

What's a Dad to Do?

INTRODUCTION

- A. A parent wrote these words:
1. I went to Sunday school when I was small and learned about God.
 - a. After I was married, I decided to go again and take my children.
 - b. We went regularly for a year.
 2. Then I skipped a Sunday. Soon I skipped a day or three.
 - a. Then we went only on special days.
 - b. Soon we became interested in fishing and hunting and sports. How the children enjoyed this!
 3. Three months ago in a courtroom, I sat and heard a judge say: "Twenty years!" He was pronouncing a sentence upon my 21-year-old son, a punishment for drinking, gambling and robbery, which ended in the shooting and near death of a man.
 4. The sentence might have been less, but my son took a sneering, defiant attitude all through the court, ridiculing every law officer who spoke to him.
 - a. But the crowning, shocking climax came when the judge sternly asked, "Young man, don't you believe in God?"
 - b. My son laughed loud and long as he said: "God? Who's that?"
 5. Every eye in the courtroom turned to look at me.
 - a. If only I had those years to live over again.
 - b. Night after night I have paced the floor, with the words, "God? Who's that?" echoing in my ears.
- B. As I mentioned last week, research indicates that religious training received as a child has a great bearing on adult faithfulness.
1. Research has indicated much of which we need to be aware: the more Scripture is emphasized to children, the more faithful they'll be as adults; the more they attended Sunday school as children, the more faithful they'll be as adults; the more faithful they saw their mother when they were children, the more faithful they'll be as adults.
 2. But more important than all those other factors is the father's faithfulness: the more faithful they saw their father, the more faithful they'll be as adults.
 - a. Therefore, this morning, I want us to ask the question, "What's a Dad to Do?"
 - b. In other words, how can fathers help their children become faithful Christians?
- C. We must give a word of caution here: There is no formula whatsoever that will ensure that your children or my children will grow up to be faithful Christians.
1. God created us with free will.
 - a. We can choose whether we will obey him or whether we will not. That applies to our children as well as to us.
 - b. If I could give you a formula where we could guarantee our children's future faithfulness, we would remove their capacity to be free moral agents — something God himself has not done.
 2. Some of you know that lesson quite painfully.
 - a. You emphasized Scripture in your home, you brought your children to Sunday school, you were faithful, your spouse was faithful, but your adult children are not faithful.
 - b. The research I've mentioned was largely based on interviews with both faithful and unfaithful Christians — Several of the unfaithful Christians interviewed had homes where Scripture was emphasized, were taken to Sunday school, had faithful mothers and fathers but are still unfaithful.
 3. Throughout Scripture, we find examples of good, faithful fathers who did not have good, faithful children.

- a. Think of Jehoshaphat and Jehoram.
 - 1) Jehoshaphat “walked in the ways of his father Asa and did not stray from them; he did what was right in the eyes of the LORD” (2 Chr. 20:32).
 - 2) Jehoram, Jehoshaphat’s son “walked in the ways of the kings of Israel, as the house of Ahab had done, for he married a daughter of Ahab. He did evil in the eyes of the LORD” (2 Chr. 21:6).
- b. What about Hezekiah and Manasseh?
 - 1) Hezekiah, without any doubt, was one of the best kings Judah ever had.
 - a) “He did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, just as his father David had done” (2 Chr. 29:2).
 - b) Think of all the good Hezekiah did:
 - i. He purified the temple.
 - ii. He reinstated the Passover and other feasts as commanded by God.
 - iii. Notice what we read at the end of Hezekiah’s life: “The other events of Hezekiah’s reign and his acts of devotion are written in the vision of the prophet Isaiah son of Amoz in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel” (2 Chr. 32:32).
 - 2) Manasseh was quite different- 2 Chr. 33:1-9.
- c. I fear that sometimes we have a tendency to think, “So and so seemed faithful to us, but we didn’t see him in his home. If he had been more faithful at home, his children would have been faithful.”
 - 1) Notice, however, what the text says about Jehoshaphat and Hezekiah — inspired text says that they were faithful men who sought God, but they had reprobates as sons.
 - 2) As faithful as we are, there is no guarantee that our children will be faithful, but we can help them go that direction. “What’s a Dad to Do” to help his kids go that direction?

DADS CAN TEACH THEIR CHILDREN

- A. Throughout Scripture, fathers are encouraged to teach their children right and wrong.
 1. Moses told the children of Israel, “These commandments that I give you today are to be upon 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” (Deut. 6:6-7).
 - a. Because we know these words so well, I fear we don’t take the time to listen to these inspired words.
 - b. But, let’s notice carefully Moses’ words:
 - 1) The commands of God are to be upon our hearts, that seat of life and emotion.
 - a) In binding these words on our hearts, there is a clear implication that we need to study the words of God. Unless we study God’s Word, how can we bind his will on our hearts?
 - b) We fathers need to spend much time examining the Word of God.
 - i. Notice what Moses said about the kings of Israel: Deut. 17:18-19.
 - ii. You remember why Luke praised the Bereans: “Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true” (Acts 17:11).
 - iii. President Woodrow Wilson once said, “I ask every man and woman in this audience that from this day on they will realize that part of the destiny of America lies in their daily perusal of this great Book.” Let us realize that the destiny of our families lies in the daily perusal of this great Book!
 - 2) We’re to impress them on our children at all times.
 - a) Many times we think we need to set aside a time for a daily family devotional.

- b) That's fine and good, but the instruction here is to teach our children through the course of daily life.
 - c) We have so many opportunities to teach through the course of day-to-day activities.
 - i. A couple weeks ago, we were driving down the road and Wil asked, "Daddy, how do babies get in mommies' bellies?"
 - ii. I knew the question would eventually come, so I took a big gulp and said, "Honey, when mommies and daddies are married and love each other, they end up having a baby."
 - iii. That answer satisfied him, was age appropriate, but more importantly, it gave me an opportunity to uphold God's standards.
 - 2. "Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4).
 - 3. Timothy learned the Scriptures at home — "From infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 3:15).
- B. Fathers, how are we doing in teaching our children?
- 1. Have we taught them how to change a flat tire, how to change the oil, how to change the sparkplugs, but never taught them how to become a Christian?
 - 2. Have we taught them the importance of doing their best in school, but never taught them the importance of doing their best for the Master?
 - 3. Have we taught them how to treat others, but never taught them how to treat the Lord and his church?
 - 4. A judge who had a great number of cases involving families and homes once said: "We adults spend far too much time preparing the path for our youth and far too little time preparing our youth for the path." Fathers, how well are we preparing our children for the path?

DADS CAN SET AN EXAMPLE FOR THEIR CHILDREN

- A. Examples play such an important role in life.
- 1. "We did this, not because we do not have the right to such help, but in order to make ourselves a model for you to follow" (2 Thess. 3:9).
 - a. Paul and those with him provided a model for the Thessalonians to follow.
 - b. We need fathers who will provide a model for their children to follow.
 - 2. "Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity" (1 Tim. 4:12).
 - 3. "In everything set them an example by doing what is good" (Tit. 2:7).
- B. For many years Monterey, California, was a pelican's paradise.
- 1. As the fishermen cleaned their fish, they flung the offal to the pelicans.
 - a. The birds grew fat, lazy, and contented.
 - b. Eventually, however the offal was utilized, and there were no longer snacks for the pelicans.
 - 2. When the change came the pelicans made no effort to fish for themselves.
 - a. They waited around and grew gaunt and thin. Many starved to death. They had forgotten how to fish for themselves.
 - b. The problem was solved by importing new pelicans from the south, birds accustomed to foraging for themselves.
 - 1) They were placed among their starving cousins, and the newcomers immediately started catching fish.
 - 2) Before long, the hungry pelicans followed suit, and the famine was ended.
 - 3. Likewise, we need fathers who will set an example and prevent their children's spiritual death.
- C. What type of an example do we need fathers to set?

1. We need fathers who are faithful in their worship attendance.
 - a. “Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another — and all the more as you see the Day approaching” (Heb. 10:25).
 - b. Well known words of Scripture, but are we fathers who live those words of Scripture?
 - 1) When we’re on vacation with the family, do we say, “It’s Sunday; we’re going to worship” or do we say, “The lines shouldn’t be long at DisneyWorld; let’s go”?
 - 2) When some friends drop by unexpectedly at worship time, do we say, “We’re on our way to worship, why don’t you come and go with us?” or “Don’t worry, we were just on our way to church; come on in — we can go some other time”?
 - 3) Just what are we teaching our children about priorities in this life?
2. We need fathers who are ethically faithful to the Lord.
 - a. In other words, we need fathers who live what they profess to live.
 - b. We’re encouraged to have an inward character which matches what we outwardly profess.
 - 1) “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead men’s bones and everything unclean. In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness” (Mt. 23:27-28).
 - 2) You know that in our families, children and spouses can see right through to the inner reality, and children are especially keen to those times when what we say doesn’t match how we live.
 - c. Do our lives at home match what we publicly profess?
 - 1) When we become angry with our children’s mother, do we lose our Christianity and say and do things we’ll soon regret?
 - 2) When we’re flipping through the TV channels, do we watch programs that we wouldn’t sit and watch with the Lord?
 - 3) When we come home and tell a joke we heard at the office, is it one we’d want our children to repeat in Sunday school?
 - d. Martin Luther once gave a very short eulogy for a fellow reformer. The eulogy: “What we preach, he lived.” Could those same words be said of you?
3. We need fathers who are faithful to the Lord in service.
 - a. The Christian life involves service to the church and to others.
 - 1) “Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all” (Mk. 10:43-44).
 - 2) “As we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers” (Gal. 6:10).
 - b. Do our children see us wrapping ourselves in a towel — as Jesus did the night of his betrayal — and serve others?
 - 1) When the church has a workday, do they see us do what we can, or do they see us stay in our nice, warm bed?
 - 2) When a lady down the street needs her yard mowed, do they see us going down to help, or do they see us concerned with our own comforts?
4. Fathers, what type of an example are we setting for our children? Are we setting an example which will lead them closer to the Lord or further from him?