amplify that condemnation as we act according to our inherited sinful nature

Therefore, every human (your kid) stands victimized by the cost, consequence, and reality of sin  
Therefore, every human (your kid) will have to deal with the accompanying baggage of this reality

### **1) This Is A Reality You Are Going to Have To Recognize/Contend With**

- You cannot gloss over the reality of the cost of sin in the life of your child
- You cannot downplay the reality of the working/operation of sin in your child

### **2) This Is A Reality You Are Going to Have To Address As A Christian In The Lord**

- You must point them to Jesus (total Savior from condemnation and our fallen nature)
- You must model for them the reality of the Christian life (your lifestyle is the best witness)
- You must work to lovingly, patiently and diligently instruct them in how to serve the Lord God

**Proverbs 22:6 (NKJV)**

6 Train up a child in the way he should go,  
And when he is old he will not depart from it.

**Ephesians 6:1–4 (NIV)**

1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 2 “Honor your father and mother”—which is the first commandment with a promise— 3 “so that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.” 4 Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.

**KEY** – We work to UNDO the damage of sin and POINT our children to a better way (in the Lord).

**LIMITED TIME**

FINALLY, let us again consider the theme of TIME...

**NOTE** – Yes, being a foster parent requires an acute sense of TIME. i.e., We recognize that we only get so much time to positively impact a child. We only have so much time to make good impressions in the wet cement of their lives. We only have so many opportunities to establish a healthy foundation upon which the Lord can (prayerfully) build upon.

**Q. But is not the same true of you biological/adoptive parents as well?**

**KEY** – Of course, you may NEVER receive a written notification that an expiration date has been applied to YOUR role as father (or mother). However, such a date DOES exist. Time is limited and, therefore, precious. Nothing lasts forever...

**James 4:14b**

14 . . . What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes.

**Ephesians 5:15–17**

15 Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, 16 making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. 17 Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord’s will is.

**John 9:15–17**

15 Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, 16 making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. 17 Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord’s will is.

**Psalms 90:12**

12 Teach us to number our days,  
that we may gain a heart of wisdom.



**NOTE** – I may only have WEEKS to MONTHS to impact a child. You may have DECADES. But, in the grand scheme of things, both are remarkably SMALL scales of time. Use the time that you have in the way that glorifies God the most! Once it is gone—it is gone FOREVER.

“As if you could kill time without injuring eternity.” –Henry David Thoreau

## **CONCLUSIONS PT. 1**

**NOTE** – As a FOSTER FATHER I must...

- Recognize the reality of my stewardship
- Commit to loving/raising a traumatized/baggage-laden child
- Accurately perceive the limited duration of my time to (+) inform and impact

...And I am the BETTER for it. These realities DRIVE me to better parenting and divine usage!

**KEY** – As PARENTS (fathers) YOU must...

- Recognize the reality of your stewardship
- Commit to loving/raising a traumatized/baggage-laden child
- Accurately perceive the limited duration of your time to (+) inform/impact

IF you do you'll be the better for it. Allow these realities to DRIVE you to better parenting/usage!

## **CONCLUSIONS PT. 2**

**NOTE** – Thank you for taking the time to join us today. Happy Father's Day to one and all!

**KEY** – Men – we honor and love you. We praise God for you and for the role that you play. As a small token of our affection, EACH man will be provided with a SMALL GIFT upon dismissal (USHERS).

- Consider it a small token of our affection and love).

### **Numbers 6:24–26**

- 24 The Lord bless you  
and keep you;
- 25 the Lord make his face shine on you  
and be gracious to you;
- 26 the Lord turn his face toward you  
and give you peace.