

The Transforming Power of Fatherhood

I. HOW TO APPLY THE TRUTHS ABOUT FATHERHOOD

- A. The Father has the affections, the desire for a close relationship, and a plan for each individual. God's names reveal different facets of His personality. He has over 300 names in Scripture. The fatherhood of God dominated Jesus' teaching about God. Jesus emphasized the affectionate, deeply involved, relational dimension of God's personality as Father. From the very beginning, God has had a Father's heart wanting a family to share His love in deep relationship.

²⁶I have declared to them Your name, and will declare it... (Jn. 17:26)

- B. The Spirit is restoring the heart of the father in the Church. There is a crisis of fatherhood in the home, in society, and in the Church. This is the first generation in which children are influenced more outside their home than in it. The solution to this starts by understanding and receiving the father heart of God for our personal lives and then expressing it to others.

⁵Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD. ⁶And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children... (Mal. 4:5-6)

- C. ***Premise:*** The truths about God's heart as our Father have application to every believer. We can apply these truths in three ways: ***spiritually***—in relating to our heavenly Father; ***in the home***—as parents in relating to our children; and ***in the Church***—as we disciple younger believers.

1. As a physical or spiritual father, we are the Father's representatives on earth.
2. A spiritual father is one who consistently invests in a younger believer for a sustained period of time—maybe even a few years.
3. I encourage young people to set their heart to be a spiritual father to younger believers (instead of seeking to find a spiritual father). The Great Commission is a command to disciple people. To disciple someone is to help them to grow up in Christ so that they can feed themselves in the Word, hear from God for their life, make godly choices, and minister to others. Discipling someone is the first step to becoming a spiritual father.

- D. God promises to be a father to the fatherless. If you are a single mom or if you are going to be a father (physical or spiritual) in the future, the principles of fatherhood can be applied by us all.

⁵A father of the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in His holy habitation. (Ps. 68:5)

- E. Fathering is one of the most important, most rewarding, and most challenging assignments in God's kingdom. It's never too late to start receiving from the Father or to become a better father!

- F. There are many principles of godly fatherhood. They include building relationships, being committed, serving, affirming, calling forth, training, correcting, honoring, communicating, listening, investing, understanding, following through, celebrating, and supporting in difficulty.

II. FATHERHOOD: 12 PRINCIPLES

- A. Principle #1 ***Relationship building***: Friendship-based leadership is not the same as being peers or pals relating only around entertainment. Leadership works best when based in relationship.
1. **Cultivate**: A relationship is like a garden that must be cultivated by watering (adding components that nurture it) and weeding it (addressing the components that hinder it).
 2. **Time**: There is no substitute for time in cultivating a relationship. Meet with your children regularly and put it on your schedule. Embrace the “discipline of relating” knowing that some meetings are exciting or intense and others are not, but over time a strong relationship is the result.
- B. Principle #2 ***Commitment***: Regularly verbalize your long-term commitment to your children. Do not take this for granted. This will give them a sense of belonging and identity. Most people struggle with fear of being rejected, of failing, being forgotten, and or not being special to anyone. Your children must know they are a top priority. Do not treat your children as an interruption. Don't make them feel that they are in the way. Cause your children to feel that they hold a unique place in your heart and what matters to them is important to you.
- C. Principle #3 ***Servanthood***: Fathering is not a relationship that only serves the vision of the father. A father is committed to using his resources to help his children succeed in their vision. Fathers should take the initiative in solving relational conflicts with their children.
- D. Principle #3 ***Affirming***: Fathers speak words of affirmation, blessing, and encouragement to their children related to their strengths and weaknesses. This helps them overcome the temptation to quit in the face of condemnation and the sense of failure. Our greatest emotional need is for the assurance of being enjoyed. We can put courage in the heart of our children by speaking affirming truths about them. It is not enough to just think these truths; we must speak them out.
- ¹³***Encourage one another daily...that none of you may be hardened... (Heb. 3:13, NIV)***
1. **Gracious**: Fathers must not relate to their children based on their failure. They break the shame off their children instead of reminding them of the stigma of past failures and holding it over them in subtle ways. We must be their primary cheerleaders until the end. The Lord does not confuse our spiritual immaturity with rebellion. He smiles over us when we begin the growth process long before we attain maturity (Lk. 15:4-7, 17-20).
 2. **Budding virtues**: The Lord sees the budding virtues in His people. He first looks at the intention of the heart and sees the budding virtues just as they begin to grow. Jesus sees the early stages of our longing to be obedient to Him and values it. This is the model for how we are to view our children. He wants us to see what He sees in our children.
 3. **Affection**: Touching your children contributes to giving them a sense of belonging.

- E. Principle #4 ***Calling forth***: Fathers seek to envision and inspire their children to take action. Ask the Spirit for information about your children’s destiny in each season of their life. Challenge them to embrace the cost of that destiny. Show them the truth about themselves that they can not see. Jesus called Peter a rock (Mt. 16:18). Samuel called David to leadership (1 Sam. 16).
- F. Principle #5 ***Training***: We are to train our children in character and life skills (spiritually, relationally, socially, physically, emotionally, and economically, etc.). Share how you faced the same predicament as a child and know that their problem will not prevail. Tell them your story. Give them corrections with gentleness to show them their blind spots, but do not provoke them.
- ⁴Fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition [correction with warnings] of the Lord. (Eph. 6:4)***
1. ***Spiritually***: We are to establish a culture of seeking Jesus in our family. One of the greatest gifts we can give our wife is to cultivate spiritual depth in our life. Have family discussions about a message they recently heard. Read a book together that strengthens their faith. Read and then discuss one chapter a week together.
 2. ***Correction***: Never let your children mistake your correction for rejection. Eli was rejected by God in his leadership role for neglecting to correct his sons (1 Sam. 2).
¹²Whom Lord loves He corrects, just as father the son in whom he delights (Prov. 3:12)
¹⁹As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent. (Rev. 3:19)
- G. I recommend a 10-to-1 ratio of affirmation to correction with children. When giving correction, we can speak with a spirit of grace with affirmation and affection. We can talk honestly about weaknesses and without a spirit of anger and accusation. We must guard against allowing the spirit of accusation to get into our family dynamics. It operates in many Christian homes and it destroys them. The father is the most responsible to make sure that this does not happen.
- ¹If a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. (Gal. 6:1)***
- H. We direct our children in a progressively decreasing way as they grow older. I suggest:
100% direction to children who are ages 0-5
80% direction to children who are about ages 5-12
50% from about ages 12-17 using more dialogue to help them to choose rightly
20% from about ages 18-21 using even more dialogue
0% commands after about age 21, but friendship based influence on decisions as they ask us
- I. Principle #6 ***Honoring the family***: Children must see that we honor their mother, siblings, and others. One of the best ways to love your children is to openly honor and love their mother. A deep sense of security comes to a child who sees his father honor his mother and the family.

- J. Principle #7 ***Two-way communication***: Fathers seek to have two-way communication with their children. They must listen to what their children want and think. They respect their thoughts, feelings, and dreams and must never insinuate that they are stupid for that they think or feel. They must talk respectfully to our children and ask for their forgiveness when we don't.
1. **Listening**: Hear their story and determine to regularly listen to what is on their heart. Ask them what brings them joy or what causes pressure, what they like and dislike, what their dreams are, etc. Do not require that they help or listen to you. Value your children by hearing what interests them and asking them questions. Work on asking questions.
 2. **The “why” behind the “what”**: Fathers explain the “why” behind the “what” in what they require from their children. A child responds better if they understand the purpose.
- K. Principle #8 ***Investing***: Fathers invest in their children according to their “currency.” They take initiative in finding out their children’s interests so they can invest in them according to their gifts and passions. Develop a bond with them by working together on things they care about.
- L. Principle #9 ***Understanding***: Fathers take time to understand their children in a general way and as unique individuals. Ask the Spirit to highlight what He is doing in the life of your children.
- M. Principle #10 ***Following through***: Fathers must keep their word to their children or acknowledge it. Jesus calls for integrity in our commitments. When we do not follow through on what we say, integrity demands that we acknowledge it to those we committed to. This applies to our children. Set a family culture of keeping your word. Keeping your word builds trust. When your children grow up, they will trust God more because you paved the way by keeping your word.
- ³⁷*But let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No.’ (Mt. 5:37)*
- N. Principle #11 ***Celebrating***: A father rejoices with his children in what excites their hearts and enjoys God’s blessing on them. We celebrate small breakthroughs in active and regular ways. God does this for us. Tell others about your children’s victories, especially in their presence.
- O. Principle #12 ***Supporting***: Fathers stand with their children in setbacks, attacks, difficulties and risks. They do not give up on their children and they fight for their honor and success. This includes reminding them of God’s perspective in times of weakness and strength. Fathers support their children in their battles. It is essential that they know they are not alone.
1. **Verbal**: Fathers speak in ways to help their children overcome temptations to quit.
 2. **Provision**: Fathers invest their resources (time and money) in practical ways to help to them to continue to press on in a time of difficulty.