

## Faith of Our Fathers

### [1 Kings 19:1-15](#)

Our scripture lesson today talks about following the voice of God and reaching deep within ourselves to find faith and strength to carry us on. This is one of those scriptures that I tend to gravitate toward because if we look at the story as a whole we can see just how quickly the tide can turn. Just before this passage, Elijah had just beaten all the prophets of Baal in what appeared to be a prophets' duel. The prophets of Baal were challenged to offer a sacrifice and pray to their god to accept it. When they failed, Elijah instructed them to pour buckets of water over his sacrifice to God, than he prayed. God accepted and consumed the sacrifice as well as the water, and in the process destroyed all the false prophets of Baal. Elijah had witnessed a tremendous victory in the name of the one true God.

Yet the very next day he was literally running for his life. Queen Jezebel was not too happy at having lost all her prophets. She put a contract out on Elijah and he took off running. But even in his fear, God does not abandon him. God reminded Elijah that he had a job to do being called as a prophet of the God of Israel. God simply posed the question to Elijah, "What are you doing here?" God was acting like a good parent. God allowed Elijah to make the mistake of running from a challenging situation but then went with him and called him back to his duty.

Today is Father's Day – the one day a year that we recognize and honor our fathers. Mrs. Sonora Smart Dodd, of Washington State, first proposed the idea of a "father's day" in 1909 while hearing a Mother's day sermon. Mrs. Dodd wanted a special day to honor her father, William Smart. Mr. Smart, a

Civil War veteran, was widowed when his wife (Mrs. Dodd's mother) died in childbirth with their sixth child. Mr. Smart was left to raise the newborn and his other five children by himself on a rural farm in eastern Washington State. It was after Mrs. Dodd became an adult that she realized the strength and selflessness her father had shown in raising his children as a single parent. Sonora's father was born in June, so she chose to hold the first Father's Day celebration in Spokane, Washington on the 19th of June, 1910.

Not everyone here is a father, but everyone here has a father. Some of you men may have served in a fathering role or have come into that role as a stepfather or godfather or really cool uncle. There is something special about having a caring, loving father in our lives. Numerous statistics play this out as we see the significance and impact a father can have on a child's life. I also know that many grow up without a loving father as part of

their lives. The gamut runs from completely absent fathers to abusive fathers to workaholic fathers to completely dedicated fathers. Today I thank God for the fathers here who have put God first in their lives and in their homes. These are the men who continue to listen for God's call in their lives, whether that call is in the storms of life or in the still small voice of beaoning. Being a God-fearing parent is not easy these days. There are many things striving for our time, yet there are those that see the importance of raising their children in a Christian home. There are those that still make attending church on Sunday morning a priority. There are those that still hear God's calling even among all the noise of daily life.

What are the qualities that make a good father? Here's a list from Jillian Marcus:

**1- He's a good disciplinarian** - A good father loves his children, but he doesn't let them get away with murder. He does this through the power of his words, not his fists.

**2- He allows his kids to make some mistakes** - A good father realizes that his children are human, and that making mistakes is part of growing up. However, he makes it clear that repeated irresponsibility won't be tolerated.

**3- He's open-minded** - A good father understands that times, people and tastes change over the years. He shows his kids that everything has its value...

**4- He teaches his children to appreciate things** - A good father never lets his children take what they have for granted.

**5- He accepts that his kids aren't exactly like him** - Everyone is different and a father knows this.

**6- He spends quality time with his children** - A dad knows how to have fun with his kids too, taking them out to games, movies, and supporting their sports teams by attending their matches. He takes the time to listen to his kids and have a good, easy chat with them. He also makes time to help them with their homework.

**7- He leads by example** - A good father is above the old "do as I say, not as I do" credo. He will not smoke if he doesn't want his kids to do it. He's fiercely loyal to his family.

**8- He's supportive & loyal** - Although he may be a football fanatic, if his son doesn't share his love for the game, he accepts

it. A good father is also his children's public defender, standing up for them when needed.

**9- He challenges his kids** - A father wants his children to be the best they can be, and gives them challenges that help them grow as human beings.

**10- He teaches his children lessons** - A father figure is the prime source of knowledge in the ways of men, and teaches his kids accordingly. A great father knows he must sacrifice his own comfort for his fatherly duties.

**11- He protects his family at all costs** - As the main provider of security and necessities, a father will do whatever he can for his family. This is how a father instills in his children the importance of personal sacrifice.

**12- He shows unconditional love** - This is the greatest quality of a good father. Even though he gets upset at his children's faults and may lament that they did not attain what he hoped for them, a father loves his children no less for it.

Those of you who are fathers here today, we thank you for taking the time to nurture and love your children by showing them the value of putting God first in your lives and in your families. It seems a shame that we only take one day out of the year to honor our fathers. Those of us who have lost our fathers

probably still feel the emptiness that loss can bring. But we will always cling to the memories of those special times we spent with our dads. If we were fortunate enough to have a father that saw the importance of living a Christian life, humbling himself before God and leading his children in the ways in which God leads us today, we are truly blessed.

I'd like to close with a story about my father. I was about eight and my dad took my sister, brother and me out to fish along the shoreline near Nicodemus Bridge. My dad was showing my sister how to cast and I was watching intently. My brother was already pretty good at age five so of course the pressure was on. My sister was pretty good right off the bat so of course I wanted to outdo her! You need to understand one thing about this story – my brother and my sister are both right-handed. My dad was left-handed but he often did things with

his right hand as he was one of those whom the school teacher forced to switch. My dad forgot one simple thing – I am also left-handed. He stood on my left side as he went through the same instruction he had given my sister for me to follow. My dad stepped forward a little in front of me and to my left. I reeled back, swung my arm forward and released the line and hook just at the perfect time to hook my dad right in the middle of his back! Luckily he was wearing a jacket so I didn't do any permanent damage but let's just say my dad didn't stand close to me for the rest of the trip, and for some reason he never took me fishing again!

Fathers show us the example of love and patience that God often has to show us when we falter or stray from God's will. Even in the midst of the high points in our spiritual lives we may find ourselves quickly losing focus. Those are the times when

God calls us back with that still small voice. Thanks be to God for those who walk with us on our faith journey who can help us find our way again. And with special gratitude we thank God for our fathers today. May God bless and strengthen you and all of us as the children of God. Amen.