

Embracing God as Perfect Father, Not a 'Community Shamer'

For years, Louie Giglio has been teaching people how to see God as a perfect Father, to see themselves as someone pursued by a God that loves them unconditionally.

Along the way, however, Giglio has encountered people who have point-blank told him: "If God is anything like my dad, I don't want to have anything to do with Him." Sadly, that sentiment, Giglio says, is shared by a lot more people than you might think—including born-again, Jesus-believing Christians.

"That's real," says Giglio, the pastor of Passion City Church in Atlanta and the founder of the Passion movement, which exists to call a generation to leverage their lives for the fame of Jesus. "And my heart goes out to every person who has been left behind by their earthly dad.

"It would be easier for anyone who has experienced this to just opt out. A lot of us have tried. I buried that wound 100 years ago and I'm never going back. But the reality is that none of us are living free unless Jesus has set us free.

"He wants to go into those places. He wants to open those doors. He wants to walk in them with us. He wants to restore what's been broken. He wants to heal us and heal our hearts. And, He wants to let us see this huge waterfall that is over each one of us whom He calls son, and He calls daughter."

Unfortunately, we live in a culture where not only fathers, but manhood and masculinity itself, are under an intense attack from the culture, the secular media and the unrelenting feminism movement that basically espouses the ideology that men and fathers are useless.

But tell that to the 18.3 million children across America—according to 2022 data from the U.S. Census Bureau—who live without a father in the home. That’s 1 in 4 children—25%—who grow up without any kind of father figure in their home.

Americans are united in the belief that strong families are a positive in today’s society, with 84% of those polled believing that a strong family is foundational to a strong America and that parents have the primary responsibility for raising children.

However, the Pew Research Center reports that the U.S. has the highest rate globally of children living in single-parent households.

Giglio says this is certainly a spiritual battle the enemy wages against the family unit, and that the church must stand up against it and let people be embraced by the Father heart of God.

“It does start with God,” Giglio says. “I think we typically want to start the identity journey with ourselves. Everyone is looking through the filter, the lens, of me—what do I think, what do I feel, and that’s how I’m going to self-identify.

“But, that’s really a trap at the end of the day because if I’m the one who is determining who I am and what my story is, then I’ve got to hold that story and that identity up for the rest of my life. Freedom comes when I realize I’m not the Creator; I’m created. I didn’t originate me; God originated me.

“So, I need to go back to the source. I need to go back to the one who thought me up in the first place and ask Him, what were You thinking about me? For me, the thinking was, I’m making you a man and here’s what my purpose and plans for your life are. I love you, and I want to be in relationship with you. I want to restore you into a relationship with me. I want

to use you to do great things for eternal significance for the world. I go back to my Creator to get my identity, not telling my Creator who I think I am.”

That’s a solid and heartwarming message for not only the gay community but also for the transgender movement that has enveloped this country and poisoned the minds of young people who believe that they need to be something—or someone—whom God did not create them to be.

Giglio says that the enemy indeed is crafty—and he has cranked that up a few notches over the past few months and years. Giglio says he knows God wants to be a perfect Father for His children, so the enemy has launched an all-out attack against fathers and fatherhood.

“The devil knows if he can crack up our concept of dad, then he puts a barrier between us in a relationship with God,” Giglio says. “And that’s what God has come to restore. That’s what can be redeemed in every single one of us.”

And that goes back to the story of the prodigal son, which Giglio says he’ll be preaching on this Sunday, Father’s Day. But instead of focusing specifically on the prodigal son, Giglio says he’ll be focusing on the other son, who felt slighted and betrayed by his father, according to the famous story in Luke 15:11-32.

“What was great about this story was that this dad never gives up on his son,” Giglio says. “When you dig a little deeper, you understand that there was a cultural practice called community shame, and that kid was going to get it. So, that father had to get to that son before the community shame got to him. Once the father had him in his arms, that community shame couldn’t come on him anymore.

“Now, the radical grace of God doesn’t mean there weren’t consequences. ... But the radical grace of God is that there is a God who is pursuing us. Some people out there, whether it

was their dad or not who did it, got this idea that God wants be the community shamer. But it's not that way. He's waiting to run to you. And through Jesus, what He did for us on the cross, He's already run to you. He's run ahead of all of the shame. ... and He has taken on that shame for you so that you can have a party tonight.

"This is not about a guy that Jesus was talking about to prove a point in the Bible. This is our story. This is my story. It's everyone's story who comes to know the grace of God and comes to know this perfect Father."

And that's the message that Giglio wants the confused, mixed-up youth of today to understand. There is no shame in Jesus, and they don't have to live in a lifestyle God never intended for them. {eoa}

Shawn A. Akers *is the online editor at Charisma Media.*