



FATHERS WHO ARE USEFUL TO GOD

2 TIMOTHY 2:21, PSALM 144:12

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2 Timothy 2:21 (NKJV) Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work.

Psalm 144:12 (NKJV) That our sons may be as plants grown up in their youth;
That our daughters may be as pillars, sculptured in palace style.

Men's Ministries theme for 2023, "Useful To God," based on the Apostle Paul's exhortation in 2 Timothy 2:21, challenges men of God to be "a vessel for honorable use, set apart as holy, *useful to the master*, ready for every good work." These words are among Paul's last words to Timothy, his son in the faith. Paul's appeal to Timothy about life and ministry in the last days resonates with us today, especially given the identity crisis of this current hour, as biblical masculinity is under assault in ever-increasing measure.

"The pathway toward the full measure and stature of a true man," says Dr. Joaquin Molina, "is Christ and Christ alone." Many men live in Peter Pan's "Never Never Land," where they refuse to grow up and mature to respond to true manhood's challenge correctly. Beaten down, bruised, and battered, they don't feel useful to anyone, especially God. The good news for all men everywhere is the realization that God can mold a man into a vessel of honor so that he is useful to God and, therefore, useful to others.

FATHERS USEFUL TO GOD

Paul's words remind us that as fathers, we have a great responsibility to cleanse ourselves from what is dishonorable so that we can be vessels for honorable use in the hands of our master, God. We must be set apart as holy, useful to God, and ready for every good work.

We live in a world that often values power, wealth, and success, but as fathers, we must remember that our true value and worth comes from our relationship with God. Our children look up to us and learn from our example, so we must lead by example and demonstrate what it means to be a faithful follower of Christ.

Fathers, we must strive to be men of integrity, honesty, humility, and compassion. We must be men of prayer, seeking God's guidance and wisdom in all we do. We must be willing to admit our mistakes and seek forgiveness when we have fallen short. And we must be ready to love sacrificially, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us.

The phrase "cleanses himself" in 2 Timothy 2:21 means that a man must purify himself from anything sinful or dishonorable. This cleansing process involves confessing sins, repentance, and seeking forgiveness and restoration through Christ. This involves avoiding immoral behavior and actively seeking to become more like Christ.

The phrase “a vessel for honor” refers to a person set apart as holy, meaning they are dedicated to God for His purposes. They are sanctified and set apart as godly men, faithful husbands, and devoted fathers. They are useful to the master of the house, meaning God can use them to accomplish His will in the world.

Hence, they are “ready for every good work,” meaning they are prepared and willing to do the work God has prepared them to do. On this Father’s Day, let us commit ourselves anew to the work of raising our children in the fear and admonition of the Lord, training our sons to be mighty oaks and our daughters graceful pillars in the Kingdom of God as David prayed in Psalm 144:12 (NKJV) “That our sons may be as plants grown up in their youth; That our daughters may be as pillars, sculptured in palace style.”

A WARTIME PSALM

Psalm 144 is a wartime psalm. David prays not just for himself but for his nation. David affirms their past protection (v. 1, 2), acknowledges their present predicament (v. 3-11), and then announces their prospective prosperity (v. 12-15) as they set themselves apart for the master’s use. David’s concern is with the family. He prays specifically for our sons and our daughters.

MIGHTY OAKS

He prays that “our sons in their youth will be like well-nurtured plants” or “plants that quickly grow to full size.” Eugene Peterson paraphrases this: “Make our sons in their prime like sturdy oak trees.” It is a picture of young men becoming strong and powerful in their adolescence, like a forest of mighty oak trees.

These trees are well-nurtured and well-cared for, so they mature early. They grow strong and straight, and tall at an early age. They grow quickly because their roots go down deep into the good soil of the earth. They spread their branches and bring forth fruit early on so that others can find shade under their branches and sustenance from their fruit. When a tree has been planted properly and carefully cultivated, it points straight to heaven.

This is what we, as fathers, should pray for our sons, believing they will be firmly rooted in the good soil of God's Word at an early age, trusting their roots might be so strong and so deep in the Word that they can stand firm in every storm. The familiar words of Psalm 1 come to mind at this point: "Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers" (Psalm 1:1-3, ESV).

What does a young man like this look like? There is nothing ugly, nothing shameful about him. He stands strong and tall and clean and pure. His thoughts are pure. His actions are noble. His intentions point in the right direction. His character dominates the horizon, and others come to him for shade and rest under his branches, where they find safety.

Sons like this do not happen by accident more than beautiful gardens plant themselves, water, weed themselves, and fertilize themselves. Hence, they bring forth the good fruit of godly character, gifted with stamina to bring forth fruit in their old age. We should pray that our sons might be deeply rooted in the good soil of God's Word, properly cultivated, watered, weeded, and pruned of dead branches, blessed to flourish early.

A PRAYER FOR OUR SONS

God, at an early age, may our sons be firmly rooted in the excellent soil
of Your Word so they will stand firm in every storm of life.

GRACEFUL PILLARS

The second image in Psalm 144:12 applies to the daughters in the family and is equally compelling. We should pray that “our daughters will be like pillars carved to adorn a palace.” In Bible times, beautiful palaces contained large decorative and weight-bearing columns. The most expensive columns were cut from marble, highly polished, and carefully put in place. The most important of those columns were placed at the intersection of two or more walls. They united various parts of the building, connecting one wing with another. Those corner columns were crucial because they held everything together. The master artisans would take extra time, choosing the best materials, working overtime to produce stone cut to exact measurements, and polished to a high degree of brilliance. The corner columns were placed with exquisite care because the integrity of the entire building depended on them. If they were cut wrong or placed wrong, the whole structure would be unsound. But when properly placed, they became the foundation and connecting point for everything else. Do not be deceived by the emphasis on beauty and grace. These columns are not mere ornaments added to please the eye. They are corner pillars that hold the palace together.

This, then, is the image of godly daughters. They are like those highly polished, carefully chosen, perfectly placed corner columns that hold together the palace where the king dwells. There is both form and function here. Godly daughters are both beautiful and strong. They hold

the family together and serve as the connecting point for everything else. They are at the center of family life. Everything flows to them and through them.

Daughters like this do not happen by accident. There is no clumsy workmanship here. Only a master artisan can produce beautiful corner columns for a king's palace. Do you dream of this for your daughters? You can have it, but it will be a lifetime's work. We should pray that our daughters will be graceful, useful, beautiful, strong, polished, and perfectly placed with godly character. God's best gift to any man is a godly woman of strength and beauty. Her worth is far above rubies. Such a woman is God's masterpiece, the crowning glory of God's creation in the Garden of Eden.

A PRAYER FOR OUR DAUGHTERS

God, at an early age, may our daughters become graceful pillars, a girl after God's heart whose true beauty emanates from boldly and unabashedly knowing who she is in Christ.

THE WORK OF A LIFETIME

Producing children like this is the work of a lifetime. It is our most significant, highest, and noblest work, the finest gift we can give the world. If we come to the end of life and have done great things, but our children are not walking with the Lord, how will we ever be satisfied? And if we come to the end and our dreams of worldly fame have not come to pass, but our children love Jesus, we can go down to the grave smiling, knowing that our time on earth has not been in vain.

Raising children who love the Lord and grow to be mighty oaks and graceful pillars, who build strong families and bless others, does not happen accidentally. If we want our children to love the Lord, then we must love the Lord. If we want our children to make God their Lord, God

must be our Lord. We cannot give lip service to true religion and expect our children to be genuinely dedicated to Christ. The stream does not rise higher than its source. The best thing you can do for your children is love and serve the Lord with all your heart. Make God your Lord, and your children will likely follow your steps. Your faith will one day be their faith. They are likely to do what you do, to believe what you believe, and to live as you live. Put the Lord first, and you have given a gift to your children that will still be a blessing long after you have gone to heaven. And perhaps God will grant you the privilege of cheering as you peer over the battlements of heaven, watching your great-great-grandchildren following Jesus Christ.

“Yes, joyful are those who live like this! Joyful indeed are those whose God is the Lord”
(Psalm 144:15, NLT).