

# Father's Day

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## Part 1

The Bible doesn't contain a chapter specifically devoted to telling men how to be good fathers. There are sentences here and there, like Ephesians 6:4, "Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord," and Colossians 3:21, "Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged," but that's about it.

In general, the Bible assumes that all men know how to be, and are, good fathers. That's the assumption Jesus makes in Luke 11:11 when He says, "Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"

Therefore, one has to infer good fatherly behavior from such passages. Fathers should not give their children snakes or scorpions.

When the Bible has little to say directly on a particular subject, we can turn to the writings of the great Protestant leaders of the past. People like Martin Luther and Ellen White are lesser lights who illuminate the greater light of the Bible by applying abstract Biblical teachings to specific situations. They lead us to Biblical principles which we should prayerfully consider to determine if they are correct and applicable to our own lives.

God also inspires ordinary people. Few ministers claim to be prophets; but still the Holy Spirit can give them messages of encouragement and inspiration. But, again, we must compare their messages with the Bible to make sure it really is a word sent from God.

Sometimes we can hear God's word in music. From time to time God inspires song writers to convey more truth in a 3 minute song than some ministers convey in a 30 minute sermon. Of course we expect traditional hymns to present correct doctrine; and generally speaking they do. But if a hymn presents a doctrine that conflicts with a clear teaching of the Bible, we shouldn't be singing that song.

God doesn't limit Himself to the hymnal, however. He can use any style of music to present truth to unsuspecting listeners. Let's listen to an example.

[Rodney Atkins – Watching You]

## Part 2

You may have heard a sermon in which a preacher said that your children will follow your example, but did that sermon have the same impact on you as the song we just played? Probably not.

Perhaps the Bible doesn't say much about Fathers being important role models because it is so obvious that it goes without saying; but we're going to say it anyway. An African-American website called "Black Spin" says this about the importance of fathers.

*A Mother cannot give all that a man can give. A truly involved father figure offers more fullness to a child's life.*

*This is not just an opinion. According to Children-our investment.org, homes without fathers ultimately affect children in numerous tragic ways:*

*63% of youth suicides are from fatherless homes  
90% of all homeless and runaway children are from fatherless homes  
85% of all children who show behavior disorders come from fatherless homes  
80% of rapists with anger problems come from fatherless homes  
71% of all high school dropouts come from fatherless homes  
75% of all adolescent patients in chemical abuse centers come from fatherless homes  
85% of all youths in prison come from fatherless homes.*

*Not only are these statistics heartbreaking, it applies to African-American homes in disproportionate numbers. Compared to the 72 percent in our communities, 17 percent of Asians, 29 percent of whites, 53 percent of Hispanics and 66 percent of Native Americans were born to unwed mothers in 2008, the most recent year for which government figures are available. The rate for the overall U.S. population was 41 percent.<sup>1</sup>*

Those disturbing numbers went by pretty quickly. They are worth repeating. In 2008, nearly 1/3 of all white children were born to single mothers. Slightly more than half Hispanic children were born to single mothers. Two thirds of all Native American children were born to unwed mothers. Nearly three quarters of black children were born into a fatherless household.

Jesus frequently compared God to a loving father. This means nothing to all those children who don't have a father living with them. I can't tell you in words what it is like for those children, but this song can.

[Brad Paisley – He Didn't Have to Be]

### **Part 3**

Some boys are lucky to have fathers like that as their role model. Unfortunately, many don't. they don't know what responsibilities come with fatherhood.

In her book, Ministry of Healing, Ellen White describes the responsibility of fatherhood.

### **Ministry of Healing chapter 33**

#### **The Father's Responsibility**

The husband and father is the head of the household. The wife looks to him for love and sympathy, and for aid in the training of the children; and this is

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.bvblackspin.com/2010/11/08/72-percent-of-african-american-children-born-to-unwed-mothers/>

right. The children are his as well as hers, and he is equally interested in their welfare. The children look to their father for support and guidance; he needs to have a right conception of life and of the influences and associations that should surround his family; above all, he should be controlled by the love and fear of God and by the teaching of His word, that he may guide the feet of his children in the right way.

The father is the lawmaker of the household; and, like Abraham, he should make the law of God the rule of his home. God has given rules for our guidance. Children should not be left to wander away from the safe path marked out in God's word, into ways leading to danger, which are open on every side. Kindly, but firmly, with persevering, prayerful effort, their wrong desires should be restrained, their inclinations denied.

The father should enforce in his family the sterner virtues--energy, integrity, honesty, patience, courage, diligence, and practical usefulness. And what he requires of his children he himself should practice, illustrating these virtues in his own manly bearing.

But, fathers, do not discourage your children. Combine affection with authority, kindness and sympathy with firm restraint. Give some of your leisure hours to your children; become acquainted with them; associate with them in their work and in their sports, and win their confidence. Cultivate friendship with them, especially with your sons. In this way you will be a strong influence for good.

The father should do his part toward making home happy. Whatever his cares and business perplexities, they should not be permitted to overshadow his family; he should enter his home with smiles and pleasant words.

In a sense the father is the priest of the household, laying upon the family altar the morning and evening sacrifice. But the wife and children should unite in prayer and join in the song of praise. In the morning before he leaves home for his daily labor, let the father gather his children about him and, bowing before God, commit them to the care of the Father in heaven. When the cares of the day are past, let the family unite in offering grateful prayer and raising the song of praise, in acknowledgment of divine care during the day.

Fathers and mothers, however pressing your business, do not fail to gather your family around God's altar. Ask for the guardianship of holy angels in your home. Remember that your dear ones are exposed to temptations. Daily annoyances beset the path of young and old. Those who would live patient, loving, cheerful lives must pray. Only by receiving constant help from God can we gain the victory over self.

Home should be a place where cheerfulness, courtesy, and love abide; and where these graces dwell, there will abide happiness and peace. Troubles may invade, but these are the lot of humanity. Let patience, gratitude, and love keep sunshine in the heart, though the day may be ever so cloudy. In such homes angels of God abide.

Let the husband and wife study each other's happiness, never failing in the small courtesies and little kindly acts that cheer and brighten the life. Perfect confidence should exist between husband and wife. Together they should consider their responsibilities. Together they should work for the highest good of their children. Never should they in the presence of the children criticize each other's plans or question each other's judgment. Let the wife be careful not to make the husband's work for the children more difficult. Let the husband hold up the hands of his wife, giving her wise counsel and loving encouragement.

No barrier of coldness and reserve should be allowed to arise between parents and children. Let parents become acquainted with their children, seeking to understand their tastes and dispositions, entering into their feelings, and drawing out what is in their hearts.

Parents, let your children see that you love them and will do all in your power to make them happy. If you do so, your necessary restrictions will have far greater weight in their young minds. Rule your children with tenderness and compassion, remembering that "their angels do always behold the face of My Father which is in heaven." If you desire the angels to do for your children the work given them of God, co-operate with them by doing your part.

Brought up under the wise and loving guidance of a true home, children will have no desire to wander away in search of pleasure and companionship. Evil will not attract them. The spirit that prevails in the home will mold their characters; they will form habits and principles that will be a strong defense against temptation when they shall leave the home shelter and take their place in the world.

Children as well as parents have important duties in the home. They should be taught that they are a part of the home firm. They are fed and clothed and loved and cared for, and they should respond to these many mercies by bearing their share of the home burdens and bringing all the happiness possible into the family of which they are members.

Children are sometimes tempted to chafe under restraint; but in afterlife they will bless their parents for the faithful care and strict watchfulness that guarded and guided them in their years of inexperience. <sup>2</sup>

This may sound outdated, like something you would see on a 1950s television show like *Father Knows Best*. It certainly isn't anything like the modern families you see on TV, which are politely described as "nontraditional." That's because *Ministry of Healing* was written in 1905. But if we want to return to traditional values, we have to know what those traditional values were. If we adopt those values, our homes will be solid and happy.

[Hymn - Love at Home]

## Part 4

The Bible doesn't say too much about fatherhood. In addition to the two sentences in Ephesians and Colossians we already read, Paul tells us in Titus, chapter 1, verses 6 through 9, the qualifications of an elder, who should be an ideal father. So his advice about elders should apply to fathers as well.

An elder must be blameless, faithful to his wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient. Since an overseer manages God's household, he must be blameless—not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain. Rather, he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined. He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.

In summary, earthly fathers should reflect the character of our Heavenly Father as Becky Richardson tells us in this song. [Father's Eyes]

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.whiteestate.org/books/mh/mh33.html>