

Living is a process of building relationships. Family, friends, business people, teachers, God: each person we know becomes a part of our life. Now we can either build weak relationships or strong relationships. But strong relationships are the only ones that can make life really meaningful.

The fact that you are here today tells me that you have a good father - son relationship, and that you are working to make it better. I think that it is great! The relationship that you are building is one of the most important things that you can do in life because, you see, God chose the father - son relationship to show man what love really means.

Let's look at this a couple of different ways. Remember that God is miles above us in wisdom and knowledge, and that he has to use what we know to describe himself to us. So he sent a special messenger to us to show us what he is like, to be the image of God, and that messenger was Jesus Christ. To show how closely Christ represented God, God called him his son, and Christ called him Father.

This relationship is one normally filled with love, and that's what God wants us to see in Him: a being that is filled to the brim with love. If you could sum up the entire Bible in a word I am sure that the word you would pick is the word love. We read in both the old and the New Testament that we should love our fellow man as we do ourselves. The amazing thing is, this is the only way that man can live together! Man could have peace on earth if they could only follow this guide. But because so many don't care we have to exist in a world filled with war and violence. One of the many reasons that I believe that the Bible is the inspired word of God is that it is the only religious book that I know of that not only tells us to love each other, but it shows us by a very touching personal example what it really means to love.

Jesus was a sacrifice for us, for in John 3:16 we read, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son," and in 1 John 4:10, "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins." All this means that even though we didn't care about God, he loved us so much that he watched his one-of-a-kind son die for us. {Firefly / son} I'm sure you fathers know what it would be like if you had to watch your son die, especially if it were for someone who didn't care. You can see why God will show his wrath one day in punishment of the wicked and unfaithful. But I hope that you sons can see the agony God went through for us. This is what being a father is.

See, in addition to God and Christ being father and son; God has given us the wonderful compliment of calling these who commit their whole lives and hearts to him: sons. And both groups of you, sons and fathers, are privileged in that you can call God 'Father'. Now this is where your earthly relationship means so much. If your relationship is good, then your idea of God can be beautiful. But if it is bad, you may be like Martin Luther, a great Bible scholar and leader, who because of his attitude towards his earthly father could not call God his Father. There must have been a tremendous gap in his relationship to God. What a shame! What a responsibility for each one of us to make that relationship the strongest that can be. Fathers, can you teach your son about God; teach him to love him and trust him!

I have been extremely fortunate, for I have had, truly, the world's greatest dad. He has shown me love, care, interest, wisdom, trust, and even helped me to stand on my own two feet. I can remember the first time that we went camping together. I can remember him disciplining me. I can remember breaking his tools and feeling so rotten. I can remember being able to call on him at anytime for help with a project or a broken-down car. After one call from Murfreesboro to tow me home while he was at work, I thanked him and apologized for disturbing him, and he said something that really meant a lot to me. He said, "Son I don't mind at all. Some of the fathers I work with have to get their kids from the police." And I knew what he meant. We should be proud to bear a record like that. When Christ came to this earth he trusted and obeyed his father. Totally, setting the perfect example for us. In Phillipians 2:8 we find that Christ was 'obedient unto death'. And yet we find that that obedience resulted in glory for Christ, in that because he obeyed his father, even as it led to death itself, Christ became the symbol of love, hope, and life eternal to which thousands of thousands of people grasp each day of their lives. Sons, one of the greatest compliments of love and respect that we can give our fathers is to obey them in the Lord. Sure, they make mistakes sometimes, but believe me, so do you!

Spending time together is a very important idea in building up a personal relationship. Conquering the challenge of the woods for a weekend is a great way to do it. But too many fathers are too busy, and too many sons think their fathers too old for the family and home to be generally in good shape across America. We find the same idea in our spiritual lives. God tells us that spending time with him willingly will help us to love him more, and he asks us to pray to him, to worship him, and to study him. God wants us to think about him a lot. Jesus said that the greatest commandment is to love God with all of our hearts and minds. But we think we're so busy, or that God is so useless.

I am so very glad to see each of you here this morning. I have spent several weeks here myself when I was in Scouts, although it has been about ten years. Scouting is a wonderful program, and I want to encourage you to stay in it. It is very interesting to me that the large majority of Scouts that I see at board of reviews of the higher awards tell me that the most important part of the Scout law, which you will learn later, is "a Scout is reverent". To me it really shows how closely the principles of Scouting parallel the principles of Christianity. Both teach love and care for others. Both teach responsibility. Both teach self discipline. And both are a tremendous challenge. If you go full blast into Scouting and Christian living, I can guarantee that you will learn the beauty of the word challenge.

Living with Christ is to me like climbing a mountain; the going is tough, but the scenery refreshes the mind along the way. When you get more into Scouting and arrive breathless at an overlook along the trail, you will know what I mean. Be challenged by Christ's example. Be strong through his spirit, and let your soul be refreshed by glimpses of an eternal home with God in heaven. Let me challenge you, right now, to make this father-son relationship as much like God and Christ's as you can.