

Mistakes You Don't Have to Make Father's Day 2018

Have you ever heard it said, "Experience is the best teacher"?

That is actually an incorrect quote.

What it's most current author, Benjamin Franklin, *actually* said was,

"Experience is a dear teacher,"

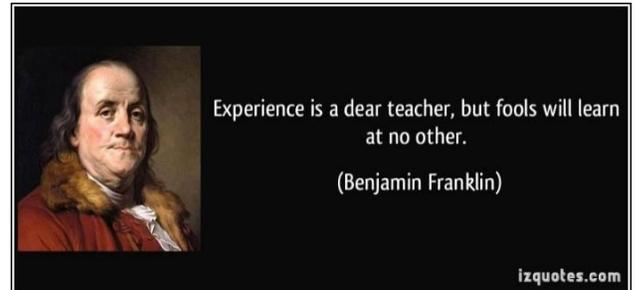
 "dear" meaning "expensive"

 (as in, "It cost me dearly!")

 and his phrase didn't end there.

He went on to say,

"but fools learn by no other."



Today, we're going to try to be *smart* people

 who *can* learn from the mistakes of others so we don't have to make them ourselves.

And since this is Father's Day,

 we're going to look at a father in the Bible who made some BIG mistakes,

The father for the day is none other than King David

 – a mighty man of valor, conquering King, and loved by his people.

 Even God said, "He's a man after my own heart!"

A man who penned some of the most beautiful poems and songs in history,

 read and sung for over 3,000 years and counting.

And yet, David failed miserably as a father.

So, Dad's? Let's go to the school of someone *else's* mistakes

 so we can avoid the painful consequence of those mistakes.

David had a big family.

The Bible mentions by name David's

 8 wives (which is 7 too many)

 19 sons

 1 daughter

The sons and daughters into today's sad story in order of appearance are:

Amnon	(Son of Ahinoam)
Absalom	(Son of Maacah)
Tamar	(Daughter of Maacah)
Adonijah	(Son of Haggith)
Solomon	(Son of Bathsheba)

Here's the abridged version:

Amnon would have said that he felt head-over-heels in love with his half-sister, Tamar. He was so crazy over her that he connived a planned to get her alone. Then, though she pleaded with him, he would not be put off, and he raped her. Afterwards (because it was never love at all) but only consuming lust, it says, Then Amnon hated Tamar with such intensity that this hatred was greater than the love he previously had.

2 Sam 13: 21 When King David heard all this, he was furious, *and he*
Unfortunately, there is no "*and he.*"

His daughter, Tamar, was traumatized by great betrayal and violent assault
That will be followed by a life-time of shame,
But Amnon, his cherished son was his first-born and heir to the throne.
The reputation of the royal family is at stake.
Though David feels awful about this and sees the great injustice of it,
he does . . . nothing.

Tamar's older brother, Absalom, is seething with anger over
his brothers sin and his father's inaction.
He quietly plots for two years, and then at an opportune time,
takes his revenge and kills his half-brother, Amnon.
Fearing his father's revenge, Absalom flees,

David mourns for the loss of two sons in one day.
The one killed, the other, and next heir to the throne, banished

Again, David feels things intensely, but does . . . nothing.
Until . . . two years later he is convinced through a clever ploy,
to let Absalom come home.
without ever addressing his sin and demanding restitution.

Absalom, having lost respect for his father,
and having ambitions of his own,
uses this opportunity to win the hearts of the people
and leads a coup to usurp the throne from his father.

It's David's turn to flee, and war ensues.
Though he urges his soldiers to please, not hurt his son, Absalom,
Absalom gets his hair caught in a tree and is hanging between heaven and heart.
Joab, David's military commander, chances upon him, and kills him.

David is nearly inconsolable at the loss of his son.

Down now a few more years,

David is on his death bed, and none of his sons are there to comfort him.

Quite the opposite is happening.

His next in line to the throne, Adonijah,

gets impatient that his father is taking so long to die,

gathered his forces and sets out to declare *himself* king.

Enter Bathsheba . . .

(You remember her? She's the one with whom David committed adultery and then had her husband killed to cover up his sin.)

She became one of David's wives, and David had promised that her that her son, Solomon, would be heir to the throne.

So, thanks to Bathsheba, Solomon is quickly brought forward and declared king.

Listen to the Biblical comment about David's fathering of Adonijah: (1 Kings 1:6)

[David] had never rebuked him by asking, "Why do you behave as you do?"

The result was sons who were spoiled, willful son

With an overweening sense of entitlement.

In time Solomon will have his brother and competitor for the throne, Adonijah, killed.

And then, although, Solomon enjoys a powerful and prosperous reign,

he too failed to keep all of God's commands

by taking too many wives and accruing too large of an army.

The result is that *his* son and successor, Rehoboam,

learned too well the power game his father,

and the kingdom was split in two, never to be restored.

Such a sad story.

Such a successful and beloved king, who fails as a father

and leaves so much heartache in his wake.

If I had to pick one word that described his failure as a father, it would be:

PASSIVITY

But why?

David wasn't passive in other area of his life.

Why here?

It's not hard to figure out.

Both Amnon and Absalom were in their late teens when
David committed adultery with Bathsheba
and then killed her husband, Uriah, to cover it up
and then brought Bathsheba into the house as the new step-mom.
They knew what happened.
Maybe not the details, but the shame and tension
would have draped the household like a shroud.

So when Amnon violated innocent Tamar, David saw himself
When Absalom murdered Amnon, David saw himself.

How could he discipline his sons for something he knew *he* was guilty of?
They'd undoubtedly play the hypocrite card,
"What moral authority do you have to punish me?"

David *had* lost his moral authority in the home.

Having no moral authority to address their bad behavior,
All he could do was just *hope* that with the passage of time
everyone would get over it,
and the problem would just go away.

David thought he could get to restoration without resolution.

Perhaps David *thought* he was showing mercy and compassion,
but he was setting his sons up for destruction

Is there anything David could have done differently,
to avoid some of these horrific consequences?

What might that look like?
What would be the opposite of passivity?

Unfortunately, for some dads, they flip to the opposite extreme.
Dad comes home and flies into a rage when his kids are caught in acts of rebellion.
Ironically, a father's angry outbursts are really the back-hand of passivity.
Flying into a rage is *equally* an abdication of responsibility

That's why James says, **(James 1:20)**
"The anger of man does not produce the righteous life that God desires."

And that's why Paul warns in **Ephesians 6:4**:

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.

So, the question remains.

If anger isn't the opposite of passivity, what is?

The opposite of passivity is responsibility.

How is that done?

Most of you who are fathers (or mothers) have some shameful failures in your past, failures you'd rather not talk about.

Is there a way those past failures could actually benefit your children?
instead of becoming a curse that follows your children into the next generation,
almost guaranteeing that they will repeat your sins?

What if David had had the courage and humility to say. . .
I have made some terrible mistakes
and my experience has been a dear (expensive) teacher.

Here's my gift to you . . .
Come and learn from my failures.

Let's look at some possible scenarios – bad and good.

What if David had said:
I know I messed up with Bathsheba.
Let me tell you what was going on that led to my bad behavior.
That's when I saw your mom/step mom, Bathsheba, on the roof,
I was in a bad place, yada-yada,
and then yada-yada.

Details not helpful!

Too many details could actually give teenagers in particular a strange sense of permission
to go out and do likewise, cause after all,
you're still around to talk about it,
and they'll be smarter than you and be sure not to get caught.

Or too many details could also traumatize the listener.

And besides, retelling of the past in hopes
that the other person will understand *why* you did it?
That's not confession, it's a veiled attempt at justification.

The goal is not to get the other person to excuse your behavior
because they feel sorry for you.
That's NOT taking full responsibility for your behavior.

Or what if David had started this way:
Listen, I need to tell you what I did because I feel so guilty;
I've got to get this off my chest.
Not helpful!

That would be using your sons or daughters as your therapist or pastor.
That would just be you trying to make yourself feel better,
And result in making them responsible for your emotional well-being.

So what could David have said?
But let's try this on for size:

Listen, you have all suffered as result of my sin,
and I want to take responsibility for that.
I was willful.
I wanted what I wanted.
I felt I was above the law, that the rules didn't apply to me.
But when I got caught, I was afraid people would stop admiring me.
I chose protecting my image above protecting my integrity.
I destroyed others to save myself.
I sinned greatly before God and many have suffered as a result.
God was merciful to me and spared my life,
The cost to me was dear, but it saved my life.
That's why you must understand that when you sin,
I will exact consequences,
not because I'm better than you,
but because I want to save your life just like God saved mine.

That confession would go a LONG way in opening the doors for healing in the family.
It wasn't the details they needed to hear, but the root sins of the heart.
That confession would be the gift of a costly experience they could learn from.
That confession could bring forgiveness of their father's failures
which would be the *best* insurance policy
against repeating those sins in the next generation.

Sometimes it's hard to sort through our bad behavior
and identify the root sin in our hearts.
I came across a good article that might be help.

I came across another great article on how to teach your kids
how to take this responsibility for the root cause of their bad behavior.
I'll leave both at the welcome center for your prayerful reflection.

But before we go, a word to wives.
Some of you may be frustrated with fathers who have abdicated their role in the home.

Here's my word for you:

Don't hog the ball.

Let me explain what I mean by telling you a story.

This story starts with some good news.

Michelle, my daughter, will graduate from her one-year alcohol rehabilitation program
in Florida, tomorrow, June 18th.

She will be flying home this week in time for Nico's preschool graduation on Friday.

I'd like to share one turning point, of which there are many.

So, I'm having lunch with a friend from my past a week or so ago,
and at the end of lunch she says,

"I want to pay for lunch as a thank you for something you said 20 years ago."

"You were teaching a class on marriage and you said
that wives should to be submissive to their husbands.

I said to you, 'That word made me cringe!

My husband was one of those passive husbands
who never stepped up to the plate to help raise or discipline the kids.
If I didn't take charge, everything would just fall apart.
But you said to me, 'Try it anyway.'"

I did, and it was the turning point in our home.

Once my husband realized that if he didn't pick up the ball
it was going to just lay there in the middle of the floor,
much to my astonishment, he picked it up!"

So, I responded,

"Well, as much as I too cringe at the word submission,
let me tell you how that lesson has come back home to me.

About a year or so ago I made a decision.

You see, Michelle's father lives in New Mexico.

I'm the one who had been navigating the painful waters
of substance addiction with Michelle.

He had the luxury of sitting back and criticizing my efforts,
Faulting me for enabling of the situation to continue.

(That was actually much truer than I wanted to admit.)

I was wise in my own eyes (that's arrogance)

And I allowed my empathy to cloud my ability to make appropriate boundaries.

(That's idolatry – putting another person perceived welfare above obedience to God.)

Well, since I had failed miserably, I figured I'd better put him in charge.

I told her father and I told her, along with everyone else involved

that I would make no more independent decisions.

I would express my opinions to her father,

but all final decisions were his.

It was amazing.

Instead of sitting in the background and criticizing,

he became responsible to help her succeed.

And Michelle?

Instead of hiding behind me to protect her from her critical, angry father,

she now had to face her fear of him.

She had to convince *HIM* of what she needed, or it wasn't going to happen.

So, there's my gift to you moms today.

My experience was a costly teacher.

Maybe you can learn from my failures.

This Father's Day will you consider giving your children the gift of your experience.

Not just the positive ones, to be honored and admired in the eyes of your children.

But the gift of your failures.

Why not let our children become wise at our expense?

Experience is a dear teacher

Let's only pay the price once