

A Man of Action
James 4:17
June 16,2024

Happy Fathers Day! - It is an honor to teach this morning - I know just how important Father's Day is to Pastor Sandy - and I know he hates not being here today.

So, I count is a privilege to have this opportunity to share from God's Word with you - Today I do want to share some thoughts about Fatherhood - The title to my message today is **"Dad - A Man of Action"**.

Let's begin our time in The Word in prayer and then we will read one verse together from James 4:17.

James 4:17 Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin.

I like the way the New Living Translation presents this verse - **Remember, it is sin to know what you ought to do and then not do it.**

My father was a GREAT DAD - We lost him about 9 years ago at age 96 - He was the Eleventh of Twelve children - His father was 60 when my dad was born - His father died when he was a Junior in HS.

I tell you this just to give you some context of what I am about to say - He didn't have a close relationship with his father growing up - His dad was a fairly old man.

Here is an excerpt from a letter that he wrote me the year he turned 80 years old - By the way, letter writing is a great way to share your heart with adult children - I loved getting these from my dad!

Just some context - My dad was born in 1922 - so he grew up during the Great Depression.

Let me relate some things that I feel have shaped my life. You are aware that I was born into a very poor family. It is almost impossible for anyone to really comprehend it unless they went through it. I can

never recall either of my parents holding me and saying “I love you”. But I now know why. Every minute was spent trying to make a living. Many days I am sure we were very close to starving. But I was really too young to remember most of it.

Imagine living life without electricity and running water. Heating and cooking were done by wood, and that had to be cut and hauled in. A doctor was available only in a life-or-death situation. I think my first visit to a dentist was when I was 18 years old.

The weather was indeed a factor in how well the family ate in any given year. The first Christmas I can remember, the other children were talking about what they would get for presents. I guess I expected some, but there were none - zero. We were lucky to have food, but I could not realize that at the time.

This was probably a big factor in how I began to look at life. “Do not expect much and I will not be disappointed again”.

So, when my dad BECAME A FATHER, most of this “**dad thing**” was new to him - But, my dad became a wonderful father - He was present - He loved his children - He disciplined us - and he knew how TO SAY NO when No was the right answer.

When I think of Mom, words that come to my mind are: **kind, warm, compassionate** - She was possibly THE KINDEST PERSON I have ever met - If you don't believe me, just ask Donna! - and remember, my mom was her Mother-in-Law!

When I think of Dad, these same words come to my mind: **kind, until he wasn't; warm, until he wasn't; compassionate, until he wasn't!** - Are you getting the IDEA?

At times, Dad could be a lot like mom - but when he needed to be, he could be a whole lot different! - I'm not saying dad was mean, because he wasn't - But, Dad was **A MAN OF ACTION** - WHEN NEEDED, DAD could put the fear of God in you!

Dad brought to our home what I would call AN ENFORCEMENT MENTALITY! - He didn't always know what needed to happen, but HE KNEW what wasn't going to happen! - You weren't going to BE DISRESPECTFUL towards him or my mom!

You weren't going TO TALK BACK - You weren't going to get away with STEALING - or LYING - or CHEATING - or any number of other behaviors that were JUST WRONG!

With mom, we could often talk her down from CERTAIN ENFORCEMENTS of the rules - Not so with Dad! - With dad, **"If you did the crime, you will do the time!"**

And, yes, if you are wondering, Dad believed in CORPORAL PUNISHMENT that was swift & convincing! - there were times WHEN HE WAS ANGRY, but he was never abusive!

You could say a lot of things about my dad, but you could not ACCUSE HIM of being a **DO NOTHING Dad** - He may have made some mistakes, but he would make them because he wanted his kids TO DO THE RIGHT THINGS - He wanted his kids to KNOW there as RIGHT and there was WRONG!

If my dad thought you were wrong, he was going to CORRECT YOU - If he thought you needed to DO BETTER or TRY HARDER, he would tell you - If you needed a NOT SO GENTLE reminder that he and mom were TO BE RESPECTED, he would deliver the message!

Again, did he handle every SITUATION PERFECTLY? - No, but he was always willing to do what he thought was right - He was never STANDING ON THE SIDELINES watching when it was HIS TIME TO ACT!

I believe ,without a doubt, the BIGGEST MISTAKES Dads have made through the centuries have come when they NEEDED TO ACT and instead THEY DID NOTHING!

A problem arose - a children STRAYED FROM TRUTH - A horrible choice was about to be made - And dad's response was to DO NOTHING!

Maybe they were paralyzed by GUILT - Maybe they were FEARFUL of making a mistake - Maybe they were simply afraid their child would NOT LIKE THEM - but, for whatever reason, Dad's often make a HUGE MISTAKE by standing by silently while a child or a teen's life is going sideways!

This morning I want us to look at TWO FATHERS who made just SUCH A MISTAKE - both are faced with an older child making BAD CHOICES - and rather than TAKING ACTION, they did nothing!

Both of these dads, in the CRUCIAL MOMENT that DEMANDED ACTION, refused to stand up and CONFRONT THE WRONG - Both of these dads made their biggest mistakes by SIMPLY DOING NOTHING in the presence of a disobedient child.

So, let's take a look at two dads that I will call **Do Nothing Dads!**

Let's first look at a man named Manoah - You know him better as the Father of Sampson - **Judges 14:1-4 Now Samson went down to Timnah, and saw a woman in Timnah of the daughters of the Philistines. 2 So he went up and told his father and mother, saying, "I have seen a woman in Timnah of the daughters of the Philistines; now therefore, get her for me as a wife." 3 Then his father and mother said to him, "Is there no woman among the daughters of your brethren, or among all my people, that you must go and get a wife from the uncircumcised Philistines?" And Samson said to his father, "Get her for me, for she pleases me well." 4 But his father and mother did not know that it was of the LORD--that He was seeking an occasion to move against the Philistines. For at that time the Philistines had dominion over Israel.**

Look first at the BAD, SINFUL DECISION Sampson is making - He is pursuing a Wife from the Philistine people - The Philistines were the ARCH ENEMY of Israel - They were Pagan Idol worshippers!

In the Law of Moses, God had PROHIBITED the Israelites from marrying the PAGAN INHABITANTS of the land - the reason for the prohibition was that GOD KNEW these wives would PULL HIS PEOPLE AWAY from following God.

Deut. 7:3-6, we read these words - He is talking to the people about when they INVADE THE LAND, **3 "Nor shall you make marriages with them. You shall not give your daughter to their son, nor take their daughter for your son. 4 "For they will turn your sons away from following Me, to serve other gods; so the anger of the LORD will be aroused against you and destroy you suddenly. . . . 6 "For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth.**

Manoah knew the Law of God - this is why he asks Sampson TO CHOOSE a wife from among the women of Israel - But, notice he STOPS THERE - He VOICES A CONCERN for the actions of his son, but Manoah doesn't act on what he knows is right - He caves to his **son's lustful desires!**

As a father, he may not have been able to STOP HIS SON - By this time Sampson is a GROWN MAN - But, at a minimum he could have REFUSE TO SUPPORT his son's pursuit of this Philistine woman - Instead Manoah SUPPORTS Sampson's sinful desires! - He even HELPS HIM arrange the marriage.

As a Father, he should have TAKEN A STAND - **"Sampson, we can't support this marriage! We may not be able to stop you, but we can't help you disobey God."**

Know this, your children will REACH AN AGE where you can no longer make them do the right thing - When A TEENAGE REACHES a certain age, if they are determined to disobey God, you may NOT BE ABLE to stop them!

But, that doesn't mean that you should SUPPORT THEM! - Dads, we have to TAKE A STAND for Truth - We may be THE ONLY ONE in their life that is telling them the truth! - Our Voice may be the ONLY DISSENTING VOICE they hear - BUT, BE THAT VOICE! - don't JOIN THEM in their sin!

Here is the question I hear bouncing around in your mind, **“Are you telling me I am to reject and abandon my child?”** - No, but I am saying that you DON'T SUPPORT THEM in their disobedience!

We can still love a WAYWARD CHILD without supporting their decisions that violate God's Word - As a matter of fact, we don't really LOVE THEM if we help them DAMAGE THEIR LIVES! - And to PURSUE SIN will always be damaging sooner or later!

Is this easy? - No, it will most likely be the HARDEST THING you will ever do as a parent - Why? - because your child WANTS YOUR APPROVAL - So much so, they will ACCUSE YOU of not loving them if you don't support their actions.

You can count THEIR REJECTION - and that is something you have to be willing to live with - to me THAT IS EASIER to live with than helping them DISOBEY GOD!

By the way, don't let verse 4 confuse you - **4 But his father and mother did not know that it was of the LORD--that He was seeking an occasion to move against the Philistines. For at that time the Philistines had dominion over Israel.**

Yes, God was going to USE SAMPSON'S DISOBEDIENCE as a opportunity to hurt His Enemies - We see this throughout in the story - **But don't confuse God's Sovereignty with God's support!**

God can use THE REBELLIOUS ACTIONS of any of us to accomplish HIS PURPOSES - that does not mean He approves of or supports our sinful choices! - God was not pleased with what Sampson did - but He did use it to DEFEND & PROTECT His people!

If you don't believe me, just look at the HORRIBLE PRICE Sampson paid for his LUSTFUL PASSIONS - He ends up A BLIND PRISONER in a Philistine Prison Camp - Blind because they PLUCKED OUT his eyes!

In the end, he COMMITS SUICIDE in a last ditch effort to kill his captures - Not exactly a HAPPY ENDING Sampson was hoping for!

God loves His People - so much so that He will even USE OUR SIN to BLESS THEM - Our God is a God of GRACE AND MERCY - but again, don't confuse His Grace and Mercy with HIS APPROVAL.

Back to THE STORY - My guess is that this is NOT THE FIRST TIME Manoah and his wife had given in to the DISOBEDIENT BEHAVIOR of their son - I'm sure if we had ALL THE DETAILS of his young years, we would see a PATTERN OF THEM GIVING IN rather than properly disciplining their son.

Moms, Dads, you have to start early CONFRONTING THE SINFUL DESIRES of our children - Folks, our kids are just like us - They have a SINFUL NATURE - and they must learn early that FOLLOWING THOSE DESIRES is costly and painful - **Early in their lives, you have to PROVIDE THE PAINFUL CONSEQUENCES of the rebellious actions & sinful choices!**

Dad, if you can't STAND UP to a rebellious 2 year old, you will never stand up to a rebellious 16 year old! - If you aren't willing to FIGHT AND WIN when they are young, you will never FIGHT AND WIN later.

Don't ever make the mistake of thinking SELFISH, SINFUL BEHAVIORS are cute or tolerable at any age - If you don't deal with it when they are young, you are in for SOME REAL HEARTACHES when they are older.

Somewhere along the way, Manoah became a DO NOTHING DAD! - Don't you make the same mistake!

Now, let's look at A SECOND FATHER who made similar mistakes with HIS SONS - Our next dad is a man named Eli - We find his story in 1 Samuel 3 - There we read:

1 Samuel 3:10-13 Now the LORD came and stood and called as at other times, "Samuel! Samuel!" And Samuel answered, "Speak, for Your servant hears." 11 Then the LORD said to Samuel: "Behold, I will do something in Israel at which both ears of everyone who hears it will tingle. 12 "In that day I will perform against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house, from beginning to end. 13 "For I have told him that I will judge his house forever for the iniquity which he

knows, because his sons made themselves vile, and he did not restrain them.

In 1 Samuel, chapter 3, we are stepping into the MIDDLE OF A STORY that takes place just before Saul becomes the first King of Israel - The Prophet Samuel is A YOUNG BOY who has been raised in the temple by a Priest named Eli.

By this time ELI IS AN OLDER MAN had two sons that we know about - Hophni and Phinehas - they were both also serving in the ROLE OF PRIEST in Israel - but the Bible is clear that they DID NOT KNOW the Lord! - their priestly service was described by God as both CORRUPT AND VILE!

They had committed SEXUALLY IMMORAL ACTS with the women who come to worship - they had ALSO BLACKMAILED worshippers in order TO STEAL extra meat from their sacrifices.

The Scripture tells us that Eli's son's had MADE THEMSELVES WEALTHY by taking advantage of the people who had come to worship - Now God was bringing HIS JUDGEMENT against them - and HE SENDS HIS message of Judgement through this YOUNG MAN, Samuel.

Notice that God's judgment of the sons of Eli were because they had made themselves **Vile - "cursed"** - In other words, THEIR OWN ACTIONS had brought GOD'S JUDGEMENT on them! - They were getting WHAT THEY DESERVED for the horrible way they had treated the worshippers of Israel!

But, look closely at why God INCLUDED THEIR FATHER Eli in the judgement - The boys were OUT OF CONTROL and God says, **"he did not restrain them!"**

God's anger towards Eli was NOT BECAUSE HE HAD done wrong - Eli had PERSONALLY PARTICIPATED in the done INJUSTICES DONE to the people - No, he had just REFUSED TO STOP his sons from doing them!

Like Manoah, Eli knew what God DESIRED from his son's - but he STOOD BY and let his sons carry out this evil - he did not try to RESTRAIN THEM.

This Hebrew word translated Restrain could also be translated **“to Rebuke”** - It appears that Eli NEVER REBUKED his sons - Apparently, he never PUBLICLY OR PRIVATELY called them out for their EVIL DEEDS!

Maybe Eli could not have PHYSICALLY RESTRAINED his sons - by this time he was an older man and they were in the PRIME OF LIFE - But, he could have at least CONFRONTED THEM - He could have CALLED THEM OUT - He could have made it known that he DID NOT SUPPORT their actions - Instead he stayed quiet!

Dads, we can't ALWAYS BE RESPONSIBLE for the CHOICES our children make - but, we can at a minimum VOCALIZE OUR DISAPPROVAL of what they are doing.

It seems that God did not hold Eli RESPONSIBLE FOR THEIR ACTIONS, but He did hold Eli responsible for not reprimanding them.

Hey DADS of younger children, are you restraining your children now? - Right NOW, while they are young and you have A LOT OF CONTROL over them? - Right now you can control or at least punish their behavior.

My guess is that Eli LOST CONTROL of his boys at a young age - then when they got older, the patterns had already been established - Here is a HARD TRUTH: **Once you loss control of your children, it is very difficult to get it back!**

Dad, we are THE ENFORCERS of our homes - That is part of our JOB DESCRIPTION as fathers - No, of course we don't do this in an ABUSIVE WAY - We need to always ACT IN LOVE - But, it is up to us to RESTRAIN OUR CHILDREN from freely & openly doing wrong!

There is an interesting verse in 1 Samuel 2:29 - Their God is announcing His prophetic judgment on the House and family of Eli - This time through a Prophet - There we read, **“Why do you kick at My sacrifice and My offering which I have commanded in My dwelling place, and honor your sons more than Me, to make yourselves fat with the best of all the offerings of Israel My people?”**

Do you see the UNDERLINED STATEMENT? - God says of Eli that he HONORED HIS SONS more than he honored God!

In other words, he cared more about PLEASING HIS SONS than he did about pleasing God - that is a heavy statement!

It reminds me of the words of Jesus in **Matthew 10:37 "He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me."**

Jesus is stating clearly that our HIGHEST ALLEGIANCE must be TO HIM - We need to love our children with all our hearts - but we must LOVE AND SERVE GOD first!

The truth is this, we can only truly love our children with the AGAPE LOVE of God when we FIRST LOVE HIM - Without the love of God in us, our love for our children will be inferior and flawed!

Eli's UNHEALTHY DEVOTION to his sons ultimately cost him his family! - WHY? - because he PRIORITIZED pleasing them MORE THAN pleasing God - Dad, don't make that SAME MISTAKE!

Well, there we have TWO FATHERS who made SIMILAR MISTAKES with their kids - When they needed to be MEN OF ACTION, instead they became DO NOTHING DADS!

It is interesting to me that the Bible is FULL OF EXAMPLES of Father's who MADE MISTAKES - As a matter of fact, I spent a great deal of time this week trying to come up with A FATHER WHO DIDN'T - The one guy in Scripture that got it all right!

I wanted to FIND THE GUY we could put up on the screen and say, **"This guy did it right!"** - Frankly, just the opposite is true - when we look at almost every EARTHLY FATHER in the Bible, we can LEARN LESSONS from the things they did wrong!

But, You might be thinking: What about Abraham: Ismael - OR ISAAC? - There was the SHOWING FAVORITISM with Essa over Jacob - What about Jacob: Remember his 10 sons selling the 11th into slavery - What about David: Yea, that whole situation with Amnon / Tamar and Absalom.

What about Solomon (he wrote all those Proverbs about wisdom) - Have you read about HIS SON REHOBOAM who split the Whole Kingdom of Israel?

I POINT THIS OUT because Dad, I DON'T WANT YOU TO BE DISCOURAGED today - If you have MADE MISTAKES with your family, You join a LONG LIST of imperfect fathers WHOSE STORIES FILL the pages of Scripture.

I chose TWO IMPERFECT father's to study today - My goal was not to make YOU FEEL GUILTY - or to make you feel like a FAILURE - My goal was to help us all to be BETTER FATHERS!

I hope I have encouraged you TO TAKE ACTION in your home when action is needed - I hope I have encouraged you to LOVINGLY CONFRONT your children when they MAKE WRONG TURNS - or when they CHALLENGE YOUR AUTHORITY!

Mostly, I hope today has made you realize JUST HOW IMPORTANT you are to your family - You have a TOUGH JOB - you are THE ENFORCER!

You are both the FIRST LINE of defense for you family - AND you are the LAST LINE of defense for them - You have got to be willing to FIGHT FOR YOU FAMILY!

I'm afraid today our world HAS BECOME FULL of "**Do Nothing Dads**" - But, You and I don't have to be one! - Make a commitment today to be a MAN OF ACTION.

You are a Dad with a DUTY! - That Duty is to LEAD your family in PATH'S OF RIGHTEOUSNESS! - You are your families SHEPHERD - LEAD!

Let's Pray!

Pass out Candy bars to dads! - Father's Stand!

Reminder about the Parenting Class in July!