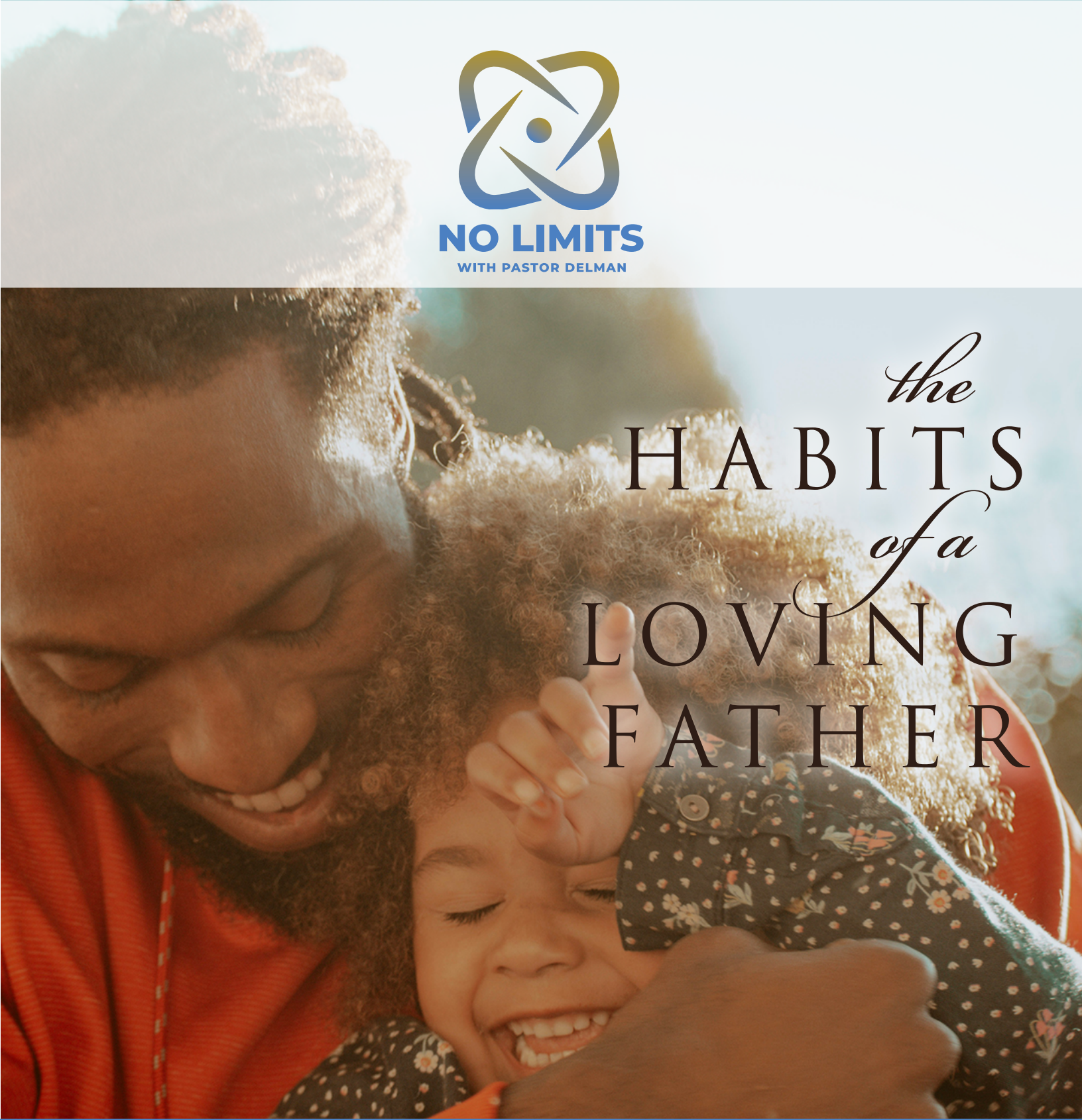




NO LIMITS

WITH PASTOR DELMAN



the
HABITS
of a
LOVING
FATHER

S E R M O N G U I D E

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The Habits Of A Loving Father

Matthew 17:14-18

INTRODUCTION

In the movie John Q, Denzel Washington plays a desperate father whose son needs a life-saving transplant his insurance will not cover. Pushed to the edge, he takes an entire emergency room hostage in a last-ditch effort to save his child. He was so devoted and determined that he became faithfully fixated on getting his son the help, hope, and healing he needed. That is what loving fathers do. They are willing to go the extra mile, make the extra sacrifice, and even go to extreme measures to help their children.

In a real sense, the father in Matthew 17 has the same heart. He approaches Jesus after coming down from the Mount of Transfiguration, kneels before him, and begs for mercy for his son who suffers from debilitating seizures. This father's situation had likely triggered a cascade of fear, frustration, and helplessness. Yet, his handling of this crisis reveals powerful habits of love and faith. As we celebrate fathers, this story teaches us what it means to advocate for our loved ones and trust God when all other systems fail.

KEY POINTS

1. Loving Fathers Know the Needs of Their Children

The father is able to describe with great detail what his son is going through, from the terrible suffering to the specific dangers of falling into fire or water. This intimate knowledge shows he was present, paying attention, and deeply involved. He was not so busy with work or life that he missed what was happening in his son's heart. He could advocate for his son because he was aware. Loving fathers understand that being a provider is more than just financial; it is about being present emotionally and physically. God the Father models this in Exodus 3:7, saying, "I have seen the affliction of my people, and I have heard their cry." The ministry of presence is perhaps the best ministry a father can have.

2. Loving Fathers Are Not Deterred by Difficulty

This father's journey was filled with disappointment. He says, "I brought him to your disciples, but they could not cure him." He sought help from the very people who should have been able to provide it, but they failed him. It is a tragedy to be let down by institutions that are supposed to lift you up. Yet, this father was not so discouraged by disappointment that it deterred him. He was so determined to help his son that he refused to let obstacles, setbacks, or the failure of others stop him. Fathers today face many obstacles: the constant pressure to provide, emotional struggles, systemic racism, and health challenges. But faithful fathers keep defying the odds, refusing to be defeated by life's disappointments.

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3. Loving Fathers Bring Their Children to Jesus

The difficulty this father faced was the very thing that landed him in the presence of Jesus. The failure of the disciples positioned him for a direct encounter with the Lord. Sometimes, our trials are divinely orchestrated not to break us, but to draw us closer to God. They shatter our illusions of self-sufficiency and push us to the edge of our human capacity. This father's desperation and determination moved him to bring his child and his problem to the one person who could truly help. He discovered an eternal truth: even when people and systems fail, Jesus will not. What the disciples could not do, Jesus did. The greatest act of love is to lead others into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

This father's story is a powerful model for faith, but it is also a call to social justice. In our world, the image of a present, protective, and fiercely involved Black father is often met with criticism instead of celebration. We see this when figures like Deion Sanders advocate for their children and are called "loud" or "overprotective," while their white counterparts are praised for being "strategic" or "assertive." The world often cannot stomach the image of a Black father who is a covering for his children, protecting the promise God has over their lives.

As a church, we must be the ones who celebrate and defend them. We must recognize that our advocacy for justice is fueled by the same habits this father displayed. We must be present enough to know the specific needs of the oppressed. We must be undeterred by the failures of unjust systems. And most importantly, we must bring the cries of our community to Jesus, trusting that His power is not limited by human endorsement or social politics. God often lifts up the very ones people overlook, ignore, or reject. As Scripture says, "The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone" (Psalm 118:22). Our worth and our future are not determined by the world's evaluation but by God's declaration.

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QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. The father in the text was intimately aware of his son's needs. In what practical ways can you cultivate a "ministry of presence" to better understand the struggles and heartaches of your children, family, or community?
2. This father faced disappointment from the disciples, who represented the church. Reflect on a time a system or institution let you down. How can we, as followers of Christ, work to challenge and reform unjust systems while not losing faith in God's ultimate power to bring breakthrough?
3. The father's ultimate success came from bringing his son directly to Jesus. Who in your life can you help point toward Jesus, and what does it look like to model a faith that trusts God even when people and circumstances fail you?
