

A Proper View of Fatherhood

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Various Scriptures

I. Introduction

- a. Happy Father's Day
- b. We find ourselves here on another day celebrating creation order over against common portrayals of fathers today
- c. My purpose today is to help us gain a Biblical understanding of fatherhood with help in living it out
- d. However, if we do not also understand the cultural current with regard to fatherhood, we will be like one swimming in the Niagara River
 - i. We may move a little this way or that, but the current is so strong and fast that we will surely move with that current towards certain destruction

II. Current State of Fathers and Fatherhood

- a. As a little background to our current culture, it is important to note that the changing views of fatherhood over the last 100+ years have been strongly affected by the three waves of feminism
 - i. Prior to the first wave, there was a strong expectation that women substantially would be in the home raising children and managing family matters
 - ii. The father represented the family, and as such was the one who voted in the political arena
 - iii. First wave feminism, from the 1800's to the 1920's was primarily about women gaining the right to vote, but also included some other rights as well
 1. This cause was just in many ways, but taken the wrong way, it may have introduced the idea that the husband and wife need not seek to be of one mind about so many things
 - iv. Then came Second wave feminism, from about the 1960's to the 1990's, which was about gaining equality for women in the workplace
 1. Some of those efforts were just, such as equal pay for equal work

2. However, there was a burgeoning quest to make women not simply equal in value, but interchangeable with men in all ways
 - a. However, thinking in terms of being interchangeable required them to deny God's creation order, a denial of how He designed men and women to be wonderfully different
3. To give a clear example, unlike men, women are able to bear children, and by design are the primary nurturers
 - a. But having an interruption in a career to bear a child can be disruptive in a business as well as interfere with her advancement in the business world
4. So to make women more interchangeable with men, the movement had to campaign for abortion on demand to destroy the natural order
5. Such a change would lead to fewer births contrary to God's command to be fruitful and multiply
6. In addition, there would be a blurring of fatherhood with a more generic concept of parenting which could be done by any two individuals, or even just one if so desired
- v. Third wave feminism, from the 2000's forward has sought to completely dismantle historical, and Biblical societal structures, and erase all distinctions between genders
 1. This shift has had the effect of plunging both fathers and would-be fathers into confusion about what it even means to be a father, or if fatherhood is no longer a meaningful concept
 - b. In addition to the feminist movement waves, men have hurt themselves, quite often and ironically because of the breakdown in fatherhood, by abusing their strength and authority in so many areas of society, including within churches
 - c. Consequently, there has been a cultural movement to call any sort of display of strength or authority by a man, even proper ones, toxic masculinity
 - d. So a tremendous conflict arises among men

- i. Men were designed to be stronger on average, to be protectors, to be providers, but the culture was now telling men that was only an erroneous social construct and that they are really no different than women
- ii. So then we see some men rebelling against that notion and going full on towards exercising strength and power and dominion to the subjugation and detriment of those around them
- iii. And other men we see capitulating to the feminizing effects of the cultural movements of the last many decades and not really knowing what to do with themselves
- iv. Both of these extremes destroy the proper understanding of what fatherhood was designed to be
- e. So what are some symptoms of this destruction of proper fatherhood?
 - i. There was a TV show that aired in the 1950's called "Father Knows Best," and you can understand its view of fatherhood from the title
 - 1. Though somewhat idealized there was an honoring of fatherhood
 - 2. In more recent decades and to the contrary, a number of fathers have been portrayed as clueless buffoons
 - a. Either the wife or the children need to set the father straight, but otherwise fathers were somewhat hopeless
 - ii. In the 1970's with the legalization of abortion supposedly being a means of freedom for women, it rather became a means of avoiding responsibility for men
 - 1. Now a man could impregnate a woman and then pressure her to get an abortion so he could avoid marriage and fatherhood along with its attendant responsibilities
 - iii. Another problem occurred as the welfare state became established
 - 1. The government sought to help single mothers by providing welfare benefits

2. But such benefits were rewarding mothers for not getting married, and for having children out of wedlock
3. The state was in some sense taking the place of fathers
4. Thomas Sowell, a black man himself, said, "The black family survived centuries of slavery and generations of Jim Crow, but it has disintegrated in the wake of the liberals' expansion of the welfare state."
- iv. In recent decades we have seen many men quite aimless and living an extended adolescence
 1. Those men, having been told, in effect, they are not needed, no longer know their significance and purpose before God, and so their pursuits turn to personal pleasure of all sorts
- v. A related trend is that of what are called DINK's
 1. That stands for Dual Income No Kids
 2. So even though there is the good of a man and a woman marrying, they are doing so not to fulfill their God-given purpose, but they are doing so to make more money together to maximize their ability to enjoy the pleasures of the world without the interference of children
- vi. In a final example, boys and men who have been radically confused by the culture, and almost always have had a broken father-son relationship, are now saying they are girls or women.
 1. Such a declaration is an extreme rejection of what God has made them to be as men and fathers
 2. Ironically, it was not proper fatherhood that led them to reject fatherhood for themselves, but it was broken or absent fatherhood, a rift in creation order that led them further away from it

III. **Building a Biblical Worldview of Fatherhood**

- a. With such confusion about manhood and fatherhood running rampant in the culture, we are in desperate need of building a Biblical worldview of Fatherhood
- b. What we see in the Bible regarding fathers is design and purpose, but we also see many failures

- c. In order to understand creation order and God's original design, we must start by looking at Adam, the first man
 - i. God made Adam in His image and gave him dominion
 - 1. He was made to exercise authority, and Adam began to do that by naming the animals
 - ii. God made Eve from Adam as a wife and they were given the command to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it
 - 1. So Adam was made to be a father, with the intent that his sons would become fathers themselves
 - 2. Also, he was to lead his wife, her coming alongside him so that together they could fulfill God's calling
 - 3. In Genesis 4:1 we read where Eve gave birth to Cain and said, "I have gotten a manchild with the help of the Lord."
 - 4. I can only imagine Adam's reaction and wonder at what to do with this child since he had no user manual
 - 5. Adam had to work with Eve to raise this and other children without any prior experience or other people to instruct him
 - iii. It is also notable that God gave the man work before the fall in tending the garden, and it just became more difficult after the fall
 - 1. So man is made to work, and when he is regularly not working, he is diverging from what God created him to be
 - 2. His work should supply what is needed by him and his family
 - 3. Unemployed men, especially unemployed fathers, can often suffer depression and purposelessness without realizing the reason being because they are not fulfilling a purpose for which God has made them
 - 4. However, when a father works, he doing what God made him to do, and he teaches his children by example that work is good and worthwhile
- d. Now some generations passed, and in the line of Cain came a man named Lamech

- i. Lamech was the first one we read about who took 2 wives, and thus he violated creation order
 - ii. Further we read of him speaking arrogantly and defiantly about killing those who come against him
 - iii. He is the one who opened the door to polygamy for others after him
 - iv. We understand here that as a man violates creation order in one way, he will violate it in another way, and others will justify their actions by his actions
 - v. So a father must walk according to God's design, and teach his family to do the same
 - 1. Otherwise he is unwittingly giving justification for his children to behave badly
 - 2. Some fathers miss the fact that the poor behavior of their children may just be a direct downstream effect of their own bad behavior
- e. As the world grew wicked in the extreme, God chose to flood the earth and yet preserve Noah, his wife, his sons, and their wives
 - i. As a father, Noah had to marshal his sons to help him build the ark and prepare for the coming flood
 - ii. And, as we who went to the Ark Encounter recently learned, Noah's family had to study the animals ahead of time to prepare food for them and understand how to care for them
 - iii. Then, not least in importance, Noah had to communicate to his sons the importance of the mission of re-populating the world that they would not be aimless or live only for their own pleasure
 - iv. So we learn from Noah that a father is to teach his children a strong work ethic, the importance of being missional, and the ability to think beyond their generation for the good of those to come
- f. Later we come to Abraham from whom we learn the rightful place of a father's love for his children
 - i. After Abraham and Sarah had the promised son Isaac, and while he was still a lad, God called Abraham to sacrifice his only son whom he loved

- ii. Abraham had waited 25 years from the promise of a son to the birth of Isaac, and so his love for Isaac must have been very great
- iii. Yet God was testing Abraham to see if he loved his son more than he loved God
- iv. In the end Abraham knew he would not even have his son without God, and even if he obeyed God in killing his son, God would have to raise his son from the dead to fulfill a promise already made (Hebrews 11:19)
- v. Before I drive home the lesson, I feel the need to state that such a command from God was once only, and there is no longer a need to have a human father face that same trial
 - 1. God was demonstrating not only the fealty of Abraham, but the agony a father feels at the death of his beloved only son
 - 2. God was pointing ahead to His own Son being sacrificed and we get only a glimpse of the wrenching agony of God the Father and God the Son as Jesus suffered and died on the cross
- vi. A big lesson we learn from Abraham is that to be a great father, you must love God more than your own children
 - 1. We see that same principle in 1 Samuel 2:29 where God rebukes Eli the priest whose sons were wicked.
 - a. God speaks to Eli through a prophet, “Why do you kick at My sacrifice and at My offering which I have commanded in My dwelling, and honor your sons above Me, by making yourselves fat with the choicest of every offering of My people Israel?”
 - 2. Then again in Psalm 17:13-14 we read that men of the world, whose portion is in this life, are satisfied with children.
 - a. In other words, their satisfaction is centered in their children, and as such children become mere objects of pleasure for the parents, which attitude is evident among some in our present culture
 - b. But for Abraham, we see the adjustment of his heart from seeing his son as his satisfaction, to

seeing his son as a blessing promised to him by God which son would be the next one leading closer to the redemption of the world

- c. Fathers, you don't know what God will do through your children and their descendants to build His kingdom, so raise them with the long view in mind
- g. Next, I want to consider Moses, or rather what God gave Moses to command the people of Israel
 - i. Deuteronomy 6:6-7 reads, "And these words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart; and you shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up."
 - ii. A father has particular influence on a family
 - iii. Let me quote from nickcady.org to illustrate my point
 1. "According to data collected by Promise Keepers and Baptist Press, if a father does not go to church, even if his wife does, only 1 child in 50 will become a regular worshiper.
 2. If a father does go regularly, regardless of what the mother does, between two-thirds and three-quarters of their children will attend church as adults.
 3. If a father attends church irregularly, between half and two-thirds of their kids will attend church with some regularity as adults.
 4. If a mother does not go to church, but a father does, a minimum of two-thirds of their children will end up attending church.
 5. In contrast, if a father does not go to church, but the mother does, on average two-thirds of their children will not attend church."
 - iv. The command in Deuteronomy should be taken with that in mind
 - v. Namely, that if the father in the family engages in the Biblical instruction, his family will be much more likely to engage with the Bible
- h. We next need to take a look at Job

- i. Job offered sacrifices on behalf of his children in case they had sinned
- ii. Today a father ought to intercede regularly on behalf of his children, praying for God's blessing, direction, wisdom, and grace in his children's lives
 - 1. He should be praying that his children will become more Christ-like
- iii. But we also learn something else quite beautiful from Job
 - 1. Job 31:18, in speaking of helping orphans states, "But from my youth he grew up with me as with a father, and from infancy I guided her"
 - 2. Job was a father to the fatherless
 - 3. Orphans are of particular care and concern to God as they are particularly vulnerable in so many ways
 - 4. Whereas a father must take care of his own children, he must have a heart to be a father to the fatherless so that those children can thrive and be able to know experientially the love of a father, which points them to God the Father
 - 5. These can be true orphans without a father, or children whose father is absent whether out of neglect, or work, or military duty
 - 6. Men should also seek to help a father who grew up himself without instruction in being a father
- i. Of course, the greatest example, the perfect example is God the Father
 - i. The failures of earthly fathers really should instill in us a longing for a perfect father. That would be God, our Heavenly Father
 - ii. Father God loves his children with an everlasting love as from Jeremiah 31:3 and evidenced in Psalm 136
 - iii. He provides for our every need, whether small or great
 - 1. In Genesis 22:14, Abraham calls Him Jehovah Jireh since God provided a ram to be sacrificed instead of his son Isaac
 - iv. God is our protector

1. David in fleeing from his son who would kill him writes in Psalm 3:3, "But Thou, O Lord, art a shield about me, my glory, and the One who lifts my head."
- v. God describes Himself in Exodus 34:6 as "...compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth..."
 1. Fathers ought to meditate on that verse and seek to emulate God in those ways
- vi. Father God also disciplines us out of love
 1. Hebrews 12:6 states, "For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, and He scourges every son whom He receives."
 2. How is it loving to discipline children?
 - a. Hebrews 12:10b states, "He disciplines us for our good, that we may share His holiness."
 - b. Then in verse 11 we read, "All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness."
 3. A father is to discipline his child when needed to teach the child that sin has dire consequences and there is blessing in obedience
 - a. Proverbs 13:24 states, "He who spares his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him diligently."
 4. At the same time, we read in Ephesians 6:4, "And, fathers, do not provoke your children to anger; but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord."
 - a. If your discipline is angering your children, then your love for them is not being communicated during that process
 - b. Discipline is not reactionary or explosive, but measured, purposeful, and loving as you seek to direct that child's heart towards what is good
 - c. That is God's method and purpose with each of us

IV. **Living It Out**

- a. Let me now finish with a bit more application as well as an illustration
- b. In short, a father's job with his children is to raise them in such a way as to know and depend on their heavenly Father
 - i. From the passage read today in Romans 8 we are told that we who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God and have received a spirit of adoption by which we cry out "Abba, Father!"
 1. We who believe are adopted into the family of God and have intimate relationship with Him
 - ii. There is a fascinating interplay here whereby fathers learn what it means to be a father by how God is described, and in turn we as people understand something of God by seeing fathers live out their calling
 1. How you as a father treat your children, and your children's friends is very likely how they will view God when they hear of Him as our heavenly Father.
 - iii. There is grace, however, for the sins and mistakes you made in the past
 1. If you still have children in the house, consider how you can use the remaining years to point them to God as Father
 2. Proverbs 1:8 begins "Hear, my son."
 - a. Then Proverbs 2 through 7 begin with "My son" or "Hear, O my sons"
 - b. So that is a great place for a dad to spend time with his son or daughter
 3. If your children were grown and gone before you realized these things, you cannot go back and change it, but you can start now, first with prayer, and then building a relationship whereby you can talk about matters of faith with your adult children
- c. You must do things with your children that they enjoy for them to listen to you
 - i. They will not know that you love them unless you demonstrate it to them in a way they can understand

- ii. They may not understand your hard work to provide for the family if it means they do not get to spend time with you
 - iii. Sometimes their acting out is a call for attention, and rather than stern discipline, what they need is for you to spend time with them
 - iv. I have found that when I spend time with children, they are more than willing to be helpful and obedient because they know that I have their best interests in mind
 - v. When you lead them rightly, they want to be around you
- d. A father is a model for his children in a mysterious unseen way
 - i. A daughter typically will marry a man like her father, whether for good or ill
 - ii. A son typically will become much like his father, whether for good or ill
- e. I have had some friends over the years who have had misbehaving parents with disordered lives
 - i. What I tell those friends is: “Stop the ungodliness in this generation”
 - ii. Forge a life for your children for which such disfunction is foreign to them
 - iii. Even if a repair of the family is not forthcoming with you because of age or situation, seek to be the godly person God is calling you to be, and help your children stop the destruction with their generation
- f. God states in Exodus 20, the passage giving the Ten Commandments, “...You shall not worship [idols] or serve them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing lovingkindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.”
- g. An illustration of this statement is found by looking at the godly line of Jonathan Edwards next to the ungodly line of Max Jukes
 - i. Jonathan Edwards was a Puritan preacher in the 1700’s. He was a very godly man instructing his children in the Lord every day. He married Sarah Pierrepont, a woman of extraordinary godly character who managed their household tremendously
 1. Together they raised 11 children

2. According to YWAM Family Ministries, their descendants include
 - a. 1 US Vice president
 - b. 1 Dean of a law school
 - c. 1 Dean of a medical school
 - d. 3 US Senators
 - e. 3 Governors
 - f. 3 Mayors
 - g. 13 College presidents
 - h. 30 Judges
 - i. 60 Doctors
 - j. 65 Professors
 - k. 75 Military officers
 - l. 80 Public office holders
 - m. 100 Lawyers
 - n. 100 Clergymen
 - o. 285 College graduates
- ii. There was another man, Max Jukes, who lived around the same time as the Edwards, but was something of a rogue
 1. He was discovered when there was research being done on the lines of a number of prisoners in a prison system here in the U.S. and they had a common ancestor, Max Jukes
 2. His descendants include
 - a. 7 Murderers
 - b. 60 Thieves
 - c. 190 Prostitutes
 - d. 150 Other Convicts
 - e. 310 Paupers
 - f. 440 Physically wrecked by alcohol
 - g. Of the 1,200 studied, 300 died prematurely
- iii. You can see by comparison of these two the difference a father makes, whether for good or ill
- iv. Fathers are critical to the well-being of the family as well as society at large
- h. But far more so, fathers are important for directing their children's hearts to know their Heavenly Father

- i. This is what God is calling you fathers to, and He is calling the rest of us to be a help in that mission.