

## **Discipline of Fatherhood**

Being a father is a tremendous God given responsibility. There are only a few influences in a person's life that can be described as truly life-shaping, and of those the influence of a father's is certainly the most significant.

The story is told of a Spanish father and son who had become estranged. In time the son ran away from home, and the father set off to find him. He searched for months and months but to no avail. Finally, in a last desperate attempt to find his son, the father put an ad in a Madrid newspaper. The ad read: "Dear Paco, meet me in front of this newspaper office at noon on Saturday. All is forgiven. I love you. Your Father." On Saturday 800 Pacos showed up, looking for forgiveness and love from their fathers.

Consider this quote from Lance Morrow's *The Chief, A Memoir of Father's and Sons* as found on p. 46

"From time to time I have felt for my father a longing that was almost physical, something passionate, but prior to sex - something infantile, profound. It has bewildered me, even thrown me into depression. It is mysterious to me exactly what it is I wanted from my father. I have seen this longing in other men - and see it now in my own sons, their longing for me. I think that I have glimpsed it once or twice in my father's feelings about his father. Perhaps it is some urge of Telemachus, the residual infant in the man still wistful for the father's heroic protection. One seeks to return not to the womb ... but to a different thing, a father's sponsorship in the world. A boy wants the aura and armament of his father. It is a deep yearning, but sometimes a little sad - a common enough masculine trait that is also vaguely unmanly. What surprises me is how angry a man becomes sometimes in the grip of what is, in essence, an unrequited passion." - *Lance Morrow is professor of journalism and Fellow of the University Professors at Boston University, a writer for Time Magazine, and author of several books.*

Why did God give this power and influence to fathers? For what purpose does it serve?

The 5<sup>th</sup> commandment (and all other admonitions in Scripture exhorting children to honor their parents) was given by God to insure that the relationship between parents (especially fathers) and children would be one that facilitated the transfer of the Law of God to the next generation. This is evident in the number of times you see phrases like "you shall tell your sons" used when referring to parents teaching their children about God.

The same is true of the Scriptural commands exhorting Fathers not to provoke their children. We must, with God's help, work to maintain a relationship with our children that will allow a transfer of God's Word to the next generation.

### **Fatherhood's "Do Nots"**

Ephesians 6:4 "*Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger...*" Provoke...to anger – *parorgizō* – this word means "to make angry." It is also translated as "jealous" in the New Testament (cf. Rom. 10:19; 11:1).

Colossians 3:21, a parallel passage to Ephesians 6:4, reads "*Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.*" Here the word translated as provoke is *erethizō* which means "to make resentful or bitter."

Let's look at some ways fathers provoke their children.

### Criticism

Colossians 3:21 is a warning to fathers not to cause their children to "*become discouraged*" (lit. disheartened).

As father's we must do all we can to help our children see themselves the way God sees them. We should be careful to never berate them with destructive criticism causing them to see themselves as worthless, stupid, inferior, etc.

Yes, our children are sinners, but remember Dad, so are you. The question we must ask ourselves is "how does God deal with me when I sin or disappoint Him?"

Consider the character of God in James 1:5 "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him." When we lack wisdom God invites us to seek and ask Him for it. We are told He gives it generously (overflowing) and without reproach (not grudgingly).

When we feel a critical spirit welling up within us toward our children let us ask ourselves "How can I use this situation as an opportunity to teach my child about the character and expectations of God?" This will quickly help to diffuse a critical spirit.

Our model:

Genesis 3:8-13, 4:5-7— God left the door open for confession and repentance.

Psalms 103:8-10 — God is slow to anger, he will not always chide (accuse) but he is also just.

Mark 10:17-22 — Jesus looked at him and loved him.

### Overstrictness

"Some fathers exasperate their children by being overly strict and controlling. They need to remember that rearing a child is like holding a wet bar of soap—too firm a grasp and it shoots from your hand, too loose a grasp and it slides away." (p. 48)

Overstrictness can have many causes. It is often a symptom of the **fear** father's have for their children's physical and spiritual wellbeing. We desire to protect our children, a desire that, in and of itself, is good and part of the responsibility of fatherhood, but this desire must be a balanced one. We must recognize our weakness as finite men and the power of God to handle those things beyond our ability to control.

Why is overstrictness evidence of a lack of trust in God?

Remember the difference between legalism and discipline from our first study. Legalism is self-centered. The legalistic heart says "I will do this to gain merit with God. Discipline is God-centered. The disciplined heart says "I will do this thing because I love God and want to please Him.

The same could be said of our parenting. Legalism is self-centered in that it desires to conform the child into the **parent's** image. Discipline on the other hand is God-centered seeking to help the child achieve **Christ-likeness**. Legalism is about **Dad** while discipline is about **God**.

What are some areas you as a father struggle to maintain balance in this area?

What did you think of Hughes statement “As conscientious fathers we ae to say ‘no’ to many things. Thus we should try to say ‘yes’ to as much as possible, and save our no’s for the really important situations.”?

Our model:

2 Corinthians 3:17 –The presence of the Spirit of the Lord brings **liberation** not **bondage**

Romans 8:15 – The child of God should not think like a **slave** but like a **free** man.

### **Irritability**

Irritability is a fruit of selfishness. It communicates to a child that Dad values his “time” or his “things” more than he values his relationship with me. The consequence of an irritable spirit is that, in time, our children will stop seeking their father’s attention.

Irritability also leads to the development of an unhealthy fear in the heart of a child toward his/her father.

Our model:

Psalms 103:8 – God is slow to anger and abounding in love.

Galatians 5:22 – Consider the fruits of the Spirit

### **Inconsistency**

Inconsistency brings confusion to a child. Inconsistency in a father’s relationship with God will leave his children with the bitter taste of hypocrisy. A father who projects one image at home and another at church or around fellow Christians will cause untold damage in his child’s spiritual life. Often times these children will develop a deep resentment toward their parents, but even worse they develop a deep seated hatred for the God of their parents.

Inconsistency when it comes to our word breeds a lack of trust in our children. Our word must mean something to our children. Do not make promises you are not certain you can keep.

Our model:

Lamentations 3:22-23 –God is always faithful

Romans 11:29 – God’s promises are always certain.

Hebrews 13:8 – Our Lord does not change

### **Favoritism**

This is difficult for parents of multiple children. Parents are naturally drawn to those children within the family with whom they have the most in common. As father’s we must be very deliberate when it comes to building relationships with all of our children. Purposely seek to discover and involve yourself in the interests of all your children, even if you struggle to relate to their interests.

We all know the destructive affects of favoritism as evidenced in the lives of Isaac (Gen. 25-28, 32-33) and Joseph (Genesis 37-50). Favoritism will lead to rivalry between siblings that will follow them into adulthood, and will even affect a family for many generations.

As believers in Jesus Christ grace must permeate all our relationships, especially within the home. Because grace is undeserved it cannot coexist with favoritism.

Our model:

Acts 10:34 – There is no favoritism with God

James 2:1 – Favoritism is forbidden within the church so we know it is especially forbidden in the home.

Remember: As Christian men we are not captives to the past. We are not doomed to repeat the sins of our fathers. We have been set free in Jesus Christ and by His Spirit we are new men (2 Cor. 5:17)

### **Fatherhood “Dos”**

Ephesians 6:4 “...but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.”

### **Tenderness**

“bring them up” is one word *ektrephō* meaning “the feed or care for.” This word is also used in Ephesians 5:29 “*For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes (ektrephō) and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church*”

Tenderness is not to be equated with weakness. The world around us is given to extremes. There are voices on one side which decry any and all vestiges of “toughness” in men and there are other voices which decry and all vestiges of “tenderness” in men. The godly man will have both a “toughness” and a “tenderness” about him.

We must also model tenderness toward the mother of our children. Our children must see that we cherish our wives and are sensitive toward them. Fathers, display the kind of love toward your wife that you would want your future son-in-law to display toward your daughter (or you son to display toward your future daughter-in-law)

Our Model

Luke 18:16 – Jesus loved children

John 11:35- Jesus wept at the tomb of his friend

### **Discipline& Instruction**

Discipline and Instruction are directly linked. You cannot have one without the other.

“*Discipline*” means “to train.”

Proverbs 22:6 “*Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.*” This is not a promise but a principle. We are told to train our children, meaning we teach them and correct them, in order to provide for them the foundation necessary for them to live without us.

As Christian parents we often fall short in this area because we think training is simple a transfer of information. While it is true that training involves teaching our children what is right and wrong (what to think) it is important that we also teach them the source and authority behind these things (how to think.)

The word for “*instruction*” here is *noutheo* which means “to counsel, to warn, and to admonish.” This means that our instruction is not simply done by modeling but also by talking. We must instruct our children both by the way we live and in the things we say. A lack of balance between the two will lead to out of balance children.

1 Samuel 3:11-13 – It was Eli’s responsibility to “restrain” literally confront or admonish them.

Deuteronomy 6:1-25 – The instruction here clearly involves “talking.” Instructing our children in God’s Word is an every day, all day responsibility. Remember every moment of the day is an opportunity for instructing, in fact there is not a moment of the day when we are not teaching our children something. The question is never, “Are we teaching our children” but “What are we teaching our children.” As we learn from Eli’s example, not speaking is teaching too.

Two other important aspects of discipline and training are love and humility. Discipline without love and humility leads to **rebellion** and instruction without love and humility leads to **prideful arrogance**.

- Note the questions on p. 54

Remember today is the time we will look back on as “when the kids were little.” What are we waiting for? Life is not later, it is now.

### **Recommended reading:**

*Shepherding a Child’s Heart* by Tedd Tripp

*Instructing a Child’s Heart* by Ted Tripp

*Hints for Parents* by Tedd Tripp

*Transparenting: Mentoring the Next Generation* by Steve Keels

*Disciplines of a Godly Family* by R. Kent & Barbara Hughes

*I Kissed Dating Goodbye* by Joshua Harris (a great resource for a hot button subject)

*Growing up Christian* by Karl Graustein (this book is for Christian young people)

### **The Discipline of Friendship**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Do you consider friendship to be important? Does your life prove this to be true?

What are the biggest hindrances to you in the area of friendships?

### **Friendship’s mutuality**

1 Samuel 18:1 “*As soon as he had finished speaking to Saul, the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul*”

Consider these words by Hughes (p. 60) “Christian friendship exceeds anything that exists between nonbelievers—for such friendship is founded on a supernatural mutuality of soul. The Holy Spirit makes you souls chorus the same cries.

- You assent to the same authority
- You are going to same way
- You dream mutual dreams
- You know the same God
- You long for the same things
- You yearn for the same experiences of holiness and worship”

Despite this lack of mutuality, it seems that many Christian men will often make friends with unbelievers before they will make friends with believers. Why do you think this is?

Christian author Henry Durbanville once said “A friend is the first person who comes in when the whole world goes out.” Jonathan had every reason to abandon David (the minority) and side with his father (the majority). Truth and righteousness will always be at the center of true friendship. He sided with David despite the fact that it was not in his own best interest to do so (1 Samuel 18:1-4, 20:1-42) because it was the right thing to do.

What application can did you draw from the example of Jonathan and David’s friendship?

Consider the following verses. What can we learn from them?

*“I am a companion of all who fear you, of those who keep your precepts.”* Psalm 119:63

*“A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.”* Proverbs 17:17

*“Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another”* Proverbs 27:17

*“Faithful are the wounds of a friend; profuse are the kisses of an enemy.”* Proverbs 27:6

*“Oil and perfume make the heart glad, and the sweetness of a friend comes from his earnest counsel.”*  
Proverbs 27:9

*“Greater love has no one than this, that someone lays down his life for his friends”* John 15:13

*“Do not be deceived: “Bad company ruins good morals.”* 1 Corinthians 15:33

=====PREPARATION & APPLICATION=====

**1. Pray:** Ask God to give you wisdom and discipline. Pray that God would bring friends into your life and pray for those friends daily. Dads, ask Him for wisdom in raising your children. Pray daily and specifically for your children.

**2. Invest:** If you haven’t already seek a brother from the study and commit to meet once a week to discuss what you’re learning and what God is teaching you. Also agree to hold one another accountable in the area of moral purity when you meet.

Fathers: make it a point this week to take each of your children aside one at a time (on a walk, to McDonalds, etc.) for the sole purpose of getting to know them.

**3. Read** pp. 71-94 for next Monday. Highlight/underline things that stand out to you. Remember; read the Scriptures listed in the book as well as the ones referenced, don’t skip over them.