

## **FATHER'S DAY**

**By Pastor Gordon**

**Introduction:** There was a father who had a newborn son. He was in the kitchen enjoying a sandwich loaded with ham, lettuce, and Grey Poupon mustard. His wife came to the kitchen, handed him the baby to get something out of the refrigerator. This was awkward for him since he had the sandwich in one hand and the baby in the other one. He placed the baby on his lap and noticed he had some mustard in his hand that he had used to hold the baby. He instinctively licked the mustard. To his horror, the taste was not of mustard, but the baby's poo-poo. In his panic, he ran to the bathroom and frantically tried to wipe his tongue. His wife didn't help much since she started laughing hysterically. Well, so much for compassion. Welcome to all fathers that are here and Happy Father's Day. Just know that God honors your role as a father and has given you a special grace to handle the difficult role and responsibility that you have. I'd like to take a few minutes to ask all the fathers, grandfathers, as well as those who function as father figures to come forward. Children, please also come forward to say a few words your father. Let me start by giving you a quick historical perspective of how we came to celebrate fathers as a national holiday. Father's Day had its origin in the church. In 1909, a lady named Sonora Dodd had heard a Mother's Day message and she was concerned that through the years, fathers were never recognized. She wanted to change that because of her desire to honor her father who was a widowed farmer that had raised six children on his own. He was also a civil war veteran. Sonora regarded her father as a hero because of the many sacrifices he had made raising those six kids by himself. Sonora approached the church alliance and argued the point that Fathers should also be honored; just like mothers, on an annual basis. The church alliance agreed with

Sonora and from that point on celebrated fathers on an annual basis. But, it wasn't until 1966 that President Lyndon B. Johnson signed a Presidential proclamation declaring the third Sunday of June as Father's Day. In 1972, President Nixon made Father's Day a permanent national holiday. Many children and wives during this time of year will buy their fathers a tie as a gift. Through the years, I've accumulated over 40 ties, so as you can see, I can use more ties in my wardrobe. What's important is not the gift, but rather the genuine love, compassion, understanding, and respect that are extended to fathers. The message God has for you today is intended to honor and uplift fathers, as well as to emphasize the need for you to also give honor and glory to God for being such an awesome Father.

**Sermon text:** 1 Samuel 1:1-8, *"There was a certain man from Ramathaim, a Zuphite from the hill country of Ephraim, whose name was Elkanah son of Jeroham, the son of Elihu, the son of Tohu, the son of Zuph, an Ephraimite. He had two wives; one was called Hannah and the other Peninnah. Peninnah had children, but Hannah had none. Year after year this man went up from his town to worship and sacrifice to the LORD Almighty at Shiloh, where Hophni and Phinehas, the two sons of Eli, were priests of the LORD. Whenever the day came for Elkanah to sacrifice, he would give portions of the meat to his wife Peninnah and to all her sons and daughters. But to Hannah he gave a double portion because he loved her, and the LORD had closed her womb. Because the LORD had closed Hannah's womb, her rival kept provoking her in order to irritate her. This went on year after year. Whenever Hannah went up to the house of the LORD, her rival provoked her till she wept and would not eat. Her husband Elkanah would say to her, "Hannah, why are you weeping? Why don't you eat? Why are you downhearted? Don't I mean more to you than ten sons?"*

**Message:** Elkanah is not a name that you will immediately recognize because there's not that much information known about him. But, he is an important figure in the bible because he served as a good example of the difficulties faced by men who are husbands and fathers. His name means, "God has possessed" which tells us that the Lord was in control of his life. This was fitting because he was a man who loved God. He was a Levite and the job of the Levites was to support the priest by maintaining the temple. All priests were Levites but not all Levites were priests. From this passage in the Bible, Elkanah was a kind and generous husband who loved and cared for his family. As he went to the temple to worship God, he took his family with him in keeping with his responsibility to be the priest of the home. That responsibility is given by God to all fathers involved in leading the family to know Almighty God, teaching children about the word of God, and setting an example by serving the Lord. Elkanah's wife, Hannah, could not bear children, and as a result, was personally troubled about this. The situation became intolerable by the constant torment she had to endure from Peninnah. Elkanah did his best to offer comfort to Hannah, but her grief was too great over this one issue of being childless. He faced a major challenge trying to deal with Hannah's depression over the issue of being barren. The Bible was silent on what action Elkanah took to try to bring peace between Hannah and Peninnah; but whatever he said or did, was not working since Peninnah continued to berate Hannah about her infertility. Peninnah was not just an instigator of the depression, but also was the root cause of Hannah's depression. She knew exactly how to hurt Hannah in a way that left her feeling empty, unfit, and dejected. Hannah refused to accept the fact that her identity was not in what others say about her. The fact that she had a loving husband, a rock-solid relationship with God, and a comfortable life, did not take away the depression she was experiencing.

Elkanah did his best by showing concern, understanding, acceptance, and love. He understood his duty as a husband was to function as a priest of his home. To that end, he allowed God to work through him in an attempt to console his beloved Hannah from this feeling of inadequacy. This couple was blessed because they both served the Lord. Hannah, like Elkanah, had a deeply personal relationship with God, and therefore, went to the temple to relay her case before the Almighty. She was so anguished in her spirit that Eli, the Priest, believed she was drunk and unfairly attacked her character by accusing her of being a wicked woman. Hannah, rather than become angry at this mischaracterization, denied the charges and confessed to Eli what was troubling her. This was a deeply personal matter that she had not previously shared with the priest until she was forced to defend herself against this false accusation. The priest had wrongly jumped to conclusions and had no proof of any wrongdoing on her part. His initial words could have been the tipping point to send Hannah over the edge of despair, but Hannah's relationship with God sustained her through this attack. After realizing his mistake, Eli changed his tune and allowed God to speak through him to address Hannah's issue. Eli offered words of hope that caused Hannah to rejoice once more when the priest informed her that God had heard and answered her prayers. More than that, the priest told her that the Lord pronounced a blessing over her for the Lord to grant her the desires of her heart. Just because pastors, teachers, apostles, prophets, and evangelists work for God does not mean that they don't miss the mark on occasions. We all tend to look at the outward appearance rather than at the heart on occasions. When Hannah went before God, she made a vow to the Lord by promising to dedicate that child to the Lord and raised him as a Nazarite. She told the Lord if He granted her a son, she would not only dedicate him as a Nazarite, but would give him to the service of the

Lord. The vow of a Nazarite involved consecrating the child to the service of the Lord. God did honor Hannah's prayer and granted her request. Hannah informed Elkanah about the vow, and he supported that decision. God granted her a son whom she named Samuel. With proof positive about the goodness of the Lord, she was at a crossroad on a major decision. God had honored his part of the agreement, and now, it was Hannah's turn to honor the promise she had made. The Bible tells us in Deuteronomy 23:21 that if we make a vow to God, He will hold us accountable to fulfill it. When we get into a desperate situation, there is a great temptation to try to bargain with God. We tell the Lord if He will get us out of trouble, out of debt, provide healing, or get us out of dangerous situations, that we would serve Him faithfully, attend church regularly, give of our tithes, take care of the poor or become a better person. It is not necessary to make such a bargain with the Lord because as His child, he wants to help us. But if we do make a vow, God will do his part, but many people choose to ignore their promise, not understanding that they are obligated to perform their part of the vow. Hannah was a woman of integrity and what she promised to God, she meant it in her heart. She was not trying to manipulate the Lord by making promises that she never intended to keep. After the child reached a certain age, she did devote the child to the Lord and allowed the priest to train him to perform the work of the ministry. Elkanah respected and honored God to the point that he stood by his wife's decision to allow the child to be nurtured and trained by Eli so that God could be glorified in Samuel's life. God said there is no sacrifice that we make on behalf of the Kingdom that he would not repay in far greater measures. Hannah and Elkanah found that to be true. As a result of dedicating their son to the Lord, they were able to witness that child becoming a man and ended up being a powerful servant of the Lord. He became a judge over Israel, a highly

respected prophet of the Lord, and a senior advisor to King Saul on spiritual matters, and also anointed David as King. Elkanah and Hanna were rewarded by the Lord for honoring their vow. They lost nothing in their decision to follow through in fulfilling their promise.

**CONCLUSION:** Fathers, please know that it is God who has empowered you with the ability and means to nurture, protect, and provide for your family. It is a most difficult responsibility, but you are not alone. God promised to stand by you as you endeavor to do your best as a father, a priest, and a husband. Continue to keep your hand in the hand of the Lord so that he can guide you on ways to overcome the many challenges that will come your way. Children, you can make that job easier for your dad by behaving, being respectful, as well as to appreciate the many sacrifices your dad has made in his attempt to raise you to be a successful adult. Dad won't always get it right and will make mistakes. That is where understanding, patience, and forgiveness come in. When you exercise those qualities, God will reward you with a long life. You will also make mistakes when you become a parent and will need the same type of grace, patience, and understanding from your children. Wives, please let your husbands fulfill their calling as the priest of the home instead of joking about submission. You can do that by not resisting their leadership, affirming them, praying for them, and respecting them. Praying for your husband to have the mind of Christ will go a long way to establishing peace in the home. Giving your husband wise and Godly advice and affirming his leadership will help him to be more confident. That will help to build trust in the relationship. If possible, let everyone take time to reach out to your fathers to let them know how much you appreciate them. If they had made blunders, try to come to a point of making peace with them. Resentment and anger are like

cancer, and will only serve the purpose of killing relationships and dash any hope of reconciliation. The bible says, as much as lies within us, we should strive to be at peace with everyone. Let this be a wonderful Father's Day by making a conscious decision to build the relationship rather than allowing it to be destroyed. Life is very short and every opportunity God has given us to mend relationships should not be ignored. On this Father's Day, let us also be mindful of our Heavenly Father whose mercy, grace, forgiveness, guidance, chastisement, support, and protection have kept us from going astray and permanently separated from the Lord. Let's take time to reflect on that relationship with the Lord to make sure that it is rock solid. We cannot make it in this world without God's abiding help. Take time to thank the Lord for His leadership, support, blessings, and even discipline.

**PRAYER FOR FATHERS:** Heavenly Father, we ask you to bless these warriors of the faith as they endeavor to fulfill the calling on their life to serve as priests of their homes. Help them not to be weary in well-doing by refusing to give up on their family or themselves. Thank you for coming to their rescue in times of need. Help them to build their family rather than repel them so that they will not reap a whirlwind in later years. Where there may be broken relationships, I ask you Lord to serve as a mediator so that that relationship can be reestablished for the sake of all concerned. We love you Father God and thank you for your leadership, and for being the Good Shepherd of our lives. You are a terrific Father who has been generous, compassionate, and loving. We want you to know that we are grateful for your many blessings. In the precious name of Jesus, Amen.