

## Thanking our Fathers

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Someone wrote these humorous words entitled, "The World According to Dad." These are words that most dads have said at some time or another to their children.

- This is going to hurt me more than it hurts you.
- Quiet. I'm watching the ball game.
- Don't forget to check the oil.
- Bring back all the change.
- How should I know? Ask your mother.
- I'm not made out of money!
- When I was your age I walked 5 miles to and from school each day and it was uphill both ways.
- You are going and you will have fun!
- Who's paying the bills around here, anyway?
- If you break your leg don't come running to me.
- Quit playing with your food.
- Be quiet! Can't you see I'm trying to think!
- Why? Because I said so!
- If you don't quit that I'm going to call your mother.
- You better get that junk picked up before your mother comes in here.
- Just wait till you have kids of your own.
- I was NOT asleep. I was just resting my eyes.

Brethren, I suppose we who are fathers could probably add a couple of quotes to this list. Being a parent and a father can be an interesting and trying experience. Today we are here today to remember the Lord and honor our earthly fathers.

We should give thanks for godly fathers.

There are three areas of thanks.

## I. THERE IS THANKS FOR MATERIAL PROVISION

I Timothy 5:8

“But if any provide not for his own (relatives who are in need – in the context the reference would be to widows), and specially for those of his own house (immediate family members - whether it would be children, an elderly father or mother), he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.”

Wow! This is a powerful command. You might miss some things in Scripture but if you miss this, you have missed it on purpose. This command is especially true of fathers and I believe is addressed to them specifically since they are to the key providers of the home. If a father does not provide materially for his family (food, clothing, shelter) then he has denied the faith (what Christians believe and practice) and is worse than unbelievers (infidels).

In a day of freebies and handouts fathers should remember this. In a day when fathers want to live a care free life, they need to come back to the Scriptures and remember that the Bible says about providing for their family. They need to get a job and support their family. Let me be very straight forward. A government run socialist society and free handouts discourages jobs but God encourages men to have jobs and support their families. Government ownership of the means of production, or government running businesses, as opposed to a free market economy, and the government supporting half of the country smacks this command in its face. But God’s Word is true and the government is wrong as it seeks to overthrow capitalism.

Men, we need to provide for our families. It’s not the governments job to provide for your family. Don’t be lazy and a deadbeat dad. Get a job and start obeying God.

Boyce Mouton is a preacher friend in Carl Junction, MO, which is near Joplin. He said these words about his grandfather which I think are appropriate. "My grandfather, R.C. Myers, came from Kentucky. He married a Kansas girl and settled down in Indian territory, which later become Oklahoma. They had 16 children. It never occurred to my grandfather than the government should take care of his family. That was his responsibility. He became a

sharecropper in order to feed his family. Their poverty did not discourage him from the personal pride of caring for his own.

"He raised his children without the benefit of electricity or running water. He died without ever having a driver's license. His children, nevertheless, grew up to be hard-working, patriotic, and devout. I am confident, that in spite of his poverty, he did a better job of providing for his own than the government."

He then says: "And thank God for all the fathers who provide as best they can for their families! Thank you, Fathers!"

1 Timothy 5:8 once again declares:

"But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel."

Now, how can a father be worse than an infidel or unbeliever? It's because even many non-Christians understand and fulfill their familial responsibilities. Even unsaved provide for their families. The Christian faith (what we read and are to believe from the Bible) consistently maintains that those who are true believers should care for one another. When a Christian fails to do this, he denies by his actions the very truths which Christianity teaches.

It does not matter what type of testimony a man may give at church or any other place, if you are not taking care of your own, you have no testimony for God. Period. Again, such a person is worse than an unbeliever for the simple reason that many unbelievers show loving care for their own relatives. Also, a Christian can bring reproach on the name of the Lord in a way that an unbeliever cannot do.

When you recall that society in that day did not have the kind of institutions we have today—pensions, Social Security, retirement homes, etc.—you can see how important family care really was. Of course, the presence of such institutions today does not relieve any father and family of its loving obligations to do whatever they can for their loved ones – whether it's their children or elderly father and mother. We must remember something: "Honor thy father and thy mother" is still in the Bible.

Exodus 20:12

“Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.”

Ephesians 6:1-3

“Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;) That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.”

Once again, if a relative and specifically a father (who earned the primary wages in Bible times) is not unwilling to help support his loved one then 1 Timothy 5:8 declares that he should be considered worse than an unbeliever. This is how important it is to care for family. Father’s we need to remember this. God holds this command very high.

Even the Lord Jesus made provision for His mother’s care as He hung on the cross. John 19:26–27 reveals: “When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son! Then saith he to the disciple (John), Behold thy mother! (John – she becomes your adopted mother – take care of her). And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own *home*.”

Someone said:

“The Christian who falls below the best heathen standard of family affection is more at fault than an unbeliever for not taking care of his family, since he has, what the heathen has not, the supreme example of love in Jesus Christ.”

Jesus loved and provided for his own mother when dying on the cross and we should follow this example.

A missionary friend of one preacher came home from the field to care for her sick and elderly parents. She was severely criticized by some of her associates since the Bible says “We should love God more than father and mother!” But in spite of what others said, she remained faithful to the end. Then she returned to the field for years of fruitful service, knowing she had obeyed God in honoring and caring for her mother. Friend, let us never forget, we love God by loving His people; and He has a special command

and concern for family members such as the elderly, the widows, and the orphans as this context speaks about.

1 Timothy 5:8

“But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.”

Dad’s, this is especially for you, since we are called upon to be the primary providers for our families. We need to take this to heart today.

One grown man said this of his father. “My dad passed away on Dec. 11, 1982. If he was alive today he would be almost 93 years old. He lived to be 72. Dad drove a truck for most of his life. He hauled livestock to and from the Joplin, MO, stockyards. He hauled hogs, cattle, and sheep. Dad didn’t make much money but we always had food on the table and clothes to wear.

“The old house we lived wasn’t much but we didn’t care. It was old, certainly nothing fancy and for a long time, we had no inside bathroom, BUT IT WAS HOME!

“Dad was a truck driver, not a carpenter. However, when it was decided we needed a bathroom and another room on the old house, DAD BUILT IT. It wasn’t perfect but it served the purpose.

“Dad always took my older brother Larry and me to the barber shop. Paid for our haircuts. And when money was tight, he got out the clippers and zip went our hair. AT LEAST, IT WAS COOL!

“We didn’t have a car when I was small. If we went somewhere we all piled in Dad’s old International Harvester truck...a two-seater and no sleeper! And all three kids were on mom’s lap!

DID I THINK MY DADDY PROVIDED FOR ME? Sure, I did. I honestly don’t remember missing out on anything. WHAT ABOUT YOUR DADDY? Did he provide for you? He probably did and you need to thank him for it if he is still alive. Or at least, give thanks to God that he did!”

We need to be thankful for our fathers in this specific way.

Yes, we should give thanks for godly fathers.

There are three areas of thanks.

## II. THERE IS THANKS FOR FAITHFUL INSTRUCTION

Ephesians 6:4

“And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture (training) and admonition (instruction) of the Lord.”

God wants us as father’s to be more of a COACH than just a CRITIC? Paul is teaching this: “Don’t keep on scolding and nagging your children, making them angry and resentful.” Dads, we are called to provide a proper nurturing environment where our kids can grow up to love and serve Christ. This means we must not be constantly discouraging our children.

I want you to notice the very first word of this verse: “Fathers.” I think Paul addresses just dads here because he knows that we especially need to hear this. He doesn’t say “parents” or “moms and dads.” He uses the specific word, “Fathers.” Most of us dads are sloppy in our fathering, not giving much thought to what we’re called to do. This verse calls us to some pretty high standards.

We need 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 a key player in the home because the ultimate responsibility for what a family becomes is the father’s.

There are several “Dad Duties” given in this passage.

### 1. Avoid resentment

The first command is negative we are told to “provoke not your children to wrath” This is a caution or warning designed to put us on guard against

stirring up anger in our kids either deliberately or through careless actions. 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.

The Greek word reflected in the English construction “stir up” means to rouse to anger or to enrage. The present tense of the verb indicates that we are to stop doing something that is common and continuous. This warning is calling us dads to avoid anything the kind of behavior that will cause children to become filled with anger.

Paul puts it this way in Colossians 3:21:

“Fathers, provoke not your children *to anger*, lest they be discouraged.

When we stir up our children to wrath our kids become bitter and bummed out. While there are times when kids become sinfully angry due to their own selfishness or immaturity, there are other times when dads are guilty of aggravating their kids. This is an important reminder for dads as they interact their children. Yes, children will be normally upset and frustrated when they are properly disciplined.

I see this in my grandson Spencer. He sometimes does not like to stop playing with his toys when it is time to eat. The Bible is not saying that children will never get angry over proper and right discipline. However, what the Bible teaches is that we should not unjustly irritate them, or provoke our children to anger.

A dad can do this when they pick on their children and call them “stupid” or “dumb,” or when they only tell them what is wrong with them, without any encouragement in life. Other ways that parents irritate children unjustly is through over-protection (smothering them in life), favoritism, pushing for achievement, or not allowing them to be children and have fun in life. Other ways to irritate them is through neglect, distrust, cruel words, unfair punishment, and a warning that you will withdraw your love if they do something wrong (“Daddy won’t love you any more if you do that”). Dad, don’t you every say this to your children! Even if you don’t mean it. Don’t every say it. We are to always to convey to our children that we love them unconditionally. Children will also be aroused to a place of anger, when they

feel that they are only a bother to their parents, or an intrusion into their life. Lack of love and the expression of grace by the parents, toward their children, can create resentful attitudes that are hard to break. When this happens, it is we dads who are sinning for provoking our children to sin – causing them to flare up in rage.

Remember that our children are commanded by God to honor us (Eph. 6:4). When we provoke them to wrath, we are causing them to sin against the Fifth Commandment. As a dad, we become guilty before God for disobeying the command of Ephesians 6:4 and also doubly guilty for causing our children to stumble.

I can think of some common ways that fathers can cause anger in their children:

#### a. Overprotection

You can anger your kids by fencing them in too much. For instance, I have to be careful so that my daughter did not grow up thinking I could ever trust her.

That reminds me of something I read recently called, “Ten Simple Rules for Dating My Daughter.” Here’s rule #1: If you pull into my driveway and honk, you’d better be delivering a package, because you’re sure not picking anything up. And rule #10: It is usually understood that in order for us to get to know each other, we should talk about sports, politics, and other issues of the day. Please do not do this. The only information I require from you is an indication of when you expect to have my daughter safely home, and the only word I need from you on this subject is “early”.

Laban, an Old Testament dad, was an overprotective and domineering parent. He dealt dishonestly with Jacob in order to get him to marry Leah, his oldest daughter, even though Jacob loved Rachel, the younger one. In exchange for a promise to work for Laban for 7 years, Jacob was allowed to marry Rachel as well. His controlling and perhaps conniving parenting cost his own daughters a healthy marriage.



Despite Laban's overprotective interfering, the daughters' assessment was that their father did not really care for them. Listen to what they say about their dad in Genesis 31:15: "Are we not counted of him strangers? for he hath sold us, and hath quite devoured also our money." In other words, they were saying: "Does he not regard us as foreigners? Not only has he sold us, but he has used up what was paid for us!" What their dad had thought of as an expression of parental protection came across as evidence that he did not really love them.

#### **b. Overindulgence**

The flip side of overprotection is overindulgence. Excessively permissive parents are as likely to stir their children's wrath as much as those who stifle them. Studies prove that children given too much freedom begin to feel insecure and unloved. Absolute freedom results in the insecurity of a child. We are now reaping the harvest of a whole generation of angry young people because we have been given too much freedom without the needed loving and secure protection children desperately need.

#### **c. Favoritism**

A third way to exasperate kids is by showing favoritism. Remember how Isaac favored Esau over Jacob, and Rebecca preferred Jacob over Esau. That family experienced terrible agony and two brothers became bitter rivals. If you want to destroy your child, just make him feel inferior to everyone else in the family.

#### **d. Unrealistic Goals**

Dads, we can provoke our kids to wrath by constantly pushing achievement and not encouraging them and comforting them when they do fail. 1 Thessalonians 2:11 (turn) shows us Paul's fatherly concern for the church when it states: "As ye know how we exhorted (giving them instruction) and comforted (console and encourage them) and charged (reprimand them) every one of you, as a father *doth* his children."

This is balancing fathering. Being a good dad is a balancing act! While it's true that we're called to exhort (instruct) and charge (reprimand) our children, we're also to comfort them. When we create unrealistic goals for our children we can create tension in their lives and find ourselves pushing them more than comforting and consoling them. As a dad, we need balanced child raising which involves instruction, encouragement and reprimanding our children for doing wrong. All are needed but don't do one at the expense of the other.

#### **e. Discouragement**

As Colossians 3:21 challenges us, we are not to provoke our children to anger or they will become discouraged. Dads, let's cut down on criticism and sarcasm in the home. Let's look for ways to celebrate and applaud. Let's give our approval spontaneously so our kids don't have to earn it or look for it in the arms of a boyfriend or girlfriend. Let's catch our kids doing things right instead of lashing out at them for what they do wrong.

Here's a simple rule of thumb:

"For every time you have to point out something that your kids do wrong, try to equalize it with a word of encouragement."

Someone said:

"A child learns what he lives. If he lives with criticism, he does not learn responsibility. He learns to condemn himself and to find fault with others. He learns to doubt his own judgment, to disparage his own ability, and to distrust others. And above all, he learns to live with the continual expectation of impending doom."

#### **f. Neglect**

Another way to cause anger to flare up in our children is by neglecting them. When we fail to show affection and act indifferently toward our kids, we can cause them to burn with anger. We can neglect our kids by never being home; or we can do it by being home but not being involved in their lives.

A man came home from work late again, tired and irritated. He found his 5-year-old son waiting for him at the door. "Daddy, may I ask you a question?" The dad replied: "Yeah, sure, what is it?" "Daddy, how much money do you make an hour?" The dad got mad and said, "That's none of your business! Why do you want to know?" The little boy said, "I just want to know. Please tell me, how much do you make an hour?" The dad, wanting to sit down and relax, said, "If you must know, I make \$20 an hour." The little boy sighed and bowed his head. Looking up, he asked, "Daddy, may I borrow \$10 please?"

The father flew off the handle, "If the only reason you wanted to know how much money I make is so that you can hit me up for some cash to buy some stupid toy, then you march yourself straight to your room and go to bed. You're so selfish. I work long, hard hours every day and don't have time for this."

The little boy quietly went to his room and shut the door. The dad sat down and started to get even madder about the nerve of his little boy. How dare he ask questions only to get some money. After an hour or so, the man had calmed down, and started to think that maybe he was a bit hard on his boy. Maybe his son really needed the money for something important. And so, the father went up to his boy's room and opened it, "Are you asleep, son?"

"No daddy. I'm awake," replied the boy. "I've been thinking, maybe I was too hard on you earlier. It's been a long day, and I took it out on you. Here's that 10 bucks you asked for." The little boy sat straight up, beaming. "Oh, thank you, daddy!" he exclaimed. Then, reaching under his pillow, he pulled out a wad of crumpled up bills. The dad, seeing that the boy already had some money, started to get angry again. The little boy slowly counted out his money, and then looked up at his dad. The dad, now ticked off, demanded to know what was going on, "Why did you want more money if you already had some?" The little boy replied, "Because I didn't have enough, but now I do. Daddy, I have \$20 now...and I'd like to buy an hour of your time."

#### g. Excessive Discipline

Too much punishment is another sure way to provoke a child to anger. Dads, don't ride your kids constantly. The father who throws his weight around

whether physically or verbally can be devastating to a child's spirit. Hebrews 12 says that God always disciplines us in love and so should we.

Well, we have seen the negative side of our dad duty: avoid producing anger and bitterness in our children's hearts. Now, let's look at three positive principles from the second half of Ephesians 6:4 as we consider the "Dad Duties" found in this verse.

Ephesians 6:4

"And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

## 2. Provide training

The word "but" (instead) shows a contrast between what we should not do and what we are to do. We are called upon to "bring them up" which means to rear them up to maturity. By the way, we as parents are to raise our children – not the day care or someone else. I'm just telling you like it is! It is our responsibility to raise our children – not the grandparent's responsibility while we go and do our thing. God has given us children and He wants us to take the full responsibility to raise them. Don't pawn them off on others.

Dad, we have a special role 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 and pointing them in the right direction. The word "nurture" means tutorage or training. Men, we are called to train our children in the ways of righteousness, holiness, and Christian character. We need CONSISTENT training. We are called upon to teach integrity, honesty, and faithfulness to our children. We need to show them how to serve the Lord and live for Him. Dad, this falls on us as the primary leader and example in the family.

I'm a dad but being a dad means that I'm also a tutor and teacher for my children. In fact, my most important job is to disciple my kids and to leave a legacy of faithfulness for them.

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.”

What strikes me here is that as a dad I am called to not just raise two children; I’m called to raise two adults (I am gradually to bring children to adulthood). I was not just a daddy of a daughter and son; I was charged to provide a nurturing environment so that my children would grow up to become young a woman and man of God.

According to a 50-year study of Christian and non-Christian families, most young adults who follow Christ either come from non-Christian homes or from homes where they grew up in love with Jesus because mom and dad were in love with Jesus. Their parent’s passion for Christ permeated their lives and passed through their pores to their kids. Sadly, very few believers came from homes where there was a kind of indifferent, apathetic commitment to Christ. This is sobering reality that suggests the chances are better for a child growing up in a non-Christian home to become a sold-out believer than for a child growing up in a spiritually lukewarm environment.

Dads, how are you doing on this one? Are you modeling authentic Christianity?

- Are you providing a nurturing atmosphere in your home in which your children can grow up to love and serve Christ?
- Are you looking for ways to teach and tutor your kids or are you leaving this only for mom to handle?

One of the best ways to parent your children is to live authentically yourself.

As someone has said:

“One way to correct your children is to correct the example you’re setting for them.”

There are several “Dad Duties” given in this passage.

### 3. Discipline faithfully

Ephesians 6:4 once again states:

“And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up (rear them to maturity) in the nurture (training) and admonition (discipline) of the Lord.”

The next thing Paul challenges us to do as dads is to provide discipline for our children. This word is translated “admonition” in our Bible carries with it the idea of a rebuke or a warning and points here in this context to the necessity of discipline. Literally, it means to “place before the mind – calling to one’s attention” by bringing necessary rebuke and discipline into the lives of our children. “Son, you can’t do that, it’s wrong to do this.” Men, it’s not wrong to say something is wrong when your child is conducting himself in a manner that is unbecoming. You don’t leave kids follow their sin nature. You must discipline them. And admonishing them must be a consistent practice within the home since children are not born to be little angels. Grandma might come to visit and say, “O Jonny is such a little angel” but dad and mom know different.

Proverbs 13:24

“He (a dad) that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes (many times).”

In other words, if you refuse to discipline your children, it proves you don’t love them as you should in a Biblical fashion; if you love your children, you will be prompt to discipline them. Dad, you may hesitate to discipline because you think that you’re being unkind to your kids. Actually, when you don’t discipline, you’re being more than unkind – you’re not loving them as God wants to express love to them. If we love our kids, then we must exhort them which involves rebuke and discipline.

Listen carefully. I’m not advocating that you beat your kids. What I am saying is this: children need to be disciplined by their dads. Our kids not only need correction, they want it. If we don’t give discipline to your children, we’re

failing them and may cause them to fall away from the truth. Hebrews 12:11 speaks of God's loving discipline in our lives by showing how beneficial it really is:

Hebrews 12:11 states:

“Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.”

It's important to understand about discipline and punishment. Discipline involves several matters. It involves punishment and inflicts a penalty on a child which focuses on their past actions. But the purpose of discipline is also designed to promote growth in our child by looking to the future. Dads, our kids are looking for us to train them and love them by properly admonishing or disciplining them – administering the necessary rebuke that a child needs to help mold and make them into a better person for the future.

This means we must apply the board of education to the seat of learning!

Proverbs 19:18 gives this wise counsel:

“Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying.”

Spanking our children in a proper manner is not abusing our children. We abuse our children by not disciplining them. Dad, 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.

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. Furthermore, it is not enough to teach them to do good things; our job is to teach our children how to develop a lifestyle of servanthood. Dads, you're the leader. Lead on! Your kids are waiting for you to step up to the plate!

Steve Farrar, author of the book, *Standing Tall*, uses a strategic metaphor for a dad that is very helpful: “A godly father is the unseen spiritual submarine

who lurks below the surface of every activity of his child's life. A man who has put on the full armor of God and with that armor, goes to warfare on his knees for his children, is a force to be reckoned with...we cannot be with our children 24 hours a day...through our prayers we have the ability to affect situations even when we are not physically present. You may be undetected but that does not mean you are ineffective." (Page 199)

Let's be honest about something. We have a problem, don't we? My trouble, more often than not, is that I'm not engaged as a dad. We need to reaffirm this priority in our hearts and lives. We need to be engaged with the lives of our children.

Malachi 4:6 says this of John the Baptist's arrival:

"And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse."

Friend, what we need is to have a heart (a fresh burden) for our children. We need a fresh burden to see them grow up and become strong Christians and warriors for Jesus Christ. If my heart is fully focused on my kids, then I will do a pretty good job of fathering.

Dads, if you sense that your heart is not really into parenting, and you sense that your kids don't have much to do with you, then make Malachi 4:6 your personal prayer. Ask God to turn your heart to your children and ask Him to turn their hearts to you. He will be glad to answer a prayer like this.

Here is the sad confession of one father. "I took my children to school but not to church. I taught them to drink but not of the living water. I enrolled them in Little League but not Sunday School. I showed them how to fish but not to be fisher of men. I made the Lord's Day a holiday, rather than a holy day. I taught them the church was full of hypocrites and made the greater hypocrite of them and me. I gave them a color TV but provided no Bible. I handed them the keys to the car but did not give to them the keys to living the Christian life. I taught them how to make a living but failed to bring them to Christ who alone can make a life."



Dads, before you get too discouraged by your own failures and inconsistency, let me remind you of 3 things.

1. There are no perfect fathers, except our Heavenly Father.
2. We can all be better dads if we will work at it.
3. We do not father alone. That's why we need to pray daily for our kids.

Someone wrote:

"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."

We should give thanks for godly fathers.

### III. THANKS FOR GODLY ILLUSTRATION

By this, I mean a godly illustration for life. Or a godly example for life. Paul said something that every father should say today.

In 1 Corinthians 11:1 he records:

"Be ye followers of me, even as I also *am* of Christ."

Please notice that Paul didn't say, "Do everything I do." He said, "Do everything I do which is Christlike." In other words, follow the example of Christ. Paul wasn't perfect and neither are we. Dad, there are some things that I have done in life that I do not want my children to do. I'm sorry when I have given them a bad example. But I have also done some good things, some godly things, some Christlike things, which I hope they will copy from my life. Remember that it's not always what our children are *taught* which is most important but what they *caught* (how they saw us living). Of course, one of the most important things that our children need to see in our lives is Christlikeness.

One father sold a car to another man. His boy was by his side and observed what happened after the sale. The fellow buying the car said that we don't have to reveal the actual price of the item to the notary so he can save some sales tax on the sale of the car. The boy remembered clearly what his father said to the dishonest man: "I don't do business like this. It will be the full price or you don't get the sale." The son never forgot this honest transaction of his father and it left a spiritual imprint upon his life that would last a lifetime. This reminds me of a poem I heard many years ago.

"A careful man I ought to be,  
A little fellow follows me.  
I do not dare to go astray  
For fear he'll go the selfsame way.  
I cannot once escape his eyes,  
What e're he sees me do he tries.  
Like me he says he's going to be –  
The little chap that follows me.  
I must remember as I go,  
Thru summer's sun and winter's snow  
I'm building for the years to be –  
That little chap who follows me."

One man gave this testimony of his father, "Once when I was a teenager, my father and I were standing in line to buy tickets for the circus. Finally, there was only one family between us and the ticket counter. This family made a big impression on me. There were 8 children, all probably under the age of 12. You could tell they didn't have a lot of money. Their clothes were not expensive, but they were clean.

"The children were well-behaved, all of them standing in line, two-by-two behind their parents, holding hands. They were excitedly jabbering about the clowns, elephants, and other acts they would see that night. One could sense they had never been to a circus before. It promised to be a highlight of their young lives. The father and mother were at the head of the pack standing proud as could be.

“The mother was holding her husband’s hand, looking up at him as if to say, ‘You’re my knight in shining armor.’ He was smiling and basking in pride, looking at her.

"The ticket lady asked the father how many tickets he wanted. He proudly said, 'Please, let me buy 8 children’s tickets and two adult tickets so I can take my family to the circus.' THE TICKET LADY QUOTED THE PRICE. The man’s wife let go of his hand, her head dropped and the man’s lip began to quiver. The father leaned a little closer and asked, 'HOW MUCH DID YOU SAY?' The ticket lady again quoted the price.

"The man didn’t have enough money. How was he supposed to turn and tell his 8 kids that he didn’t have enough money to take them to the circus? Seeing what was going on, my dad put his hand in his pocket, pulled out a \$20 bill and dropped it on the ground. (And we were not wealthy in any sense of the word!) My father reached down, picked up the bill, tapped the man on the shoulder and said, 'EXCUSE ME, SIR, I BELIEVE THIS FELL OUT OF YOUR POCKET.'

"The man knew what was going on. He wasn’t begging for a handout but certainly appreciated the help in a desperate, heartbreaking, embarrassing situation. He looked straight into my dad’s eye, took my dad’s hand in both of his, squeezed tightly onto the \$20 bill, and with quivering lips and a tear streaming down his cheek, replied, 'THANK YOU, THANK YOU. THIS REALLY MEANS A LOT TO ME AND MY FAMILY.'"

Brethren, the man telling the story about his father concludes with these words: "My father and I went back to our car that night and drove home without any money and without going to the circus. But we didn’t go without that night. Our hearts were blessed beyond measure!"

What a godly illustration or example of Christ this father was to his boy. This is because Christ taught that it is more blessed to give than to receive (Acts 20:35). His Son never forgot this example. Thank God for all fathers who have been godly illustrations, or godly examples to follow!

Brothers and sisters, we need to be thankful for godly fathers. They are fathers who really tried to do what is right even though they were not perfect. We should give thanks for their material provision, faithful instruction, and godly illustration. In doing this, we will be truly honoring our fathers.