

Creator God is Father God and He has a plan to reveal Himself to the world through fathers and mothers. He does things that demonstrate His nature and as we see and experience them we come to know Him more through what He does. In the process we also learn who we are and become more like Him as we reflect Him to our sons and daughters through what we say and do. In raising sons and daughters in this way we leave a legacy that continues to grow beyond our own generation.

I have titled this book Things Fathers Do, but it is really things that God does and how we can best manifest Him through our lives to the people in our lives. So don't believe the lie that only men can father, and don't allow gender to disqualify you from revealing the Father. Find the best you that you can and express it. Not in competition or comparison, but in order to reveal the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, made as a man or a woman in the image of God, in every role and relationship through your life.



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Paul is still surprised at what he gets to do in life..... believing in a God who has never let him down and a life where he knows that God wastes nothing and gets him ready

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THINGS FATHERS DO

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A practical guide to fathering, revealing the Father and leaving a legacy.

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FOREWORD BY LEIF HETLAND

Things Fathers Do

Paul Manwaring

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Introduction

Dear Dad:

I am just finishing my third book. Yes, I became an author—among other things. Writing this book has been another journey into my heart, memory and spirit. Many times when I preach about the heart of our heavenly Father, I talk about you and the day 32 years after you died that I laid on my bed and had an imaginary conversation with you. As I came to finish this book, it occurred to me to continue that conversation and share with you the impact you've had on this book—and my life—through this letter.

You'd have thought by now—I'm 60—that I would have forgotten you or “got over” losing you when I was 15 years old. I have come to realize that “getting over it” is not a realistic goal for anyone who suffers the loss of a loved one at any time in their life. In fact, I often tell those who are grieving to instead work to weave the memory of their loved one into the rest of their daily lives. I guess I am living my message. To be honest, it would be impossible to forget you. I look a bit like you, although I have never grown a beard or mustache past ten days growth. My two sons love the things you loved and my grandsons are beginning to share those passions as well.

I'm glad that I can start this book with this letter. A few years ago I wouldn't have been able to write these words. When I realized that abandoning my sonship was unhealthy, I learned to be comfortable with memories of you and I became determined to not focus on what I didn't have, but to make sure that I lived with a desire to become the very thing I lacked. Of course, I would have loved to celebrate life's major events with you during these past 45 years, share with you my joys of marriage, having sons and grandsons. Sharing these things with you is an experience I will never know, but I have been blessed to enjoy the journey and even more-so now that I am aware I am living out things for which you had such value.

Dad, I wrote this book because there are so many people who have experienced absent fathers or fatherlessness and I hope that our story will help them to become the fathers they want to be, regardless of what they had or didn't have. This book is about things fathers do. My goal is to help people, especially fathers, to know that in their doing—in the living out of their lives—they make a difference. And the more confidently we do the right things, the greater the impact of our lives.

There are so many things to say. One thing I know is that whether our fathers still remain on this earth or not, their influence should never end. I am amazed by the way that DNA gets passed on: family traits get passed from generation to generation, even if the generations never meet.

As for me, I find myself with four things in my life that are so clearly influenced by you, even though we never spoke about what I would do with my life when I grew up, apart from childhood dreams of sports, astronauts and train drivers. I never had an adult conversation with you about dreams and skill sets, logical choices and how to pursue my gifting. Yet somehow, your life influenced mine in these profound ways. The first of these is that you were clearly a strategic thinker. I cannot imagine that you would have been selected for your work with Barnes Wallis and the Bouncing Bomb or sent to Germany to clean up after the war without a mind for strategy. You probably don't know this, but strategy and strategic thinking is also a trait I carry and one that has influenced my career in more ways than one. The second thing that influenced me is when you interviewed with Mum—just before I was born—to work with troubled young men, a job that you only didn't get because it wasn't suitable for a pregnant woman. And so, the third influence is when you became a manager instead. The fourth influence is that through all of those years you were a regular preacher. I still have your

notebook by the way. I found it in a metal box along with a gun and some engineering and other equipment. Don't worry I handed the gun in. I even had one of your sermons published in my first book, it was very good.

Those four pieces of your life have so clearly been a part of mine. I have worked as a manager of a juvenile prison, studied, taught and practiced strategic planning, and now I travel and preach. Thanks for the influence, you gave me more than you knew.

Food was always a part of our family; it still is. Memories of what you loved live on, time spent around the dinner table was a gift you gave me and I even recently discovered how many German foods you loved. You should know that I never visit Germany or Austria without eating a Vienna Schnitzel. The cheese, bacon and ham we sold in Sunnymead's Stores & Post Office were the best, you made sure of it.

These days I have a football and rugby ball always at the ready in the boot of my car, ready for fifteen minutes with my grandson. It reminds me of you, the way you might stop at somewhere like Richmond Park and get the cricket stumps out to play a quick game. In all honestly I can't remember many things that you said but I do remember the things you did and the impact they had on my life. You taught me not to be embarrassed when shopping for gifts for my wife. I still remember all the times you took me with you when shopping for Mum. You taught me to go to crazy lengths to buy the best gifts for my sons by the way you had things delivered for your sons and nephews, and that was before the days of online shopping.

And of course the last thing you ever did was buy me an SLR camera. Not a day has gone by since that I haven't valued photography.

Dad, you did things, big and small. The way you ran your grocery store and cared for your customers taught me how to pastor people and to love beautiful and excellent things. You always took an interest in the world around you, you treated all women with great respect and I could go on. You demonstrated so many things.

Most profoundly of all, you showed me all of this before I was fifteen. Perhaps it will encourage others to know the effect that you had, even though you left this life too soon.

This book was birthed when I was creating a memory with my youngest son, which you would have loved: attending the World Cup in Brazil. I still remember sitting with you and watching England win in 1966. We still haven't done it again—win the World Cup, I mean—but we will. I remember how you loved the singing of "Abide With Me" while watching the FA cup and of course I remember the hymn you loved to quote when you made a mistake. "Dear Lord and Father of Mankind, Forgive our foolish ways" and I remember your verse from the JB Phillips translation: "Do not let the world squeeze you into its mold."

I became a Christian the day you died. It was both the best and one of the worst days of my life. The things you did meant more than you knew, that's why I wrote this book.

My prayer is that those who read this book will find hope, redemption and restoration through the telling of our story. Some have also experienced the premature departure of their father, and others never had a good example of an earthly dad. I pray that people will realize the power they have to live life not regretting the deficiencies, but determined to look past their lack and give of themselves so that others—especially their children—won't experience that same lack. Of course, there are those who have had great life experiences with their dads. For them I hope they will see how blessed they are and live determined to pass that blessing to the generations to come.

Your son,

Paul

1. Fathers Do Things

The very first passages of the Bible reveal incredible truths; yet, behind the grandeur of the creation story is one truth that we have almost all read and overlooked. The first depiction of Creator God is of Him doing something; taking action. On that very first day in time, the Father of all, Creator, God Most High, did something. He created, He made and He fashioned out of who He is.

Someone, somewhere once said that artists do two things: they copy and they express themselves. God had nothing to copy, so He just expressed Himself. The result of that is all of creation, including us. Just as our Father in Heaven expresses Himself, we who are made in the image of the heavenly, royal family are also created to do things—and none more than fathers. There is a catchy phrase that gets tossed around claiming that we are human beings rather than human doings. This clever play on words helps me at times to bring some needed recalibration to my life when I allow myself to get too busy. However, it was never meant to be left as a prescription for life. I often get to know people by discovering what they do—for work, for fun and for rest. These details give me great insight into who someone is, acting as a mirror to reflect back to them who they are, based on the various doings of their lives. Of course if all that someone has is what they do, then they will find their identity there, but if their doing is as a result of knowing who they are then the result is one of great strength and purpose. Life simply cannot be reduced to being or doing alone. You cannot have one without the other. We do not have a passive God and equally, we ourselves should not be passive. As fathers, especially, passivity is not an option, nor do we find that it is natural to us. Jesus, as the son of God, was very clear on this matter when He said, “Did you not know that I must be about my Father’s business?” (Luke 2:49 NKJV).

Fathers do things. I like to define destiny using the phrases Jesus used of Himself: I Am (John 6:35), I came to (Matthew 5:17), and I do (John 8:29). It is the amalgamation of these three identifiers that gives us a picture of destiny: the combination of identity, purpose, and action. Jesus also tells us where He is going, which adds to our understanding of destiny: the collective reality of who we are, what we are here for, what we choose to do about it, and the overall goal of where that will lead us.

There is a story in Luke chapter 15 that most know as the story of the prodigal son. The real hero of the story is the father, not because of his morals or his patience, but because of his action. His son (the prodigal) left home and wasted his inheritance. Despite his son’s behavior, the father watched and waited, and when he saw his son returning, he took action: he ran out to meet his son. A middle aged, middle eastern man ran. That simple act of running was uncommon—and even undignified—in that culture.

When I look at the stories that Jesus told, I find myself comparing them to our stories. He was the master communicator and story teller, but what made Him truly unique was that His story began in heaven and was translated for earth. The story He told of the Father was not the result of Him looking around for ideas on earth of what a father looks like. Rather, He came from the Father and used the landscape in which he was living—the world— to illustrate God’s character.

Perhaps the best known verse in the Bible is not about the character of God or even the thoughts of God, but it is about the doings of God. “For God so loved that He sent...” (John 3:16). Sending His son, Jesus, was an act resulting from His heart. He so loved that He was compelled to do something.

Mary and Martha are great biblical examples that have often been used to justify a lack of action. We see Jesus rebuke Martha for being in the kitchen while Mary, who has chosen the

better role, sits with Jesus. My pastor sometimes breaks the conventional understanding of this story by saying that Martha should have gone to Jesus first, asked Him what she could serve Him, and then gone to prepare the food. The idea behind this interpretation is that the outcome of time spent with Jesus is a desire to take action and an understanding of what action needs to be taken.

Using the story to justify doing nothing is a misuse. I too have been guilty of busyness and have certainly missed opportunities to sit and listen or rest. But I also know that the result of sitting at Jesus' feet is that I will take action in my life from a new perspective. "Being" is valuable, but it should result in "doing." One is evidence of the other. True life creates a path which leads to action. Jesus did not come solely to declare who He was. His "I am" statements themselves were all statements declaring His purpose, not just His identity.

Fathers do things. They don't have a set of rules which override emotions, they do things because of their hearts. A father can talk all he likes about his love, but without doing something no one will know the size of his heart. Our hearts are seen by what we do and what we express. Values without behavior are unconvincing.

Fathers, in their doing, will break rules. This is the result of passion. The father in Luke 15 broke the rules on three occasions, particularly rules pertaining to the accepted culture of the day—the kind of rules that can lead to religious tradition rather than life. The interesting thing about this great story is that the elder brother, who is famous for being a rule-keeper, failed his cultural responsibilities, a choice with more serious consequences than breaking rules for love. The story in Luke 15 has been known for a runaway boy and an elder brother who kept the rules, but it should really be most famous for a dad who allowed his heart to cause him to do something. Fathers do things.

A father, in his doing, has the power to break religion's grip. Jesus, in one of His most critical statements, accused the Pharisees of being white-walled sepulchers—nicely painted tombs full of dead things. They were fathers who drew a lot of attention to themselves, but they were not doing what they had been created to do and had, therefore, become dead on the inside. Leaders known for lists of rules and regulations create dead religion around themselves. The Pharisees had the ability to look and sound good, but when they were examined more closely they were not alive.

Men and fathers can often feel weighed down by the pressure of being doers. We are accused—sometimes rightfully so—of getting our identity and affirmation from what we do. We can so easily get this wrong, finding our identity in what we do and getting caught up in serving our bosses and masters to the detriment of family. In rectifying that aspect of manhood, we must ensure that we don't create another error by devaluing action. Equally damaging is to think that not doing things is an option.

Heidi Baker, a missionary and preacher, once said, "Lovers get more done than workers." The key is that lovers still get things done. The result of love is action that demonstrates what is going on in the heart. Jesus asked if He would find faith on the earth when He comes back and we know that faith without works is dead. His question begs a response: will I find people, He is asking, who because of their faith, because of what has happened in their hearts, will be doing things that can be seen and recognized and therefore attributed to faith?

God so loved that He sent. God is love and out of that He did something. The more we learn to love and be loved, the more productive and effective our doing will be. We must become fathers that take action out of love and unto love. For God so loved the world that He sent Jesus. It doesn't get simpler or more well-known than that. God the Father loved us and He chose to do something about it. That's an example worth following.

Activation Questions:

Are there areas in your life in which you have been 'being' when you need to be 'doing', or vice versa? What steps can you take to bring healthy balance to these areas?

What would it look like for your 'doing' to come from a place of loving and being loved? How would things change for you and those around you?

How do you express love to those you care for by what you do?