

“Fathers, Bring Them Up”

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Read Ephesians 6:4

“The common denominator between success and failure seems to be the spiritual depth and sincerity of the parents, **especially the spiritual depth and sincerity of the father**. There seems to be a strong correlation between the faith, commitment, and sincerity of the family’s head and the spiritual vitality of his adult children.” ([emphasis his] William P. Farley, *Gospel-Powered Parenting: How the Gospel shapes and transforms parenting*, 15).

I would like to speak on two ideas. First, fathers need to accept their primary responsibility in the upbringing of their children. Second, fathers need to be intentional in the shaping of their children.

Although the weight of such words can crush a father, we cannot dismiss such words. Fathers, we must step up and stand ready to fight for our homes. We cannot afford to excuse our negligence because of business or needs/wants that are of a personal nature. We must function as heads within our homes whereby the wife and children are secure, guided, provided for and prized.

In a private dialogue I was told, “There are lots of explanations, but no excuses. All are culpable.” The mantle or weight of bringing up a child falls on the husband/father. It is shared by the wife/mother, but it is not hers to bear primarily or exclusively. Many mothers and single parents have born up well under the weight of such a task and they are to be commended and honored, but the home was not designed for them to assume such heaviness. It is time for you as a husband and father to “man up”.

I would venture to guess that for many of us to “man up” and bear the weight would require a significant change of priority and scheduling, but I would equally guess that such an adjustment would be welcomed by all within the home.

Many of us would give our “right arm” for the well-being of our children if such were demanded. Yet such is the case. Your child is crying out to you for your love, acceptance, forgiveness, favor and service. **They need you**. It is true that many mothers are “stay at home moms” and thus spend the bulk of their day with their children. Because of this, they have major and significant input in the shaping of the child. But all of this should be carefully discussed between the parents and intentionally planned by both.

Fathers, if you have been negligent in this area, or perhaps have started well but find yourself faltering, then I appeal to you to step back in the game and get your knees dirty. Roll up your sleeves and get to work in this most important of tasks laid on you by God.

Secondly; fathers need to be intentional in the shaping of their children. Paul uses the words “bring them up”. It speaks to the idea of training and is cloaked in tender care. Men, we need to be tender warriors. We must be willing to “spill blood” in our fight for our families, but let us never err in not cradling our loved ones. Let them openly know of our watch-care and oneness with them in their joys and sorrows. The word Paul used is found only used twice in the New Testament.

“for no one ever hated his own flesh, but **nourishes** and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church” (Eph. 5:29).

“Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but **bring them up** in the discipline and instruction of the Lord” (Eph. 6:4).

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- The meaning is the same for how a husband relates to his wife and child, but the application is different.
- You would not treat your wife in the same manner in which you treat your child.
- Your children should know you have their best interests and well-being in mind.

This tender care is invasive and pervasive as noted in the word "discipline" or **paideia** and steadfast or hard as noted in the word "instruction" or **nouthetic**. "The term **paideia** is probably best known to modern English-speakers through its use in the word encyclopedia, which is a combination of the Greek terms enkyklios, or "complete system/circle", and paideia." (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*)

I think we misunderstand what this might look like. I do not believe you have to control or micro-manage every area of your child's training, but I do believe you need to have "oversight" of your child's training, and where possible, you need to be directly involved. You need to "get your hands dirty". You cannot teach swimming with dry trunks. You need to be invested in your child's training.

The word **nouthetic** calls us to persevere in the process. **Nouthetic** is largely captured by the idea of confrontation or "in your face". When parenting your child there will be those occasions when you as a father will need to be "in their face". You will be challenged as a parent as to who is in charge. The National Geographic Network has a program called "Dog Whisperer" featuring Cesar Millan. Cesar "speaks" fluent dog. One of the working principles he operates from is this, "There is a pack leader and as the owner of the dog/dogs it better be you." That principle is equally true in your home and in parenting. You must be "pack leader". It would be wrong for us to assume this implies or encourages bullying or exploitation, but if this idea is not celebrated, then the home, church and society will suffer and fail.

Just as a child is persistent in "testing the waters" and "checking out each and every border," so must you be equally persistent in calling out the challenge and putting down the insurrection. Why? Because we are involved in spiritual warfare and Satan is out to destroy you and your family. He wants to capture the souls of your sons and daughters. Parenting isn't about your popularity poll or where your standing is among other parents and their teenage children. Parenting is about you strapping on your belt and pulling up your boots and working the soil and pulling the weeds.

I am calling out to you to say "NO" to the devil and his evil insurrection against the kingdom of God and the God of the kingdom. In no way do I wish to denigrate the role of wife and mother; they are our allies in this holy endeavor however they must not be the ones who stand in the gap. If because of your failure they do, then so be it and shame on you. But I call on every husband and father to "act like men" (1 Cor. 16:13). Will you accept this challenge, and will you place around your family a protective wall that under God becomes impenetrable? Will you willingly lay yourself on the altar if necessary for the well-being of home and hearth? Gentlemen, it is time to man up and lead your family to the foot of the cross. Let us call out and shout the supremacy of God in all things. Let us lead our wives and children to the throne of God and cry with mighty voice, "He is enough in this life and in the life to come" and may this idea so capture our hearts that when the night ends and the day dawns we, with Paul, will say

I have fought the good fight,
I have finished the course,
I have kept the faith;
in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness,
which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day;
and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing
(2 Tim. 4:7, 8)