

The Foundation of Fatherhood

Fatherhood can make a man's life rich, filled with joy and laughter and give a man a lasting sense of gratification and achievement.

This is God's will for fathers.

- There is no more worthwhile and significant mission a man could undertake than to start and cultivate a family.

As a dad, you get to shape and influence another human's life to a greater extent than any other relationship on earth.

As a father, we have the opportunity to either set our children on a trajectory of true greatness or in the worst case – to wound them deeply.

The reality is that being a father and cultivating a family isn't **EASY**.

- We start a family before we really know what we've gotten ourselves into: we are staring into the face of a son or daughter for the first time and felt lost as to what to do as a father.
- You may be or have struggled with figuring out how to get your child to obey or do their homework in grade school.
- Now you're wondering how to relate to your teenager who is arguing with you over every issue.
- By the time you begin to figure out how to connect with children at that level, they transition to another stage which has its own unique needs.
- Our culture today doesn't offer much guidance.
- Fatherlessness and its effects are pervasive today.
- In 1954 4% of children were born outside of marriage; in 2007 that number had ballooned to 40%.
- Children growing up in fatherless homes are: 1. More likely to be poor. 2. Have behavioral problems. 3. Be convicted of a crime. 4. Be abused, use drugs & be overweight.
- Children growing up in father present homes are: 1. More likely to get better grades. 2. Be more emotionally secure. 3. Be less sexually active and be more physically healthier.

We need men who are willing to embrace the long road of **BUILDING** and **CULTIVATING** a family.

Foundational Truths of Biblical Fatherhood:

1. The family was **GOD'S** idea.

- The family was God's idea and was part of His purpose for mankind and for how we should relate to one another in this world.
- This is important to realize because today we live in a culture that views kids as a nuisance and ignores the sacredness of the family.
- The family, a man, a woman, and children were God's design for society.

Genesis 2:24

“Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.”

- God creates and blesses the institution of marriage.
- God calls children a **GIFT**.

Psalms 127:3-5

“Behold, children are a heritage/gift from the Lord, the fruit of the womb, a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior are the children of one's youth. Blessed is the man who fills his quiver with them. He shall not be put to shame when he speaks with his enemies in the gate.”

God doesn't see children as an obstacle to our freedom, a burden to our income, or a distraction to what's really important; God calls them a GIFT, HERITAGE and a REWARD.

Fatherhood needs to be restored as an honor in our culture, not as a responsibility added to a list of things to do.

2. Fatherhood is a God-given **COMMISSION**.

A commission refers to an area of responsibility entrusted to an officer or soldier who is given authority and responsibility to act and to lead.

Commissioned officers are trusted with the welfare, the moral, and development of those under their care.

- God has commissioned and entrusted fathers with the incredible task of nurturing, guiding, and equipping their children for life. Through their high and low points of life.

This commission is taught directly or implied throughout the Bible:

- Proverbs 22:6 “Train up a child in the way they should go [teaching them to seek God’s wisdom and will for their abilities and talents], even when they are older, they will not depart from it.”
- Proverbs 29:17 “Correct your children and they will give you comfort; yes, they will delight your soul.”
- Ephesians 6:1-4 “Children, obey your parents in the Lord [accept their guidance and discipline as His representatives] for this is right. **Honor** [esteem, value] your Father and Mother [being respectful to them], for this is the first commandment with a promise that it may be well with you, and that you may have long life on the earth. Fathers, **do not provoke your children to anger** [do not exasperate them to the point of resentment with demands that are trivial or unreasonable or humiliating] but bring them up [tenderly, with lovingkindness] in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.”
- 1 Timothy 3:4 “He must **manage his own household well**, keeping his children under control with all dignity [keeping them respectful and well-behaved] ...”

Biblical scholar – Andreas Kostenberger notes: “Parents ought to consider themselves entrusted with the [temporary] responsibility and stewardship of nurturing and cultivating a child’s heart and mind in light of the scriptures and on behalf of God...[and] while children ought to obey both parents, fathers bear special responsibility for disciplining their children.”

As a father, you have been given an incredible gift, but you also have been given a sacred post = an area of responsibility from which you can step into and provide life and blessing to others.

3. Fatherhood takes **INTENTIONALITY**. Deliberateness

- You can’t outsource parenting and expect your wife or parents, the church or school to do it for you.
- Good dads ENGAGE, they act, think, pray and learn how to connect with their children.

In your life as a father, there are some principles that are modeled by the Lord Jesus that you need to have:

- REJECT PASSIVITY
- ACCEPT RESPONSIBILITY
- LEAD COURAGEOUSLY
- INVEST ETERNALLY

REJECT the cultural paradigm of the DETACHED dad – passive and self - interested.

ACCEPT the responsibility of the sacred commission to lead their families.

LEAD COURAGEOUSLY despite the many setbacks of life.

INVEST ETERNALLY in our families knowing they are God’s valuable plan and gift.

4. Wise fathers focus on the **HEART**. Their own heart and the heart of their children.

Your heart first:

- As men, we tend to work out of our heads and hands, but not our hearts.
- Working harder and solving problems, making decisions and stuffing our feelings; never opening our hearts to others.

Christian author – Chip Dodd: Men “**Never fully knowing ourselves, never fully knowing others, and never fully finding the abundant life... We spend our existence toiling to make life happen, and all it gets us is a grave, a marker, and a date.**”

Heart deficient fathers can be **TOXIC** for children.

- Our sons/daughters and grandkids need for us to connect with them on a heart level. They need to know that we love them and they affect us emotionally.
- But if you aren’t in touch with your own heart, how can you give that to your kids?
- They need to see us deal with our own emotions in a healthy way: sadness, joy, grief, anger, shame.
- They need to see us live full lives with its ups and its downs.

Then focus on your child’s heart:

Parents are typically tempted to focus only on **EXTERNAL** behavior.

The Bible emphasizes the heart as the key to change and to full, abundant living:

Proverbs 4:23 “Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flows the springs of life.”

Luke 6:45 “The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.”

A noted pastor, Ted Trip states:

“Behavior is not the basic issue. The basic issue is always what is going on in the heart... the heart is the wellspring of life. Therefore, parenting is concerned with shepherding the heart.”

- Wise fathers are not just concerned with compliance and external behavior; they are trying to connect with the heart of the child and build trust with them.
- Wise fathers aren't just trying to protect their own peace and quiet, they are willing to be interrupted and pause to figure out what's really going on inside their kids.
- Wise fathers don't play the short game of external behavior; but they play the long game of shepherding their children's hearts.

REMEMBER: Behavior is just an expression of what's going on inside!

5. Wise fathers are **grace – dependent.**

Wise fathers have recognized their own **BROKENNESS** and their own need for forgiveness before God.

Romans 3:23-24 “**All** have sinned and fall short of the glory of God and are justified by His grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.”

- Wise fathers know what it means to need and experience forgiveness from God.
- Wise fathers know what it means to be in need of grace and can give grace to others, especially to their children.

Jesus tells us there is a link between expressing **FORGIVENESS** and showing love.

Luke 7:47 “...he who is forgiven little, loves little.”

- Unless you, as a father, have experienced the grace of God,
 - it will be difficult for you to give grace to others.
- Your children have failed you and they will again, but when you have God's grace working in your heart;
 - you will be able to minister God's grace to them when they need it most.
- Experiencing God's grace for yourself will enable you to soften your heart towards those who need the same grace.
- God's grace will act as an antidote for anger, frustration and disappointment.
- Wise fathers also recognize their daily need for GRACE as a parent.
- They've realized they can't do it alone.

We need God to soften our hearts daily to strengthen us in our shortcomings and empower us in the demands of fatherhood.

This realization must lead us as men to our knees asking our Heavenly Father for His help and guidance.

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