

24 What Fatherhood Actually Costs – and What It Gives Back

June 21, 2026 – Father's Day

Today is Father's Day.

And this year it arrives carrying more weight than usual.

Last weekend my family gathered – not for a celebration, but for a funeral.

We said goodbye to my father-in-law, Don.

My daughter and her new husband flew down for it.

And for the first time ever, my wife and I had every one of our children in the same room.

All of them.

Including the newest addition to our family – a son now, not just a son-in-law.

It was the first time we had ever been fully together.

At a funeral.

I will not pretend that wasn't hard.

Grief and gathering, sorrow and reunion, loss and fullness – all in the same room, the same weekend.

But it was wonderful.

Even there.

Even then.

Watching my children – grown now, one married, and a new son – stand together in the same space, I found myself doing what fathers do at moments like that.

Reflecting.

The Day Everything Changed

I will never forget the birth of each of my children.

Or the day we brought our youngest home through adoption.

Each one was life changing.

A before and an after.

Not just for them.

For us.

Dawn and I were different people walking out of those rooms than we were walking in.

Not physically per se’.

Mentally. Emotionally. Permanently.

There were moments of incredible joy. Awe that still catches me off guard at times when I think about it.

And there were moments – more than I’d like to admit – of feeling completely, utterly inadequate for the job.

Holding something that small.

Being responsible for something that significant.

No one tells you how heavy “significant” actually feels and no one really can because until you experience it yourself, you simply have no words for it.

If a Young Man Asked Me Today

If a young man preparing for fatherhood asked me, “What should I do now to get ready?” I would tell him gently:

There isn’t much you can prepare for.

Few words can capture how bringing a new life into this world changes you.

You can read every book.

You can listen to every podcast.

None of it fully prepares you for the gravity of it.

But there is one thing I would recommend.

One thing I wish someone had told me before I needed to hear it.

“Clear out the storerooms of your castle.”

In my book I write about the storerooms – the hidden chambers where we pack away ‘things’ instead of processing them.

We tell ourselves it won’t affect anything.

We tell ourselves we’ll deal with it later.

But fatherhood has a way of finding every storeroom you’ve ever closed the door to.

Because kids press buttons you didn’t know you had.

The Anger I'm Not Proud Of

I want to be honest with you here.

I was never abusive toward my children.

Not even close.

But I struggled with anger.

There were times – not many, but enough that I remember them clearly – when one of my independent little ones would do something, and frustration would rise faster than I could manage it.

Raised voice. Furrowed brow.

Those of you who have been there know exactly what I mean.

Those are not moments I am proud of.

And here is what I have come to understand:

That anger rarely came from what my child actually did.

It came from what was already sitting in my storerooms – unprocessed stress, old wounds, pressure I hadn't dealt with – and my child simply happened to be standing there when it overflowed.

Ephesians 4:26-27 says: "Be angry, and do not sin: do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil." (NKJV)

Notice what that verse does not say.

It does not say "never feel anger."

Anger itself is not the sin.

What we do with it – how long we carry it, who absorbs it when it spills over – that is where the danger lies.

And Colossians 3:21 speaks directly to fathers: "Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged." (NKJV)

That verse has a way of impacting you right where it needs to.

It doesn't say "fathers, do not struggle." It is not calling for perfection.

"Fathers... do not provoke."

Because a discouraged child is a child who starts building a castle of their own – one with rooms meant to protect them from the very people who were supposed to be their safest place.

What I Recommend Instead

If anger is something you struggle with as a father – or anything else sitting heavy in your storerooms – I want to encourage you toward something specific.

Seek help.

Start with a pastor or a trusted elder if that feels like the right first step.

But for some of us, it requires more.

A counselor. A professional trained in helping you clear out the actual root – not just manage the symptom, but understand where it came from and why it surfaces the way it does.

There is no shame in that.

There is only shame in leaving it unaddressed and letting your children inherit storerooms you built before they were even born.

And if you have already had moments like mine – the raised voice, the furrowed brow, the outburst you wish you could take back –

humble yourself and apologize.

Tell them you are sorry.

Do not mask it.

Do not brush it off with a joke or an excuse.

Do not hide behind bravado, because bravado is almost always weakness wearing a disguise.

Colossians 3:12-13 says: “Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another... even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.” (NKJV)

That includes forgiving yourself.

But it starts with owning it out loud, to the people you hurt.

Even when those people are small enough to still believe you hung the moon.

Especially then.

For the Fathers Who Are Fatherless – Not By Choice

I want to pause here and speak to a group of men this day often overlooks.

Some of you reading this are not fathers or rather do not have children you can hold.

Not because you didn’t want to be.

Because the path was closed to you in ways beyond your control.

Scripture does not shy away from this pain.

Hannah wept before the Lord, so broken that the priest thought she was drunk.

She was not drunk.

She was barren, and it was breaking her.

If that is you – if infertility has been your quiet, unspoken grief – you are not forgotten today.

God heard Hannah.

He does not promise every story will end the way hers did.

But He does not look away from the ache either.

Others of you have known a different grief.

The positive test. The overwhelming joy. And then the loss – sudden, silent, often unspoken because so few people know how to talk about it.

If you have grieved a child through miscarriage, that grief is real.

It is not lesser because the world never met them.

You were already a father the moment you found out.

You are still one now.

And I am sorry for what was taken from you.

A Quieter Grief

There is one more group I want to acknowledge briefly, and with as much gentleness as I know how to offer.

Some men carry the grief of a child lost through abortion – a choice made in fear, in pressure, in circumstances that felt impossible at the time.

I am not here to add weight to what you already carry.

You have likely judged yourself far harder than I ever could.

If that grief is yours, please hear this:

God's grace reaches into places we assume are unreachable.

David – a man who orchestrated the death of another man to cover his own sin – was still called “a man after God's own heart.”

Not because his sin didn't matter.

Because grace was bigger than his sin.

If you are carrying this quietly, you do not have to carry it alone forever.

There is healing available to you too.

What I Got to Keep

Last weekend, even surrounded by grief, I looked around that room and saw twenty-five years of fatherhood standing in front of me.

Not perfect years.

Years with raised voices I had to apologize for.

Years of feeling inadequate for a job no manual could have prepared me for.

But also years of birthday parties and scraped knees and devotionals and bedtime prayers and songs and reading books.

Years of watching a daughter become a bride.

Years of watching a stranger become a son.

Years of garden dreams becoming children (a reference to a section in my book), and children becoming the very adults now standing in front of me.

Psalm 127:3 says: “Children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb a reward.”

I believe that with my whole heart.

Even on the hard days.

Especially on the hard days.

So to every father reading this today – whatever kind of father you are.

Whatever kind of father you wanted to be and haven’t fully become yet.

Whatever kind of father this day reminds you that you are not, through no fault of your own.

Your story is still being written.

Mine still is too.

Twenty-five years in, and I am still learning.

Still apologizing when I need to.

Still watching my children grow into people I am endlessly proud of.

And still – every single time I look at them – completely, hopelessly amazed that I get to call them mine.

That part never gets old.

If you're struggling:

- Christian Faith-Based Resources: <https://mentalhealthhotline.org/christian-faith-resources/> or call 1-866-903-3787 (24/7)
- Crisis Text Line: Text HOME to 741741
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 988 (call or text)

You matter. However your road to fatherhood has gone – or hasn't gone – you are seen today. Please stay.

William James Meyer is the author of "Do You Live in a Castle? Breaking Free from the Walls That Hold You Hostage." He writes from a Christian perspective as a father of twenty-five years who is still learning, still apologizing when needed, and still amazed by the family God built.

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