
A Fortified Father

Joshua 24:14-15

June 20, 2026

SCRIPTURE

Joshua 24:14-15 (NKJV)

[14] "Now therefore, fear the LORD, serve Him in sincerity and in truth, and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the River and in Egypt. Serve the LORD! [15] And if it seems evil to you to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."

ILLUSTRATION

[Play 'Old Blevins' audio clip]

I don't want to be like "Old Blevins," a man who only has old, pointless stories to remember, stories that exist to overshadow a wasted life. And I want to believe that every man in this room feels the same way. You don't want to get to the end and realize you spent your best years on things that didn't matter while the things that mattered most drifted away from you.

But here's the reality for a lot of men right now. The culture has spent decades working to redefine, redesign, and ultimately erase the category of biblical manhood.

- Your sons are being told that masculinity is a problem. Your daughters are being told that strength means not needing anyone. We have sons who are becoming experts at laziness and video games, while not holding any character skills needed to succeed in life and relationships. And in the middle of all of that, the church of Jesus Christ cannot afford to be quiet, and the fathers in this room cannot afford to be passive.

CUSTOM

The stats tell the story. Nearly 20 million American children today are growing up in fatherless homes. Almost a quarter of all kids don't have a dad present. And the downstream damage is real: fatherless children are six times more likely to grow up in poverty, nearly half of all prison inmates grew up without a father, and young women without a present dad are twice as likely to become teenage mothers.

But let me say something that may hit close to home: fatherless homes are not just homes without fathers. Just because you and your kids have the same address and live under the same roof, it doesn't mean they aren't living in a fatherless situation.

A physically present but spiritually passive father still leaves a gap. Your kids can grow up in the same house as you and still not know what a godly man looks like. That is what we're talking about today.

Context:

Joshua is at the end of his life. He's led Israel into the promised land. He's fought the battles. He's seen God come through again and again. And now he gathers the people and lays it all out. Fear the Lord. Serve Him. Put away the false gods. And then he says the line that every father in this room needs to make his own: **As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.**

I want to pull that one sentence apart this morning because I believe it contains everything a man needs to be a fortified father. Four phrases, four responsibilities.

MAIN POINT 1

A Fortified Father Starts with Himself ("as for me")

Joshua doesn't say "as for my family" first. He begins with himself because he understands something that many men spend years learning the hard way: ***you can't lead people to a place you haven't been. You can't give what you don't have.***

QUOTE

— Pastor Josh

Men don't have the luxury of waiting for their wives and children to lead them.

And for the single guys in the room, just because you may not have an immediate family doesn't let you off the hook. God has already made you an example to someone.

- The way you lead yourself right now will impact others and your own walk with God.
- If you want a family one day, the best favor you can do for your future wife and kids is to start becoming the man they'll need before they ever exist in your life.

Here's what I've learned: ***a man who successfully leads his family is a man who has been working on mastering himself.*** And I say 'has been working on' because we will never fully arrive. This isn't about arriving. It's not about pride in "being the man." It's actually about desperation. The more clearly you see who you really are in light of who God really is -- and the weight of what He's placed in your hands -- the more desperate you become to get your own life in order. The more you realize you are nothing apart from Christ and complete surrender to Him.

ILLUSTRATION

Think about the difference between a thermometer and a thermostat. A thermometer dad reads the temperature in his home—he reacts to what's already there.

A thermostat dad sets it. He walks into a room, and the room changes. He's the one who establishes the spiritual tone, not the one who waits to see what everyone else is feeling and adjusts accordingly. Joshua was a thermostat. He didn't survey his family to find out what they were going to do. He declared it.

That starts with you, alone, before God. Let me be direct with a few things:

APPLICATION

- If you're dabbling in pornography, you are setting up your unsuspecting wife and children for future harm and damage they don't even know is coming.
- If you don't have dedicated time to study the Bible, you're setting yourself up to lack wisdom exactly when your family needs you to provide it.
- If you don't have self-control over your natural appetites, whether that's food, hobbies, or work, you will unintentionally set a tone in your home that says it's okay to be mastered by your passions, and that honoring God can come second.
- Men, if you don't serve your wife in the home, the workplace, and the bedroom, but instead take a selfish approach to intimacy and leadership, you will teach her that you don't have the maturity to lead like Jesus.

And let me ask you directly: does your prayer life consist of more than a nice, memorized request for God to bless the food? Because in the church and in the home, men should be the ones stepping up to pray first. We should be the ones standing up and leading our families before God rather than waiting until someone asks us to.

I don't say any of this to condemn you. I say it because I've had to face these same things in my own life, and I know what it costs a family when a man doesn't. By the grace of God and the power of the

Holy Spirit, He will give you the strength to rise. He'll give you genuine humility, the ability to confess and repent, and a growing capacity to think and live more like Christ.

A few of Paul's words are worth sitting with here:

SCRIPTURE

1 Corinthians 9:27 (NKJV) [27] But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.

SCRIPTURE

1 Timothy 4:16 (NKJV) [16] Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.

SCRIPTURE

1 Corinthians 11:1 (NKJV) [1] Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.

That last one is the goal. Not a perfect man... a man who is visibly, consistently chasing Christ, so that his kids have something worth imitating.

APPLICATION

Listen, dads: Lord willing, your children will surpass you in success, devotion, and following Christ. That's my prayer for my own kids. But that momentum has to begin somewhere. It begins with your example.

The Proverbs liken children to a quiver full of arrows. Arrows can fly far and hit incredible targets, but they start in the hands and bow of someone with strength and aim. You are the archer.

Listen, husbands: your wife longs for a man she can follow. She desires that when she has moments of failure and weakness, instead of hearing 'well, you're a sinner too,' she has a man who stands up and says 'let me show you the better way' -- by taking responsibility, managing his temper, controlling his words, and modeling forgiveness, strength, and dependency on God.

SCRIPTURE

1 John 2:14 (NKJV) [14] I have written to you, fathers, because you have known Him who is from the beginning. I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the wicked one.

There was a reason John, when writing to the church, started by addressing the men. This is where it starts. A man who knows his God is fortified to live in a way that protects future generations.

SCRIPTURE

Psalms 112:1-2 (NKJV) - [1] Praise the LORD! Blessed is the man who fears the LORD, who delights greatly in His commandments. [2] His descendants will be mighty on earth; the generation of the upright will be blessed.

SCRIPTURE

Proverbs 20:7 (NKJV) [7] The righteous man walks in his integrity; his children are blessed after him.

MAIN POINT 2

A Fortified Father Takes Radical Ownership ("my family")

Your wife and children are not someone else's responsibility to disciple and lead. Yes, it takes a community at times, and thank God for pastors, teachers, coaches, and others He brings into our lives. But when God looks at your family, He sees them as yours, not someone else's.

Joshua understood this. When he speaks for his family, he is not stripping his wife or children of their individuality or autonomy. He is taking responsibility for setting the expectation and tone for what his home will be. Within one statement, he establishes priorities, focus, and expectations.

APPLICATION

Here's what I've seen with men over the years. We tell ourselves that we need to let our family feel it for themselves and hope for the best. But passive husbanding and passive fathering only lead to bad habits. Drifting is the natural direction in which human beings flow without leadership. If you're not setting the tone, the world will—and it already is.

Radical ownership is NOT overbearing control, it's a loving example. Ownership isn't just creating boundaries; it's cultivating soil for growth. Childish men have to control their families. Mature men take ownership and responsibility.

Think about something you own that you're genuinely proud of.

- A restored car, a well-kept garage, a garden, an instrument, something you've invested real time, money, patience, and attention into.
- You protect it from things that would damage it. You cherish it with maintenance and care. That's what I mean by radical ownership.
- Do you want your wife to blossom and thrive? You cultivate that. Do you want your children to expand, grow in holiness, and reach their God-given potential? You cultivate that.

APPLICATION

Don't look at your family as a group of autonomous individuals you have to provide for and who hopefully won't get in the way of what you actually want to do. See them as your greatest treasure, one that will take shape according to what you build into them through intentionality and commitment.

Your wife is part of you, bone of your bone and flesh of your flesh. Your children are from you and a piece of your legacy that will be sent out to touch the world.

Now, let me give that a biblical frame. Nehemiah is trying to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, a city that's been in ruins, left exposed and vulnerable. The enemies are circling, mocking the workers, and threatening to shut it all down. Nehemiah doesn't pull the men away from the work. He tells them to carry a sword in one hand and keep building with the other. Fight and build. Stand and work. And then he tells them what they're fighting for:

SCRIPTURE

Nehemiah 4:14 (NKJV) [14] And I looked, and arose and said to the nobles, to the leaders, and to the rest of the people, "Do not be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, great and awesome, and fight for your brethren, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your houses."

Five things to fight for. Every one of them is relational. Not property... people. Men, that is radical ownership. You fight for them. You protect the ground they're standing on. You don't let things into your home that you would never let through the front door if they showed up in person.

ILLUSTRATION

I came across an interview a few years back with a convicted child offender named Jack Reynolds. When asked whether he had scoped out a child before attacking, he said something that stopped me cold. He said he didn't observe the child -- he observed the family. If the father was present, engaged, and paying attention, he moved on. If the father wasn't a threat, there was an easy victim. The predator didn't fear the lock on the door. He feared the man inside the home.

Men, the world already knows something about the power of a present, engaged father that we have somehow managed to forget. Satan hates strong, godly men who are determined to stand against his agenda. And he knows that if he can get the father out of position, through distraction, passivity, addiction, or apathy, he has an open door. **Radical ownership closes that door.**

MAIN POINT 3

A Fortified Father Is Resolved ("we will")

Joshua didn't say "we might serve the Lord when it's convenient," or "we'll see how things go," or "if and when it's convenient." He made up his mind. He planted his flag. He decided in advance what position the Lord would have in his family's life, and then he said it out loud where his family could hear it.

As men, we have to be willing to see our commitments, promises, and vision through. Not perfectly -- but consistently.

Now, you can't force independent human beings to know and accept Jesus. That has to be a personal decision. Your children and your wife will still have to make their own active choices to obey and follow God. But you can set the standards and the tone:

- What will be allowed in your home and what will be expelled. Where church involvement and family worship will stand as a non-negotiable. How your family will engage the world outside your home and outside the church. Get some godly goals, stick to your guns, and be consistent. Run like a man who's running to win.

SCRIPTURE

1 Corinthians 9:24-26 (NKJV) [24] Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. [25] And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. [26] Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air.

Now, let me tell you why this resolution carries so much weight, because I think we underestimate what's at stake generationally.

SCRIPTURE

Malachi 4:5-6 (NKJV) [5] Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD. [6] And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the earth with a curse.

That is the last thing God says in the Old Testament before 400 years of silence. Not a doctrine, not a law, a father turning toward his children and children turning toward their fathers. God considered the most important word to leave in the Old Testament. That tells you everything about how seriously He takes the resolve of a father.

But here is the sobering side of that:

SCRIPTURE

Judges 2:10 (NKJV) [10] When all that generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation arose after them who did not know the LORD nor the work which He had done for Israel.

One generation. That's all it takes. One generation of fathers who don't pass it on, who are too distracted, too checked out, or too passive about spiritual things, and an entire nation forgets God. That is not ancient history. That is exactly what is happening in our culture right now. And the question every man in this room has to answer is: what generation will yours produce?

SCRIPTURE

2 Timothy 2:2 (NKJV) [2] And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

Four connection points in one verse. Paul to Timothy. Timothy to faithful men. Faithful men to others also. That's the discipleship chain, and it doesn't start in a seminary. It starts in a house with a resolved father who decided he would run his race and not stop. Failure or inaction is not an option.

Men, complaining and wavering are contagious. When a father is anxious, unstable, and inconsistent about his faith, his family learns to be anxious and unstable about theirs. But when a father is resolved—when his kids watch him take hits, face uncertainty, and still say “God is faithful and we are going to get through this” — that deposits something in them that the world cannot shake out.

MAIN POINT 4

A Fortified Father Has a Destination ("serve the Lord")

Over the years, our family has taken a lot of road trips. There are times we'll take a turn off the main path for a little adventure, but one thing I've learned from my wife is that the trip goes a whole lot better when you have a general plan, and you've mapped out your destination. It's incredible how much time can be wasted when nobody knows where they're going. That's true in a car, and it is absolutely true spiritually.

The Bible says “where there is no vision, the people perish.” How many lives have been spent going nowhere significant spiritually because someone never set their heart on a destination? A destination is a statement of priority and intentionality. Consider Jesus:

SCRIPTURE

Luke 9:51 (NKJV) [51] Now it came to pass, when the time had come for Him to be received up, that He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem...

He had a destination and the resolve to get there. When Paul was warned through prophecy not to go to Jerusalem -- that arrest was waiting for him -- his response was classic:

Acts 21:13 (NKJV) "Then Paul answered, 'What do you mean by weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.'"

Paul had a destination and the resolve to get there. And I can already hear someone say, “Well, Josh, Abraham didn't have a destination. God didn't tell him where he was going.”

- Yes, He did. His destination was faith. His resolve was to trust God and walk by faith and not by sight. And Hebrews 11 tells us that Abraham was waiting for the city whose builder and maker is God. He had his eyes set on eternity, and he took his family with him. That's an admirable destination for a father.

CUSTOM

Men, do you have a spiritual destination that leads to a spiritual destiny for you and your family? Joshua's destination was "serving the Lord." That end goal drove every priority and every decision he made from that point forward.

[Personal: the difficulty of moving your children and wife to multiple places in ministry -- and why a clear destination made those moves survivable]

Why is a destination so important? Because your children will not automatically drift into a relationship with God. Because the value structures in your home will be built around where you're headed. Because time is short and you only have one life to make an impact that outlives you.

And here's what I want you to understand about destinations: they don't always have to be grandiose. In fact, sometimes it's the smallest destinations that make the biggest difference in the long run.

- Prioritizing corporate worship as a family sets a tone that God is not optional.
- Praying out loud over your wife and children sets a destination of faith and spiritual safety.
- Telling your kids the truth and telling your wife you're sorry sets a destination of honesty and integrity -- it models what repentance looks like.
- Serving together on a mission trip or a family service day sets a destination of generosity.
- Reading even a few verses of Scripture with your kids daily sets a destination of the Word being a source, not a decoration.
- Standing for biblical truth in your home, even when the culture says the opposite, sets a destination of righteousness. Guarding what comes into your home through entertainment sets a destination of holiness.

You may feel overwhelmed if you've never mapped out an intentional destination for your family—but that's okay. You can start small. You can start today. Make a plan and surrender it to the Lord.

No matter what, there's no guarantee that everyone will reach the destination. A child may go astray. Your own carnal nature may get the best of you in a season. But you put the odds in your favor when you have a destination, a vision, and an example for those behind you to see and follow.

SCRIPTURE

Proverbs 22:6 (NKJV) [6] Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.

Conclusion:

Now, let me close this point by giving you a picture of what 'serving the Lord' actually looks like for a father, because I think it's easy to leave that phrase abstract. Theologically, Jesus carried three offices: King, Priest, and Prophet. And in a real sense, a father is called to carry all three in his home.

As King, a father leads with servant authority. Not as a dictator, not as a pushover, but as someone who carries the weight for the people in his care. The buck stops with you. Your family needs you to make the hard calls, hold the hard lines, and lead by example. Jesus came as King to serve, not to be served. That's the model.

As Priest, a father intercedes. Jesus is our great high priest. He stands between us and the Father. Likewise, you are called to stand spiritually between your family and the world. You set the spiritual temperature of your home. You're the one who prays over the table, who brings your kids before God by name, who keeps the conversation about eternity alive under your roof.

As Prophet, a father speaks life. Jesus as prophet proclaimed truth that reoriented people's lives. One of the most underused roles a father has is this one: speaking God's life, direction, and hope over his children and calling out what God has placed in them. God will show you things about your kids that they don't see in themselves yet. As a prophet, you call those things out. Your kids need to hear from your mouth who they are and what God has put in them before the world tells them something different.

Conclusion

I want to make sure before I close that we're all talking about the same kind of man. Because when I say God has called you to start with yourself, take radical ownership, be resolved, and lead your family to a destination, I'm not talking about a domineering, take-no-prisoners, my-way-or-the-highway version of fatherhood. And I'm not talking about the spineless, passive, disengaged version either.

I'm talking about Jesus.

Jesus, who on the night He knew He was going to be betrayed, looked at a room full of grown men arguing about who was the greatest and picked up a towel. He got down on His knees and washed their feet. Not because He had no authority. He had all authority. He did it because He understood that the greatest use of strength is sacrifice.

That's the kind of man Joshua was. That's the kind of man every father is called to be. A man who leads with a towel, who fights with Nehemiah's resolve for the people behind him, who speaks life as a prophet over children who can't yet see what God has placed inside them, and who sets his face

toward an eternal destination and refuses to let his family drift away from it.

As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.

That sentence is available to you today. No matter where you're starting from. No matter what you've gotten wrong up to this point. The making of a fortified father doesn't require a perfect past; it requires a **decided present**. You can say those words today and mean them, and God will meet you right where you are and give you everything you need to make them true.

Response: I want to give every man in this room a chance to respond to what God has said this morning.

- Maybe you came in carrying the weight of knowing you haven't been the man your family needs. There's a conversation you've been avoiding, a habit you haven't dealt with, a child you've been distant from. Today is the day to change direction.
- Maybe you're a new or expectant father who wants to start right -- to build a home from the ground up that your kids will look back on and say, "My dad showed me what it meant to follow Jesus."
- Maybe you're a man without children of your own, but there is a younger person in your life who needs you to step up. The chain of passing faith to the next generation doesn't only run through biology. It runs through faithfulness.
- Maybe you're a young man who may be a husband and father one day... do you have the humility to put aside worthless things, embrace humility, and follow the real man, Jesus?

Wherever you are today, God sees it. And He is not finished with you.