

Good Fathers: Today and Tomorrow

#FromTheVault

This tough, demanding role calls for creative partnerships.

Fatherhood, a time-honored role, is presently in such a state of flux that many men, especially black men, hardly know how to handle it effectively. The medias has greatly distorted fathering with the use of such situation comedies as All in the Family and the not-so-good Good Times. With the increased independence of women and greater emphasis on children's rights, fatherhood in the future surely will be one of the most demanding and creative roles a man will ever play. Successful fathers must possess the following qualities: a high degree of spirituality, respect for women, a balance in career goals, and responsibility for influence.

The successful father will accept the fact that as a human he is totally unable to direct and mold rightly the lives of his children without divine guidance. In matters of morality, the media is corrupt, the government compromised, and the church inconsistent. How can a father counsel his children against pre-marital sex when the Supreme Court has declared abortion on demand to be legal? With the large number of television programs, books, magazines, and popular songs promoting compromising or immoral behavior, a father must look to others sources for moral standards.

The effective father of the future must be firmly grounded in the Word of God. He must learn about the lives of Bible characters and teach his family about their failures and successes. His children must be familiar with great Bible truths and believe that the enabling power of the Holy Spirit can help them to live out these great truths as they run the gauntlet of temptations common to youth.

Constant prayer for wisdom characterizes the daily life of the effective father. The first fact every father must accept is that he is grossly unprepared for the many decisions before him. Only by bowing in humility before the heavenly Father can there be even a remote chance of true success. Indeed, the creative solutions to tough family problems have often been resolved, not through might or money or compromise but through divine inspiration and direction.

Fathering is but half the parenting process. Mothering is the other half. Many fathers have overlooked the fact that the best mothering is done by a woman who feels her husband respects, trusts, and appreciates her. Many a marriage and home have been destroyed because the mother felt that either she was left alone to make all the decisions or that she wasn't involved in major decisions.

It is not wise of think of oneself as a successful father if the mother is not allowed to reach her full potential. Fathering, in the sider sense, includes supporting and encouraging the mother. The roles of a mother or father, as we have traditionally learned them, in many cases have changed dramatically. It's important that both parents seek to support each other and do what is necessary to promote, nurture, and advance the family unit.

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Fathers who understand this relationship can then find joy in the challenge of dirty diapers, soiled dishes, unwashed clothes, and messy bedrooms. Fathers who help with the constant, repetitive, and often boring tasks of keeping house allow the mother to spend quality time with the children and also allow her to have cherished moments for rest and reflection. Too few fathers know the limitless joy of marital bliss when the mother is allowed to go to bed early and the father stays up to take care of the supper dishes, give nightly baths if needed, and do other exhausting evening activities before joining her.

For many men, the most difficult area of fathering is balancing career objectives with family commitments and responsibilities. Currently, fathers are measured by society on their ability to provide creature comforts and material possessions. A man who refuses to provide for his family obviously needs counseling. However, the father who provides every material need and want, yet fails to spend quality time with his family is planting the seeds of discontent and restlessness. There is no real wisdom in being a workaholic in order to acquire that home, that business, that vacation when, after having acquired it, the family doesn't enjoy the "thing" because they really don't enjoy the father, who by now has become nervous, ill-tempered, and restless.

The successful father will consistently have to do what many may consider very unwise. During the family's formative years, the father will need to balance career goals with the emotional and spiritual needs of his family. He will not take a job, regardless of the pay, if the environment is harmful for the children. He will not recklessly move to a new area if his wife's job or objectives might be severely affected. The father realizes that jobs come and go and that his first job is to promote well-being and contentment in his family. Moreover, what is the advantage of gaining a major career promotion and losing the sense of family that the promotion was supposedly going to improve? It is better to rear a successful and well-adjusted family than to start and run the world's largest business.

Finally, the successful father will accept responsibility for his influence on those not of his home. Through his behavior, attitudes, deportment, and philosophy the successful father must attempt to demonstrate to other fathers the potentials for successful fatherhood.

In the church, in the school, on the job, and on the playing field, he will encourage the principles of toleration, compassion, strength, kindness, and generosity. He knows that the world needs men who are true to such family principles. He will seek ways to uplift, encourage, and help those in his circle of influence, as well as direct them to his heavenly Father. A variation of a slogan used by the Marines seems appropriate here: "The world is looking for a few good fathers." Will you be one?