

Defend the Fatherless: Becoming a Spiritual Father

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INTRO:

When you think of father-son relationships, the same images always come to mind. You know the ones.... The dad teaching his son to play catch. The family car's hood up with father and son, covered in oil, tinkering with the engine. Down in the basement, man and boy, with tools in hand, building things with wood. I must admit that I have somewhat similar remembrances of things past, but none of these are his greatest gift to me. My dad taught me something that I use every day. He taught me how to laugh.

Those iconic images of father and son, we did them all. Yet, they were something out of a Twilight Zone episode, not a Norman Rockwell painting. We played catch with the baseball, but I was so uncoordinated that I'd keep missing the ball... and it would hit me in the head. We'd try to fix the car together. But the minute the hood went up, we'd stare at the engine like we were janitors trying to do brain surgery. So we'd wash and wax the car and take it to the mechanic. And anytime we'd try to build anything, well... God bless my mother for accepting the fact that her bird feeder was a death trap for any animal who came near it.

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Maybe you have some memories like these with your dad, or another male figure in your life (grandpa, a step-dad). Sadly many kids don't have those memories.

Today is Father's day of course, so as I was considering what to share on tonight, I kept coming back to one thought... being a spiritual father. This message applies first of all to dads. You may have kids of your own, and of course that makes you uniquely qualified. Step-dads, you too have a great opportunity.

But maybe you are not a father; perhaps you are single, or married with no children. This message still applies to you. You don't have to be a biological father to be a spiritual father. There is a great need for spiritual fathers in our time, and God will use anyone who's willing. (Ladies, there is also a huge need for spiritual mothers, many of these principals will apply to you as well.)

1. The Lack of Spiritual Fathers- A Growing Problem

It is obvious in our time, that many homes have no father figure. There are a growing number of divorces in our world (which unfortunately doesn't exclude the Church). Lack of commitment is on the rise. (You can even buy "Do It Yourself, Divorce Kits" at Wal-Mart). With all of the family breakups, children (young kids + teens) are the ones who are probably the most affected. This generation of young people has often been called "the fatherless generation."

Even when there is a man on the scene (whether he be the blood father, or a step) there is still often a lack of fathering in the lives of children and youth. There are few true fathers who invest time and effort into loving and guiding their kids. These few are the heroes that continue to fulfill their mission.

Unfortunately there are far too many kids that struggle through their childhood and teen years, without a father figure, and without guidance. They are looking for clear direction, and finding none. The results can be horrible.

2. Growing Up Fatherless -The Effects

a. The effects on Boys

Boys Raised without a father are more likely to end up being violent and even spending time in jail.

"Boys raised outside of intact marriages are, on average, more than twice as likely as other boys to end up jailed, even after

controlling for other demographic factors. Each year spent without a dad in the home increases the odds of future incarceration by about five percent.”

December 1, 1998 issue of **The Wall Street Journal**, Maggie Gallagher's article *Fatherless Boys Grow Up Into Dangerous Men* reports on a study by the University of California's Cynthia Harper and Princeton's Sara McLanahan

Growing up without seeing a father who loves his wife and treats her well, leaves young men without a good example of healthy marriage relationship. Many times men who grow up in fatherless homes have a hard time relating to their wives. Sometimes they are abusive... and sometimes they have a harder time showing healthy emotions.

Often men that pursue gay relationships, were boys that had no father figure. They are seeking that love from another male, and instead of finding it in a healthy love of a father, they find it in a perverted relationship with another man. They are trying to fill that void of male love.

I learned about hard work from my dad. He gave me a healthy work ethic. Many young men grow up with no example of a hard working man to admire. So, they do the minimum, just to get by. Because of that lack, they find it hard to succeed in life.

Beyond all the practical things, there is of course the spiritual affect. The father is meant to be the priest of the home, the protector, provider, and spiritual leader. Boys who don't experience that type of male leadership, will often make a lot of stupid choices in life. It's true that a mother can bring some of that guidance, but it definitely helps a young man to have a strong, Godly man to look to. Without Godly spiritual leadership, and even healthy boundaries, a boy is destined to learn everything the hard way. He is automatically enrolled in the school of hard

knocks, because he has no Father to teach him life's lessons (both spiritual and practical).

b. The effects on Girls

"Finally, girls whose parents divorce may grow up without the day to day experience of interacting with a man who is attentive, caring and loving. The continuous sense of being valued and loved as a female seems **an especially key element in the development of the conviction that one is indeed femininely lovable. Without this regular source of nourishment, a girl's sense of being valued as a female does not seem to thrive.**"

Long-Term Effects of Divorce on Children: A Developmental Vulnerability Model
Neil Kalter, Ph.D., University

In other words, when a girl doesn't have the healthy love offered by a father figure, she has a hard time feeling lovable. **She doesn't realize how beautiful she is, because she never had dad tell her she is a princess.** If she doesn't feel important and lovable, she will likely settle for a man who doesn't genuinely love her for who she is. She is more likely to be in abusive relationships. She is more likely to have sex before marriage... and the list goes on.

71% of teenage pregnancies are to children of single parents.
(U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services.)

Not having a father figure often affects a girl's educational successes, and the likelihood to do drugs.

Adolescent girls who had experienced parental divorce when they were younger than six or between six and nine years old reported becoming involved with **alcohol or drugs in proportions higher than did girls from intact families.** Adolescent girls whose experience of divorce occurred before they were six **more frequently reported skipping school** than did girls from intact families or girls whose parents divorced when they were between the

ages of six and nine. The Effects of Marital Disruption on Adolescents: Time as a Dynamic A. Frost, PhD; B. Pakiz, EdM, American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 60(4), October, 1990

Not having a father in the picture affects both girls and boys in a lot of harsh ways. They are more likely to experience everything from relationship problems, to education and job related problems. These fatherless kids are even more likely to be involved in drugs and violence and to do time in jail. That is the sad truth... but what's the solution???

3. Spiritual Fathers- God's Answer to the Problem

I've painted a scary picture for you, but I won't you to realize the truth of what this generation faces. But God is not caught off guard by the problem we face. He has an answer. There is hope.

Isaiah 1:17 NIV

learn to do right!
 Seek justice,
 encourage the oppressed.
Defend the cause of the fatherless,
 plead the case of the widow.

God's command to us is... defend the fatherless. In this verse defend means...

Defend-deliver from injustice or oppression.

God calls us to deliver them from their oppression and injustice. The injustice is that they have no father figure. We can step up to the plate and provide them with a caring spiritual leader. You could become a father to the fatherless. In fact I'm convinced that many of us our called to that very thing.

I've prayed often that God would use me to be a father to the fatherless. I know that is one of the greatest callings, and I want to answer the call.

Hosea 14:3 NIV

Assyria cannot save us;
we will not mount war-horses.
We will never again say 'Our gods'
to what our own hands have made,
for **in you the fatherless find compassion.**

The fatherless find compassion in *God*. *God* loves the orphans.
God has a special burden for the fatherless. We as *God's* Church
must share His heart for them.

... in You the fatherless find compassion.

Ask: Are you in Him??? Then doesn't it make sense that the
fatherless find compassion when they are around us??? I think it
is only right that we as the Church share *God's* heart and love
those that don't know a father's love. We need to show them what
a father's love is like, so that when we tell them about "Father
God" they will understand.

Psalm 68:5-6 NIV

**A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows,
is God in his holy dwelling.**

[6] God sets the lonely in families...

Ultimately *God* is the father to the fatherless. He is the One
that cares for them more than anyone else can, but the scripture
doesn't end, just with *God* loving them. It says also, that "*God*
sets the lonely in families..." What is the Church often referred
to??? The family of *God*... We are the family of *God*. We are to
be a family to them that have no family. We are to love those
that others fail to love. We are the family of *God*. *God* sets
people in our family, so that we can meet their needs, just as He

meets our needs. If they need love, we show them love, if they need a sponsorship to youth camp... we give them a sponsorship to youth camp... if they need a hug from an old grandma lady... come on grandma... give them a hug. If they need a man to take them fishing and show them how to drive a jet-ski... take some time to do that for them. God's desire is that we as God's people would step up to the plate and be fathers and mothers to the spiritual orphans of Parker. When we let God the father give us His heart for the fatherless, it will be natural for us to care for them.

4. A Mighty Army-The End Result

One amazing thing about young people, is that they are much more open than older people. They aren't set in their ways yet, and they want the truth. If we become the fathers to a fatherless generation, than we can help to set the course for them. I'm convinced that from the broken and fatherless, God desires to raise up an army of radical Christians. I mean soldiers of the cross, that fear nothing but God alone, and would do anything for the Gospel. If we as Christians set an example of men and women of God to these, they will become mighty men and women of God. I have no doubt that God will raise up an army, but He's looking for some fathers. These fathers are called to be the generals. These fathers are the ones that will take fearful children and raise them into courageous men. This challenge is a long term one. Being a spiritual father is not something that you do for a bit... it takes patience and commitment. **God is looking for a few willing men to love the spiritual orphans... and show them what a man is like. Will you be one of those men???**
Will you be a father to the fatherless???

Prayer: