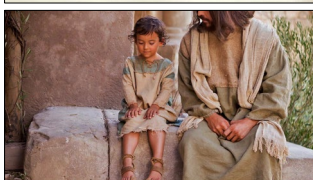
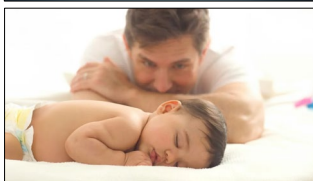


Dad Company

The Fellowship of Fatherhood

June 16, 2024

Today we're finding the formula for fellowship in fatherhood. Cuz we were *all* born to be *friends* and *family* – but the whole reason *behind* that *design* was to make things on *earth* the way they are in *heaven!* And up *there*, everything is peaches and cream cuz everybody is *friends* and *family* with the *Father!* So, if we want to prepare for *our place* in *His heavenly home* before we arrive, the big question is: **What does fellowship with the *Father* look like?**



So, let's start with some clarification on the *definitions* of *relationship* and *fellowship*: in the broad sense, **relationship is what we are to one another** while **fellowship is what we share with one another**; **relationship is the nature of our connection** while **fellowship is the expression of our connection**. So, for example, a *married relationship* is what makes us *husbands* and *wives* – but *married fellowship* is what makes us go on dinner *dates*, do our *taxes*, and *agree to this photo*.

And as *self-aware individuals*, **we can't help but connect to everyone in creation by relation**. We label everyone from *bosses*, *buddies*, *enemies*, and *frenemies* to *coaches*, *caretakers*, *BFFs*, and *CEOs*. And yet, in *every connection*, it's up to *us* what we *share* and *how* the relationship gets *expressed*. Cuz we may be *compelled to connect* but we're *not obligated to engage*. It's where our free will kicks in; **relationships are mandatory** but **fellowship is optional**.

But – there's one weird *exception* to the rule: PARENTING. Because the bottom line in every *parent-kid* relationship is **if parents don't engage, kids don't live**. For *mothers* and *fathers*, *not sharing* is *not* an option. Which means **parenting is the one relationship with forced fellowship!** Why? Well, I can't say for *certain*, but here's what we *do* know: 1) *God* created it that way and 2) *He* calls Himself *our Father*. And based on *that* information, it seems safe to *assume* there's *something* He wants us to know about the fellowship of fatherhood that defines Him.

And since it is our *earthly dad's* big day, we're gonna explore the *fundamentals* of fellowship to see what makes their relationship so special – and then listen for what *God* might be trying to tell us by expressing *Himself* as our *heavenly Father*. Cuz, as our *Father*, He tells us that *listening* to fathers is a matter of *life* and death (Dad's already like where this is going):

Listen, my sons [and daughters], to a father's instruction; pay attention and gain understanding. I give you sound learning, so do not forsake my teaching. For I too was a son to my father, ... and he said to me, "Take hold of my words with all your heart; keep my commands, and you will live. – Proverbs 4:1-4, 7 NIV

So let's keep *that* command and try to *understand* what *fellowship is*, and *why God's* is so *Fatherly*.

7 Fellowship Fundamentals Found In Fatherhood:



1. **Fellowship is activating.** Because **Fellowship motivates our movement.** Remember, *fellowship puts our relationships into action.* Cuz as the *expression* of a relationship, it's what a relationship *does*. It's how the *people* around you *poke, prod, and provoke* you to *get up* and *live* your life in one way or another.

And I call it the Bobby Rockanello principle. Cuz in my *teen* years, the father of a good friend used to always tell epic tales of his legendary *mischief*, exciting *escapes*, and *near-death experiences* – and *curiously*, every story involved his best friend, *Bobby Rockanello!* Because it was *always Bobby's* big idea that got things going; “*I heard about this racetrack in Tijuana where we can make bets without an ID...*” And everyone *has* – or *is* – the *Bobby Rockanello* that puts *action* in our *lives*.

But this *fundamental* of fellowship takes a *different* form in *fatherhood*. As much as *dads* want to *poke, prod, and provoke* their *kids* to share in an adventure, **dads focus on the outcome of their activities.** Dads know they're responsible for the *product* of the fellowship, so they aim it at *good*.

[And unsurprisingly, we see that lesson when we listen to God's instruction:] Let us consider how we may spur one another on *toward love and good deeds*, – Hebrews 10:24 NIV

Every *good* father, including *God*, wants *their fellowship* to activate something *amazing* in their kids because *they* can see the profound *potential* kids can't. Which is why:



2. **Fellowship is illuminating.** Because **Fellowship increases our awareness.** You ever notice it's *hard* to see the *back* of your own head while it's *easy* for *others*. That's because **a shared perspective is a superior perspective.** Seeing with *one* eye keeps our perception *shallow* because it takes at least *two* to see something's *depth*.

Back when I was 11, I got *this* sweet haircut over the summer cuz I thought girls would see me as a smooth operator... *I was wrong.* And although I wish they were little more *gentle*, it was the *fellowship* of my friends that made me see things more clearly. Because the truth is, **we need the input of others to see all dimensions of our world and ourselves.**

And increasing our *awareness* is a huge part of fellowship with a *father* cuz sharing *guidance, wisdom, and insight* is what dad's are all about. From the moment we were born, dad *had* to teach us how to stay alive; the only problem is, **we don't like hearing hard truths about being wrong.**

[So no wonder we *weren't* real excited for God's illuminating input that came with *Jesus*:] The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. ... but His own did not receive Him. ... [Cuz they didn't want to hear it from Dad anymore!] Yet to all who *did* receive Him, ... He gave the right to become children of God – John 1:9, 12 NIV

We generally prefer others' input to be *complementary*, but **a father's fellowship includes what we need to hear not just what we want to hear.** And *that* goes for God, too; cuz even if it *stings*:



3. **Fellowship is validating.** Because **Fellowship affirms our identity.** Through the *illuminating* accounts of *others*, we start to see the true *substance* in *ourselves* and our *experiences*. And when we hear how others express *their* experiences, **fellowship shows us who we *are* by teaching us where we *belong*.**

And as true as that is in *all* our various *social* settings, nothing validates us like family! Relating to *relatives* makes *us* make *sense*. And in every *father*, **seeing the source of our substance gives us a sense of acceptance.** I was at *my* dad's the other day and happened to notice we buy the same *hot sauces* – *and you know what* – it just made me feel like I was doing something *right!*

[And since God sent *Jesus* to show *us* our *heavenly* Father's substance,] Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God. – Romans 15:7 NIV

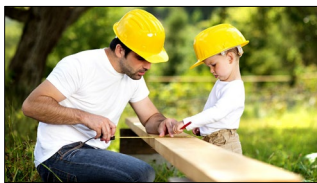
When we accept *others* as family, we show we share our *Father's* substance because we're acting like *His* kids. And as that grows our *confidence* in our *character*, it *also* gives us *guardrails* and *thus*:



4. **Fellowship is regulating.** Because **Fellowship keeps us accountable.** Once we *find* where we *belong*, it's important to *stay there*. And **it takes ongoing input to maintain an ongoing identity.** And *fellowship* provides a system of *feedback* where we can keep tabs on our *progress* toward the person we *want* to be. But that can be a bit *rough*:

As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another. – Proverbs 27:17 NIV

And you don't sharpen one *knife* with *another* – you use something a little *different* to create *friction!* Cuz as *nice* as it is to *feel* the fellowship of those with a *shared* substance, **nothing focuses us on who we *are* like seeing who we *aren't!*** And even though we share our core substance with our *fathers*, it's the *friction* from those *differences* that remind us we're *kids* not *clones!* And good fathers *expect* a little friction cuz they want to love their kids as *individuals apart* from themselves. And it's the *same* for our heavenly Father; the *difficulties* of our *differences* are worth it because:



5. **Fellowship is integrating.** Because **Fellowship builds a bigger body.** And *nothing* gets *bigger* without a few *growing pains!* **Fellowship doesn't just connect us, it changes us.** As we *express* our *relationships* by *sharing* our *experiences*, our identity grows *beyond* the individual and we develop dimensions *only seen* in our *community*.

The way it takes ol' Bobby Rockanello to *bring out* certain *pieces* of a person, **fellowship doesn't just strengthen the community, it grows each member.** Whether you *nerd out* with your *physics friends*, *talk smack* with your *fantasy football league*, or *do devotionals* with your *prayer group* – **the more you find ways to fit in community, the more you become you.** *Uniquely.* And when it comes to *fathers*, a big part of fellowship is *pushing* kids to do things like *go play*, *find a job*, or *get married* because they know we *belong* in something *bigger*; and *that's* 100 percent *heavenly* Father

For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body [And when we form a new body, we also live a new life, because:] – Romans 12:4-5 NIV



6. **Fellowship is generating.** Because **Fellowship creates new character.** After we *integrate* and *grow* ourselves as part of a community, **it actually makes a new version of you.** When we do things like *start careers*, *get married*, and *have kids* – we bring a brand new *boss*, *husband*, or *father* into the world! And we get to live *that* new life.

Because of the fellowship I've chosen, I've gotten to live *many* glamorous lives, such as Noah the *tortured musician*, Noah the *urine specimen collector*, and Noah *the guy in a van in Malibu*. And yet, even though they *all* had *value*, no *new* Noah can compare to the *first* one; *Noah the son*. It's the *foundation* of all *other* Noah's cuz **kids can't exist without a father's fellowship.** And only God can offer *that* foundational fellowship a *second* time, remember the verse we already read:

Yet to all who *did* receive Him, [AKA join in His expression of our relationship] ... He gave the right to become children of God – John 1:9, 12 NIV

So, of course He calls Himself our Father – cuz only *God's fellowship* can create something so new, it's like we've been *born again*; to live a *new life as God's kid*. And it's the *ultimate* example of how:



7. **Fellowship is liberating.** Because **Fellowship frees us from our flesh.** As we grow and *change* according to how we *choose* to *share* ourselves with others, we're not *just* changed into something *new* – **we're separated from everything old.** And it's a *relief* to realize that choosing our *fellowship* means choosing *whatever life* we want to lead!

Since relationships are *mandatory* but fellowship *is optional* – we are in charge of which people get to *know* and *grow* us. I am *free* to leave this church and hang out exclusively with *jugglers*, *acrobats*, and *daredevils* if I think the *circus* life suits me best – **because to find who we are, we have to leave who we were.** And both *good dads* and *our heavenly Father* encourage kids to freely *explore* their options for fellowship cuz they know the fundamentals of *other* relationships *may* stay the *same* – but there's something *special* about what *they* shared. So what is it? Well, what did we *learn*?

What does fellowship with the Father look like? It looks a lot like our *earthly* dads when *they're* at their *best*. Like *all fellowship*, it's *activating*, *illuminating*, *validating*, *regulating*, *integrating*, *generating*, and *liberating* – the only *difference* is, something *forces* dads to *do* it in a *specific* way. *Something compels* them to have to express *every* dimension of their relationship. Any guesses? **Love! Love is what forces every good dad to do the relationship right! It's** the *substance* we share with our heavenly Father that *reveals* – deep down at our core – **we all want what's best for others!**

Even if the ways of this world distracted and disabled some dads, the truth is, **every person on this planet has the instinct to love one another.** And although that *selfless* fellowship can feel inconvenient on earth, it's so *critical* to understanding who we *are*, that God gave us our *own* kids to *force* us to *confront* the feeling. Because He wants us to *know*, **we have a Dad who doesn't just have to share His love, but wants to!** He wants us to know a *loving* dad means all of the *stress*, *friction*, *confusion*, *pains*, and *change* in His fellowship is always aimed at our best. And He wants us to know when we *accept* that truth, the real *you* just chose to be born into His *real fellowship*!

[Cuz that's when] You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." – John 8:32 NIV