

Is Fatherhood Still Vital?

Proverbs 20:7: (NASB) *A righteous man who walks in his integrity - how blessed are his sons after him.*



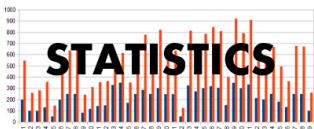
The whole idea of fatherhood seems to have changed. In this age of one-parent families in which the present parent is overwhelmingly the mom, we accepted and embraced minimizing the need of a living at-home dad. I certainly understand not wanting any child to feel inferior because they do not have a dad in their life, but does that justify marginalizing every dad? So, what is the role of fatherhood? Are there principles and practices of fathering that are concrete and should never change? How do we take the old-fashioned scriptural ways and apply them to men raising children in the 21st century? What are the most important things Christian dads should be aware of? How do they raise their children in an age where we have now begun to pronounce masculinity as toxic?

 **Big influence, Jonathan's son, Paul**

- *Hi, Dad! Happy Father's Day and Happy Birthday! I wanted to thank you for raising me right and teaching me morals and ethics and the right way to treat people when I interact with them on a daily basis. You've been a big influence on how I perceive the world and how I should treat others. So, thank you.*



I tried to be a good dad to Paul. I taught him how important God and His word was, and how to live. I also taught independence. Even when he was 16, he bought a used car with his own money he saved and paid for his own car insurance. He worked at a dog kennel and had a really good head on his shoulders. Now he is almost 30 years old and is very independent - maybe a little too much - we would like to hear back from him a little bit more. 😊 There is a balance, though. I also tried to have fun with him. One of my favorite memories is when he turned 10. I was ready to drop him off at school. He opened his door to get out and I said, "Close that door and get back in. We are going to have a Father/Son Day." We had a blast. I remember we went to a photo booth and took silly pictures together. There is a balance of teaching wonderful godly principles but also being a dad and having fun.



According to the Census Bureau's annual tables called *America's Families and Living Arrangements*, in 2018, of the estimated 73.7 million children in the United States, over 22 percent (16,395,000) live with only a mother.

 **The Impact of Fatherlessness, National Center for Fathering**

- - 71 percent of all high school dropouts come from fatherless homes.
 - - 71 percent of all pregnant teenagers, 85 percent of all children with behavior disorders, 90 percent of all homeless and runaway children come from fatherless homes.
 - - 63 percent of youth suicides are from fatherless homes.
 - - 85 percent of all youth in prison come from fatherless homes.
- Considering that the vast majority of prisoners come from fatherless homes, and my own father's history, I think prison is the true place to go to uncover the real gritty truth about what's wrong with the family.*

My father didn't tell me how to live. He lived and let me watch him do it.
— Clarence Budington Kelland



SEGMENT THEME: LOVE
LIFE LESSONS IN FATHERING

from
Jesus' earthly father, Joseph

Dave is the father of four adult daughters.

 **Be on the same page, Dave W.**

- *One of the most important things to do is to be on the same page with my wife. We need to work together and to communicate, and it's very often my job to help her efforts since she does most of the parenting. And she's also very good at it, so I have to recognize that and do my part to help her. One of the things we try to do is set a loving example. We always put God first. Some of those things are as simple as just praying before eating and to eat together as a family and go to regular Sunday services.*

Dave also said, "Your kids should never question if God is a priority in your life - that's how important setting the example is." Set that first and line up everything underneath it.

Let's start the story of Joseph...

God chooses the faithful young woman, Mary, engaged to Joseph, to miraculously conceive. The Angel Gabriel tells Mary this will happen *before* their wedding. How does she convince Joseph of what God is doing and to be on board raising a child conceived "out of wedlock" and not his?

Matthew 1:18-19: (NASB) ¹⁸Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: when his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹And Joseph her husband, being a righteous man and not wanting to disgrace her, planned to send her away secretly.

This is a horrifying dilemma! The Bible tells us he was a righteous man and did not want to disgrace her. As was his right, he determined to send her away privately. He loved Mary. Joseph carefully considered this life-changing decision and slept on it to be sure.

Then came a dream:

Matthew 1:20: (NASB) ...Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for the child who has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit.

Joseph began to clearly see God's purpose. The angel continued:

Matthew 1:21-23: (NASB) ²¹She will bear a son; and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins. ²²Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet: ²³Behold, the virgin shall be with child and shall bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel, which translated means, God with us.

Joseph would have awakened with a conviction of God's will in their lives. His direction to do the right thing would now bring him the privilege to raise the Messiah to manhood.

He even had the right to stone her to death, according to Jewish civil law in Deuteronomy 22:23,24. He also could have divorced her - an engagement back in that time had the legal power of marriage. He had the power to ruin her life or even take her life. His decision was to do the least harm to her by sending her away quietly, because he loved her. God gave him a third choice - to marry her.

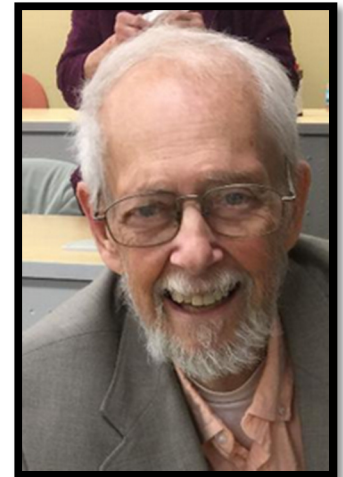


Love your wife. This sets the table for loving her children! Joseph showed us how to "man up" in the face of sure misunderstanding and persecution. Joseph took the reins given to him by God and forged ahead with courageous humility.

Using the theme of love, we asked Rebecca to give us a few comments on the example of her father, a deeply consecrated man named Dan who recently passed away from pancreatic cancer. Here is what she said:

 **Love and service, Rebecca**

- My dad knew how to love big. He gave it freely and without condition. He showed it in so many ways - in his time and his work, in his great hugs and his ability to comfort. He always made you feel like he was happy to see you and interested in whatever you had to share. His love showed his acceptance of you. I believe this is how God loves us as well, and so I feel especially blessed to have had this kind of example in my daily family life growing up. He truly enjoyed doing for others and would never put himself first. He taught us to think of ways to help others and to take the opportunity to be of support to others whenever possible. His "drop everything" way of doing for his family... even those late-night runs to the store when needed... was just such an inspiration to me, and Christ's example of service as lived out by him has been amongst the biggest lessons of Christian living to me in my life.*



Dan was an excellent example of "courageous humility." He was not ostentatious. He was not the loudest man in the room, but he was a wonderful example for both his natural and spiritual families.

Practical love:

Psalm 103:13: (NASB) *Just as a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear Him.*

Joseph was a great example of loving his wife-to-be when she was pregnant. He accepted the responsibility that would have only brought grief in his society.

It is amazing how impactful and life-changing love can be for your child when it has a generational head start.

**Joseph is not mentioned much in Scripture after this.
Does that mean he became less important?**

It is true that at this point in the story we usually begin to forget about Joseph and relegate him to being a background player, because it becomes all about Mary and then all about Jesus. The lesson here? While a father's work is often quiet and unnoticed, it is no less critical to his family.

The nature of impending fatherhood is that you are doing something that you're unqualified to do, and then you become qualified while doing it. — John Green



How can dads be effective when our society is set up to give kids their own world of screens and social media?



SEGMENT THEME: LEAD **LIFE LESSONS IN FATHERING**

from

Jesus' earthly father, Joseph

Aaron and his wife have been married almost 34 years and have three adult daughters.



God is the primary parent, Aaron K.

- We always looked at God as being the primary parent and we were assisting. That meant His standards were the rules of our home; things like compassion, loving and forgiving each other, honesty and trust, thinking of others and contributing to the family. It also meant HE was the final authority. If He didn't allow it, we didn't either.*

The attitude of these parents was that they were raising GOD'S daughters. This really is a different perspective.

And as it relates to the theme of LEADING, while they set age-appropriate boundaries, their goal was to raise successful and independent children apart from the parents. Aaron looked for ways to say "yes" so the girls could make their own decisions and be accountable for those decisions, even though it was difficult to step back and watch the girls fail at times. That failure made them strong. Letting your children go is difficult but necessary.



Notice how Joseph is not the focus in the following accounts, but he is ever-present and always doing the right thing.

Up to this point Joseph has been a father to the unborn:

Luke 2:3-7: (NASB) ³And everyone was on his way to register for the census, each to his own city. ⁴Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, ⁵in order to register along with Mary, who was engaged to him, and was with child. ⁶While they were there, the days were completed for her to give birth. ⁷And she gave birth to her firstborn son; and she wrapped him in cloths, and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

Who got her there safely? Who cared for her while in labor? Who delivered the baby? Who protected mother and child? There is a helpless baby and a young mother who just gave birth. How vulnerable they are!

Luke 2:16-19: (NASB) ¹⁶So they (the shepherds) came in a hurry and found their way to Mary and Joseph, and the baby as he lay in the manger. ¹⁷When they had seen this, they made known the statement which had been told them about this child. ¹⁸And all who heard it wondered at the things which were told them by the shepherds. ¹⁹But Mary treasured all these things, pondering them in her heart.

Joseph is there, but he is not the focus. His job is to support, protect and guide.

Joseph next shows himself to be fully focused on adhering to the Law - no matter what whispers and rumors might have already begun to circulate about his family:

Luke 2:21-22: (NASB) ²¹And when eight days had passed, before his circumcision, his name was then called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb. ²²And when the days for their purification according to the law of Moses were completed, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord.

Joseph showed his courage, humility and leadership as he continued to receive and follow direct instructions from God.

The logistics were all spiritually-driven. "This is what the Law requires, so this is what we will do." This is why he was the man chosen for the job. He was asked to perform specific tasks related to prophecy and the Law with a high level of honor and integrity.



Lead your family. It does not matter if anyone sees or acknowledges a father's leadership. What does matter is that he guides his family to where they need to be.

Where you bring your family in accordance with God's word and will is what counts. This is shown in the story of Joseph bringing his family to Jerusalem eight days after the birth.



Practical leading:

Proverbs 22:6: (NASB) *Train up a child in the way he should go, even when he is old he will not depart from it.*

Rhoda is Rebecca's sister who we heard from earlier. Here is how Dan led the family:

Trust, Rhoda

- *Two Scriptures come to my mind when I think of the example my father gave me. The first is Matthew 6:33: "Seek ye first the kingdom of heaven and all these things shall be added unto you." At an early age, my father gave his life to the Lord's service. He filled his time doing his best to that end. Dad worked an hour away, and yet he not only attended Sunday services but also regularly attended two weeknight Bible studies...all of which he prepared for in private study. The majority of our vacations were to Bible conventions and Bible youth camps. All of this showed me how important it is to put the Lord first in my life as well.*
- *The second Scripture is Psalm 31:1: "In Thee, oh Lord, do I put my trust." In every event that happened in our lives, from cars breaking down to family trials, and even when Dad was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer, my dad demonstrated complete trust in the Lord's overruling hand. Poor Dad was outnumbered by his four daughters, and of course, my mom, but at times we would fret and worry out loud, and yet Dad was always that quiet pillar of strength. He would give these big bear hugs and urge us to have faith. He had absolute confidence that all would be made well in the Lord's way and the Lord's time and that we just had to wait on the Lord. I hope to do that in my life as he did.*



About a week before Dan passed away, I took him aside and asked if he was scared. We knew he was dying. "Be honest, you have to be scared." And he gave me this huge smile and said, "Whatever the Lord wills is all okay with me." That's really hard to do! He was leaving a lot behind, but he was so zeroed in on Matthew 6:33. This is how he lived his life.



I knew Dan since I was a small child. Dan and his wife Linda were the two individuals who saw in me raw enthusiasm and an immature young man who wanted to be everywhere all the time. They gently acknowledged it, saw it as important and guided me as to how to use it. They were the first individuals outside my own family who said, "You have potential. Let's work with it." They gave me an incredible start and Dan is a hero.

Even if you are not a father, the principles we are talking about can apply to you and those around you.

One of the functions of a natural father, aside from the obvious of providing food, clothing and shelter, is to provide a sense of identification with the values of the family. The father sets the tone for what will happen.



This is a small example, but I never once heard my own father swear or use off-color language. He worked in the printing industry for decades where this was very prevalent. Yet, he kept to his values of godly speech. This was a great example to me that it is not okay to be careless with our words at any time, even when we are upset.

This is how you lead children in this world where they are given their own fantasy social media world. Dads need to step up and lead their children through coping with real life that does not have to do with a screen.



Ephesians 6:4: (NASB) *Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.*

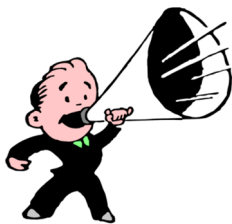
The responsibility of leading a family starts out small and thankfully grows slowly over time.

**What happens after the drama of Jesus' birth?
How does Joseph's fathering of Jesus still shine out?**

Any father will tell you being a dad is a continuous learning experience and for Joseph it would not have been different. Of course, he was fathering the son of God - the Messiah. Think of the weight that responsibility carries!

Christian fathers have the responsibility of bringing praise, honor and glory to our Heavenly Father, letting that shine through our children.

Children need models rather than critics. — Joseph Joubert



**Has the world crowded active fatherhood out?
Are there too many other things to do to give
your family what you want them to have?**



**SEGMENT THEME:
LISTEN & RESPOND
LIFE LESSONS IN FATHERING**

from
Jesus' earthly father, Joseph



Don't talk at them, Dave W.

- *I heard a radio program one time that promised never to talk at you. That's good advice for your kids also. Don't talk at them. Talking is a two-way street; talk with them. Listen to them. It's really important to listen, and this will give you the opportunity to teach them right from wrong, and they'll be making good choices.*

"We promise never to talk at you," was one of the early slogans of Christian Questions. Children need models rather than critics.



Aaron also said talking and listening was important. He said, "If it was important to them, we tried to make it important to us; and if it was important to us, then we tried to teach them that it should be important to them as well." This promotes mutual respect, yet without elevating the children's needs as being more important than the adult.

The Magi came to Bethlehem where Joseph had settled his family about two years after Jesus' birth. It was there that they worshipped him and gave him gifts.

The Magi's visit was also a trigger for Herod, who was going to have nothing to do with any Savior being born within his jurisdiction:

Matthew 2:13-14: (NASB) ¹³Now when they (the Magi) had gone, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, Get up! Take the child and his mother and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is going to search for the child to destroy him.

Joseph's humble priority was to listen, and he knew how to act. All the angel had to do was to tell Joseph the what, where and why.

Joseph's response was immediate and complete:

¹⁴So Joseph got up and took the child and his mother while it was still night, and left for Egypt.

Instant obedience! Keep in mind that they had settled in Bethlehem since Jesus' birth, and were being instructed to relocate to another country - moving for a second time since Jesus' birth.

Joseph listened, responded and led his family through another series of steps for their protection:

Matthew 2:19-21: (NASB) ¹⁹But when Herod died, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, and said, ²⁰Get up, take the child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel; for those who sought the child's life are dead. ²¹So Joseph got up, took the child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel.

God's faith in Joseph was well placed for he again courageously walked his family into the unknown. Give your children the life lesson of godliness first. Over time it will shape their lives. This is how we cope with the overstimulation of the world around us.

God had also provided the gifts of the Magi as a way for them to sustain themselves while in Egypt. God provided, and so did Joseph.



To listen to the word of God takes attention and humility, but to respond by applying it takes courage. Listening is not complete without appropriate response.

Christian fathers are required to follow the will of God. Listen and respond.



Practical listening:

Hebrews 12:7: (NASB) *It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline?*

We have to study the Scriptures to know the will of God. The Bible is where we are going to get good instructions on being a solid parent, even if our own parents were not the best models. We have scriptural examples.

It is important to send children out into the world with the protection of faith, hope and the knowledge of God’s plan for all mankind. We all have excruciating experiences that need the stability of faith.

To the fathers who feel they did not do the right thing, a change of direction is possible. Listen and respond to the biblical principles of good fathering. We can all do better.

So far we have learned to love and lead our family as we listen for God’s direction. What’s next?

There is always more to learn. Fathering requires a man to not only adapt to the circumstances his family faces, but to also adapt himself as well. This is not easy. It is not only a test of humility; it tests the depth of a father’s love for and devotion to his family’s well-being. Learn to change when necessary for the good of the family.

Every father should remember one day his son will follow his example, not his advice.
— *Charles Kettering*

We need to make sure our example is worth following.



To be a father is to put your children in a position to learn. How do you do that when you are not so sure yourself?

There has never been a time in dealing with my children during the tough times when I didn’t think, “I should have done that differently...why did I dwell on that...why didn’t I do this instead...” I could only try to remember the right principles for the next time. There was never a single fatherhood experience I had where I thought, “Man, did I nail it!”



Another good thing is, your wife will always tell you what you should have done or said!

Listen to the voice of your spouse! There is a wisdom and perception she has that you probably do not.



SEGMENT THEME: **LEARN** **LIFE LESSONS IN FATHERING**

from
Jesus' earthly father, Joseph

Mark is one of the best friends of both Rick and Jonathan. He has two adult children.

 **No license needed to have children, Mark G.**

- *Oddly you need a license to go fishing, to operate a boat, ride a motorcycle - but you need no credentials to have children, and they do not come with an owner's manual. I have identified three major ingredients I would suggest to fathers:*
 - *Let your children see your reverence for God. Let them see that you endeavor to learn His will and to follow it on your own behalf and on behalf of your family.*
 - *Love their mother. Work together. Cooperate. The family, the home you create is their safe haven...their resting place.*
 - *Include them. Let them live life with you. Don't have 'kid time' and then put them aside and have 'you time.' They would rather see a sermon than hear a sermon.*



My wife was always astute at noticing the family dynamics. I had my own business when the kids were young and it took up a lot of time. My wife would tell me they each need individual time. So, on Fridays, I would go to my daughter's school for lunch. I sat down at those little tables, and we would have lunch. We would then go out for recess and all her little friends wanted to know if this was the day I was coming. First I did this with Emily and then Amy. I would not have thought to do this had my wife not said, "They need time. Find a way." It made a huge connection I wouldn't have otherwise made.

Children need to feel they are valued and have value. They are not going to find that online.

Once Joseph was back in Israel he discovered the current political landscape, and his fatherly instincts caused him great concern:

Matthew 2:22-23: (NASB) ²²*But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there...*

This tells us of Joseph's astute attention to what God had been telling him. He learned to look for evidence of danger or safety as he again moved his family. Joseph was in tune with God.

Then after being warned by God in a dream, he left for the regions of Galilee, ²³and came and lived in a city called Nazareth. This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophets: He shall be called a Nazarene.

Joseph again was guided by God to **relocate for a third time** since Jesus' birth. He changed course and finally came to settle in a place called Nazareth.

Joseph settled into his carpentry trade, and that is how Jesus was known:

Matthew 13:55: (NASB) *Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary, and his brothers, James and Joseph and Simon and Judas?*

He was known as *the carpenter's son*. But Joseph was diligent to teach Jesus the trade. He knew Jesus was special, but did not know how or when God was going to use him.

Joseph showed Jesus how to support himself and be a contributing member of society:

Mark 6:3: (NASB) *Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, and brother of James and Joseph and Judas and Simon? Are not his sisters here with us? And they took offense at him.*

Now Jesus is *the carpenter*. At every turn, Joseph did what a good father does. He protected his son and brought him up to be responsible and contributory. Joseph equipped him to be a well-rounded man.

Fatherhood



Lesson

Learning is life-long. As we absorb our fathering experiences and apply those lessons, we open ourselves to becoming more in tune with God's guidance. Further, a good father teaches their children how to cope with life so they may become life-long learners as well.



Spiritual father, *Becca M.*

- I didn't have a great relationship with my father, and when he passed away in my early 20's I felt I had lost that experience that most children have of building a real, advice-seeking relationship with their parent. I always wanted a father who knew me better than myself and could give me advice from a higher perspective and respect for our Heavenly Father. I've always identified with the character of Job who seems to lose so much, but in the end, God blesses him in ways he didn't even know to ask for.*
- Much like Job, although I had a loss of my own father, God has blessed me with having a spiritual father through Rick. Rick is all of the things you'd want in a spiritual father. He is fiercely passionate about the Lord and serves Him with every fiber of his being. He genuinely cares, not just about me, but about countless others who go to him because they are seeking help or advice. He doesn't just pay lip service. He follows up, asks questions and wants to know how you're really doing. Rick inspires me to be better, do better, and do more, and it is a privilege to be able to look to him and talk to him as the father I wish I had had. God has blessed me more than I deserve.*



Becca is just one of many people I know (and there are many I don't know) who go to Rick on a regular basis for fatherly advice. They know they are going to get someone who will stop, listen, listen more, consult with scriptural



principles and only then will start giving advice. He has counseled people on the verge of suicide, those going through divorce, infertility and all kinds of issues that can knock Christians off their path. Being a spiritual father is so important and is something as spiritual adults we can all do.



We had traumatic experiences when fathering my own children, and God was gracious. God held my hand as I held my children's hands. By His grace He helped us get through. At this stage in life, my kids are grown and I am learning that there are many who need those same scriptural principles in whatever life's circumstances are. If God gives us the grace to know the principles and be willing and able to listen and respond, then He gives us the opportunity as well.



Rick, in your family it is a heritage thing. Your father was one of my spiritual fathers. I lived with your dad, Richard, and your mom, Anna May, for six months. I witnessed what home and marriage with a dedicated life to God were all about. It was just what I needed to learn just when I needed to learn it.

It is a privilege to be part of the same "family" going in the same direction.

Practical learning:

Matthew 7:9-11: (NASB) ⁹Or what man is there among you who, when his son asks for a loaf, will give him a stone? ¹⁰Or if he asks for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he? ¹¹If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!

God is so willing for us to be blessed by Him spiritually in ways we cannot imagine. Why don't we go running to see His blessing like we would into the arms of our earthly fathers? We know of His unconditional love.



Becca also wrote: Thankfully God is THE most patient Father who allows me to make mistakes and slowly but surely shows me that I CAN and NEED to trust Him because He always, ALWAYS has my best interests at heart. My conclusion is, even if we've had a poor example of a father in our life, God (through Scriptures and our experiences) really demonstrates the best, most awesome and perfect Father we could ever imagine.

For those who did not have the best father, find those people in your life who can help to fill the gap.

1 Thessalonians 2:11-12: (NASB) ¹¹just as you know how we were exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you as a father would his own children, ¹²so that you would walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.

Exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you as a father would his own children - there is strength in this kind of relationship. We do not have to be a father or child to take the principles and apply them.

Parenting is one of life's greatest learning experiences, as well as one of life's greatest teaching opportunities.

**There is not ALWAYS drama in fatherhood.
What can we learn from the more quiet times of life?**

After tumultuous years of moving from place to place, Joseph can now finally settle his family down. As Joseph looked back on those years of uncertainty, we can picture him quietly nodding to himself as he thought about God's protection and grace. Now it was time to have roots and raise his family to honor God.

One father is more than a hundred schoolmasters. — George Herbert



What is the very best way to teach your children the life lessons they need to know?



**SEGMENT THEME: LIVE
LIFE LESSONS IN FATHERING**

from

Jesus' earthly father, Joseph



Bring God into your life first, Aaron K.

- *As a parent, if I were to give advice to another parent, it would be to try to honor God and raise your children in a godly way. I would say bring God into your own life first. Make Him a priority in your own life, and then it becomes a priority in everybody else's, because they affect and impact you as well. They may not make it the priority that you want it to be, but because it's important to you, you automatically start sharing and teaching, respecting and acting that way, and they pick up on it. They may not agree with it, but they pick up on it.*

When we are doing the right thing honoring God, our family will see the difference between "home" and what they are finding on their screens. The key is to make our stand known to our children by showing them our life.

One small fathering example that speaks volumes:

Luke 2:41-43,47-51: (NASB) ⁴¹Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover.

Joseph lived the example for young Jesus to see.

Joseph lived a God-honoring life and ALWAYS brought his family to Jerusalem for Passover:

⁴²And when he became twelve, they went up there according to the custom of the Feast; ⁴³and as they were returning, after spending the full number of days, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. But his parents were unaware of it...

Notice they were there from beginning to end. Honoring God and fulfilling the Law were most important to Joseph. Jesus stayed back in Jerusalem. His parents found him three days later in the Temple, listening and asking questions.



⁴⁷And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. ⁴⁸When they saw him, they were astonished; and his mother said to him, Son, why have you treated us this way? Behold, your father and I have been anxiously looking for you.

Your father and I - Mary speaks for both parents

⁴⁹And he said to them, Why is it that you were looking for me? Did you not know that I had to be in my Father's house? ⁵⁰But they did not understand the statement which He had made to them.

These are hard words. Mary and his father, Joseph, worried as Jesus explained he was in *his Father's house*. What would go through Joseph's mind at that moment, realizing he is raising this special child? Perhaps Joseph saw the shifting of perspective similar to what John the Baptist would say later in comparing his work to the work of Jesus, *He must increase and I must decrease*.

⁵¹And he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and he continued in subjection to them; and his mother treasured all these things in her heart.

In spite of the shifting ground, Joseph continued to father Jesus.

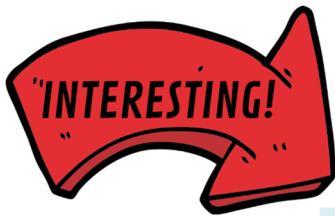
God's plan of hope is not only built upon the firm foundation of prophecy, but it is built with the sturdy and enduring materials of character. Joseph was chosen as a critical early support for the young and tender Jesus. He was strong as a man, courageous in his decisions, daring in his actions, and most importantly, humble in his obedience to God's will. Now that's how you "man up!" Be like Joseph!

This is the last we hear about Joseph. He is not mentioned as being around during Jesus' public ministry and it is assumed he died. Some think this was reiterated when Simeon spoke to Joseph and Mary about their newborn:

Luke 2:33-35: (NASB) ³³And his father and mother were amazed at the things which were being said about him. ³⁴And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and for a sign to be opposed - ³⁵and a sword will pierce even your own soul - to the end that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed.

Simeon predicted a sword would pierce Mary's soul (her pain at the crucifixion) but said nothing to Joseph. Perhaps this was an indication that Joseph would not live to see this event.

The object of fatherhood is to raise children up so they can be on their own. We want to give them the tools to become responsible, contributory adults who can make a difference in good and positive ways. We do it primarily by how we live. If we did not have a great example of a father, no worries! Be the great father example or find one to emulate.





Ultimately, the greatest lesson any father can teach his children is in the observation of his own life. More than profound words, more than gifts, and more than beautiful surroundings, the manner in which you live your every day is your greatest teaching tool.

 I will, *Courageous* (2011 movie)

- In my home the decision has already been made. You don't have to ask who will guide my family, because by God's grace, I will. You don't have to ask who will teach my son to follow Christ, because I will. Who will accept the responsibility of providing and protecting my family, I will. Who will ask God to break the chain of destructive patterns in my family's history, I will. Who will pray for and bless my children to boldly pursue whatever God calls them to do? I am their father, I will. I accept this responsibility, and it is my privilege to embrace it. I want the favor of God and His blessing on my home. Any good man does. So where are you, men of courage? Where are you, fathers who fear the Lord? It's time to rise up and answer the call that God has given to you, and to say, "I will, I will, I will!"*

Practical living:

Proverbs 4:3-4: (NASB) ³When I was a son to my father, tender and the only son in the sight of my mother, ⁴then he taught me and said to me, Let your heart hold fast my words; keep my commandments and live;

The Bible has wonderful examples of what good fathers are and what bad fathers are. God is ultimately our amazing Father who we can depend on.

God's will needs to be our will. We honor the responsibility and privilege of fatherhood. Take the principles and apply them and reach out to others who need the guidance and life example. Be that person walking in the footsteps of Jesus. "Follow me as I follow Christ."

*So, is fatherhood still vital?
For Jonathan and Rick (and Julie!) and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!*



Join us next week for our podcast on June 24, 2019:
Ep. #1079: Does God Really Love Humanity? (Part I)

Bonus Material!

It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men. — Frederick Douglass

One of the greatest things a father can do for his children is to love their mother. — Howard W. Hunter

You don't raise heroes, you raise sons. And if you treat them like sons, they'll turn out to be heroes, even if it's just in your own eyes. — Walter M. Schirra, Sr.

Some day you will know that a father is much happier in his children's happiness than in his own. I cannot explain it to you: it is a feeling in your body that spreads gladness through you. — Honore de Balzac, Pere Goriot

The thought behind this next text gives us a very real sense of how our Heavenly Father wants us to see Him:

Romans 8:15: (NASB) *For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, Abba! Father!*

(Source: Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words) Abba (ab-bah'); of Aramaic origin; father (as a vocative case) Abba is an Aramaic word, found in Mark 14:36; Romans 8:15 and Galatians 4:6. In the Gemara (a Rabbinical commentary on the Mishna, the traditional teaching of the Jews) it is stated that slaves were forbidden to address the head of the family by this title. It approximates to a personal name, in contrast to "Father," with which it is always joined in the New Testament. This is probably due to the fact that, abba having practically become a proper name, Greek-speaking Jews added the Greek word pater, "father," from the language they used. Abba is the word framed by the lips of infants, and betokens unreasoning trust; "father" expresses an intelligent apprehension of the relationship. The two together express the love and intelligent confidence of the child.

The uses of Abba are always in a dramatic and emotional setting:

Mark 14:32-36: (NRSV) ³²They went to a place called Gethsemane; and he said to his disciples, *Sit here while I pray.* ³³He took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be distressed and agitated. ³⁴And he said to them, *I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here, and keep awake.* ³⁵And going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed that, *if it were possible, the hour might pass from him.* ³⁶He said, *Abba, Father, for you all things are possible; remove this cup from me; yet, not what I want, but what you want.*

Context of the above Romans text:

Romans 8:12-17: (NRSV) ¹²So then, brothers and sisters, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh— ¹³for if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. ¹⁴For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. ¹⁵For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, Abba! Father! ¹⁶it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ—if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.

Galatians 4:1-7: (NRSV) ¹My point is this: heirs, as long as they are minors, are no better than slaves, though they are the owners of all the property; ²but they remain under guardians and trustees until the date set by the father. ³So with us; while we were minors, we were enslaved to the elemental spirits of the world. ⁴But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his son, born of a woman, born under the law, ⁵in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children. ⁶And because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of his son into our hearts, crying, Abba! Father! ⁷So you are no longer a slave but a child, and if a child then also an heir, through God.



To use the phrase, *Abba Father* captures the true essence of fatherhood. It symbolizes unreserved trust in the depth of trial and agony, it symbolizes the honor and respect due to the father of deliverance, and it symbolizes the true bond of brotherhood of children united under their father.

1 Corinthians 16:13-14: (NASB) ¹³*Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong.* ¹⁴*Let all that you do be done in love.*

