



DADS: IT'S TIME TO STEP UP

Three Fatherhood Essentials




DR. JAMES
DOBSON'S
familytalk

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1. Recapturing the Meaning behind “A Good Family Man”— The compliment “good family man” is one of the phrases that has gone into obscurity. It was once widely used in our culture to designate a true badge of honor. Look at the three words that make up that phrase. **Good** refers to widely accepted moral values. **Family** points to purposes larger than the self. And **man** says there's a norm of masculinity. It seems that contemporary culture no longer celebrates a widely shared ideal of such a man who puts his family first.

Where do we see responsible masculinity represented on television? There just aren't many. No, we're more likely to hear about superstar athletes or the ladies' man or the entrepreneur who's sacrificed all, including his wife and children, to make his start-up company a success.

Fortunately, it's not too late to bring this simple phrase back into vogue. “A good family man.” It is indeed one of the highest callings to which a man can aspire.

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*Fatherhood: Building Character
Into the Hearts of Children*

2. No Regrets— A recent study asked 400 parents of college freshmen to report their feelings when their son or daughter left home. Surprisingly to some, the fathers took it harder than the mothers. And one of the chief explanations was regret. Fathers had been so busy—working so hard—that they suddenly realized it was too late to build a relationship with the then-grown child.

If you still have teenagers at home, take a moment regularly to enjoy your remaining time together. Those days will be gone in the blink of an eye.

3. Your Ultimate Priority— It is possible for mothers and fathers to love and revere God while systematically losing their children. You can go to church three times a week, serve on its governing board, attend the annual picnic, pay your tithes and make all the approved religious noises, yet somehow fail to communicate the real meaning of Christianity to the next generation.

I have since talked to dozens of parents whose children are grown and married.

“We thought our kids had accepted our faith and beliefs,”

they say, “but somehow, we failed to get it across.” For those younger parents whose children are still at an impressionable age, please believe the words of my dad, “The greatest delusion is to suppose that our children will be devout Christians simply because their parents’ have been, or that any of them will enter into the Christian faith in any other way than through their parents deep travail of prayer and faith.”

If you doubt the validity of this assertion, may I suggest that you read the story of Eli in 1 Samuel 2-4. Here is the account of a priest and servant of God who failed to discipline his children. He was apparently too busy with the “work of the church” to be a leader in his own home. The two boys grew up to be evil young men on whom God’s judgment fell.

It concerned me to realize that Eli’s service to the Lord was insufficient to compensate for his failure at home. Then I read farther in the narrative and received confirmation of the principle. Samuel, the saintly man of God who stood like a tower of spiritual strength throughout his life, grew up in Eli’s home. He watched Eli systematically losing his children, yet Samuel proceeded to fail with his family, too! That was a deeply disturbing truth. If God would not honor Samuel’s dedication by guaranteeing the salvation of his children, will He do more for me if I’m too busy to do my “homework”?



CLICK TO LISTEN

Children: A Heritage From the Lord

This mission of introducing one’s children to the Christian faith can be likened to a three-man relay race. First, your father runs his lap around the track, carrying the baton, which represents the gospel of Jesus Christ. At the appropriate moment, he hands the baton to you, and you begin your journey around the track. Then finally, the time will come when you must get the baton

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safely in the hands of your child. But as any track coach will testify, relay races are won or lost in the transfer of the baton. There is a critical moment when all can be lost by a fumble or miscalculation. The baton is rarely dropped on the back side of the track when the runner has it firmly in his grasp. *If failure is to occur, it will likely happen in the exchange between generations!*

According to the Christian values which govern my life, my most important reason for living is to get the baton—the gospel—safely in the hands of my children. Of course, I want to place it in as many other hands as possible, and I'm deeply devoted to the ministry to families that God has given me. Nevertheless, my number one responsibility is to evangelize my own children. In the words of my dad, everything else appears “pale and washed out” when compared with that fervent desire. Unless my son and daughter grasp the faith and take it with them around the track, it matters little how fast they run. Being first across the finish line is meaningless unless they carry the baton with them.

There is not enough knowledge in the books—not enough human wisdom anywhere on earth—to guarantee the outcome of parenting. There are too many factors beyond our control—too many evil influences—that mitigate against the Christian message. That is why we find ourselves in prayer, week after week, uttering this familiar petition:



LORD, HERE WE ARE AGAIN. *You know what we need even before we ask, but let us say it one more time. When you consider the many requests we have made of you through the years...regarding our health and my ministry and the welfare of our loved ones...please put this supplication at the top of the list: keep the circle of our little family unbroken when we stand before you on the Day of Judgment. Compensate for our mistakes and failures as parents, and counteract the influences of an evil world that would undermine the faith of our children. And especially Lord, we ask for your involvement when our son and daughter stand at the crossroads, deciding whether or not to walk the Christian path. They will be beyond our care at that moment, and we humbly ask You to be there. Send a significant friend or leader to help them choose the right direction. They were yours before they were born, and now we give them back to you in faith, knowing that you love them even more than we do.*

This material is excerpted from two of Dr. Dobson's books, *Dr. Dobson's Handbook of Family Advice* (Copyright 1996/1998, Published by Harvest House Publishers) and also from *Straight Talk to Men: Timeless Principles for Leading Your Family* (Copyright 2007, Published by Tyndale Momentum) and are both used with permission.

Here are some links for additional encouragement especially for men from Dr. James Dobson's FamilyTalk:



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