

Bible Promises for Dads

The LORD is like a father to his children. PSALM 103:13

 Nick Connolly





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A Tyndale nonfiction imprint



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Designed by Ellery Sterling

Published in association with Jenni Burke of Illuminate Literary Agency, www.illuminateliterary.com.

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ISBN 979-8-4005-1105-9

Printed in the United States of America

32	31	30	29	28	27	26
7	6	5	4	3	2	1

Contents

Introduction 1

Anger 4

Bible 7

Children 9

Church 12

Comparison 15

Compassion 17

Confidence 20

Contentment 21

Courage 23

Death 26

Decisions 27

Doubt 31

Encouragement 33

Expectations 35

Faith 36

Family 39

Fatherhood 42

Forgiveness 45

Friendship 46

Future 50

Gentleness 52

Grace 53

Grief 55

Guidance 59

Health 60

Hope 62

Insecurity 66

Integrity 67

Joy 70

Legacy 71

Love 73

Marriage 76

Overwhelmed 80

Patience 83

Peace 86

Perseverance 88

Prayer 90

Priorities 95

Protection 99

Provision 101

Regret 104

Rejection 108

Rest 109

Self-Control 112

Temptation 114

Weakness 117

Wisdom 119

Work 122

Scripture Index 127

About the Author 135



Introduction

You're a good dad.

Maybe no one has ever said that to you before. Maybe your self-perception falls short of that reality. I know. I, too, can be my own biggest critic. It seems there's always more I could've done, more love I could've given, more patience I could've had, more initiative I could've taken, and plenty of failures and blunders to navigate. The list (and the internal soundtrack) goes on.

Maybe you don't feel like a good dad because of how *you* were fathered. How can you emulate something you've never experienced? Or maybe it's all the expectations—both spoken and unspoken—inside your own head and from others around you. There's a ton of advice about fatherhood out there, but it's tough to learn on the job. Perhaps you've heard it said, "It seems as if we are building and flying the plane at the same time!"

I've certainly felt that way on occasion. Sometimes it even feels as if we're building and flying while *learning* how to build and fly! Can we do all three simultaneously?

What makes a good dad? I'll bet it's not what you think. Being a good dad doesn't mean being perfect or having all the answers or even feeling like a good dad.

Being a good dad starts with knowing who your good Father is.

A good dad knows the importance and power of God's promises found in Scripture. Notice I didn't say that a good dad *knows it all*, but he *knows the importance* of drawing upon God's wisdom. We don't stand a chance apart from God's Word. The words of Scripture are *life* and *light* on the pathway of fatherhood, and we desperately need someone to show us the way on this journey.

Does that knowledge make us *perfect* fathers? Absolutely not.

Maybe you find yourself battling the fallout from a destructive family tree. Perhaps the fruit of that particular tree has found its way into your heart, and you have become part of the problem.

That may be your lineage, but it doesn't have to be your legacy.

As dads, we have to decide: Will we live from our lineage or live out our legacy?

Let me explain.

If, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much

INTRODUCTION

more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ!

ROMANS 5:17, NIV

The fact is, your lineage—no matter what kind of destruction it holds—didn't start with your dad, your dad's dad, or his dad before him. It started with "the trespass of the one man," namely Adam. Bad choices, passivity, selfishness, shame, and the tendency to hide—they've all been passed from generation to generation ever since.

Lucky for us, the story doesn't end there.

You see, Scripture also speaks of another man who came: Jesus Christ. This man came to redeem our lineage and to provide abundant grace and the gift of righteousness so that we might leave a beautiful and lasting legacy.

It's up to us: Will we live from our fallen nature and perpetuate the fruit of sin, death, and darkness, or will we allow Jesus to graft us into the tree of everlasting life? The same tree that produces grace and peace, wisdom and strength.

We are—and always will be—in the process of being formed into good dads. Let's commit to keeping our eyes on the Lord and his Word—to being in a committed relationship with our good Father—so that we can have access to wisdom and the power to be good dads even while we ourselves are being perfected in that same power over time.

That's our plan of action in these pages. We will rehearse some of God's timeless truths for life and fatherhood, and I pray that some of these truths will take root in your heart—adding confidence and courage to your fathering adventure.

When I tell you you're a good dad, I'm telling you the truth. Even if you don't *feel* the truth of it right now. Even when current circumstances don't necessarily support that truth. Even when you feel like an injured athlete on the field of fatherhood, playing day-to-day. Even if you have yet to see the good fruits of your fathering. You are a good dad, because only good dads are brave enough to attempt this climb.

Anger

At some point in my life, I somehow bought into the lie that feeling and showing emotions isn't manly. That any man who walks with God has (or should have) the ability to be unfazed in every circumstance. And even more, that anger in *any* situation isn't righteous.

But as I've grown in my walk with the Lord, it has become clear through reading Scripture that the opposite is true: God expresses emotions—deep, righteous, and perfect emotions—including anger.

The problem, then, is not the anger itself but the way we convey it. As fathers, it's essential that we help our kids learn how to recognize, process, and express *all* their emotions—*especially* anger. The way we teach them

begins with modeling it ourselves, working to recognize, process, and express our own anger in constructive and appropriate ways.

I find I often become angry about all the wrong things and communicate it in all the wrong ways. This type of anger is quick, punishes others, usually involves temporary and unimportant issues, and is ultimately unproductive. As fathers, we must acknowledge and repent of our hot-tempered and sinful emotions so that we can teach our kids to do the same.

Righteous anger, on the other hand, is slow to develop. It is born out of prayer and time with God, growing as the Word of God takes root in our hearts. We become angry about the things God is angry about. Godly anger expresses itself in godly ways—with appropriate restraint, humility, patience, and a willingness to sacrifice oneself for the greater good. This is the model we have in Jesus: An overturned table, yes, but he followed it up with a life sacrificed on the cross.

Mere human anger is hopeless and pointless. Godly, righteous anger displayed in Christlike ways can change the world. As fathers, let's learn the difference and help our kids do the same.

When you are struggling to control your anger . . .

Fools vent their anger,
 but the wise quietly hold it back.

PROVERBS 29:11

Let the Holy Spirit guide your lives. Then you won't be doing what your sinful nature craves. . . .

The Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

GALATIANS 5:16, 22-23

When you feel angry with your children . . .

“Don't sin by letting anger control you.” Don't let the sun go down while you are still angry, for anger gives a foothold to the devil.

EPHESIANS 4:26-27

Understand this, my dear brothers and sisters: You must all be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry. Human anger does not produce the righteousness God desires.

JAMES 1:19-20

When you wonder whether God is angry with you . . .

“Don't tear your clothing in your grief,
but tear your hearts instead.”
Return to the LORD your God,
for he is merciful and compassionate,
slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love.
He is eager to relent and not punish.

JOEL 2:13

Bible

We are living in a day when “content is king.”

Podcasts. Videos. Books. Internet. Streaming options. Apps. There is no shortage of information to be consumed. Our access to many different avenues of information guides our lives and ultimately forms our souls.

But there is only one source of content that truly matters, only one source of holy and divine information full of God’s promises and wisdom for life. I once heard a pastor say in a sermon that the Bible is the only book whose author is always present while we’re reading it. No other resource can deliver that kind of payoff.

Have you ever felt like you’re in over your head as a father—quite uncertain about what to do and which way to go? Those feelings are actually quite normal. But how you respond as a Christian father might be seen as *abnormal* according to the world’s standards.

As fathers, our lives must be formed and guided by the words of God found in Scripture. It’s imperative that we cling to God’s promises so that we might know which paths to take in life and in guiding our children. Start your day with Scripture. Consume it. Recite it and pray God’s promises for your children as often as possible. If your life is full of God’s Word, God’s wisdom will flow from your life. It is through Scripture and the work of the Holy Spirit that we discover the abundant life that God promises.

There’s so much content to consume in this world.

Make sure to prioritize the content inspired and illuminated by God's unchanging and powerful Word.

When you question whether you need to read the Bible . . .

The Scriptures say, "People do not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God."

MATTHEW 4:4

All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work.

2 TIMOTHY 3:16-17

When you wonder if the Bible applies to your life . . .

Your word is a lamp to guide my feet
and a light for my path.

PSALM 119:105

The word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires.

HEBREWS 4:12

When you need assurance that the Bible is true . . .

Every word of God proves true.

He is a shield to all who come to him for
protection.

PROVERBS 30:5

Above all, you must realize that no prophecy in Scripture ever came from the prophet's own understanding, or from human initiative. No, those prophets were moved by the Holy Spirit, and they spoke from God.

2 PETER 1:20-21

Children

Due to various circumstances when I was a child, I felt pressured to grow up too quickly. I became aware of burdens, demands, and responsibilities beyond what some would consider a typical childhood experience.

Isn't that how most of us live our lives? Culturally, it seems as if we're collectively trying to achieve and do as much as possible—to grow up as quickly as possible. But what if this is contrary to the very nature of the Kingdom of God? Jesus seems to suggest that God values the opposite way of thinking. It's almost as if he's asking us to put off our so-called sophistication and become younger in our perspectives—that is, we should repent of our cultural expectations, put on humility, and regain our innocent, childlike faith.

To be clear, becoming childlike does not mean being childish—which involves shirking our responsibility as dads within the family. To be childlike is to approach the world with awe and curiosity. To have a humble posture where we can learn from anything and anyone. It's the ability to see that anything is possible in life if we ask—and trust—our heavenly Father.

The real fruit of living as a child of God comes from inviting our kids onto the journey with us. Kids long for adventure . . . *especially* with their dads. As fathers, when we pursue a childlike experience of the Kingdom of God, we must teach our kids to do the same.

You might have had to grow up quickly. But I pray you'll spend the rest of your life learning how to be a trusting, faithful child of God. Because that's when being a dad gets good. Really good.

When you wonder if children matter to God . . .

[Jesus] put a little child among them. Taking the child in his arms, he said to them, “Anyone who welcomes a little child like this on my behalf welcomes me, and anyone who welcomes me welcomes not only me but also my Father who sent me.”

MARK 9:36-37

When you are preparing for the birth of a child . . .

You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body and knit me together in my mother's womb.

CHILDREN

Thank you for making me so wonderfully
complex!

Your workmanship is marvelous—how well I
know it.

PSALM 139:13-14

You will keep in perfect peace
all who trust in you.

ISAIAH 26:3

When you desire to discipline your children in a godly way . . .

Those who spare the rod of discipline hate their
children.

Those who love their children care enough to
discipline them.

PROVERBS 13:24

Discipline your children while there is hope.
Otherwise you will ruin their lives.

PROVERBS 19:18

Do to others as you would like them to do
to you.

LUKE 6:31

Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger
by the way you treat them. Rather, bring them
up with the discipline and instruction that
comes from the Lord.

EPHESIANS 6:4

When you realize that you can learn from your children . . .

Jesus called a little child to him and . . . said, “I tell you the truth, unless you turn from your sins and become like little children, you will never get into the Kingdom of Heaven. So anyone who becomes as humble as this little child is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven.”

MATTHEW 18:2-4

When you struggle to feel grateful for your children . . .

Children are a gift from the LORD;
they are a reward from him.
Children born to a young man
are like arrows in a warrior's hands.
How joyful is the man whose quiver is full of
them!

PSALM 127:3-5

Beware that you don't look down on any of these little ones. For I tell you that in heaven their angels are always in the presence of my heavenly Father.

MATTHEW 18:10

Church

As a pastor, I've heard a lot of men question the value of going to church.

“What’s the point?”

“I don’t hear from God through singing songs and listening to sermons.”

“In the outdoors or on the golf course is where I hear God best.”

Instead of discipling our children within the ecosystem of the local church, many dads have chosen to disciple their kids only in the ways of nature, the outdoors, the perfect swing, competitive sports, vacations, and pursuing success. All these things have their place and contribution, but I’m wondering if they’ve taken the place of our participation as men within the context of the family of God. I believe our God-given mandate—as men and as fathers—is to be part of what God is doing within the context of the local church.

When Jesus first spoke to his disciples about the importance of the local church, he said that nothing would ever be able to stand against it. As one father to another, I implore you to be involved in a local church with your family. Model for your children how to listen to the proclamation of God’s Word. Teach them how to worship, serve, and give sacrificially and cheerfully of their firstfruits. I’m not talking about merely going through the motions of church attendance. I am talking about modeling a Spirit-filled, life-giving devotion that overflows into every member of your family.

Neglecting to be involved in a gathering of believers that meets together regularly is a decision to spiritually neglect our children—whether we intend to or not. The other formative experiences of life will come and go. But

not the church. I pray you'll choose to establish the importance of the local church in your family.

When you wonder whether going to church is important . . .

Where two or three gather together as my followers, I am there among them.

MATTHEW 18:20

Faith comes from hearing, that is, hearing the Good News about Christ.

ROMANS 10:17

Don't you realize that all of you together are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God lives in you?

1 CORINTHIANS 3:16

Let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near.

HEBREWS 10:25

When your children have doubts about God and the Bible . . .

The word of God will never fail.

LUKE 1:37

You must worship Christ as Lord of your life. And if someone asks about your hope as a

believer, always be ready to explain it. But do this in a gentle and respectful way.

1 PETER 3:15-16

You must show mercy to those whose faith is wavering.

JUDE 1:22

Comparison

Dads aren't immune to comparison, though we might not like to admit it. We might even call it "a little healthy competition." We convince ourselves we're in the midst of a game rather than consenting to a contagious spiritual disease. Sometimes, it can look more like covetousness; we want what others have. Houses. Cars. Job titles. Salary packages. Health. Status. Personality or temperament. Other times, comparison may present itself as shame or guilt. We might convince ourselves we're not as good, present, or loving as other dads.

I confess I'm pretty good at all forms of comparison.

Here's what's hard about comparison: We usually compare our insides with someone else's outsides. We can see what's going on in our own hearts and minds. We're aware of our own feelings, desires, and aspirations, and we take those complicated internal things and compare them to someone else's shiny exterior—even though we know that people often look better on the outside than on the inside.

What's the solution? How can we live with confidence and contentment rather than constant comparison?

We must pay careful attention to our own work. This happens in two ways. First, focus on what God has put you on this earth to do. You have responsibilities that only you can accomplish. These things have been entrusted to you by God himself. Second, be grateful. Celebrate God's grace in your life. He has given each of us a wonderful inheritance (Psalm 16:6). Celebrate others, especially other dads. This is the ultimate antidote to comparison.

Be the kind of dad that doesn't allow comparison to undermine your abundant life. And help other dads do the same. You will be better for it—and so will your family.

When you feel tempted to compare yourself to other dads . . .

Do not judge others, and you will not be judged. For you will be treated as you treat others. The standard you use in judging is the standard by which you will be judged.

MATTHEW 7:1-2

Pay careful attention to your own work, for then you will get the satisfaction of a job well done, and you won't need to compare yourself to anyone else. For we are each responsible for our own conduct.

GALATIANS 6:4-5

When you worry that you aren't a good dad . . .

Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.

And now, dear brothers and sisters, one final thing. Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise. . . . Then the God of peace will be with you.

PHILIPPIANS 4:6-9

When you compare your child to other children . . .

You must not covet your neighbor's house. You must not covet your neighbor's wife, male or female servant, ox or donkey, or anything else that belongs to your neighbor.

EXODUS 20:17

A peaceful heart leads to a healthy body;
jealousy is like cancer in the bones.

PROVERBS 14:30

Compassion

It sometimes seems like society places greater emphasis on fathers being tough rather than tender. Tenderness is

seen as a weakness, a liability against one's manhood. Because of this, the art of compassion isn't always passed down from father to son.

Throughout the Bible, our God and Father is described as all-powerful and mighty. Choose any page of Scripture at random and you shouldn't have to look too hard to see this.

But it would surprise some to see God also described as tender and compassionate. Even more, it's common to see God describe *himself* as compassionate (for example, Exodus 34:6).

What the world would label as a contradiction, God sees as quite crucial to how he relates to and treats his people, his followers. Powerful and strong, yet tender and compassionate.

Can we say the same about ourselves as dads?

Do we hold toughness and tenderness together when dealing with our families? Or are we all laws and rules and restrictions? Are we constantly grumpy and short with our loved ones? Especially as fathers of young boys, do we communicate compassion as a liability, or as a beautiful characteristic displayed repeatedly by our heavenly Father?

It takes great courage to be compassionate. It means holding healthy boundaries while being patient and kind. It means that, rather than lashing out when your kids don't listen or obey, you press in, you get closer, and you find out what's happening in their hearts and minds.

Is it challenging to be compassionate in a world that values toughness? Absolutely. But it's worth it. As dads,

when we practice compassion, we proclaim the character of our God to our kids. And that's the stuff that changes hearts and lives. That's the stuff that lasts.

When you desire to be more compassionate with your children . . .

Be happy with those who are happy, and weep with those who weep.

ROMANS 12:15

Be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you.

EPHESIANS 4:32

Since God chose you to be the holy people he loves, you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience.

COLOSSIANS 3:12

When you struggle to have compassion for yourself . . .

There is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus.

ROMANS 8:1

All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is our merciful Father and the source of all comfort. He comforts us in all our

troubles so that we can comfort others. When they are troubled, we will be able to give them the same comfort God has given us.

2 CORINTHIANS 1:3-4

Confidence

When you feel unsure about your worth . . .

God created human beings in his own image.
In the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them.

GENESIS 1:27

What is the price of five sparrows—two copper coins? Yet God does not forget a single one of them. And the very hairs on your head are all numbered. So don't be afraid; you are more valuable to God than a whole flock of sparrows.

LUKE 12:6-7

When you need to be reminded that your role as a dad matters . . .

My child, listen when your father corrects you.
Don't neglect your mother's instruction.
What you learn from them will crown you with
grace
and be a chain of honor around your neck.

PROVERBS 1:8-9