

Happy Father’s Day to all our fathers this morning. Let’s also not forget our Father in Heaven as we pass these wishes around.

I had two choices this morning. I suppose I had more than that, but for me it was narrowed to two. I could embrace the topic of Father’s Day this morning or I could deal with last Sunday’s shooting in the Orlando Nightclub that has been all over the news all week long. Since Father’s Day comes only once each year and sadly, there will undoubtedly be another terrorist attack soon, I figured I would go with Father’s Day.

Now, I know that sounds somewhat flippant, but I went online and found that so far for the first 6 months of 2016 there have been 734 terrorist incidents around the world. Somewhat skeptical, recognizing that there are places that consider themselves to be at war and war has rocket attacks and the like, I thought that maybe those things, as terrible as they are, shouldn’t be categorized as terrorist attacks. So, I went down the list, one by one, and only counted things like car bombing in public areas, suicide bombings, and mass shootings and executions. That brought the number down to 377. So that means about two per day.

So, I decided to go with Father’s Day. Maybe taking a closer look at fathers might, actually provide a remedy, at least partially, to some of the ills of our world.

Let me tell you all something about fathers that you might not know regarding their relationship to the church. Fathers are the backbone of the generational church. Well, if not the whole backbone, they are definitely T1 through T12, that main section.

Now ladies, no one knows better than I do how the women of the church are the ones who, for the most part, keep things operating. So, before you mob me, let me explain. I said that men are the backbone of the *Generational* church. According to studies down over multiple generations, while it is true that women tend to keep the church running day by day and week by week and it is mostly the mothers at home that get everyone to church on Sunday, for some unknown reason, statistically it is fathers who tend to be the determining factor on whether children continue to worship when they are adults.

Here are the numbers, and I will try to keep this concise as nobody wants to sit here and listen to a bunch of statistics.

If a father and mother both attend church regularly, 74% of their children will also attend church, either regularly or irregularly.

Of course, God would want 100%, but we're on the right track. A family, as a family, drawing near to God. And a family that attends church together will produce children that, most often, will have a church attachment for themselves and for their families.

But here is where it gets interesting. In families where the mother attends regularly but the father only irregularly, only on occasion, there is a 90% decrease in regular church attendance by their children. This applies to all children, both male and female.

Going further, if the father is a non-attender rather than an irregular attender, even when the mother is a regular attender and takes the children with her, regular attendance by the children in adulthood drops by another 33% beyond the 90% loss. In this scenario; father not attending, mother faithfully attending; 60% of their children will not have an active faith to pass on to their children.

So what happen if we look at the other way? What if the father attends regularly and the mother irregularly or not at all? In that case regular church attendance by their children actually increases by up to 33%. I know, go figure, right?

The bottom-line is that a father's impact in their children's and grandchildren's faith from one generation to the next is huge. Now, just so mothers don't feel neglected, while a father carries a higher influence generationally, it is the mother, if she is willing and strong, who most often sets the standard for the family, and her husband, in the present day.

Fathers need to hear this clearly. A father's role in their children's spiritual lives is profound. Choose to abstain from regular attendance and 90% of your children will be driven from regular community worship. You can say that you will just let them decide for themselves when they reach adulthood, but in doing so, statistically at least, you have decided for them.

And this doesn't mean that fathers have to be perfect in their faith. You don't have to memorize passages or be able to explain every intricate theology. As a matter of fact, allowing your children see, in their father, an authentic walk of faith that even includes questions within the context of an ongoing commitment to God, helps children to struggle towards God and the joy and peace that it will bring instead of choosing the easy path that has been modeled for them.

This is quite simply a Godly mission of presence. I know, so often we push back when we hear the word evangelism. It carries a picture of standing on a street corner or knocking on doors, but the greatest form of evangelism for a father is to simply, and regularly, worship with their families. The greatest gift a father can give to his children is an introduction to their Heavenly Father.

It is really not all that hard and the rewards are huge.

Comedian Jim Gaffigan, a father of five, recently said this when asked about why in the world he had such a large brood: "I guess the reasons against having more children always seem uninspiring and superficial. What exactly am I missing out on? Money? A few more hours of

sleep? A more peaceful meal? More hair? These are nothing compared to what I get from these five monsters who rule my life. I believe each of my five children has made me a better man ... Each one of them has been a pump of light into my shriveled black heart. I would trade money, sleep, or eve hair for a smile from one of my children in a heartbeat.”

What do so many fathers trade their children’s spiritual lives of living the fullness of life in the embrace of our loving God for? A round of golf, extra time with the sports section, an hour more of sleep on Sunday morning or maybe a later bedtime on Saturday night?

I know that not everyone has been blessed with perfect fathers, because, truth be told, except for our Father in Heaven they don’t exist. But here is a message for all men, whether they are currently fathers, plan to be fathers, or are a male role models for a child in their lives: Your children, the children that God has placed into your life are looking to you. They are looking to you, and most often it is not for what you think they are looking for.

I would like to end with a poem. I think I have probably shared it before, but it is worth hearing again, just to remind us of the importance of fathers and father figures and their deep impact on children. I added a couple of verses in the middle. See if you can guess which ones. It is entitled, *My Father is Not the President*.

My father’s not the President
 he’s not the head of state
And I don’t suppose the history books
 will rank him with the great

He didn’t scramble to the top
 or win a test of might
He chose instead to spend his years
 coming home at night

My father’s not the President
 he never gave a speech
But he used to bend his neck lowdown
 so my small arms could reach

And when I would look up to him
 he seemed to stand so tall
Now many years have come and gone
 and that’s not changed at all

My father’s not the President
 he’s not a famous man

But when I struck out in the ninth
he took me by the hand

And many times I've struck out since
perhaps I always will
But when I do he's got a shoulder
that I can lean on still

My father's not the President
Although his time is full
He sets his clock alarm each night
So his call can be fulfilled

And Saturday is not left out
For Sunday comes each week
And he wakes his family faithfully
For together God we seek.

I dreamed I stood upon a hill
high above the street
And thousands of important men
were gathered at my feet

Famous faces, millionaires,
great men every one
A voice told me to pick one out
and I could be his son

Each of them filled my ears
with self-important talk
Until I spied a man in back
shoveling someone's walk

He wasn't trying very hard
to make himself a star
He simply went about his work
and fixed the neighbor's car

He gave the shirt right off his back
to someone that was near

It was then I made my choice
and the others disappeared

My father's not the President
still it's plain to see
When everything is said and done
it's him I'd like to be

Men, let be the him you that you would hope your children will be.

Amen.