

Firm Grips and Tender Hearts

Sonora Smart Dodd heard a beautiful Mother's Day poem at church and it caused her to ask the question – but what about fathers? Her Father was a widowed Civil War veteran who was raising six children. There was no day set aside to honor him or any of the other fathers. She began to promote her father's birthday, June 19, as a time to remember those important men in our families. In 1926, President Coolidge supported such a day of recognition and in 1956, Congress recognized the day. President Nixon then established the third Sunday of June as the official Father's Day. It was a while in coming, but it is a noble recognition.

Father's Day compared to Mother's Day has a ways to go:

Mother's Day	Compared to
Father's Day	
\$11.23 billion spent on gifts	
\$8.23 billion	
152 million Hallmark cards	95
million	

This doesn't mean Dad's are not important. The National Center for Education Statistics indicates when fathers are involved in their children's activities, they have better grades and are less likely to repeat grades. The role of important and attentive males in the family is critically important.

Jesus refers to His "Father." He begins what we call the "Lord's Prayer" with the endearing term of "Our Father..." He told Mary that when he was left at the Temple in Jerusalem, he was "about His Father's business." From the cross, Jesus cried out "Abba Father." We refer to the great heroes of the Old Testament as the Patriarchs or fathers of the faith. Proverbs frequently reminds the reader to listen to the teachings of the fathers.

Ephesians 6:1-4

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

Fathers are to guide children with a goal of leading them in the ways of faith. This takes loving strength, involvement, and patience. It is best done and then said.

Those who have had men like this in their lives are blessed. This is a day to say thanks— to thank God and then thank these men.

But what happens to those who did not have Christian men to lead them?

II Corinthians 6:18

I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.

God desires that every girl and boy have a strong loving father. He designed for children to be nurtured by a mother and father who will guide them in His ways. But God does not leave something this important solely in the hands of those who are the physical parents. He will be that Father. He will send others of his family of faith to fulfill this role.

This time of year we are urged to remember Dad. Remember the strong and tender hands that have led us this far. But if those strong and tender hands were a teacher, an uncle, a pastor, a neighbor, or older brother – thank God for them and tell them they are God's fulfillment of his promise to you.

Dr. Bill Heston

bheston@fpchouston.org

Dr Bill Heston is Associate Pastor at First Presbyterian Church of Houston and is Licensed in Marriage and Family Therapy.