



MEMOIRS WITH LOVE

*A Week of Meditations Towards
Father's Day*



Boston Carmel Mar Thoma Church

467, River Rd, Hudson, MA

FOREWORD

As we approach Father's Day, it is a time to reflect on the incredible role that all men and fathers in particular, play in our lives and the impact they have on their families. This devotional is dedicated to all fathers, celebrating their love, sacrifice, and the unique journey they embark upon in shaping the lives of their families and the wider societies.

Fatherhood is a divine calling, a gift entrusted to men, and a responsibility that carries great significance. Just as our Heavenly Father cares for us with unwavering love, fathers are called to mirror this love in their relationships with their families. It is a truth that these days, fathers increasingly face unwarranted criticisms and pejoratives such as “toxic masculinity” and “patriarchy.” Even without this added pressure, it can be daunting for some men to strike the balance between being true leaders in their households and being loving, nurturing parents. However, fathers are not alone in this journey as God, the ultimate Father, walks beside them, offering His guidance and grace. He equips them with the tools needed to be a loving and impactful father, and He celebrates every effort they make to reflect His character. Through their guidance, provision, and nurturing presence, fathers have the power to shape the character and future of their families.

In this devotional, we will embark on a journey of reflection, inspiration, and spiritual growth revisiting themes of love, leadership, faith, perseverance, and the profound influence fathers have on the lives of their family members. I invite you to draw strength and wisdom from the stories of fathers who have gone before us, the biblical examples of fatherhood, and the lessons learned from their triumphs and failures. Whether you are a new father, a seasoned parent, a grandfather, or a person contemplating on fatherhood, this devotional is meant to ignite your spirit and reaffirm the importance of this role in each family's life.

I wish to appreciate all who partook in this noble venture by sharing their personal stories and especially Neethu and Sheba who continue with me on this team after the publication of *Memoirs with Love: A Week of Meditations Towards Mother's Day* with their unrelenting support harmonizing all efforts. May God's name be praised in this effort too.

Blessed Meditation.

Rev Sujith Sam Mammen

Vicar, Boston Carmel Mar Thoma Church

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"But select capable men from all the people—men who fear God, trustworthy men who hate dishonest gain—and appoint them as officials over thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens".

- Exodus 18:21

My father was a man deeply rooted in faith and family. He led his society through an outstanding display of compassion and care for those in need. As a child, I often saw people come to his small grocery store and say they had no money to pay. My father would give them their groceries on kadam (meaning they could pay later) and many times, he would write off the kadam. One summer holiday, I was helping him at the store. It was closing time, and we were about to put on the last palaka (wooden shutter). A man came saying his family had nothing to eat, and asking whether he could borrow some food for a meal. My father went back inside and gathered rice and other groceries. The man was very grateful and blessed my father and his children. My father's leadership in society through care and compassion has inspired me to establish a charitable foundation through which help is provided to many in need. My father was able to see Christ in the needy, and I pray his legacy will continue in and through us. - **Memoir by Thampy Kurian**

After the death of Moses his successor Joshua was called to lead the nation of Israel into the Promised Land. The Lord's instruction for Joshua on three separate occasions was to be both strong and courageous! God wanted Joshua to be brave in the face of his enemies because the Lord would guide and protect him. In the same manner, God wants all Christian fathers to stay courageous and guide their families as the leader. Moreover, Christian fathers who embrace their role as leaders in society have the potential to be catalysts for positive change, promoting values of love, justice, and compassion in their communities. By exemplifying Christ's teachings and leading with integrity, they can inspire others to live out their faith and make a meaningful impact in the world. Christian fathers who actively engage in their communities, serving and uplifting those in need, demonstrate the transformative power of love and inspire others to follow their example. They are called to address injustices, stand up for the marginalized, and advocate for values that align with God's heart for humanity. As leaders, they have the opportunity to model ethical behavior, integrity, and moral values, influencing societal norms and promoting a culture of righteousness.

"My father didn't tell me how to live. He lived, and let me watch him do it." - Clarence Budington Kelland

Prayer: Heavenly Father, ignite within me courage, vision, compassion, and wisdom so that I may lead others by example and inspire them, all for your glory. Amen

"The righteous man walks in his integrity; His children are blessed after him." - Proverbs 20:7

At the tender age of 20, my father journeyed to Singapore—a youthful dreamer plunging into a newly independent nation. He bore the burden of finding a job to support his family back in Kerala amidst the unfamiliarity of the different cultures and races the young nation encompassed. At 40, an irreversible neurological disease struck. Still, my father remained uncomplaining, enduring what must have been difficult international business trips for work and even managing the family business later in his life. Looking at the pain my father endured, I struggle to understand why good people suffer. Maybe it is a reminder to always be thankful when we live in health and plenty. Maybe it is to look out for people who are facing difficulties in their lives, to become a source of help and comfort to others who may be going through pain. My father's spiritual devotion was unwavering. He insisted on daily family prayers and ended his days with personal time with God, reading the Bible, and singing hymns. Despite his trials, he never envied his healthier peers or spoke ill of others revealing his character. Instead, his gentleness, generosity, and resilience made him a credible beacon for those in need. My father may no longer be with us, but his love for God and enduring character remain a testament to an extraordinary man of integrity I hope to emulate in my own way. - **Memoir by Eugene Varughese**

Joseph, the earthly father of Jesus was surely one of the most underrated fathers in the Bible. What do we learn from a man who never said anything? Even though none of his words were ever recorded in Scripture, Joseph's example teaches us some invaluable lessons in fatherhood. He handled it with a beautiful sense of dignity when it came to protecting his wife, Mary, and their baby. Without reacting with bitterness or harshness, Joseph made every effort to protect his family. The key to being a good father is first being a good man! He then saw to Jesus' education and needs as he was growing up. Joseph taught Jesus the carpentry trade. The Bible calls Joseph a righteous man, and Jesus must have loved his guardian for his quiet strength, endurance, honesty and kindness. Joseph believed God, obeyed God, and fulfilled the responsibility that God had given him with dignity. Being unwavering in our commitment to stand with what is right, both in actions and in words, will help maintain mutual trust and respect within our families and communities.

“A child is not likely to find a father in God unless he finds something of God in his father.” - Austin L. Sorensen

Prayer: Lord, help me maintain my personal integrity and be a Godly role model to my family. Give me wisdom to teach them how to keep themselves pure in body, soul, mind, and spirit. Amen.

"For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named". - Ephesians 3:14-15

Close to Father's Day, I wish to reflect upon the remarkable bonding I had with my father. He was a family-oriented person who made time to engage and connect with his family. He cared deeply about our needs and took responsibility for the moral vision of his family. My dad provided a Christian upbringing right from my childhood days even when we were in Saudi Arabia, where there was no Church and Christian worship was prohibited. Under these circumstances, my dad stood firm to uphold the worshipping community. He was always mindful to take the initiative to anchor our family in faith. We used to have secret prayer groups and Sunday Schools in those days. My dad was keen on taking us, to ensure his family and friends sustained in the faith. During the gulf war, my Dad and some of our Christian friends, reached out to the US military for bibles. This gesture speaks to the extent of his involvement in our spiritual well being and it had a lasting impact on me. I still cherish the beautiful camouflage bible cover and it reminds me of the comfort we received through the word of God. After his retirement, we moved to Kerala where he was a very active leader in various roles in the Church. I continue to follow his path by instilling the same values in my family.- **Memoir by Sebastian Samuel**

In order to develop meaningful relationships with our loved ones, it's important that they have our full attention. Could being more available - intentional and mindfully present be the answer? Jesus must have felt a responsibility toward his earthly family. He grew up in Nazareth and worked as a carpenter till the age of 30, probably to care for his mother and siblings after his father died. Families matter! Yet Jesus says something surprising: "My mother and brothers are those who hear God's word and put it into practice." For Jesus, the family of God transcends human families. All who have faith in Christ are part of God's family. As followers of Jesus, we must care for our physical families. And part of that care is to be part of God's family through faith in Jesus. The resources that Jesus provides help us treat everyone in our circle of fellowship with the love of Christ. Let's put the remote control down, get up off the couch, and spend some time with our kids—take responsibility. Get down on the floor with them. Play sports with them. Take them to the park. Take them to Church. Seeing God in their father is a child's best way to come to know God as their Father.

"In my career, there's many things I've won and many things I've achieved, but for me, my greatest achievement is my children and my family. It's about being a good father, a good husband, just being connected to family as much as possible." - David Beckham

Prayer: Thank you, Lord, for inviting us to become part of your everlasting family by trusting in Jesus as our Savior and Lord. Help us to intentionally spend time in our family which is a foretaste of your kingdom. Amen.

NON-PROVOKING DISCIPLINARIAN DAY 4

"Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord". - Ephesians 6:4

After graduating High School, my father sacrificed his education and family life to join the Indian Air Force to support his family. While his military life made him a man of discipline, he was a loving & caring father who always put the needs of others first & truly believed in the power of prayer. A decade ago I had undergone a surgery that went terribly wrong and I was at the brink of death. My dad was still recovering from a very bad stroke. Despite his poor physical health, he traveled all the way to the hospital with my family to pray for me and encourage me to never give up. Seeing his courage, strength & belief helped me to endure my time in hospital multiple times. He taught us to pray ardently and even in his weakest state, he continued to live by the principles he had impressed on me. He was demanding in his expectations and firm in enforcing consequences while remaining accessible, engaging in affection, and being emotionally responsive. By God's grace and my father's and everyone else's prayers I am able to write this today. Dad continues to be a source of inspiration, wisdom, love, and courage to me and my family, and many others.

- Memoir by Willy Isaac

The Scripture speaks about God, the ultimate dad and digs into a profound characteristic of His fatherly love: The Lord disciplines the one he loves. This is something that any Christian father should imitate. We are often told that loving the family means accepting the wrong behavior instead of correcting it. Disciplining involves correction as well. However, the goal of discipline is not to provoke anger or resentment but to help the family develop a Christ-like character and make choices that align with biblical principles. By exercising discipline in a loving, consistent, and grace-filled manner, Christian fathers can fulfill their role as non-provoking disciplinarians within their families. Christian fathers should discipline their family with the understanding that correction is meant to guide and teach, not to shame or harm. This approach reflects the love and grace that God extends to us. Recognizing and affirming good behavior and character traits alongside, reinforces the values that are to be instilled in children. Christian fathers should also strive to apply discipline fairly and consistently across all family members. By explaining why certain behaviors are not acceptable and how they conflict with Christian values, fathers help their children understand the importance of making better choices.

“Keep an apple beside the rod to give the child when he/she does well.” - Martin Luther
Prayer: Eternal Father, may the discipline that we encourage, be rooted in love and understanding, fostering growth and character development in our family. Amen.

"For if you were to have countless tutors in Christ, yet you would not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel". - 1 Corinthians 4:15

In this short journey of life, few relationships are as sacred as the bond between a father and son. I was blessed with a father who was my best friend and an unwavering spiritual leader- a priest (Late Rev. C.A. Mathew Cherukara) whose calling extended far beyond the walls of the church. He was a constant source of strength, support, and encouragement. In moments of triumph, he celebrated alongside me and in times of struggle, he was the rock I leaned on. It was not easy to juggle the role of a father and a spiritual guide to his congregation, but he embraced it with grace, compassion, and devotion. He was a man of few words, eager to lend his ear to the needy. His actions spoke volumes, his unwavering faith instilled determination and humility, and he served as a guiding light for us and his parishioners. His teachings, steeped in wisdom, emphasized the power of prayer, the beauty of forgiveness, and the importance of love and compassion. He led by example, embodying the virtues he preached with profound reverence for God. He was a great gift to many - his love, guidance, and unwavering faith shaped me into the person I am today.

- **Memoir by Cherukara Robin Mathew**

Father in a Christian family is responsible for its spiritual welfare. In hard and good times he's ready to lay down his life to provide for those of his family. Likewise, he also looks for ways to help its members grow in their relationship with God - in matters of faith and spirituality. In the relationship between Paul and Timothy the Apostle instructed, encouraged, affirmed, and empowered Timothy; living his life as an example to follow with the desire for his 'son in the faith' to fulfill his full potential in God. As the spiritual father, Timothy was accountable to Paul for oversight and correction if necessary. The father takes the lead in setting a spiritual tone in the family. He can initiate family devotionals, where he reads and discusses Scripture, teaches biblical principles, and encourages open dialogue about faith-related topics as his family navigate their own spiritual journeys. He can involve his family in prayer, teaching them the importance of communicating with God. He can guide them in applying biblical principles to their daily lives, helping them make wise decisions, and modeling a Christ-like character through his actions and interactions. By embodying these qualities and investing in the spiritual well-being of his family, the father can make a lasting impact on their lives and help them develop a meaningful relationship with God.

"Dads are most ordinary men turned by love into heroes, adventurers, story-tellers and singers of song." - Pam Brow

Prayer: Father, grant us the wisdom, patience, and passion to impart biblical truths to our families and lead by example, nurturing a strong foundation of spiritual maturity that will impact generations to come. Amen.

"Anyone who does not provide for their relatives, and especially for their own household, has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever." - 1 Timothy 5:8

For several decades migrant fathers from Kerala, India, have been playing a significant role in providing for their families by working alone in the Gulf countries. My daddy left his family behind and traveled to the Gulf in search of better opportunities so that he could provide a better standard of living and financial stability not just for his immediate family but also for his parents and siblings as he was the eldest boy. We have missed him many times and he too has missed many of the significant moments in the family and the local Church to which he was deeply connected. He even had an accident in his work place which had cost him his hearing but his determination to provide for us was never affected. I remember him as a tender-hearted family man temperate, respectable and hospitable; one who managed his family and kept his children in control. Many years after my marriage, it was surprising when he told me that he always wanted me to be married to a minister of the Lord and I strongly believe that it was his loyalty to the Lord that was rewarded when his desire was granted by the Lord. He went to be with the Lord at the age of 65 and when I look back he was a loving father - loving enough to spend all his prime years alone in a foreign land for the well-being of the family for which I remain ever grateful. I will see him again. -

Memoir by Sherin Mary Jacob

Christian fathers have an important role as sacrificial providers for their families, just as Christ sacrificially provided for His Church. Christian dads often strive to provide for their families' financial needs to the best of their abilities. This includes working diligently, managing finances wisely, and making responsible decisions to ensure the well-being of their family members. Beyond financial support, sacrificial provision involves meeting the material needs such as food, clothing, shelter, and other essential resources that contribute to their physical well-being and comfort. Sacrificial provision also extends to include emotional support wherein they are present in the lives of the family members, actively listening to their concerns, providing encouragement, and offering a shoulder to lean on during challenging times. Christian dads can model the sacrificial love of Christ in their relationships. This involves giving up personal desires or preferences to prioritize the needs of family members, making decisions that benefit the family as a whole, and selflessly serving and caring for their loved ones. In all this they strive to create a nurturing and supportive environment that reflects God's love and provision.

“When a father gives to his child, both laugh; when a child gives back to the father, both cry.” -
Unknown.

Prayer: Help us Lord to embody sacrificial love with grace and humility as providers for our families, following your example of selflessness and provision. May we find fulfillment in our role, finding ultimate security and identity in you. Amen.

THE UNSPOKEN STRUGGLES OF FATHERHOOD

"As a father shows compassion to his children, so the Lord shows compassion to those who fear him." - Psalm 103:13

Earthly fathers are like mirrors reflecting the love and compassion of our Heavenly Father. A father who loves his children with the love of God, gives them a taste of heaven on earth. The bar is set high for fathers with a growing list of expectations. We expect them to be Providers, Role models, Mentors, Protectors and so much more. Like the pieces of a puzzle, these expectations must be carefully put together to showcase the elegant design and fabric of fatherhood. Unrealistic or challenging expectations are like misplaced pieces of the puzzle, and they expose gaps, vulnerabilities, and the unspoken struggles of fatherhood.

UNCOVER AND CONFRONT THE STRUGGLES

Men are painted by society as stoic, iron-willed individuals who are resolute and unshakeable. The problem with this male stereotype is that it does not represent the male population in its entirety and is devoid of emotion. Any struggle to match up is viewed as a weakness. Unfortunately, men as fathers carry the same burden to conform. Their struggles are kept under wraps and rarely discussed. Uncovering and confronting these issues infuses hope and assures fathers that they are not alone in their struggle.

THE MASCULINE POSTURE discourages men from expressing their emotions. It causes fathers to silence and hide their emotional struggles. Pent up feelings are hazardous, and any small provocation can trigger an outburst. Volatile anger and aggressive behavior are telltale signs of unresolved emotions. To confront this, we must identify proper outlets within the family or among reliable peers/mentors and encourage dads to vent their frustrations, share their feelings, to let the tears flow and process their emotions. The catharsis will make them emotionally stable and secure and help them forge meaningful relationships.

THE PARENTING STYLE of fathers and mothers is different, and children benefit from a blend of both. Fathers encourage children to explore, take risks, and face failures with the larger intent of preparing them for the real world. Fathers tend to withdraw if we become gatekeepers controlling or interfering with their parenting style. The paternal instinct must be underscored not sidelined. Children are always seeking their father's approval and we desperately need engaged and involved fathers to raise a generation of secure and confident children.

GEOGRAPHICAL SEPARATION is a bittersweet reality in the father child equation, where work separates dads from their families for extended periods of time. These dads are often alone, fending for themselves, missing milestones, and feel detached by this prolonged absence. We can make a difference by staying closely connected and apprising them of the happenings in the family. Furthermore, children must grow up with an attitude of gratitude, valuing and appreciating the sacrifices these fathers make to provide for them.

COMPROMISED HEALTH is a concern in many households and when fathers suffer a health crisis, it changes the complexion of the family. This can be a lonely place and as they cope, fathers must be reassured of the unwavering love and support of their families. We must remember that illness does not define them. We owe them a debt of gratitude for bringing us this far. They deserve our respect, and illness must not diminish their rightful place in the family.

When we consider all the pivotal roles of a father, we must also examine what it means to be **FATHERLESS**. Families that lose a father have lost their anchor, their representative to the outside world and are left with an identity crisis and a gaping void. They realize the brevity of life and lean on each other to rearrange their broken lives and regain their identity. Trusting in God who is the father to the fatherless, a defender of widows (Psalm 68:5), they emerge stronger on the other side. As fellow believers we are called to help them heal and lead them into a new and better tomorrow.

Some shades of fatherhood require dads to navigate unfamiliar territory and take a stand for the greater good of their families. **ADOPTIVE FATHERS**, sometimes after years of waiting to father a child, make the life-changing choice to adopt and are instantly catapulted into the joy and incredible privilege of raising children. This brave choice solidifies their partnership with their spouse and creates a fulfilling parenting experience, shadowing our own adoption as spiritual children of God. **FATHERS OF DIFFERENTLY ABLED CHILDREN** are confronted with wrapping their hearts and minds around the challenges of their special child and they make the decisive choice to stand committed to their cause. It unlocks their potential to love without limits and to find indescribable joy, inspiration, and purpose in raising their children. They are the pillars of strength of their families and their faith journey is marked by a deep dependence on a compassionate and loving God.

It is important to approach conversations about childlessness with empathy, respect, and sensitivity, recognizing that each individual's experiences and choices may be unique. Creating a supportive environment that fosters understanding and acceptance is essential. Society's understanding of fatherhood is evolving, and it is not solely determined by biological parenthood but can also encompass nurturing and mentoring roles in the lives of children. Encouraging positive male role models and acknowledging their contributions can challenge societal stereotypes.

The loss of family members is a deeply emotional and personal experience for anyone, including men. Men who have experienced the loss of family members including children, particularly as fathers, may face unique challenges in navigating their role as a parent or adjusting to changes in their family dynamics. Providing resources and support specifically tailored to single fathers can be valuable in helping them navigate these challenges.

Finally, the spheres of influence of fathers are far reaching, giving them the distinct privilege of leaving an imprint of godly love on their children. Their roles are demanding, and their struggles are real but with Christ at the helm and their loved ones beside them they can steer their families to their God given purpose and destiny.

Blessed Father's Day

Neethu Preetam Korah

**Prayer: Lord, we thank You for designing fathers to be the pillars of support in our families. We pray that You will help them to lean on You and learn to love as You do.
Amen**

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Thampy Kurian
Eugene Varughese
Sebastian Samuel
Willy Isaac
Cherukara Robin Mathew
Sherin Mary Jacob

The faithfulness of these fathers is their true, lasting legacy. We hope as you meet them in these readings and get to know more about their lives, they will challenge you, motivate you, encourage you, and inspire you with love for the God whom they trusted and served. May our hearts be set ablaze with the very same faith, may our lives be characterized by a similar faithfulness, and may our soul be overwhelmed with love for the extraordinary God they worshiped.

Coordinators

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Happy
Father's Day

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