

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?

The Best Legacy to Leave

Wisdom for the Ages: Legacy for Life's Paths. Message Magazine's Online Devotional for Wednesday, February 28, 2018

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"Listen, children, to a father's instruction, and pay attention so that you may gain discernment. Because I give you good instruction, do not forsake my teaching. When I was a son to my father, a tender only child before my mother, he taught me, and he said to me: "Let your heart lay hold of my words; keep my commands so that you will live. Acquire wisdom, acquire understanding; do not forget and do not turn aside from the words I speak. Do not forsake wisdom, and she will protect you; love her, and she will guard you. Wisdom is supreme—so acquire wisdom, and whatever you acquire, acquire understanding!" (Proverbs 4:1–7, NET)

Wisdom's Legacy

One thing that insulates generations from unnecessary or self-imposed disaster (perhaps more than others) is our forefathers passing love, resources, guidance, and wisdom on to us. There is so much we can learn if we listen to those who have travelled life's paths before us. However, too few take this seriously. What if more fathers taught our children the precious keys to life? What if more parents were honest with our sons and daughters about some of the mistakes we have made and how we learned from those experiences?

I find today's passage tender and encouraging because Solomon is sharing generational and acquired wisdom with his son. Solomon's daddy faithfully taught him to embrace his words so he could experience a long, healthy life just like the fifth commandment promises.

Six Assets We Can Also Pass Down

What did King David actually teach Solomon in this context?

1. David taught Solomon that he loved and cherished him. You may be rushing back to your Bible to see where he said that. Though you will not find it in words written in the text, you will find it in David's approach to his son. He could have allowed Solomon to go his own way and discover all the good and evil of life without direct guidance. However, David's love said, "I will not leave you to fend for yourself. I will love and honor you enough to be by your side as long as God gives me strength."
2. David taught Solomon to embrace all of his words of instruction so he could experience a long, healthy life.
3. David taught Solomon to drink up all of the knowledge, wisdom, and understanding he could.
4. David taught Solomon to have a great memory. It is in remembering how the Lord has taken care of all our needs and led us in the past that we can have assurance and hope for the future.
5. David taught Solomon to have a rich relationship with knowledge, wisdom, and understanding. He said that wisdom would protect him if he loved and cherished her.
6. Above all things, David taught this sixth lesson: "In all you do, aspire

to, achieve, and hope for, let wisdom be your chief asset. Let wisdom be what you value most. No matter what else you get, get wisdom, and you will succeed.”

The Ask

Now, let me ask you a question: Did Solomon listen to his father? “One night in Gibeon the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream. God said, “Tell me what I should give you.” Solomon replied, “You demonstrated great loyalty to your servant, my father David, as he served you faithfully, properly, and sincerely. You have maintained this great loyalty to this day by allowing his son to sit on his throne. Now, O Lord my God, you have made your servant king in my father David’s place, even though I am only a young man and am inexperienced. Your servant stands among your chosen people; they are a great nation that is too numerous to count or number. So give your servant a discerning mind so he can make judicial decisions for your people and distinguish right from wrong. Otherwise no one is able to make judicial decisions for this great nation of yours.”

The Blessing

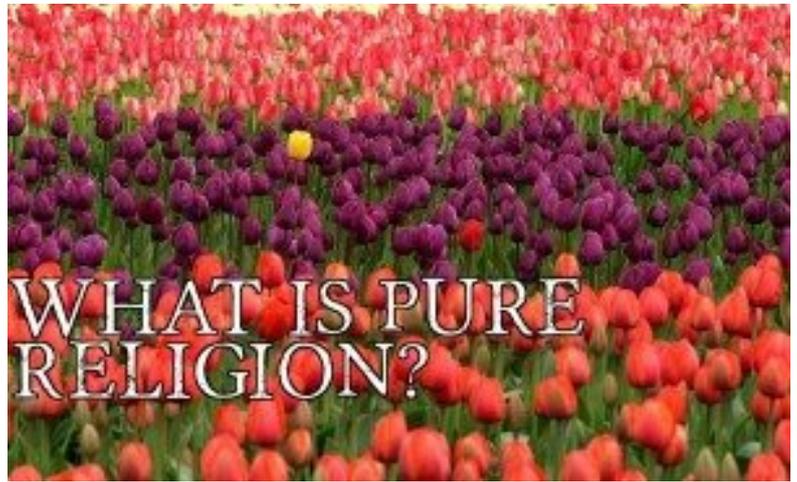
The Lord was pleased that Solomon made this request. God said to him, “Because you asked for the ability to make wise judicial decisions, and not for long life, or riches, or vengeance on your enemies, I grant your request, and give you a wise and discerning mind superior to that of anyone who has preceded or will succeed you. Furthermore, I am giving you what you did not request—riches and honor so that you will be the greatest king of your generation. If you follow my instructions by obeying my rules and regulations, just as your father David did, then I will grant you long life” (1 Kings 3:5–14, NET).

Solomon followed David’s counsel, and where he made mistakes, he repented. All-in-all, this relationship was a success.

A word to the foolish is wasteful. A word to the wise is sufficient.

How Pure Religion Widens The Influence Of Fathers

Message Magazine’s Online Devotional for Monday, April 11, 2016



“Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world” (James 1:27).

Pure religion is practical. Oftentimes Christians are portrayed as theorists and Bible apologists who never actually do anything meaningful in our communities. While it is true that some have not gotten the biblical memo on this, those who live according to the Scriptures draw close to those in need. There are many who have no active father in their lives or positive male role models. Consequently, some find family bonds in gang life. There are many who learn their paradigms from others whose fathers abandoned them and that is obviously perpetuated in their mistreatment of women. Some of us had fathers who were mainly such biologically, but not in terms of love, nurture, reflecting the image of Christ in our households, and wholehearted provision. Not only are young men affected by fatherlessness. Many of our young ladies have been suffering beneath that burden. Some have had great daddies who have died at the hands of diseases, tragic accidents, or are absent due to incarceration. Others have either not known their fathers or were abandoned by them for whatever reasons. The results of fathers and or positive father figures being absent from the lives of young women are often manifest in depression, poor relationship choices, poor grades in school, behavior problems, deteriorating relationships with their mothers, and unmentionably worse.

What the Bible is saying here is that those who embody the pure religion principle reach out to those who would otherwise become a statistic. We become available to young men and woman to model the interest and tender care Jesus demonstrated. We are not satisfied with simply seeing them and smiling. No. If we can share money, we share money. We do our best to be a shoulder to cry on. We invest time getting to know their likes and dislikes. We teach them valuable life principles. We make and keep promises. We pray for and with them. We encourage them to excel in all areas of life, and much more. In short, we take a hands-on approach and in many ways become a community of surrogates to them. In my adulthood, I experienced a few couples that became that for me, and in turn, I am learning to do the same for others.

Pure religion is practical, helpful to others, and can be duplicated so others learn from our examples to do the same.