



FATHERS WHO LEAD

Ephesians 6:4

Happy Father's Day, dads! While there will be no records set today for long-distance phone calls, few sentimental cards given, and certainly no flowers handed out at today's service, it's still a good day because

I read something this week entitled 50 Reasons Why It's Good To Be a Man. I won't read all of them but I did put together my own top-10 list:

- 10 - If someone forgets to invite you to something he can still be your friend.
- 9 - One wallet, one pair of shoes, one color, all seasons.
- 8 - You can drop by to see a friend without bringing a little gift.
- 7 - You can do your nails with a pocket knife.
- 6 - Your pals can be trusted never to trap you with, "So...notice anything different?"
- 5 - There is always a game on somewhere.
- 4 - If another guy shows up at the same party in the same outfit, you might become lifelong buddies.
- 3 - You can fix just about anything with Duct Tape.
- 2 - You can go to the bathroom without a support group.
- 1 - If something mechanical doesn't work, you can bash it with a hammer and throw it across the room.

Our primary passage is a short one but it packs a wallop!

Ephesians 6:4: "Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord."

In essence, Paul is challenging us to see the word "fathers" as a verb not just a noun. It's biologically easy to become a father, but biblically challenging to actually "father" our children.

The Bible very clearly challenges dads to become the point men in their homes because the ultimate responsibility for what a family becomes is the father's.

In this passage, we're given 4 "Dad Duties." One duty is something we should not do; the other three are what we are to do.

1. Avoid Exasperation

- ❖ The first duty is a negative/positive... we are told to "not exasperate our children." This is a caution or warning designed to put us on guard against stirring up anger in our kids either deliberately or through careless provocations.
- ❖ I think Paul started with a negative command because he knows that fathers, who are fallen creatures, are prone to abuse their authority in the home.
- ❖ Remember that our children are commanded by God to honor us.
- ❖ When we provoke them to wrath, we are causing them to sin against the Fifth Commandment.

In such cases we are guilty before God for disobeying Ephesians 6:4 and also doubly guilty for causing our children to stumble.

I can think of some common ways that fathers can exasperate their children:

1. Overprotection.
2. Overindulgence.
3. Favoritism.
4. Unrealistic Goals.
5. Discouragement.
6. Neglect.
7. Excessive Discipline.

That's the negative/positive side of our dad duty: avoid exasperation.

- ❖ Now, let's look at three positive principles from the second half of Ephesians 6:4: "...Instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord."

2. Provide Nurture

- ❖ The word "instead" shows a contrast between what we should not do and what we are to do. Here's the first thing we are called to do: provide nurture.

- ❖ The NIV translates this verb as “bring them up.” This is the same phrase that is used in 5:29 referring to the husband’s role of “feeding and caring” for his wife.
- ❖ Men, we are called to nourish our wife and children by sharing love and encouragement in the Lord.
Notice also that we are to “bring them up.” We are to bring our children up because they will not get there by themselves.
- ❖ Dads, we are to take an active role in shaping the character of our children. Proverbs 29:15 says, “A child left to himself brings shame to his mother.”
 - ❖ John MacArthur puts it this way: “What ruins most children is not what their parents do to them, but what they do not do for them.”

3. Provide Discipline

- ❖ The next thing Paul challenges us to do is to provide discipline for our kids. This word is translated “admonition” in some of your Bibles and carries with it the idea of a rebuke or a warning. Literally, it means to “place before the mind.”
- ❖ Proverbs 13:24 in the New King James Version provides a strong challenge to us dads: “He who spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him promptly.” I like the way the New Living Translation puts it: “If you refuse to discipline your children, it proves you don’t love them; if you love your children, you will be prompt to discipline them.”

4. Provide Instruction

- ❖ And so dads, we are to avoid making our kids angry if at all possible and we’re to provide nurture and discipline. There’s one last thing that we’re called to do in this verse: we’re to provide instruction. Notice that this instruction is to be “in the Lord.”
- ❖ Dads, we are to bring up our children to know, understand and experience the love, hope, Righteousness, promises and the triumph of God through Jesus Christ.

There are at least three ways that we can do this:

- Bring them up to find their place in Jesus Christ. Who they are in Him, Who He is in them.
- Bring them up to see everything in relation to God’s truth. Do whatever it takes to make all of life God-saturated for your kids.
- Bring them up to know that the path of sin is a dead end street because

righteousness will prevail in the end. Teach and show them God's will, ways and plan.

Some Thoughts by Godly Dads...

Greg Laurie:

Dad, you are the point man in your home. You are the coach of your team. You are the captain and your barracks is boot camp for training young soldiers for the greatest combat in the world. Your residence is a launching pad for missiles of missionary zeal aimed at the unreached peoples of the world.

Jack Hayford:

Our goal is not merely to get our kids to outwardly conform to a list of rules. Our mandate is to develop children who seek to glorify God with their lives. It is not enough to teach them to do good things; our job is to teach our children how to develop a lifestyle of kingdom servanthood.

Tony Dungy: All Pro Dads www.allprodad.com/

Tony's Top Ten to be a better dad: Love Your Wife, Spend time with your kids, be a role model, understand your child, show affection enjoy your time with our kids, eat together as a family, discipline with a gentle spirit, pray and worship together and realize you're a father forever.

Chuck Swindoll, in his book, "The Strong Family," says this: "C'mon dads...Let's start saying no to more and more of the things that pull us farther and farther away from the ones who need us the most...You're not perfect? So, what else is new? You don't know exactly how to pull it off? Welcome to the club...your family doesn't expect profound perfection, command performances, or a superhuman plan. Just you warts and all...Let's get started." (From The Strong Family)

Dads, It's your time. You're the leader. Lead on! Your kids are waiting for you to step up to the plate!