

Family Matters

Part 9a

By Dale Payne

The Challenges Of Fatherhood

*“Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger,
but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.”*

Ephesians 6:4

I still remember sitting in the audience watching for the first time the Christian film, **Courageous**. Alex Kendrick played Adam, a sheriff deputy, who tragically lost his young daughter in a car accident. Throughout the movie he wrestled with what was really important to him, and he was challenged in his role as a father responding to his teenage son. At the end of the movie, Adam had an opportunity to give a speech to other fathers regarding their responsibility as fathers before God. He stood before those men and said,

“As a law-enforcement officer, I’ve seen firsthand the deep hurt and devastation that fatherlessness brings in a child’s life. Our prisons are full of men and women who lived recklessly after being abandoned by their fathers, wounded by the men who should have loved them the most. Many now follow the same pattern of irresponsibility that their fathers did. While so many mothers have sacrificed to help their children survive, they were never intended to carry the weight alone. We thank God for them.

But research is proving that a child also desperately needs a daddy. There’s no way around this fact. As you know, earlier this year, my family endured the tragic loss of our daughter, Emily. Her death forced me to realize that not only had I not taken advantage of the priceless time I had with her, but that I did not truly understand how crucial my role was as a father to her and our son, Dylan. Since her passing, I’ve asked God to show me, through His Word how to be the father that I need to be.

I now believe that God desires for every father to courageously step up and do whatever it takes to be involved in the lives of his children. But more than just

being there or providing for them, he's to walk with them through their lives and be a visual representation of the character of God, their Father in heaven.

A father should love his children and seek to win their hearts. He should protect them, discipline them and teach them about God. He should model how to walk with integrity and treat others with respect and should call out his children to become responsible men and women who live their lives for what matters in eternity.

Some men will hear this and mock it or ignore it. But I tell you that as a father, you are accountable to God for the position of influence He has given you. You can't fall asleep at the wheel only to wake up one day and realize that your job or your hobbies have no eternal value but the souls of your children do.

Some men will hear this and agree with it but have no resolve to live it out. Instead, they will live for themselves and waste the opportunity to leave a godly legacy for the next generation.

But there are some men who, regardless of the mistakes we've made in the past, regardless of what our fathers did not do for us, will give the strength of our arms and the rest of our days to loving God with all that we are and to teach our children to do the same, and, whenever possible, to love and mentor others who have no father in their lives but who desperately need help and direction.

We are inviting any man whose heart is willing and courageous to join us in this resolution. In my home, the decision has already been made. You don't have to ask who will guide my family, because by God's grace, I will. You don't have to ask who will teach my son to follow Christ, because I will. Who will accept the responsibility of providing and protecting my family? I will. Who will ask God to break the chain of destructive patterns in my family's history? I will. Who will pray for and bless my children to boldly pursue whatever God calls them to do? I am their father. I will. I accept this responsibility, and it is my privilege to embrace it. I want the favor of God and His blessing on my home. Any good man does. So where are you, men of courage? Where are you, fathers who fear the Lord? It's time to rise up and answer the call that God has given to you and to say, "I will. I will. I will."

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*children to boldly pursue whatever God calls them to do? **I am their father. I will! I accept this responsibility, and it is my privilege to embrace it. I want the favor of God and His blessing on my home.** Any good man does. So where are you, men of courage? Where are you, fathers who fear the Lord? It's time to rise up and answer the call that God has given to you and to say, "I will. I will. **I will!**" Those words gripped my heart! **I will! I am their father. I want God's favor on my life, my marriage, and my home** (Gen. 6:8, Prov. 3:32,33; Acts 7:46). Wow! Those words had a strong impact on me! I want God's favor on my home! God help me be that kind of husband and father!*

A Father's Responsibility:

*Genesis 5:3 "Adam became the **father** of a son in his own likeness, according to his image, and named him Seth."*

*Proverbs 17:6 "Grandchildren are the crown of old men, and the glory of sons is their **father.**"*

It begins with us fathers! Children desperately need their daddy! They look up to dad. They want to be with dad. They want to be like dad. Dads, the moment you walk in the front door from work, you set the tone for the rest of the evening. It is reported by the *Fatherhood Initiative*, when a father is absent in a child's life, the child is 5x more likely to commit suicide, 32x more likely to run away, 20x more likely to have behavioral disorders, 9x more likely to drop out of high school, 10x more likely to abuse chemical substances, and 20x more likely to end up in prison (Stuart Birks, "Effects of Fatherlessness," Fatherhood Initiative, January 1996). In most cases, a child who grows up in a fatherless home is far more likely to be expelled from school, drop out of school, develop emotional or behavioral problems, fall victim to child abuse or neglect, be involved in violent gangs, become homeless, be involved in drugs, and involved in illegal activity. Fatherlessness is the number one cause of poverty in America. *"Nearly 75% of fatherless American children will experience poverty before age eleven, compared to 20% of those raised by two parents. Fatherless males are far more likely to become violent criminals, with 70% of the prison population serving long-term sentences."* (Voddie Baucham Jr., *What He Must Be*, p. 22). One in three (33%) families in America are fatherless (Fatherless Factor; US Census Bureau; Pew Research). It is said that 24.7 million children live absent from their biological father. In the documentary film *Irreplaceable*, 71% of all high school dropouts; 71% of teen pregnancy, 85% of child behavioral problems, 90% of runaways and homelessness, 63% of teen suicides, and 85% of youth in prison, all come from

fatherless homes. The opening lines on the website *Fathers.com* state, “More than 20 million children live in a home without the physical presence of father. Millions more have dads who are physically present, but emotionally absent. If it were classified as a disease, fatherlessness would be an epidemic worthy of attention as a national emergency.” “Fatherlessness is associated with almost every societal ill facing our country’s children.”

A husband’s primary responsibility is to love, nourish, and cherish his wife. “A happy wife is a happy life.” When a marriage is where it should be, the children will experience a healthy environment of peace and security. *Deuteronomy 24:5* says, “When a man takes a new wife, he shall not go out with the army nor be charged with any duty; he shall be free at home for one year and shall give happiness to his wife whom he has taken.” *1 Corinthians 7:2,33* says, “Because of immoralities, each man is to have his own wife and each woman is to have her own husband. The husband is to fulfill his duty to his wife...” “One who is married is concerned about the things of the world, how he may please his wife...” *1 Peter 3:7* says, “Husbands... live with your wives in an understanding way... and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life.” *Matthew 19:6* says, “Whatever God has joined together, let no man separate.” Nothing should come between a husband and wife as they begin to birth and raise their family. That relationship together is foundational to a healthy home.

Our view of our earthly father directly effects our view of our Heavenly Father. Fathers, you are a visible representation to your daughters and sons as to who our Good Heavenly Father is to us. *2 Corinthians 6:18* says, “**I will be a Father to you and you shall be sons and daughters to Me says the LORD Almighty.**” In the New Testament, God is referred to as “Abba Father” or “Daddy” (*Mark 14:36; John 5:18; Rom. 8:15; 1 Cor. 8:6; 2 Cor. 6:18; Gal. 4:6; Eph. 4:6*).

“If you then, being evil, know how to **give good gifts to your children**, how much more will **your Father who is in heaven give what is good** to those who ask Him.” *Matthew 7:11*

“**Every good thing given** and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the **Father** of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow.” *James 1:17*

Fathers are responsible to be the head of the home and have a significant influence over their family. Children follow their father's lead. Affection is especially powerful when it comes from fathers. The more affectionate a father, the more likely that his children will internalize his values and by contrast, children tend to reject the values of unaffectionate fathers. The vast amount of social research evidence supports how crucial the role of dad's affection is to his children. Social researcher David Popenoe stated, *"Young adults who feel emotionally close to their fathers, tend to be happier and more satisfied in life."* (David Popenoe, *Life Without Father*, New York: The Free Press, 1996; p. 150)

Fathers must train their sons to be masculine and their daughters to be feminine. *"Fathers have a God-given responsibility to see to it that their daughters marry well and that their sons become worthy husbands. Fathers must model Biblical manhood and teach Biblical manhood and hunt for Biblical manhood on behalf of their sons and daughters"* (Voddie Baucham, *What He Must Be*, p. 27). James Robison stated that both young boys and girls form their sexual identities by relating to their father. *"The more affectionate the father, the stronger and normal sex typing. The less affectionate and distant a father, the more likely his children are to be tempted with homosexuality or sexual promiscuity."* (James Robison, *In Search For Father*, Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale, 1979, p. 55, 174-180). After studying many counseling cases regarding homosexuality, Peter Wyden in *Growing Up Straight* states, *"I never saw a homosexual who had a good relationship with his father. We have come to the conclusion that a constructive, supportive, warmly related father precludes the possibility of a homosexual son. It is the loving quality of the fathering which a boy received and sometimes even the mere memory of it as reinforced by the mother (when the father is deceased), that now turns out to be a vital factor. Sons must be able to admire and identify with their fathers in order to become well-adjusted heterosexual males."* (Peter and Barbara Wyden, *Growing Up Straight*, Lanham, MD: Stein and Day, 1968; p. 60, 61).

Other studies confirm the same principle with daughters. *"Inappropriate or inadequate fathering is a major factor in the development of homosexuality in females as well as males."* Many lesbians felt their fathers were weak and incompetent. *"Homosexual women were more hostile toward and afraid of their fathers than the heterosexual women."* (Lamb, *The Role Of The Father In Child*

Development, p. 127; Farley, *Gospel-Powered Parenting*, p. 207). Appropriate love and affection with one's father has a major effect on the life of a child.

God has given us a clear picture in Scripture of what a husband and father should be with basic requirements that all good men should seek to achieve.

A Father's Leadership: (leading, initiating, modeling as the spiritual leader)

Ephesians 6:4; Colossians 3:21 "Fathers..."

*1 Corinthians 11:3/Ephesians 5:23 "The **man** is the head of his home."*

*Genesis 18:19 (Abraham) "**He** will direct **his** children and **his** household... to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just..."*

*1 Chronicles 15:12 "You are the heads of the **fathers'** households..." (1 Kgs. 8:1)*

Dads Must Be The Spiritual Leader In Their Home:

A boy's knowledge of what a godly husband and father is should surround him from the time he is a small boy. There is a direct connection between the faith of the father and the faith of the children. William Farley said, "*The common denominator between success and failure (in parenting) seems to be the spiritual depth and sincerity of the parents, especially the spiritual depth and sincerity of the **father**. There seems to be a strong correlation between the faith, commitment, and sincerity of the family's head and the spiritual vitality of his adult children*" (William Farley, *Gospel-Powered Parenting*, p. 15).

*Deuteronomy 4:9,10 "**Only give heed to yourself and keep your soul diligently**, so that **you do not forget** the things which **your eyes** have seen and they do not depart from **your heart** all the days of **your life**, but **make them known to your sons and your grandsons...** so they may learn to fear Me all the days they live on the earth and that they may teach their children."* "When you become the **father of children and children's children...**"

*Deuteronomy 5:29 "**Oh that they had such a heart in them**, that they would fear Me and keep all My commandments always, that it may be well with them **and with their sons** forever."*

*Deuteronomy 6:2, 6, 7, 20, 24 "So that **you and your sons and your grandsons might fear the LORD your God...** These words which I am commanding **you** today, shall be **on your heart**. **You shall teach***

them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when **you** sit in **your** house and when **you** walk by the way and when **you** lie down and when **you** rise up.” “When **your** sons ask you, ‘What do the testimonies and the statutes and the judgments mean...?’ Then **you** shall say, ‘The LORD commanded us to observe all these statues, to fear the LORD our God for our good always’...” (11:19; Josh. 4:21)

Joshua 24:15 “As for **me** and **my** house, we will serve the LORD.”

1 Kings 8:25b “If only your sons take heed to their way to **walk before Me as you have walked.**” (2 Chron. 6:16)

1 Kings 9:4 “As for you, if you will **walk** before Me **as your father** David walked, in integrity of heart and uprightness, doing according to all that I have commanded you and will keep My statutes and My ordinances...”

2 Chronicles 17:3,4 “The LORD was with Jehoshaphat because he **followed the example of his father David** (father Asa and grandfather David) ...(he) **sought the God of his father...**” (2 Kg. 22:2; 2 Chron. 34:2,3)

Job 1:5b “Job would send and consecrate them, rising up early in the morning and offering burnt offerings according to the number of them all, for Job said, ‘Perhaps my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts.’ Thus Job did continually.” (Matt. 17:5)

Acts 10:2 “Cornelius... a devout man and one who **feared God with all his household**, and gave many alms to the Jewish people and prayed to God continually.”

A Negative Father’s Influence Can Affect Generations:

Every father will have an influence in their family, some for good, but sadly some for evil. Nothing is neutral. Everything points somewhere.

Exodus 20:5 “...visiting the iniquity of the **fathers** on the children (and grandchildren), to the third and fourth generation...” (34:7; Num. 14:18; Deut. 5:9; 24:16; 2 Kgs. 5:27)

1 Kings 15:3 “**He walked in all the sins of his father which he had committed before him**; and his heart was not wholly devoted to the LORD his God, like the heart of his father David.” (15:26; 22:52,53; 2 Kings 21:20-22; 24:9; 2 Chron. 20:32)

If you plant wickedness deep, it will take generations to reverse. Manasseh tried later in his life to change the destructive effects of his earlier wicked life, but he could not reset the consequences which remained for generations (*2 Chron. 33:12-23; 2 Kings 21:20*). But God is gracious, and does not always give us what we deserve. *Ezekiel 18:14-32* says, “Now behold, he has a son who has observed all his father’s sins which he has committed, **and observing does not do likewise... he will not die for his father’s iniquity, he will surely live. He who executes My ordinances, and walks in My statutes, he will not die for his father’s iniquity, he will surely live... when the son has practiced justice and righteousness... the person who sins will die. The son will not bear the punishment for the father’s iniquity, nor will the father bear the punishment for the son’s iniquity... repent and turn... and live**” (*Deut. 24:16*). *Ephesians 2:4* says, “But God... being rich in mercy.” Dads, what legacy of spiritual leadership and manhood will you leave your family?

Many men who should now be training their sons to imitate their walk with Christ, and their manhood, are instead not yet good men themselves. Their bad example produces only confusion. Many men are still in the process of “finding themselves” (growing up) and trying haphazardly to understand what a real godly man should look like. The real question is who sets the standard for manhood? Our present culture is completely lost with gender identity. We have no idea who should “wear the pants” in the family or who should nurture the children. We have no idea what it means to be “spiritual” or “know God.” Apart from the God of the Bible, there are no absolute categories or clear definitions of true masculinity, femininity, or spirituality. Our culture has lost its moral or spiritual compass on true north. Men must first learn what it means to be a real Biblical Man before they can teach their boys to follow their good example. You can’t pass on something you don’t possess. Any healthy human being can have a child, but raising and training children rightly is a different story. Being born male or female are God-given gender qualities, but true manhood and womanhood are God-based learned traits. Daughters look to a father’s example to set the bar as to what kind of man they want to look for in their future marriage partner. Any boy is male, but he must develop through careful training into being a good godly man by observing his good godly father, who is imitating his Good Heavenly Father. Jesus, being the physical,

earthly representation of the Father, is our best example of the Good Perfect Man.

Regarding Church Spiritual Leadership and Home Management

A pastor or elder's place in the church is based on his leading well in his home. Anything short of that disqualifies spiritual leadership in the church. Good men leading at home will be good men leading at church.

1 Timothy 3:4,5 "He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect. If a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?"

Titus 1:6 "Having children who believe, not accused of dissipation or rebellion."

Some men in spiritual leadership use these passages to say that it is acceptable for an elder to have an unbelieving, rebellious child as long as they are compliant in his home. I know there are different views on these passages, but I believe if we take the low view of eldership at home, we do both the church and our own family a disservice. The word translated "believe" can also be translated "faithful" or "trustworthy." This word is never used of an unbeliever in Scripture. Faithful to what or whom? Christ? Rebellion? Unbelief? A child may be obeying you sitting down on the outside, but if he is rebelliously standing up against your authority, leadership, and your teaching on the inside, he is not faithful to anything but to his sinful nature. It applies to children of any age, even those who leave our home (*Deut. 21:18-21*). How can an elder say with any integrity, "follow my example (in my family) as I follow the example of Christ" (*1 Cor. 11:1*)? He can't. How can an elder be "above reproach" if his own family is not doing well and people know it? He isn't. This leader, in my humble opinion, should step back from leadership and focus on his family and make the gospel the main point of his conversation with his children. He may need to be more intentional now for the prior years of neglect when his children were young, and there may be long-lasting consequences for "the years that the locust have eaten." But, thank God He is merciful, even when we have failed.

Every day is a new day to live in obedience. I believe this disqualification can be temporary, based on the possibility that circumstances may change in the future when if God saves and transforms the child from the inside out. A similar situation is when an elder has young untested children. Maybe he is qualified when his children are young, but as they age and it is obvious there is unbelief and rebellion evident in the heart of his child, I believe it is in the best interest for all involved, for him to step back and be full-time at home for the sake of his family. If a man is taken away from his home because of his busy schedule at work, this can only compound the problem in the family and home must be the focus of his ministry first, before he loses his family for eternity. If we disciple other people's children, but fail to disciple our own kids, we are guilty before God. Home is the proving grounds for everything we say.

We shepherd the church in the same way we shepherd our family. Integrity is living what you teach and preach publicly and at home privately. Spiritual leadership is held to a stricter standard (*Ja. 3:1; 1 Tim. 4:16*). A child may go through a season of rebellion which may change for the good, but if their life is continuously bent on rebellion, it will disqualify that elder permanently from serving in that capacity. Richard Baxter in The Reformed Pastor said, *"It is not likely that the people will much regard the doctrine of such men, when they see that they do not live as they preach. They will think that he doth not mean as he speaks, if he does not live as he speaks. They will hardly believe a man that seemeth not to believe himself."* Voddie Baucham said, *"Who a man is as a husband and father to a large degree shapes who he is as a minister of the gospel."* *"God has chosen the family as a training ground for church leaders."* *"A man's home (is) his resume."* *"Take a wife, start a family, and then see if you qualify."* (Baucham, What He Must Be, p. 37,41)

David Wilkerson said, *"For years I was a youth evangelist traveling the nation and ministering to thousands of young people. During that time, I had conversations with many troubled teenagers from Christian homes. These kids were completely turned off to church. They wanted nothing to do with their parents' religion. They spoke of their dad and mom's angry fights, blatant hypocrisy, awful gossip, and secret sins. They heard constant grumbling and complaints about their minister, church members, family,*

and friends. Usually in such cases the dad was active in church. People saw him as dedicated and full of Jesus. But his kids knew how to read his life, and they saw him as he really was: a phony. He mistreated their mother with abusive language. Or he had a secret stash of pornographic magazines. Or he was caught watching filthy videos. Such a dad serves in the Eli priesthood. He has no spiritual authority. And in turn, he has no respect. He might lecture his kids, or threaten them, or try to demand obedience. But he's wasting his breath. It's all to no avail. We see this illustrated in Eli's life. Eli had two sons named Hophni and Phinehas, who also served as priests. God called these men "sons of Belial," or children of the devil. Yet Eli never dealt with his sons about the sin. He never spoke to them more than an empty word of caution. After all, he knew anything he might say to them was in vain, because of his own spiritual sloth."
(Wilkerson, Times Square Church email July 12, 2002 quoted in Barnett, Word Filled Families Walk In Truth, p. 290)

Every Christian man can have his blind spots. James Snyder wrote about A.W. Tozer, "As a family man, Tozer had his share of contradictions and incongruities..." Tozer saw his family as a distraction from his goal of knowing God to which he sacrificed his family for the sake of his ministry. Because of his speaking engagements, he was gone more than he was home, and when he was home, he was in his bedroom studying or writing. His wife Ada was left to raise their six sons alone. Tozer was not involved in any education or discipleship of his children. There was no family discussion of Biblical doctrine or Scripture reading in the home. It wasn't until his daughter Becky was born, that he began to be involved somewhat in his family. Yet, he would prefer communication with his daughter over his wife. (In Pursuit Of God: The Life Of A.W. Tozer; New York, Christian Publications, 1994, p. 179-189).

Based on 1 Timothy 3:5, he was disqualified, "If a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?" Tozer is known for his passion for God, but little of us know the story of his neglect of his family. Heart breaking! I remember reading the biography of Bob Pierce, founder of World Vision. His story is similar. Nothing in this life is worth sacrificing your family. Our family is the basis for everything we do in life. It is our resume and platform for church

leadership. My greatest platform to speak into people's lives as a pastor is based on my family. No family is perfect, but it must reflect Christ at this basic level. If my marriage and my children are not right, then nothing is right.

A Father's Discipline:

The father is to be the main disciplinarian in the home. He sets the tone for proper correction of the children. Today many fathers are absent or passive. The wife usually ends up with the bulk of discipline and instruction of the children. Children desperately need strong engaged fathers. It begins with us dads. We need to be good men. We need to lead. Remember, discipline is not an end in itself. It is a tool to shape a child's heart. We must be present and participating.

*Deuteronomy 8:5 "The LORD your God was disciplining you, just as a **man disciplines his son.**"*

*2 Samuel 7:14, 15 "I will be a **father** to him and he will be a son to Me; when he commits iniquity, **I will correct him with the rod** of men and the strokes of the sons of men. But my lovingkindness shall not depart from him."*

*Proverbs 3:11,12 "My son, do not reject the discipline of the LORD, or loathe His reproof, for whom the LORD loves he reproveth, even **as a father corrects the son in whom he delights.**"*

*Proverbs 13:1 "A wise son accepts his **father's discipline...**" (15:5)*

*Proverbs 13:24 "**He** who withholds **his** rod hates **his** son, but **he** who loves him **disciplines** him **diligently.**"*

*Proverbs 19:18 "**Discipline your son** while there is hope..."*

*Proverbs 29:17 "**Correct your son**, and he will give you comfort (rest); he will also delight your soul."*

*Hebrews 12:7b, 9, 10 "For what son is there whom his father does not **discipline?** ...We had earthly **fathers** to **discipline** us and we respected them... **They disciplined us** for a short time **as seemed best to them**, but He disciplines us for our good so that we may share His holiness."*

Biblical Bad Examples Of Little Or No Discipline

Eli had two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, who were priests at the Tabernacle. They were worthless fellows who did not know God. They would take the best of the offerings for themselves. They despised their responsibilities, misused the sacrifice procedures, and were harshly

“lording over” those who were entrusted to their care. They were sexually immoral with the women who served at the Tent of Meeting. These young men’s sin was very great before God. Eli heard what his sons were doing, but he was more concerned about his own bad reputation, than the sin that his boys were guilty of before God. When confronted, his sons did not listen to their father (1 Sam. 1:3 2:12,14-17,22-25). God confronted Eli and said, *“Why do you kick at My sacrifice and at My offering... and honor your sons above Me by making yourselves fat with the choicest of every offering...”* (1 Sam. 2:29). *“He who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me”* (Matt. 10:37). God’s judgment was that the three of them would perish. *“The word of the LORD was rare in those days”* (this is understandable with corrupt spiritual leadership) (1 Sam. 3:1). God’s final judgment against Eli stated, *“I have told him that I am about to **judge his house forever for the iniquity which he knew**, because his sons brought a curse on themselves **and he did not rebuke them**”* (1 Sam. 3:13). The ESV, NIV, and NKJV, all translate this *“failed to restrain them”* (1 Sam. 2:29,34; 3:1,13). Alexander MacLaren wrote, *“We may learn how cruel parental laxity is, and how fatal mischief may be done, by neglect of the plain duty of restraining children.”* *“He who tolerates evil which it is his province to suppress, is an accomplice, and the blood of the doers is red on his hands”* (MacLaren, Expositions of Holy Scripture).

It was said of David’s son Adonijah, that King David never crossed him at any time by asking, “Why have you done so?” Adonijah exalted himself and tried to take over the kingdom, without his father’s knowledge (1 Kings 1:6,18,27).

What happened to Samuel’s sons? Sadly, it is said of Samuel’s sons Joel and Abijah who were judges, they *“did not walk in his ways but turned aside after dishonest gain and took bribes and perverted justice,”* to the point the people of Israel refused to follow their leadership as Samuel was aging (1 Samuel 8:1,3,5). They wanted a king because the present leader’s sons were corrupt.

A Father’s Instruction:

Fathers are to be the main overseer of the instruction of their homes. The buck stops with them and their oversight over what is taught to their children.

The wife may be the main teacher, but the father should manage his household well as spiritual head. His example is significant in the family. Dads, we need to love God with our whole heart, soul, and mind, and teach our family to follow.

*Deuteronomy 32:46 "Take to your heart all the words with which I am warning you today, which **you shall command your sons to observe carefully**, for it is not an idle word for you... it is your life..."*

*Deuteronomy 31:13 "Their children, who have not known, will **hear and learn** to fear the LORD your God..."*

*1 Chronicles 28:9 "As for you **my son Solomon, know the God of your father**, and serve Him with a whole heart and a willing mind..."*

*Psalms 34:11 "Come, you children, listen to me; **I will teach you the fear of the LORD.**"*

*Psalms 78:1-8 "**Listen... to my instruction.** Incline your ears to the words of my mouth... which we have heard and known and our **fathers** have told us. We will not conceal them from their children, but tell to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and His strength and wondrous works that He has done... which He commanded our **fathers** that they should **teach** them to their children, that the generation to come might know, even the children yet to be born, that they may arise and tell them to their children that they should put their confidence in God and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments, and not be like their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation, a generation that did not prepare its heart and whose spirit was not faithful to God."*

*Proverbs 1:8 "Hear my son your **father's instruction** and do not forsake your **mother's teaching.**" (2:1; 3:1; 4:1-5,10,11; 5:1; 6:20; 7:1; 23:22)*

*Proverbs 14:26 "In the fear of the LORD, there is strong confidence. And **his** children will have a place of refuge."*

*Proverbs 23:22,26 "Listen to your **father** who begot you..." "Give me your heart my son, and let your eyes delight in my ways."*

*Proverbs 24:21 "**My son**, fear the LORD and the king..."*

*Isaiah 38:19 "A **father tells his sons** about Your faithfulness."*

*Isaiah 54:13 "All your **sons** will be **taught** of the LORD, and the well-being of your sons will be great. In righteousness you will be established."*

*1 Corinthians 14:35 "If they (wives) desire to learn anything, let them ask their own **husbands** at home..." (1 Tim. 2:12)*

We need to train sons to become men and not live in perpetual adolescence.

1 Corinthians 13:11 "When I was a child, I used to speak like a child, think like a child, reason like a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things."

A Father's Sacrificial, Gentle Love And Care:

"Husbands, love your wives" (*Eph. 5:25; Col. 3:19; 1 Jn. 3:16*). Dads, the greatest gift you can give your family is to love and be committed to your wife, their mother, and demonstrate that love uniquely to each of your kids. Your wife should be your very best friend. Next to Christ, she should be your first love. Husbands, look for ways to praise your wife in front of your children and in public (*Prov. 31:28*). You are the provider, protector, and ultimately the one who brings security and safety to your family. Your gentle spirit will cause your children to be near you.

A father's deep tender affection for his children will provide the foundation to their self-concept, their love for each other, their security, and their joy in life. A father can express his love by personal touch, praying for his family by name, spending quality and quantity time, expressing thanks or praise, and celebrating each child's individual achievements and personal growth. A father can communicate love with the time he spends with his kids playing games, bathing them, reading the Bible or story books to them, holding them in his lap, telling his children how much he loves them. If a father only gives a token moment and then moves on to his own desires and pleasures elsewhere, he will only communicate false affection and the kids will see right through him. *1 John 3:18 says, "Let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth."* I had a young dad once tell me, "I don't do diapers!" I asked him how long he wanted to stay married? Real dads change diapers. Real dads are willing to play Polly Pockets, Lincoln logs, Lego, Nerf, army men, and dress up. We played a game called hide and go peep (not hide and go seek), where we would hide and give away our location by "peeping." A Sprite beverage commercial showed a dad playing dress up with his daughter who he loved dearly. His daughter had him decked out with special hair, makeup, and weird clothes, and then the doorbell rang, and a repair man was there to fix a broken kitchen appliance. You can imagine what went through that repairman's little mind. We do these things out of a heart of love for our family. Our earthly father's love is directly associated with our heavenly Father's love for us in Christ (*Lk. 1:78; Eph. 4:32*). Children will

emulate their father's sacrificial love for his family (selfless leadership – gentle, kind, forgiving, serving) (1 Cor. 13:4-8). A father who demonstrates a humble attitude only will strengthen his relationship with his family. Humility and honor go hand in hand.

*Deuteronomy 1:31 "The LORD your God carried you, just as **a man carries his son** in all the way you which you have walked..."*

*Psalms 103:13,14 "Just as a **father** has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear Him. For He Himself knows our frame, He is mindful that we are but dust."*

Dads, are you known for your compassion for your children? Do you understand their utter helpless dependence on you as their father? Do your kids run to you for safety and security and cry out, 'Daddy'? What a picture of our relationship with God our Heavenly Father. The father figure is so important in a child's life (Mark 14:36; Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:6).

*Psalms 68:5 "A **father** of the fatherless... Is God in His holy habitation."*

Psalms 146:9 "(The LORD) supports the fatherless and the widow."

*Jeremiah 31:20 "Is Ephraim **My dear son**? Is he a delightful child? Indeed, as often as I have spoken against him, I certainly still remember him; therefore my heart yearns for him; I will surely have mercy on him, declares the LORD."*

*Matthew 7:9-11 "What man is there among you who, when his son asks for a loaf, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he? If you then being evil know how to **give good gifts to your children**, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him?" (Lk. 11:11-13)*

*Luke 1:17 "To turn the hearts of the **fathers** back to the children..." (Mal. 4:6)*

*Luke 15:20,24 "While he was still a long way off, his **father** saw him and felt compassion for him and ran and embraced him and kissed him... for this son of mine was dead and has come to life again, he was lost and has been found." (Luke 9:38-43; 14:5; Jn. 4:47-53)*

*1 Thessalonians 2:11 "...As a **father** would his children – exhorting, comforting (encouraging), urging (imploring)."*

1 Thessalonians 5:14 "Admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone."

John 15:13 "Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his

friends.”

Colossians 3:12 “Put on the heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience.”

A Father’s Work Ethic: (exemplifying diligence in work)

Dads, how we come to work before our family will shape their view of working the rest of their lives. We can either be lazy (slothful), or pursue excellence in our labor – either action will have a profound impact on our families – for good or for evil. Our children will emulate the work ethic we model before them every day. Dads, how do you come to your work? Do your kids see you working diligently, finishing tasks, willing to do whatever needs to be done to fix things around your home? Do they see you adequately providing for your family’s well-being? Do your children find joy in work because you model a joyful spirit in your work? Do they have no understanding of what work involves, because they have never seen it exemplified before their eyes at home, nor has it been expected of them to participate in together as a family? A good work ethic is contagious and effects generations. Children will follow the example of us as husbands and fathers, as we provide for our family, and care well for our home. Some of my greatest joys has been seeing my whole family working together build up our home and helping serve others together as we work to the glory of God. We can talk about work all day, but until we actually get out and do it together with our kids, it is at those times we genuinely prepare them for their future. A good work ethic is more caught than taught. Children learn work by doing work.

*Genesis 30:30 “...When shall I **provide for my own household** also?”*

*Proverbs 19:14 “House and wealth are an inheritance from **fathers**...”*

*Ecclesiastes 5:14 “When riches were lost through a bad investment and **he** had **fathered a son, then there was nothing to support him.**”*

*Colossians 3:23 “... do your **work heartily** as for the Lord...”*

*2 Corinthians 12:14 “Children are not responsible to **save up** for their parents, but **parents for their children.**”*

*1 Timothy 5:8 “If anyone does not **provide for his own**, and especially for those of **his household**, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.”*

*1 Thessalonians 4:11-12 “Excel still more... Make it your ambition... to **work** with your hands... and not be in any need.” (work hard)*

2 Thessalonians 3:6-11 “Keep away from any brother who leads an unruly life...”

*follow our example... in labor and hardship we kept **working** night and day so that we would not be a burden to any of you... if anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat. We hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined life, doing no work at all... we command and exhort in the Lord... to **work** in quiet fashion and eat their own bread..." (work diligently and don't be dependent on anyone)*

A Father's Strength, Courage, & Protection:

Dads, we are the gate keepers. We must be willing to do hard things. We are called to be courageous. We are the protectors of our family. Next to the Lord, our family must find safety and security in us. There are times when men have to fight for what is right. A gentile man is one who has "strength under control." A discerning man is one who knows when to stand strong and when to restrain action. A father must be wise in how he uses his strength. He must not overpower in discipline and must not misuse his strength to harm. He must be careful when he competes with his sons and not be overly aggressive or stifling.

Deuteronomy 20:1-4,7,8 "When you go out to battle... do not be afraid of them, for The LORD your God... is with you. Do not be fainthearted... afraid... panic... or tremble... for the LORD your God is the one who goes with you to fight for you against your enemies to save you." "Who is the man that is afraid and faint-hearted? Let him depart and return to his house so that he might not make his brothers heart's melt like his heart." (men fought in the front lines of battle) (Deut. 20:7; 24:5; Josh. 1:14)

*1 Kings 2:2 (David to Solomon) "Be strong, show **yourself a man.**"*

1 Chronicles 28:20 "Then David said to his son Solomon, "Be strong and courageous, and act; do not fear nor be dismayed for the LORD God, my God, is with you..." (Deut. 31:6; Josh. 10:25; 2 Sam. 10:12; 1 Chron. 19:12; 2 Chron. 32:7)

*Nehemiah 4:9,13,14 "We prayed to our God... and we set up a guard... I stationed people in families with their swords, spears, and bows... Do not be afraid of them, remember the Lord who is great and awesome, **fight for your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your houses.**"*

*Mark 3:27 "No one can enter the **strong man's** house and plunder his property unless he first binds the **strong man...**" (Lk. 11:21,22)*

*1 Corinthians 16:13,14 "Be on your guard, stand firm in the faith, be **men of** courage, be strong. Let all that you do be done in love."*

2 Samuel 1:18 "Teach the sons of Judah the song of the bow..." (valiant men in were commemorated)

The Protector Of One's Wife

Dads, the greatest gift and sign of love is that you love and protect your wife. That will be the greatest sign to your kids of your faithfulness and it will bring stability to your home. Women have a deep desire to be protected and led by a man who is strong enough. His strength may not necessarily be physical or brute force. Bring brave is far more than owning a weapon. Protection may come in the form of being your wife's buffer or standing between her and something that is wearing away at her. A young man is not ready for marriage unless he knows he has sufficient horsepower to pull that load. *1 Peter 3:7 says, "Husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way as with someone weaker, since she is a woman, and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life..."*

The Protector Of One's Children

Fathers are the ultimate authority and sign of strength to their children. Dads play an active role in the process helping our kids make good decisions and of finding and evaluating potential suitors for their daughters and potential mates for their sons. We must train our children not to settle for less than a God-honoring, Christ-exalting, Bible-believing mate. Dads, we must get this one right. We cannot be passive here. We are the gatekeepers.

Proverbs 14:26 "In the fear of the LORD, there is strong confidence and his children will have a place of refuge."

Deuteronomy 7:3,4 "You shall not intermarry with them, you shall not give your daughters to their sons nor shall you take their daughters for your sons, for they will turn your sons away from following Me..." (Ezra 9:12; Neh. 10:30; 13:25; Jud. 3:6,7; 12:9)

Leviticus 22:13 A daughter is under her father's authority & protection and her father protects her from rash vows. (Num. 30:3-5,16; Gen. 38:11)

Deuteronomy 22:15-21 The father is responsible for presenting his Daughter as a pure virgin in marriage. He is responsible for his daughter's sexual purity (virginity) and future welfare. (Lev. 19:29; 1 Cor. 7:36-38; Ex. 22:16,17 father's right of refusal)

Jeremiah 29:6 "Take wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage"

A Father's Character:

1. Faithful

Fathers are called to be loyal, consistent, constant, reliable, steadfast, and men of integrity. Faithfulness is a foundational desired trait in a father and young man. Unfaithfulness and inconsistency are abhorrent traits in anyone.

Psalms 37:3 "...cultivate faithfulness..."

Proverbs 12:22 "Those who deal faithfully are His delight."

*Proverbs 20:6,7 "Who can find a trustworthy **man**? A righteous man who walks in his integrity – how **blessed are his sons** after him."*

Proverbs 28:20 "A faithful man will abound with blessings."

2 Kings 12:15 "They did not require an accounting from the men into whose hand they gave the money to pay to those who did the work, for they dealt faithfully." (22:7)

Matthew 25:21 "Well done good and faithful servant..." "You were faithful with a few things..." (24:45,46)

Luke 16:10 "He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful in much."

2 Timothy 2:2 "The things which you have heard from me... entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also."

1 Corinthians 4:2 "It is required of stewards that one be found trustworthy."

Titus 2:2 "Older men are to be temperate, dignified, sensible, sound in faith, in love, in perseverance."

Titus 2:6-8 "Urge the young men to be sensible, in all things show yourself to be an example of good deeds, with purity in doctrine, dignified, sound in speech, which is beyond reproach so that the opponent will be put to shame having nothing bad to say about us."

Biblical Examples

Abraham - Nehemiah 9:8 "You found his heart faithful before You."

Moses - Numbers 12:7 "He is faithful in all My household." (Heb. 3:2)

Hananiah – Nehemiah 7:2 "He was a faithful man and feared God more than most men do."

2. Prayerful

A loving father prays diligently for his children. He prays for their protection and salvation. He prays that they would fear God, pursue holiness, and develop a clean conscience before God. He prays fervently for their future mates and life occupations.

Job 1:5 "Job would send and consecrate them, rising up early in the morning and offering burnt offerings according to the number of them all, for Job said, 'Perhaps my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts.' Thus Job did continually." (Job prayed for his kids regularly.)

*1 Chronicles 29:19 "Direct their heart to You, and give to **my** son Solomon a perfect heart to keep Your commandments and to do them all..." (David prayed for his son's relationship with God.)*

Promises To Dads:

Throughout the Bible, God promises great blessings to fathers who fear Him and live righteously and obediently before their family.

Deuteronomy 28:1 "If you diligently obey the LORD your God... all these blessings will come upon you... blessed shall be the offspring of your body... the LORD will command the blessing upon you in all that you put your hand to..." (God's favor will be upon your children and your home.)

Proverbs 3:33 "He blesses the dwelling of the righteous."

Proverbs 10:7 "The memory of the righteous is blessed."

Proverbs 12:7 "The house of the righteous will stand."

*Proverbs 23:15,16 "My son, if your heart is wise, my own heart also will be **glad**; and my inmost being will **rejoice** when your lips speak what is right."*

*Proverbs 23:24 "The father of the righteous will greatly **rejoice** and he who sires a wise son will be **glad** in him. May your father & mother be **glad**; may she who gave you birth **rejoice**."*

*Proverbs 27:11 "Be wise, my son, and **bring joy to my heart**; then I can answer anyone who treats me with contempt."*

*Psalms 147:11,13 "The LORD **favours** those who fear Him... He has blessed your sons within you."*

1 Kings 2:4 "If your sons are careful of their way, to walk before Me in truth with all their heart and with all their soul, you shall not lack a man on the throne of Israel." (v. 3 "that you may succeed in all that you do")

Warnings To Fathers:

God also warns fathers if they disobey in their God-given roles, sin will bear devastating consequences which may last generations.

Leviticus 20:5 "I Myself will set My face against the man and against his family and I will cut off from among their people both him and all those who play the harlot after him, by playing the harlot after Molech." (a father's sinful choices can affect generations to come)

Deuteronomy 28:9,15,20 "But if you do not obey the LORD your God... all these curses will come upon you and overtake you...cursed shall be the offspring of your body... confusion in all you undertake to do... on account of the evil of your deeds, because you have forsaken Me." (God's judgment on family/nation)

Proverbs 11:39 "He who troubles his own house will inherit wind."

Proverbs 15:25 "The LORD will tear down the house of the proud."

Proverbs 17:13 "He who returns evil for good, evil will not depart from his house."

Proverbs 27:8 "So is the man who wanders from his home..."

Micah 7:2,6 "The godly person has perished from the land... son treats father contemptuously, daughter rises up against her mother... a man's enemies are the men of his own household."

*Luke 17:2 "It would be better for **him** if a millstone were hung around **his** neck and **he** were thrown into the sea, than that **he** would cause one of these little ones to stumble."*

The Disgrace Of A Father:

God warns fathers if they do not correctly discipline and instruct their children, sin will bear consequence in their children's lives.

Proverbs 17:21,25 "He who sires a fool does so to his sorrow. A father of a fool has no joy." "A foolish son is grief to his father and bitterness to her who bore him."

Proverbs 19:13 "A foolish son is destruction to his father..."

Proverbs 28:7,24 "He who keeps the law is a discerning son, but he who is a companion of gluttons humiliates his father."

Proverbs 30:17 "The eye that mocks a father and scorns a mother..."

Promise To Sons:

*1 Kings 9:4 "If you will walk before Me **as your father David walked**, in integrity of*

heart and uprightness, doing according to all that I have commanded and you keep My statutes and ordinances ... then I will... (bless you).” (Ps. 132:12)

Warning To Sons:

Deuteronomy 21:18-21 “If any man has a stubborn and rebellious son who will not obey his father or his mother, and when they chastise him, he will not even listen to them, then his father and mother shall seize him and bring him out to the elders of his city at the gateway of his hometown. They shall say to the elders of his city, ‘This son of ours is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey us he is a glutton and a drunkard. Then all the men of his city shall stone him to death, so you shall remove the evil from your midst and all Israel will hear of it and fear.”

1 Samuel 2:25 “But they would not listen to the voice of their father, for the LORD desired to put them to death.”

1 Kings 9:6 “But if you or your sons turn away from following Me and do not keep My commandments and go and serve other gods and worship them... then I will cut off Israel from the land... this house will become a heap of ruins... because they forsook the LORD their God...”

1 Kings 11:6 “Solomon did what was evil in the sight of the LORD and did not follow the LORD fully as David his father had done.”

Isaiah 30:9 “For this is a rebellious people, false sons, sons who refuse to listen to the instruction of the LORD.”

Fathers Desiring God’s Favor:

Do you want God’s favor on your home? Choose wisely with how you live.
Deuteronomy 12:28 “Be careful to listen to all these words which I command you, so that it may be well with you and your sons after you forever, for you will be doing what is good and right in the sight of the LORD your God.” (7:13)
Deuteronomy 30:15,19,20 “I have set before you today life and prosperity, and death and adversity in that I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in His ways...If your heart turns away and you will not obey... you shall surely perish. I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. So choose life in order that you may live, you and your descendants, by loving the LORD your God by obeying His voice and by holding fast to Him, for this is your life...” (11:26,27; Jer. 44:10)

Acts 2:38,39 "For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself."

As many times as I have watched the music video "**Cats In The Cradle**" sung by **Ricky Skaggs** on YouTube, my reaction is always the same, "Oh God, please don't let me be like that father..." It brings me to tears as I see him as a grandfather, in a convalescent home in a wheel chair, looking out the window toward the end of his life, hoping his kids would come and visit him, but they are not interested or too busy. He has created this separation through the years of his neglectful response to his own children. Now it has come full circle. What a tragedy!

"Cat's In The Cradle" by Harry Chapin

My child arrived just the other day
He came to the world in the usual way
But there were planes to catch, and bills to pay
He learned to walk while I was away
And he was talking 'fore I knew it, and as he grew
He'd say "I'm gonna be like you, dad"
"You know I'm gonna be like you"

My son turned ten just the other day
He said, thanks for the ball, dad, come on let's play
Can you teach me to throw, I said, not today
I got a lot to do, he said, that's okay
And he walked away, but his smile never dimmed
He said, I'm gonna be like him, yeah
You know... I'm gonna be like him.

Well, he came from college just the other day
So much like a man I just had to say
Son, I'm proud of you, can you sit for a while?
He shook his head, and he said with a smile
What I'd really like, dad, is to borrow the car keys
See you later, can I have them please?

I've long since retired and my son's moved away
I called him up just the other day
I said, I'd like to see you if you don't mind
He said, I'd love to, dad, if I could find the time
You see, my new job's a hassle, and the kids have the flu
But it's sure nice talking to you, dad
It's been sure nice talking to you

And as I hung up the phone, it occurred to me
He'd grown up just like me
My boy was just like me

Chorus:

*And the cats in the cradle and the silver spoon
Little boy blue and the man in the moon
"When you coming home, dad?" "I don't know when"
But we'll get together then
You know we'll have a good time then*

A Father's Confession:

"My family's all grown and the kids are all gone. But if I had to do it all over again, this is what I would do. I would love my wife more in front of my children. I would laugh with my children more – at our mistakes and our joys. I would listen more, even to the littlest child. I would be more honest about my own weaknesses, never pretending perfection. I would pray differently for my family; instead of focusing on them, I'd focus on me. I would do more things together with my children. I would encourage them more and bestow more praise. I would pay more attention to little things, like deeds and words of thoughtfulness. And then, finally, if I had to do it all over again, I would share God more intimately with my family; even ordinary things that happen in every ordinary day I would use to direct them to God." (John M. Drescher, If I Were Starting My Family Again, Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1996, preface)

A Letter To Dad: (A wonderful letter written by a daughter to her father)

"I don't know where to begin. You have been such an amazing dad to me. You are such a picture and example of someone who is truly wanting to follow Christ in everything you do. I thank you so much for telling and reminding me,

who my husband should be like someday (Lord willing). Thank you so much for the husband you are to mom. I only know that I would want my husband to be like you. You are such a great example to me of how someone should trust Christ, even through hard times. I hope I can be like you in times of trouble. Dad, you are such a great example of a hard worker. No matter where you are, you are always looking for things to do to help. You work overtime and you don't stop until the job is done. You give it your best. You push about the standard. I truly believe that when you stand before God someday, He will say, 'Well done my good and faithful servant'. I love you so much Dad. Your daughter..." "PS. Someday will you help me choose the right husband? And if he isn't the right one, will you chase him off with a shot gun?" (Anonymous)

One great example of a godly husband and father is found in Jonathan Edwards. Because he was a faithful husband and father to his family, he left a generational legacy. He and his wife parented eleven children. In 1900, A. E. Winship studied what happened to 1,400 descendants of Jonathan and Sarah by the year 1900 A.D. He found that the descendants included:

"13 college presidents, 65 professors, 100 lawyers and a dean of a law school, 30 judges, 66 physicians and a dean of a medical school, 80 holders of public office including three US Senators, mayors of three large cities, governors of three states, a Vice President of the US, a controller of the US Treasury. They had written over 135 books and edited eighteen journals and periodicals. Many had entered the ministry. Over 100 were missionaries and others were on mission boards." (Christianity Today Int., "Jonathan Edwards: America's Humble Giant", 2008)

Dads, who you are and how you lead is foundational to the health of your home. Very few things in life are more influential and beneficial to your family than your faithful relationship with your wife and your loving relationship to your children. Because you are a good dad who fears God and has a personal relationship with Christ, your children will come to love God, because you reflect Him and His goodness in what your sons and daughters see every day in your presence. May we reflect God's goodness as we strive to be good faithful fathers. *Proverbs 17:6 says, "Grandchildren are the crown of old men, and the glory of sons is their **father**."*