

A FIELD GUIDE FOR MEN

The Blessing

Words a father speaks over his son and his daughter

Jake McCluskey

Most men were never blessed by their own father. Not cursed, necessarily. Just never blessed. No words spoken over them that said who they were and that they mattered. So they grew up guessing, and they are still guessing now, and somewhere along the way they decided a real man just doesn't say things like that out loud.

Your kid does not get to skip that guessing game unless you speak first. The world will tell your son he is only as good as his last win. It will tell your daughter she is only as good as how she looks. Somebody is going to define your kids. The only question is whether it's you, speaking for God, or a screen that doesn't know their name.

This guide is short on purpose. Read it once, then use it. You don't need a seminary degree to bless your kids. You need to open your mouth.

1. What a blessing actually is

A blessing is not flattery. Flattery tells a kid what he wants to hear. A blessing tells him the truth about who God made him to be, and it calls God's favor down on him while he's still becoming it.

It's not magic words either. You're not casting a spell over your kid. You're doing what God's own people have done since Abraham: speak identity and worth over your children before the world gets a vote.

Most of us default to correction. Clean your room. Do your homework. Watch your mouth. Correction has its place, your kid needs it, but a kid who only hears what he's doing wrong will drown. He needs something to stand on. Blessing is what he stands on.

One honest thing before you speak it. Some of what you bless is true of your kid just because God made him. He carries God's image whether he ever believes or not, and nothing changes that. But the lines about being in Christ, forgiven, belonging to Him, those are true of a kid who has actually come to Christ. If yours is not there yet, you are not declaring those over him like they are already done. You are asking God for them, out loud, in front of him. Bless him either way. Just know which one you are doing.

2. The pattern God gave

God did not leave fathers guessing what a blessing sounds like. He gave Aaron the exact words to speak over His people, and it's the pattern we still use:

"The LORD bless you, and keep you; The LORD make His face shine on you, And be gracious to you; The LORD lift up His countenance on you, And give you peace." (Numbers 6:24-26)

Look at what's in there. Blessing. Protection. God's attention turned toward them, not away. Favor they didn't earn. Peace. That's the shape of it. When you bless your kids, you're not making something up. You're standing in something thousands of years old, speaking the same kind of blessing God's people have spoken over the ones they love since Abraham.

3. A blessing over your son

Say his name first. Look at him when you say it. Read it slow, out loud, like you mean every word, because you do.

"[Son's name], I bless you. God knew you before you took your first breath, and He made you a man on purpose. You are not the mistakes stacked up behind you. In Christ, you are forgiven, and you belong to Him before you belong to anything else. The Lord bless you and keep you. He sees you, and He is not disappointed in you. Stand up for what's right, even when it costs you. Tell the truth. Lead where you're planted. The Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you. When you fail, and you will, that does not undo one word of this. Get back up. The Lord lift up His countenance on you and give you peace. I am proud of you. I love you, not for what you do, but because you're mine and you're His. Go, and be the man God made you to be."

4. A blessing over your daughter

Same rule. Say her name. Look at her. Slow down.

"[Daughter's name], I bless you. You are not an accident and you are not a disappointment. God formed you the way He wanted you, and He does not make mistakes. In Christ, you are His, treasured, not because of how you look or what you accomplish, but because you belong to Him. The Lord bless you and keep you. You do not need to shrink yourself to be loved, and you do not need a man's approval to know who you are. You already have your Father's. The Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you. You are strong. You are capable. He sees you, and He delights in you. The Lord lift up His countenance on you and give you peace. I see you. I am proud of you. I love you, and nothing you do will change that. Go, and be the woman God made you to be."

5. Why saying it out loud matters

A blessing you only feel doesn't count. Your kid can't hear what's in your chest. He can only hear what comes out of your mouth.

"Death and life are in the power of the tongue, And those who love it will eat its fruit."
(Proverbs 18:21)

Words plant something. Silence plants something too, it just plants a question mark instead of an answer. Your kid is going to grow up believing something about whether you're proud of them. Don't leave that to inference. Say it plain.

6. When to do it

You don't need a special occasion, but a few moments carry extra weight.

Bedtime, when the day is done and the noise has settled. A milestone, a birthday, a graduation, the first day of something hard. A hard day, when your kid failed at something or got their heart handed to them and needs to hear who they are underneath the failure. And just because, on a random Tuesday, for no reason at all except that you thought of them and wanted them to know it.

You don't need the whole written blessing every time. Sometimes it's just, "I'm proud of you," said and meant. Start small if you need to. Just start.

7. To the man who feels like a hypocrite

Maybe you're reading this thinking, who am I to bless anybody. You lost your temper last week. You've missed more than you've caught. You don't feel qualified, and honestly, you're right, you're not.

Neither was I. Neither is any man who has ever spoken a true word over his kid. Blessing was never about you being finished. It was never about you earning the right to say it. God didn't wait for Aaron to be a perfect priest before He gave him the words. He gave him the words, and Aaron spoke them, imperfect hands and all.

You don't have to be the father you wish you'd had. You just have to open your mouth and tell your kid the truth about who God made them to be. Do that today, and do it again tomorrow. That's the whole job.

The verses to have ready

- Numbers 6:24-26, the blessing itself: "The LORD bless you, and keep you; The LORD make His face shine on you, And be gracious to you; The LORD lift up His countenance on you, And give you peace."
- Genesis 1:27, on who your kid is: "God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them."
- Psalm 139:14, on how they were made: "I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Wonderful are Your works, And my soul knows it very well."
- Zephaniah 3:17, on how God feels about them: "The LORD your God is in your midst, A victorious warrior. He will exult over you with joy, He will be quiet in His love, He will

rejoice over you with shouts of joy."

- 1 John 3:1, on whose they are: "See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and such we are."
- Proverbs 18:21, on why your words matter: "Death and life are in the power of the tongue, And those who love it will eat its fruit."

Keep this page somewhere you'll see it. Bedtime table, truck visor, bathroom mirror. Your kid is waiting to hear who they are. Go tell them.

Scripture quotations are from the New American Standard Bible (NASB), 1995, by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.