

Being a better father

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“God longs for men who have learned to live as sons towards Him and as fathers for Him. Real fathers are rare and their lack is probably the greatest source of social problems in New Zealand today”. Tom Marshall



What does the word “father” mean to you? Depending on what kind of father you had it could bring up very positive or very negative images. For Christians the word will also bring up images of our heavenly Father. Again these images could be positive or negative depending on your beliefs and your experiences of God.

Most fathers want to give their best to their children but many don’t feel very well equipped for this great task. Remember when you held your baby for the first time? Were you confident and knew what to do? Not likely! The Bible teaches us much about being a great father, so let’s explore some ways we can be better fathers. This will be an investment in our children’s futures. And aren’t they worth investing in?

Families need fathers

In Greek, the word for family, “patria” comes from the word for father, “pater”.

“I fall on my knees before the Father, from whom all fatherhood, earthly or heavenly, derives its name”. Ephesians 3:14-15. (Philips). This means that all fatherhood is directly linked to God the Father. He is the best example of fatherhood, but He is also the source of fatherhood.

It also explains why families are so important. They are the Father’s design and carry the imprint of His name. When family life and fatherhood deteriorate, it reflects on God the Father. The best way to do something about our fatherhood is to examine the relationship between God the Father, and Jesus His Son. The most important thing in the life of Jesus was undoubtedly His relationship with the Father.

Fathers give life to their families.

See John 5:26, 8:42, 12:49, 14:10, 16:28, Proverbs 23:22.

All that Jesus said or did was initiated by the Father. This resulted in Jesus revealing and glorifying the Father. John 17:6-26.

It’s exactly the same in a family. The father is the life source for the family: physically, spiritually, financially, materially, socially. Fathers have a God-given responsibility to continually inject LIFE into their families. When fathers are functioning properly the whole family is blessed. When fathers are not there, or don’t function properly, the whole family suffers. A family without a father isn’t really a family at all!

What does it mean to inject life into your family? You will be always bringing something new or different to your family - something which wasn’t there before. This requires initiative, creativity, thoughtfulness and an awareness of where each person in your family is at. If you do this continually, your family will have a sense of direction and there will be plenty of excitement and a feeling of family unity. There will be life! If you don’t take the initiative and lead in this way, it is probable that no one else will.

What can you do to inject life into your family?

Fathers give children identity.

If children are to be confident, secure and happy they need a sense of identity. "I know where I have come from, and where I belong". That's why:

- God continually emphasised His relationship with Israel. eg Exodus 19:5, Leviticus 11:44-45.
- God the Father often declared His relationship to Jesus. eg Hebrews 1:5, Matthew 3:17, 17:5.

In a family, the father gives the children their surname, but they need a lot more from him than that. Children need to know where they come from and who they are. Otherwise they are insecure with no sense of belonging or obligation.

Here are some ways you can give your children a sense of identity:

a) Encourage "family-ness"

Why are special family times so necessary?

b) Remember the past. This gives children a heritage.

What can you do to remember the events of the past and to expand on the lessons you have learnt from them?

c) Give a perspective for the future. Children are often very insecure about the future. Your strength and stability is a major source of their hope and confidence: 'If Dad has made it, so can I'.

What can you do to help your children face the future with confidence?

What happens in children if their fathers are unstable?

There comes a time when you must release your children so they can stand on their own as independent, mature adults. (This happened in the relationship of Jesus and the Father. See Luke 22:42, Matthew 27:46, Luke 23:46). If your children are secure in their relationship with you (from the past) it will help them go through this traumatic experience with confidence. It will also mean that you can maintain good adult relationships with them in the future.

Fathers give children an inheritance.

In the Bible, inheritance and Fatherhood are inseparable. (e.g. Proverbs 13:22) The inheritance you leave to your children includes your estate but it is much, much more than this. Your major inheritance is the character attributes and the attitudes you pass on to them.

The main character attributes I want passed on to my children are:

After I die I would like my children to remember me for:

*If children live with criticism they learn to criticise.
If children live with hostility they learn to fight.
If children live with ridicule they learn to be shy.
If children live with shame they feel guilty.
If children live with tolerance they learn to be patient.
If children live with encouragement they become confident.
If children live with praise they learn to appreciate.
If children live with fairness they learn justice.
If children live with security they learn to have faith.
If children live with approval they learn to like themselves.
If children live with acceptance and friendship they learn to find love in the world.*

What kind of inheritance are you leaving your children?



Fathers need to a source of consistent, caring love for their families.

There are countless ways you can show your children you love them. Agape (unselfish) love is something you do rather than something you feel. It requires consistency, time, planning and effort.

Most fathers want to give more of themselves to their children but struggle with a clash of priorities.

Do you want to give a lot more of myself to my children? A little more? The same? Less?

Here are some ways you can give your children consistent, caring love.

Loving your children	Scripture	Application in your family
Identify with your children so their problems are your problems and their delights are your delights.	John 16:32	
Discern your children's real needs. This requires sensitivity to what is going on in their world.	Matthew 6:8	
Reinforce positive attitudes (not just achievements).	Matthew 4:6; Proverbs 10:1	
Give your children what is good for them, (not necessarily what they want).	Matthew 7:11	
Continually affirm your children's worth. What you think of them is far more important than what others think of them.	Matthew 3:17 Mark 9:7	
Shape your children's lives by teaching and discipline. You cannot afford to delegate this to anyone else (including your wife).	John 5:19,20 Ephesians 6:4 Hebrews 12:9-11 Proverbs 3:12	
Give them an example to follow. If you don't have your children's respect they will rebel against all of the things you stand for. Respect comes from setting a good example.	John 13:15 1 Timothy 4:12 1 Peter 2:21	
Tell your children you love them. You can do this in countless ways!	Jeremiah 31:3	
Show them that you love your wife.	Ephesians 5:28 Colossians 3:19 1 Peter 3:7	

Let's pray for fathers.

The father of a righteous man has great joy; he who has a wise son delights in him.
Proverbs 23:24

