



The Honour of Fatherhood

By Thomas Eglinton

These days dads are typically portrayed as dumb. Think Homer Simpson (doh!) or Daddy Pig or Raymond. It's rare to see a dad presented as respectable and honourable. This trend is so obvious that even secular media have articles about 'The Dumbing Down of Dad' and 'The Rise of the Bumbling Dad'. The cancel crew have even got on board in renouncing the stupid dad stereotype by haggling a Huggies ad in 2012 and a Clorox ad in 2013. Apparently, there is a swing in the culture away from portraying dads this way which the Washington Post puts down to our increasingly egalitarian society. "Advertisers and TV writers are just catching up to demographic trends."

But as Christians, we have the true reason for seeing the role of dad as something honourable and worthy of respect. Christian dads should not align with the dumb dad stereotype but not because they have decided to be stay-at-home fathers. Christian dads are honourable because they are tasked with being like God the Father.

THE CREATION OF FATHERS

When God made the world and then revealed Himself to us in the bible, He had a blank slate to work with. He got to choose everything: how to structure society (He chose the family as the basic building block), how to structure a family (husband, wife, youngsters), and even what names He would use for Himself (which includes Father). What this means is that God deliberately chose to build the role of father into reality and chose to refer to Himself as Father in heaven. If you are a dad, let that sink in. God gave you the same name He gave Himself: Father.

This doesn't mean you are God. But it does mean that your role

as a father is to be like God in His father-ness. Be like He is. So, how does God father His creation?

PROVIDE

"Be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matt 5:45).

The Father cares for the sparrows, and He clothes the lilies of the field. Every day He makes the sun shine, the rain fall, the plants grow. He gives each breath, each heart-beat to the butcher, the baker and the candlestick maker so that you can have meat, bread and light.

Dads should go out into the world and work to bring home the bacon. In doing this, they are reflecting the fatherhood of God.

TEACH

"It is written in the Prophets, 'And they will all be taught by God.' Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me" (John 6:45).

The Father doesn't leave his creation in the dark. He trains and teaches us all that we need to know. This was true even before the fall. The Father told Adam what he needed to do. His instruction was clear, true and was given before the moment of temptation. Throughout the rest of the Bible we see God revealing Himself and His laws to the world through His people. This culminates in the greatest revelation of God – Jesus Christ. "If you have seen [Jesus], you have seen the Father" (John 14:9).

Dads should be teachers. Their goal should be to teach their children the truth about God, the world and human nature. Dads

should train their kids in the ways of wisdom and righteousness. Ultimately, like the Father, they must point their children to Christ. In doing this, they will reflect the fatherhood of God.

LOVE

“Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world” (John 17:24).

From eternity past, the Father has delighted in and loved the Son. This love is displayed in many different ways. He draws near to the Son (John 16:32); He listens to the Son (John 11:41); He lifts up the Son, glorifying Him (John 8:54, 17:1). God’s love for his Son overflows to His people (John 14:21). It is out of this eternal love that all other loves flow. When God is dealing with His people, He loves them in all the same ways He loves the Son but He also provides a sacrifice for their sins and disciplines them (Heb 12:6).

Dads should draw near to their children with kisses and hugs. Dads should listen to their kids. They shouldn’t put their kids down but instead should be on their team. This doesn’t mean that dads should ignore sin, but it does mean they should deal with it in a way that holds their child in honour. Discipline your children, but don’t humiliate them. Dads cannot provide a complete sacrifice for the sins of their children, but they can, like Job, pray to God on behalf of their children and they can

definitely point them to the One who can take the punishment they deserve. In loving their children in these ways, fathers reflect the fatherhood of God.

WANT MORE?

These are just a tiny selection of characteristics of God the Father that fathers are to reflect. If you want to see more, here is an assignment for you: read through the book of John and take a note every single time you see the Father referred to (there are almost 100 references – more than any other book in the New Testament). For each time the Father is mentioned, record what God the Father is like and think about how we, as earthly fathers, could reflect the fatherhood of God in that way.

Fathers, your job is a big one. It is said that what children see in their father will be a dominant concept when they start to see God as Father. God designed it to be this way. He built it into the fabric of reality. You want your children to say when they grown up that the gap between what they knew a father to be and who God is as Father was as small as possible.

May God give us grace.

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