

Healing Father Wounds

Fathering is a good thing

Psalms 127:3-5 - "Children are a heritage from the LORD, offspring a reward from him. Like arrows in the hands of a warrior are children born in one's youth. Blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them. They will not be put to shame when they contend with their opponents in court."(NIV)

Proverbs 23:24 - "The father of a righteous child has great joy; a man who fathers a wise son rejoices in him."(NIV)

What is the current state of affairs with regards to fathering?

A new report on the living circumstances of young children (0-4 years) shows that, while 93% of young children have both biological parents still living, only 36% of them live with both biological parents. Most young children (43%) live with only their biological mother, 2% live with their biological father only, and 19% do not live with either of their biological parents. STATS SA. In 2014 Over 1.1 million births were registered, but 64% had no information on fathers.

"The United States is becoming an increasingly fatherless society. A generation ago, an American child could reasonably expect to grow up with his or her father. Today, an American child can reasonably expect not to ... Fatherlessness is the most harmful demographic trend of this generation. It is the leading cause of declining child well-being in our society. It is also the engine driving our most urgent social problems, from crime to adolescent pregnancy to child sexual abuse to domestic violence against women. Yet, despite its scale and social consequences, fatherlessness is a problem that is frequently ignored or denied."

—Fatherless America by David Blankenhorn

How does fathering today affect the next generation?

Proverbs 14:26 - "Whoever fears the LORD has a secure fortress, and for their children it will be a refuge."(NIV)

Robbie Low, vicar of St. Peter's, Bushey Heath (church of England), wrote an article in a 2003 issue of *Touchstone*. It dealt with a 1994 study in Switzerland on the question of whether a "person's religion carried through to the next generation, and if so, why, or if not, why not." The findings were staggering, but, upon consideration, they make sense:

There is one critical factor. It is overwhelming, and it is this: It is the religious practice of the father of the family that, above all, determines the future attendance at or absence from church of the children.

How big of an effect is it?

If a father does not go to church, no matter how faithful his wife's devotions, only one child in 50 will become a regular worshipper. If a father does go regularly, regardless of the practice of the mother, between two-thirds and three-quarters of their children will become churchgoers (regular and irregular). If a father goes but irregularly to church, regardless of his wife's devotion, between a half and two-thirds of their offspring will find themselves coming to church regularly or occasionally.

A non-practicing mother with a regular father will see a minimum of two-thirds of her children ending up at church. In contrast, a non-practicing father with a regular mother will see two-thirds of his children never darken the church door. If his wife is similarly negligent that figure rises to 80 percent!

Father wounds

Jeff Eckert

Jack is a 42-year-old who entered my office for counseling after his wife discovered his long history of Internet pornography, and trips to local massage parlors. As I began to explore his history in an attempt to understand the deeper issues involved, I was struck by one of Jack's statements: 'My father always provided for us and was home every night after work. But even though he was there, he was never really present.' Thus begins an exploration of the question: What is the father wound?.....

Like Jack, then, many men grew up with fathers who returned home after work, but were never really active as sharpening agents in the lives of their sons. These fathers provided for their sons' material needs, but they were strangely absent when the time came to satisfy the needs of the heart, such as intimacy and connection. Fathers like this may have been available to coach their sons' baseball teams or supervise yard work. However, they were less likely to model intimacy in relationships, or to be an active presence when their sons were dealing with the pain of rejection by peers.

....Lonely and discouraged, boys become isolated and alienated men. In this isolated state, men continue to desire closeness and connection, but they often have no concept of how to achieve it. It is because of this quandary that many men seek out sexual fantasy in an attempt to find some sense of intimacy. Many men feel a void in their lives, often created by the wounds of the past, and some men attempt to fill that void with illicit sexuality. Men's desire for intimacy and connection is real, powerful, and appropriate. But when men try to satisfy that desire in the form of sexual fantasies and acts, they find merely approximations or shadows of true relationship and connection.

Andrew Comiskey, in his book on sexual and relational healing entitled "Strength in Weakness" writes, 'Though the Father intended for us to be roused and sharpened by our fathers, we find more often than not that our fathers were silent and distant, more shadow than substance in our lives.' This kind of a 'shadow' presence is not what our heavenly Father intended for our relationships with our earthly fathers.

.....As Jack began developing relationships with others who were truly present, and experiencing relationship with a heavenly Father who is always present, his need to escape into the world of sexual fantasy was diminished.

What do you wish your father gave or did for you that you didn't get?

What did you receive from your father that you most appreciate?

What do you find most challenging about being a father?

What are your current gaps in fathering?

What's your default parenting style?

Be careful of compensation parenting. (Where you parent in the opposite extreme of your parents)

Often our children's view of God becomes skewed because of our own proclivities and wounds. If you are performance oriented and perfectionistic this often translates to shame in your children, low self esteem or passivity when they fail to reach your standards. Reflecting God the Father is not just about standards but also heart. It means reflecting His tenderness and patience as well as His justice.

Fathering is a choice

Here are some key mandates for the father:

- **To bless**

Gen 49:26 is a good example of a father's blessing.

Your father's blessings are greater than the blessings of the ancient mountains, than the bounty of the age-old hills. Let all these rest on the head of Joseph, on the brow of the prince among his brothers.

- This will impact their self belief with regards to their potential.
- Biblical blessings can be stated formally and informally.

A traveling preacher took ten-year-old Charles, sat him on his knee, and prophesied, "This child will one day preach the gospel, and he will preach it to great multitudes. I am persuaded that he will preach in the chapel of Rowland Hill, ..." He called all present to witness what he had said and then gave Charles a coin as a reward if he would learn the hymn, God moves in a mysterious way His wonders to perform."

Years later, that prophecy was fulfilled. Spurgeon comments, "Did the words of Mr. Knill help to bring about their own fulfillment? I think so. I believed them, and looked forward to the time when I should preach the Word" (C. H. Spurgeon Autobiography [The Banner of Truth Trust, 1:28]). He goes on to say that he wasn't even yet converted, but those words spurred him on to seek the Lord's salvation.

- **To protect**

- From what do we need to protect our children? Physically, spiritually, emotionally, sexually and morally.
- Sadly in many families kids need to be protected from their fathers.

Gen 19:8 "Now behold, I have two daughters who have not had relations with man; please let me bring them out to you, and do to them whatever you like; only do nothing to these men, inasmuch as they have come under the shelter of my roof,"

- **To model**

1 Corinthians 4:14-16

I am writing this not to shame you but to warn you as my dear children. 15 Even if you had ten thousand guardians in Christ, you do not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel. 16 Therefore I urge you to imitate me.

- Let them see you pray.
- Let them see you overcome in trials.
- Let them see you being generous.
- What are you not letting your children see?
- Are you modeling tenderness?
- Your children need to see you loving your wife. This is one of the first things a good parent is to do.

- **To lead**

Joshua 24:15 - "But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD."(NIV)

Definition = He makes things happen.

- Leading biblically involves serving.
- Lead in taking accountability.
- Lead in visioning.
- Lead in setting values and standards.
 - Be careful what you defer to your wife, it might be your mandate.
- Lead in commitment to God and church. How?
- Lead by modeling
- Lead by taking initiative
- Lead by setting direction
- Lead by ongoing evaluation
- Lead by stewardship = You are morally responsible for the home before God.

Questions leaders ask

- 1.) Where are we now?
- 2.) Where do we need to go?
- 3.) What must we do to get there?

- **To give identity**

Ephesians 6:4 - "Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord."(NIV)

Colossians 3:21 - "Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged."(NIV)

- How you treat your wife reinforces in your daughter a sense of significance or worthlessness
- It impacts your son with regards to how to treat women or if negative can make him hate men and overly identify with women.

- **To disciple and teach**

This is the priestly role

Deuteronomy 6:6-9 - "These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates."(NIV)

Proverbs 22:6 - "Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it."(NIV)

- What does this require on your part?
- Sometimes you can't do all the teaching but can at least facilitate it and connect them to the right source.

He's a priest. = He makes God known.

Questions priests ask:

- Do my kids know God?
- Do they have an accurate view of God?
- Does our home honor God?
- Are we growing in holiness?
- What do they need to know, do, and be?
- How do they best learn?
- When and how will I teach them in this season of life?

Your role is to transfer of godly wisdom to the next generation.

You are the custodian of the spiritual climate of the home.

How do you play this role?

- Pass on your faith to them while they are young.
- Disciple your children. Discipleship involves: Connection, Ministry development, Purpose alignment, Character development, Doctrinal & Theological Development, Prayer, and Correction (7 Dimensions).
- Model authentic worship
- Initiate family worship
- Encourage private worship
- Impart wisdom and build character.
- Model a "Word-centered" life

To Love

Fathers are called to love as God loves. It's a heart thing.

Malachi 4:6 - "He will turn the hearts of the parents to their children, and the hearts of the children to their parents; or else I will come and strike the land with total destruction."(NIV)

Psalms 103:13 - "As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him"(NIV)

Proverbs 3:11-12 - "My son, do not despise the LORD's discipline, and do not resent his rebuke, because the LORD disciplines those he loves, as a father the son he delights in"(NIV)

As a lover he gives people what they need most.

•Questions lovers ask:

- How are my kids "really" doing?
- Do they sense my approval and acceptance?
- Are we "connecting" at a deep level?
- What do my children need from me that only I can give them?
- Am I demonstrating empathy

The Father as lover demonstrates deep relationship not just task orientation.

How?

- Modeling a loving relationship with God and your wife
- TIME
- Providing tender love unconditionally
- Providing tough love when necessary
- Being emotionally intelligent