

Front Page - 2012 06

Fathers



What is a father? Being a father means that God has entrusted us with the task of training our children in the way they should go. We have been given the duty to teach them the fear of the Lord, and to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord without provoking them.

In 1 Tim. 3:5 the Holy Spirit draws an important connection between Christian fathers and elders in an assembly. When this is observed, then Christian fathers are to be viewed as “shepherds caring for the flock”, as “elders, overseeing those whom God has entrusted to them”. To do this work as well as possible, they need to know the fierceness of the enemy of themselves, their place in the government of God, and the spiritual dangers their children are in. We live in a world which is no different in its attitude to God and Christ as the world that crucified Him. It is totally opposed to all that is of God and Christ, a fact that was manifestly evident when above the

Savior's head His superscription was written in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin. Greek was the language of culture and entertainment, Latin the political language, and Hebrew the religious language. All sectors of society united in rejection of God and Christ His Son. We Christian fathers and grandfathers have been given the responsibility to “bring them (our children) up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Eph. 6:4).

The burden is particularly on fathers because they have been given the role of leading the home. It is a work that cannot be done without the consciousness of the need for God's help. Manoah said: “How shall we order the child?” (Jud. 13:12). Samson was their first child. Rearing a child was a path they had never walked before, and in the spirit of James, they acted (Jam. 1:5). As parents we need to observe that each child is different and fathers need wisdom in how to deal with each child individually. A child that is strong willed needs to be treated differently from a yielded child. Furthermore, the world of today is so much different from that which we were reared in, being more corrupt than our fathers would have dreamed possible. The governments of some countries having passed laws which result in:

- a) Children suing their parents
- b) Limiting the responsibility of parents to discipline their children
- c) Humanistic teachings which tell parents to reason with “out of control children”
- d) Humanistic teachings which tell us not to tell a child he is wrong, but help him feel good about himself
- e) Children divorcing their parents.

[Scripture Gives Guidelines For Fathers](#)

There are a number of passages throughout the scriptures dealing with the role of parents toward their children (Ex. 13:14; Deut. 6:20; Prov. 22:6; Matt. 7:11; Eph 6:4; Heb. 12:6). Within the limits of our space, we can only touch on some of the instructions given to fathers.

In Ex. 13:14 it is evident that it was expected the son would ask why certain things were being done. It was a matter of teaching by example and then speech.

Hebrews 12:4-9

It must be observed that discipline ought to be an activity of love for the spiritual, emotional, and social development of the child. It is an activity that ought never be done with undue harshness, in anger, or because “I said so”. Every discipline by a father ought to be as God disciplines His children, His method, and in degrees. His discipline is in the order of instruction, making sure there is understanding, verbal discipline, then more severe. Even in judgment God has degrees. There must be the checking of ones motives. God never disciplines us for that which we do not know is wrong, but always when such is done, gives instruction first. This is evident in 1 Corinthians. With this in mind, when a child for the first time says a word, or does something which in its ignorance does not know is wrong, there must not be a spanking, but instruction given. If the child understands it

is wrong and continues, then the discipline must be progressed. There must be great care taken in the type of punishment administered.

Colossians 3:21

A father is not to provoke his children to wrath. This means that a father is not to purposefully do things that agitate the child to the point where the child becomes angry or discouraged and bitter (cf. Col. 3:21). A child must not be tormented for no other reason than just for the sake of tormenting them. Such activity could be by promising a child something and then failing to keep the promise or to hold out something for a child and then withdraw it. An illustration may help here. When my dad was a child they were very poor. Grandpapa was a drunk and money was very scarce. One day an uncle held out a sizable piece of money toward the child and said: "Have you ever seen one of these?" The child said "no". The uncle then said: "I thought so" and put the money back in his pocket. The child never forgot it. That is provoking a child to anger and resentment. Another way in which children can be provoked is by making God to be a spoilsport, that is, when the child asks to do something, you then say: "God would not like you doing that". In many cases, there is a fine line between the two that a father must avoid to keep from provoking his children to wrath.

Children have been provoked to anger and resentment against God because of the father's absence. While I cannot judge, the stark reality is that many a child has angrily rejected the ways of a father and God because father is simply too busy climbing the corporate ladder or pursuing personal hobbies. In many homes the father is hypocritical, demanding things of his family that he does not demand of himself. Children learn by example.

Ephesians 6:4

Another aspect of a father's responsibility is to bring his children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. In the government of God the man is to be the head of the home (this does not mean he is the big boss, for he also is under Christ). Among other roles, man is to be the spiritual head of the home and in the local church (cf. Eph. 5:22-24; 1 Cor. 11:3). The presence of the living Christ should be manifested by and through him in the character of the home. Such a home will be marked by a God consciousness in its training, unity and purpose. This is what is meant by "the nurture and admonition of the Lord". He is expected to nurture his children intellectually, emotionally, nutritionally, but above all these, he is to nurture them spiritually. The greatest legacy he can pass on to his children is a God consciousness.

The sight when the elders brought their gifts for the consecration of the altar, all Israel stood by with their little ones. It was a place of learning, not amusement, for the children. When this sacred and solemn ceremony was proceeding, would any think that the children were playing with their dune buggies in the sand? I fear we have lost the responsibility of having our children sit reverently in the Lord's supper. Part of the problem is fathers fail to have a family altar at home.

[Christian Fathers Who, On a Major Point, Dishonored God](#)

- 1) The Christian church needs fathers who will not pitch their tents toward Sodom as did ancient Lot. When time came for the separation of Abraham and Lot, Lot clearly made a choice indicating his materialism and good business sense. Where did he learn about the "well watered plain of Egypt"? It was from his uncle Abraham, for when there was the famine Abraham went down into Egypt (Gen. 13:10-13). Sodom was not a prosperous place for the raising of a family (2 Pet. 2:7-8). If righteous Lot was tormented day to day by the wickedness surrounding him, just think about the effect this would have on his family. Genesis 19 seems to indicate that some of Lot's children chose to remain behind and not leave with Lot. All too often fathers make many of life's decisions with materialism as the dominant factor.
- 2) The Christian church does not need fathers who will not restrain their children like Eli of old (1 Sam. 2:12, 17, 24). The reason they were so wicked was because Eli "restrained them not" (1 Sam. 3:13). Ours is a permissive age. Many boys and girls grow up and never see daddy set out a boundary line for their actions, they never hear daddy say "no" to their demands, they never feel his weight behind corporal punishment.

Fathers who are too permissive are the greatest enemy of a child (Prov. 29:15, 17). Fathers must discipline his children.

- 3) The Christian church does not need fathers who practice theft, deception, and dishonesty as did Achan. Israel had just crossed the Jordan River and plans according to God were made known for the capture of Jericho (Josh. 6:1-10). To the planned attack God also gave a command: "All the silver, and gold, and vessels of brass and iron, are consecrated unto the Lord" (Josh. 6:19) and "Ye, in any wise keep yourselves from the accursed thing . . . and make the camp of Israel a curse, and trouble it" (Josh. 6:18). Then going against the city of Ai (Josh. 7:2-5) Israel was soundly defeated and Joshua asked God why. The answer was given: "Israel hath sinned" (Josh. 7:11). Someone had taken that which belonged to God and the whole congregation was suffering the consequences. Achan was guilty (Josh. 7:20-21; 25-26). I cannot help but wonder how Achan felt when he saw his wife and children being taken out and then began to be stoned. He disobeyed and tried to deceive, but what a cost to his children. Christian fathers must obey the word of God and be honest, because we cannot foresee the effect of what we do will have on our children.

**God knows the responsibilities and joys of fatherhood because He is our heavenly Father.
As our Father, He will give us what we need to care for our children.**

A Christlike example is a father's greatest gift to his children.

. . . Rowan Jennings