

“Our Father’s Day”

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John 14:6-9 **Jesus said to him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; and from now on you know Him and have seen Him.” Philip said to Him, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us.” Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, ‘Show us the Father’?”**

A father of five children once came home with a toy. He summoned his children and asked which of them should be given the present. “Who is the most obedient one here?” he inquired. “Who never talks back to Mom and does everything that Mom says to do?” There were a few seconds of silence, and then all of the children said in one accord: “You play with it Daddy!”

Does this describe your childhood? Children see what fathers do. They see how Mommy and Daddy interact. They learn about authority. They learn about loyalty. They learn about duty. On the flip side, they also learn about manipulation, sedition and betrayal. I’ll be honest: this little story doesn’t really describe my childhood, but I see the humor in it. My dad was the boss, the top authority, the strong disciplinarian. He spent four years in the Marine Corps and I did not want to go sideways with him. Sometimes he would get so angry at our disobedience I thought he was literally going to kill my brother (not me, because I was always an angel). Truthfully, I had my fair share of spankings. My mom kind of freaked out sometimes when the drill instructor came out of him. She was

worried he actually might go the distance. But he revealed a little secret to me and my brother once we'd gotten a little older. I never observed it during the epic sessions of getting chewed out, when my brother and I were both in tears and shaking in fear of imminent death, but my dad said when we weren't looking he would steal a glance at my mom and give her a little wink. That was the sign that he really wasn't a deranged drill instructor. For discipline to be effective in changing behavior, the receiver must believe the punishment is coming and it is deserved. If it's not deserved, one resents it, and maybe even develops a martyr complex. If punishment rarely or never comes, then there really is no motivation for behavior to change.

Fathers, we learn about authority from you.

Fathers, you learn about authority from God. If you don't respect God's authority, how can your child respect yours?

I learned from my dad that discipline, including punishment, is actually good, because it makes us take our bad behavior seriously and encourages us to not repeat it. Withholding punishment is actually harmful to a child's development, because they may never learn from their mistakes, which lays a shaky foundation for bigger problems later in life. Why are so many Americans in jail and in prison? I would venture to say that as children they never truly adopted a healthy respect for authority. Many of those in prison didn't have a father at home. Moms by default become disciplinarians, and there are many success stories of boys without fathers who succeed in life because their moms are so strong. But boys are not girls, and moms are not dads. There is an ideal authority structure ordained by God that started with Adam. If more men took that authority structure seriously, we would have fewer kids wind up in jail and worse.

The same principle doesn't change with God. God is our loving father. He chastens those whom he loves. He doesn't expect us to be perfect, but He cannot allow us to never learn. With so much evil in the world, which is really caused by a failure to respect and fear God, why hasn't He become the deranged drill instructor in the sky and just zap us all?

2 Peter 3:9 tells us,

"The LORD is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance."

He chastens those whom he loves.

I love my parents. They're still married after 54 years. I love my mom. Growing up, she was always my cheerleader and was always there for me. I love my dad. He was always my guide and mentor. He taught me to have faith in God. He taught me to respect Jesus Christ. He emphasized this passage so many times I had it memorized as a child:

"I am the way the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."

I remember Bible verses that he would print and hang on the walls. One was

Romans 1:16:

"I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for all who believe, for the Jew first and also for the Greek."

God wants us all to come to Him, and the only way is through Jesus.

This being Father's Day, it seems appropriate that we take some time to reflect on fathers. One of the many things that each of us has in common is that we each have a father. Some are good fathers, some are bad; some are beyond amazing, and some are unknown. Some are simply-biological—they contributed only what genes they themselves were born with—while some do everything a father *should* do without sharing a lick of genetic information.

Fathers come in many shapes and sizes. Some fathers work all the time; some rarely work or don't work at all. Some beat the living snot out of their children; some never lift a finger. Some drink excessively; some never touch a drop. Some go to church every Sunday; some never go to church at all. Here is the point: regardless of where your father fits on the

father spectrum—good or bad, rich or poor, mean or kind—each of our fathers has done one thing: he has *profoundly* impacted our lives—*deeply, tremendously, thoroughly* impacted each of our lives.

Let me share with you an article written by the late Erma Bombeck. If you don't know who Erma Bombeck is, she was a beloved humorist, bestselling author, and newspaper columnist from the 1960s through the early 90s. Over 30 million people devotedly read her bi-weekly columns. Some of the books she wrote were called *Just Wait Until You Have Children of Your Own*, *I Lost Everything in the Post-Natal Depression*, *The Grass is Always Greener Over the Septic Tank*, *Motherhood: The Second Oldest Profession*, and *A Marriage Made in Heaven ... Or Too Tired For an Affair*.

Clearly, she had a wry sense of humor. I suspect it was ultimately just a vehicle for her pearls of wisdom. In an article entitled, WHAT DOES A FATHER DO?, she wrote:

I received a letter from a single mother who had raised a son who was about to become a dad. Since he had no recollection of his own father, her question to me was "What do I tell him a father does?"

When my dad died in my ninth year, I, too, was raised by my mother, giving rise to the same question, "What do fathers do?" As far as I could observe, they brought around the car when it rained so everyone else could stay dry. They always took the family pictures, which is why they were never in them. They carved turkeys on Thanksgiving, kept the car gassed up, weren't afraid to go into the basement, mowed the lawn, and tightened the clothesline to keep it from sagging.

It wasn't until my husband and I had children that I was able to observe firsthand what a father contributed to a child's life. What did he do to deserve his children's respect? He rarely fed them, did anything about their sagging diapers, wiped their noses or fannies, played ball, or bonded with them under the hoods of their cars.

What did he do?

He threw them higher than his head until they were weak from laughter. He

cast the deciding vote on the puppy debate. He listened more than he talked. He let them make mistakes. He allowed them to fall from their first two-wheeler without having a heart attack. He read a newspaper while they were trying to parallel park a car for the first time in preparation for their driving test.

If I had to tell someone's son what a father really does that is important, it would be that he shows up for the job in good times and bad times. He's a man who is constantly being observed by his children. They learn from him how to handle adversity, anger, disappointment and success.

He won't laugh at their dreams no matter how impossible they might seem. He will dig out at 1 a.m. when one of his children runs out of gas. He will make unpopular decisions and stand by them. When he is wrong and makes a mistake, he will admit it. He sets the tone for how family members treat one another, members of the opposite sex and people who are different than they are. By example, he can instill a desire to give something back to the community when its needs are greater than theirs.

But mostly, a good father involves himself in his kids' lives. The more responsibility he has for a child, the harder it is to walk out of his life. A father has the potential to be a powerful force in the life of a child. Grab it! Maybe you'll get a greeting card for your efforts. Maybe not. But it's steady work.

– Erma Bombeck

One line at the end is worth repeating: “A father has the potential to be a powerful force in the life of a child.”

How powerful? Tony Cooke, a pastor and speaker from Oklahoma, tells this story:

A man came home from work late again, tired and irritated. He found his 5-year-old son waiting for him at the door. “Daddy, may I ask you a question?”

The dad replied: “Yeah, sure, what is it?”

“Daddy, how much money do you make an hour?”

The dad got mad and said, “That's none of your business! Why do you want to know?”

The little boy said, “I just want to know. Please tell me, how much do you make an hour?”

The dad, wanting to sit down and relax, said, "If you must know, I make \$20 an hour."

The little boy sighed and bowed his head. Looking up, he asked, "Daddy, may I borrow \$10 please?"

The father flew off the handle, "If the only reason you wanted to know how much money I make is so that you can hit me up for some cash to buy some stupid toy, then you march yourself straight to your room and go to bed. You're so selfish. I work long, hard hours every day and don't have time for this."

The little boy quietly went to his room and shut the door.

The dad sat down and started to get even madder about the nerve of his little boy. How dare he ask questions only to get some money. After an hour or so, the man had calmed down, and started to think that maybe he was a bit hard on his boy. Maybe his son really needed the money for something important. And so, the father went up to his boy's room and opened it, "Are you asleep, son?"

"No daddy. I'm awake," replied the boy.

"I've been thinking, maybe I was too hard on you earlier. It's been a long day, and I took it out on you. Here's that 10 bucks you asked for."

The little boy sat straight up, beaming. "Oh, thank you, daddy!" he exclaimed. Then, reaching under his pillow, he pulled out a wad of crumpled up bills. The dad, seeing that the boy already had some money, started to get angry again. The little boy slowly counted out his money, and then looked up at his dad.

The dad, now ticked off, demanded to know what was going on, "Why did you want more money if you already had some?"

The little boy replied, "Because I didn't have enough, but now I do. Daddy, I have \$20 now—and I'd like to buy an hour of your time."

How profoundly impacted was that little boy that he thought he had to pay his father just to spend time with him? Our fathers, whether deeply involved or deeply absent, significantly shape how we look at life, how we choose to live our lives. One type of father we *follow* by example, the other type we *avoid* because of their example. Sadly, the second is not always true. Sometimes the *bad* example is the one that is followed, in a generationally-repeating cycle of failure.

Here's a parallel to the story that I wrote in response:

A father came home from another long day of work. He was tired, as usual, but something significant had happened and he couldn't wait to share it with his family. When he arrived he discovered that the lawn hadn't been mowed, the dishes were still stacked on the counter, and his wife had left a note that she had taken the youngest kids to the store but his oldest son was in his room. She helpfully added, "Sorry the lawn isn't mowed." When he got to the room he stood by the closed door and listened. Occasionally he could hear his son's voice inside, but he couldn't quite understand what was being said. Out of respect, the father lightly tapped on the door. No response.

Knocking louder, his son's voice responded, "What is it?"

The father opened the door and entered. His son's ears were covered with a headset that allowed him to hear his favorite video game more clearly. He was deeply engaged in the game and was busy manipulating a controller faster than his father could follow. The father stood there for a minute, waiting patiently for his son's attention. After a while the son became aware of his father staring at him. "Sorry, dad, saving the world right now!" he said in a loud voice as he continued to play, expertly shooting a host of virtual enemies on the screen.

The dad nodded reluctantly. Then he turned to leave. In the doorway he paused, hoping his son would decide to stop what he was doing and listen to what he had to say.

But the moment passed. The father left the room and closed the door behind him.

Of the two dads, which one is most like how our heavenly Father would act towards us? Is our heavenly Father so busy running the universe that He doesn't have time for us, that we have to pay Him for his time? What kind of world would that be like, when only the wealthiest have access to God? That's certainly not what the Bible teaches. God cares less about your money and more about your humility. He cares more about what you give to others than what you get from them. President John F. Kennedy famously said, "Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country." I wonder if sometimes we get it all backwards. Are we so busy asking God to do things for us that we

forget it is our first responsibility to do things for Him? If we truly are the *servant* and He is the *master*, what in the world are we doing with the time He's given us?

Too often we just naturally serve ourselves first, then serve God if we have anything left over. I have to be honest. I'm from the video game generation and sometimes I struggle with the distraction of entertainment. Am I going to play X-Box games for four hours—which, while entertaining, have no eternal value—and forget to read the Bible, which contains the living words of God and are a treasure with *eternal* significance? I say this because I've done it! If you're a teen, you've done it too, maybe even last night! I don't know about you, but if you are like me, you are incredibly distracted. Whether it's Pastor Dave and his fascination with squirrels (I'm kidding), or my new and growing interest in mastering chess, or maybe your preoccupation with [fill in the blank], why do we this? Are all of the things we pursue literally like that gaming headset that shuts us out to our family, or, worse, to God? Is God the Father knocking on the door of your heart, ready to share with you, but you are too busy doing something that holds zero eternal value? Guys, I honestly think we are illogical creatures. We do things that make no sense. Maybe we have a touch of insanity. Someone popularly defined insanity as doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results. The essence of the gospel is that we need to change. We need to be transformed. We must be reborn from above. It's time we consider our complacency about God. He is the Master and we are His servants. He is the Father and we are the children. I know that. You know that. It's a struggle keeping it in perspective, but maybe we need to consistently act like we truly believe that?

If I polled you here today with the question, "Do you want to grow spiritually?", I'm willing to bet that all or nearly all of you would say "yes." If I asked, "do you *regularly* read the Bible and actually *study* God's word?", what do you think that figure would be? I don't know either, but I feel pretty safe saying it would be considerably less. Here's the thing: You can't get the first without the second; right? To grow spiritually you have to have an effective plan for growth. It's not going to happen by osmosis.

So, which child are you right now? Honestly. Are you knocking down doors to get to

God? Giving up your lifelong distractions? Are you looking for ways—and spending valuable time—to fellowship more with God? Or are you distracted, unhearing, and uninterested in what He has to say to you? Maybe you're somewhere in the middle. Half distracted and half committed. Let me tell you, the middle is not the safest place to be.

In Revelation Chapter 3, Jesus says to the church at Laodicea:

"I know your works, that they are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of my mouth. Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing'—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked—

"I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see.

"As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent."

As many times as I've read this passage, while I have understood the sternness of the warning, I never believed it was actually talking about me. But remember that this letter was written *to a church*, not a group of unbelievers. I'm not rich, but I do feel like my needs are taken care of. I'm not against God. I'm actually *for* God. But lately I've been wrestling with the idea of how much am I really for Him? Am I zealous? Am I on fire? Do I feel an overwhelming burden to save those who are lost? Helping save the lost, after all, is our *purpose* as Christians.

How about you? Are you zealous for God? Are you on fire to serve Him before yourself? Do you feel an overwhelming burden to save the lost? If not, I don't blame you . . . but GOD might!

While you chew on that, did it occur to you that maybe God is similar to the father in the parallel story? He's busy working, but He always makes time for us. He gives us chores

to do, but we forget—no, let's be honest, we *neglect*—to do them because we are too busy playing games that have no eternal value. He gently knocks on the door of our hearts, hoping we will respect Him enough to stop what we are doing and listen attentively. When we are slow to respond He waits patiently for us to come around, never forces Himself on us, but eventually leaves when we ignore Him long enough.

Does that picture bother you? It bothers me. I don't believe a Christian can lose salvation. Once saved always saved. The reason I believe that is because the Holy Spirit was given at Pentecost in a new way to those who believe in Jesus Christ as their God and Savior. The Holy Spirit is the comforter that counsels us and guides on the straight and narrow path of obedience to Christ. It's difficult for me to be obedient. I mean *truly* obedient. But the Holy Spirit communicates to my spirit when I am wrong. And I know what I need to do. I need to REPENT. Admit I am wrong and turn away from it. What is it today that you are struggling with? What distraction is keeping you from truly being a servant of God Most High? If you know, don't wait another second to repent. Do it right where you are seated. Admit you are wrong. He already knows, but you need to admit it to yourself so that God can cleanse it from your heart. Remember, God is a good, good Father. He has the power to cleanse you from all unrighteousness. But He never forces Himself on you.

Let's focus on Jesus. Jesus said to Philip, "He who has seen Me has seen the Father."

Colossians 1:15-23 says,

15. He [Jesus] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. 16. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. 17. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.

18. And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the

firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.

19. For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell, 20. and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of the cross. 21. And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled

22. in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and irreproachable in His sight—

23. If indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister.

Since a true Christian can't lose their salvation, "If indeed you continue in the faith" implies to me that it is possible to fake it. To be a fake Christian. But a fake Christian won't be presented holy, blameless, and irreproachable in God's sight. "Fake it 'til you make it" does not apply here. Are you faking it? Before you say no, I encourage you to ask God and let Him answer for you. After all, it's not what you think about yourself that matters, but what God the Father thinks about you.

Have you embraced **Colossians 3:1-4**?

1. If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. **2. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.** 3. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.

Sometimes life gets so complicated we lose sight of the big picture. Let me try to break this gospel down. If you're a believing Christian, I encourage you to set aside your comfortable thoughts about yourself for a moment and be challenged. If you are here and do not know Jesus Christ as your savior, I also encourage you to set aside your comfortable thoughts about yourself for a moment and be challenged. Let me start from the beginning

and ask you a series of questions. Answer them truthfully.

1. Have you ever lied? If I lied to you, what does that make me? A liar. So you've lied; what does that make you?

2. Have you ever stolen anything? If I stole from you, what does that make me? A thief. So you've stolen; what does that make you?

3. Have you ever disobeyed your parent? What does that make you? Disobedient. You've dishonored your father and mother.

Guys, the next one is difficult, but ladies, this applies to you just as easily. Jesus said in **Matthew 5**: "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart."

4. Have you ever looked at another person with lust in your heart? What does that make you? An adulterer.

By your own admission, you are a disobedient, lying, thieving, adulterer at heart. You've violated at least 4 of the 10 Commandments. If you went before God and He judged you based on your admission, would He declare you innocent or guilty?

Keep in mind, God is good. He judges righteously. Imagine you were in a courtroom and you've been declared guilty of serious crimes. What are you going to say to the judge? What are you going to say to God?

"Can you just sweep this under the rug and let me go?"

What judge is going to say, "Well, I see you are clearly guilty of serious crimes, but since you asked nicely, okay, forget about it!"? No! You've committed serious crimes that deserve serious punishment!

If you think that what's past is past, let me tell you, there is no statute of limitations on sin. "But I don't do those things anymore," you say. Really? You haven't had a lustful thought enter your head? You haven't cursed inside your head? You haven't imagined hurting someone who made you angry? Maybe you haven't acted on those thoughts (and I hope you haven't) but they still show up from time to time don't they?

If it's in your heart, you're guilty! I'm guilty! Let's not beat around the bush!

"But I've done so many good things for other people," you say.

Doesn't matter. Tell that to the judge. The judge looks at whether the crime has been committed. So you murdered someone, but then went and saved 40 kids from a burning building. Doesn't matter. You committed the crime. You saved 1,000 babies from an abortion mill. Doesn't matter. You committed the crime. You went to church every Sunday for 40 years and never missed a day. Doesn't matter. You committed the crime.

We deserve condemnation. **John 3:18** says we are actually condemned already. We deserve punishment. We deserve death. "For the wages of sin is death." **Romans 6:23**.

Christian, what's your response? "For we are saved by grace through faith, and that not of ourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast." **Ephesians 2:8**.

Yes, we are saved by grace. And there is enough grace to save everyone. But not everyone *is* saved; if you think everyone *is* then you ascribe to the unbiblical heresy of Universalism.

Whether you are a Believer or About-to-be-a-Believer, know this: Our Creator Father is a Holy God. He is perfect. He is so perfect that we cannot be in His presence any more than we can stand on the surface of the sun. It's physically impossible. We are filthy. Our hearts are filthy. There is no amount of work you can do to scrub your heart clean for God. In fact, your heart is more like the blackened hand of a frostbite survivor. Your heart is necrotic. It's dead. It needs to be cut out and replaced with a new heart.

So, you're standing before a Judge and he says, "You're guilty. Your fine is a hundred thousand dollars. Can you pay it?"

"No," you say.

As the bailiff starts to escort you away, in comes someone you don't know who tells the judge, "I am this man's friend and I love him. Here is a hundred thousand dollars."

The judge replies, "Payment accepted." To you he says, "You are free to go."

You look at the stranger in astonishment. How does what he did for you make you

feel? He did something for you that you did not have the power to do for yourself. Would you not be grateful? Would you not owe him your life?

There is no amount of money that can pay the cost of sin's death sentence.

Think about it. What is the most valuable thing in the world? How about the whole Universe? Gold can buy almost anything. But if you're dying of thirst and you have one choice between a gallon of gold dust and a gallon of water, which is more valuable? Can you drink the gold and save your life? Speaking of life, how valuable is life itself? Except for angelic beings, it does not exist anywhere else in the Universe. Life is scarce, and value is based on scarcity. Water is not alive, so life is actually more valuable than water. The bible reveals that the life is in the blood. We cannot live without blood. So is blood the most valuable thing in the world, because it represents life?

Whose blood is the most valuable?

Jesus of Nazareth is the God who became a Man. **John Chapter 1**. His heart was filled with the most valuable commodity in the world, God's perfect blood. Jesus lived a sinless life, and because he lived a perfect life he did not deserve the wages of sin, which is death. Taking the death sentence on the cross in Jerusalem 2,000 years ago—the death sentence that we rightly deserve—he took our place and paid our fine with his blood, the most precious commodity in the Universe. That act was performed by the grace of God. But unlike someone paying your fine, in order to receive this grace you must first respond appropriately to it.

Romans 10:9 says:

“If you confess with your mouth that Jesus Christ is Lord and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.”

Christ's resurrection from the dead was like the receipt for his payment. The sign that He indeed is God. The blood of God Himself paid your death fine. He did for you what you are unable to do for yourself.

How do you respond to that? Are you grateful? What can you give Him in return? You must give Him your heart. You must give him your time. You must give him everything that you are. You were purchased out of death. You owe Jesus everything. Do you act like it?

To confess that Jesus Christ is Lord is to pledge allegiance to Him as your Master. Servants serve their Masters. An employee who comes to work, punches the time clock, then sits down for the rest of the day—or even half the day—is a worthless employee. They deserve to be fired. A servant, whose job is to serve the Master, who shows up, punches the clock, then sits down for the rest of the day—or even half the day—is going to get thrown out.

Read the **Parable of the Talents: Matthew 25:14-30**

To believe that God raised Jesus from the dead is to pledge allegiance to Jesus Christ as your God.

Listen to what Jesus told the multitudes:

Luke 14:26-27— 26. "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. 27. And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple."

God will not tolerate *anything* that you value more than Jesus Christ.

The gift of salvation is free, meaning you can't purchase it with money or with actions, but it cost Jesus His life, and it actually costs you yours in return.

Don't take salvation lightly. Don't be deceived by the comforts of this world. Don't walk through life doing what you want to do and only then giving God some token act of kindness and think that you are pleasing to Him. A good servant must be obedient to his

master. Don't be a worthless servant.

You ask, "How can I serve Him faithfully?"

God gives each of us gifts of the spirit; use them prayerfully.

Put the needs of others ahead of your own; share Jesus with someone who is lost.

Ask God to share with you a sense of the love that He has for those who are lost, and ask Him to give you a burden to do something that glorifies Him. Then be ready for Him to respond. You remember the story of the father waiting in the doorway? God isn't going to give you this burden until you ask for it. Take off the headphones. Stop being distracted. Let God give you something to do that actually has eternal value.

Friends, Jesus Christ is our Father. Our Savior. Our Lord and our God. Let us be respectful and obey His authority over our lives. Let us seek to serve Him before we serve ourselves. Let us do our chores faithfully. Let us grow in a loving relationship with the God of the Universe, Jesus Christ.

Sharing Jesus Christ requires a plan. You should never go into battle without a plan. And it *is* a battle—against the devil and his hold on this world.

So I am taking volunteers for an 8-Session **Basic Training**¹ class designed to equip you to share Jesus Christ with the lost. Training starts the first week of July and you can sign up today, right here. It doesn't matter how old you are. I will fit you into an age-appropriate class.

Let me close with one final parable, written by Theodore Wedel of Washington D.C. .
(Source: Johnston, Ray. *Developing Student Leaders*. 1992. Zondervan. pp145-46)

THE LIFE SAVING STATION

On a dangerous seacoast where shipwrecks often occurred, there was once a crude little lifesaving station. The building was just a hut, and there was only one boat, but the few devoted members kept a constant watch over the sea. With no thought for themselves, they went out day and night, tirelessly searching for the lost. Some of those who were saved, and various others in the surrounding

area, wanted to become associated with the station and give of their time, money, and effort for the support of its work. New boats were bought and new crews trained. The little lifesaving station grew.

Some of the members of the lifesaving station were unhappy that the building was so crude and poorly equipped. They felt that a more comfortable place should be provided as a first refuge for those saved from the sea. They replaced the emergency cots with beds and put better furniture in the enlarged building. Now the lifesaving station became a popular gathering place for its members, and they decorated it beautifully and furnished it exquisitely, because they used it as a sort of club. Fewer members were now interested in going to sea on lifesaving missions, so they hired lifeboat crews to do this work. The lifesaving motif still prevailed in this club's decoration, and there was a liturgical lifeboat in the room where the club initiations were held. About this time, a large ship was wrecked off the coast, and the hired crews brought in boatloads of cold, wet, and half-drowned people. They were dirty and sick; some of them had black skin and some had yellow skin. The beautiful new club was in chaos. So the property committee immediately had a shower house built outside the club where victims of shipwreck could be cleaned up before coming inside.

At the next meeting, there was a split in club membership. Most of the members wanted to stop the club's lifesaving activities because they were unpleasant and a hindrance to the normal social life of the club. Some members insisted upon lifesaving as their primary purpose and pointed out that they were still called a lifesaving station. But they were finally voted down and told that if they wanted to save lives of all the various kinds of people who were shipwrecked in those waters, they could begin their own lifesaving station down the coast. They did.

As the years went by, the new station experienced the same changes that had occurred in the old. It evolved into a club, and yet another lifesaving station was founded. History continued to repeat itself, and if you visit that seacoast today, you will find a number of exclusive clubs along that shore. Shipwrecks are frequent in those waters, but most of the people drown.

IN CLOSING

If you have heard the voice of God speaking to your heart today, if the Holy Spirit is telling you to stop playing games with Christianity, if you know the Lord but want to renew your commitment to serve Jesus Christ, please listen to what God is telling you today and take action.

If you don't have a personal relationship with Jesus and you feel that your life needs a change, that you need a new heart, that you need to meet God, don't put the headphones back on and ignore what God wants to share with you. I invite you to get down on your knees, confess the sin in your heart, and place Jesus Christ on the throne of your heart as your Master and Savior.

God Bless you.

What do you think about this message? You can email me at:

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¹ I highly encourage you to visit Ray Comfort's evangelism ministry: www.livingwaters.com