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Father's Day
By Rev. Jerry Rea

Dad Dilemmas

Obviously to father is different than being one. Fathering is more than an act of nature. What's the difference? Dogs may father puppies, but seem to have very little sense of obligation after they are born. In the world of nature, "fathering" happens every day. Surely that's not what we celebrate on Sunday. All of us had a father in the one sense, but many of us did not have a dad in the highest sense.

When we speak here of "fathering" we're lifting our eyes high. It is truly a high call to be a dad. It seems that this higher call is missed by most. Some of us believe that after we've made a living, and built a home (or a house) we've completed the job. Sometimes that's because of the fathering we experienced ourselves. If you've not had a good dad, you really may not have any idea what one might look like. There are two problems with that. On the one hand, you live looking for an unrealistic dad. You know what I mean. I mean you fantasize about some unearthly and unrealistic perception of a perfect person who meets your every need and never fails. The other problem is that you never expect anything because you've never had anything. Both extremes miss the mark.

There's an extreme need nowadays for good, solid, godly dads. Granted that's hard to accomplish when you don't have any or many good role models to pattern after. To make Jesus our role model is wonderful, but you do remember that He was perfect don't you? He had a Father, but God the Father is hard to wrap our minds around, let alone use as a day to day pattern. All our earthly models have feet of clay. All the Biblical models are fraught with deficiencies. Moses was a great man, but I'm not sure he was such a great dad. Judging by his children, Jacob must have had a few "glitches" in his abilities when it comes to being a dad. We are not even sure Paul was married, much less a father. When I think of Hollywood dads, I get depressed. "Father Knows Best" was good, but more of a fantasy. The days of Dick and Jane are gone, and even in their own day failed miserably to make life real.

If you're a dad, I'd like to suggest a pattern. Use the Biblical dads to see life in the real world. Use some of the examples as what "not to do." And some to show you what you ought to do. David failed his family and children in example, and in attentiveness. He succeeded as a king, but there was a huge hole in his parenting. On the other hand, Joseph (the earthly dad of Jesus) was quiet and steady and godly in his approach. We all assume he died early but while he was here, he took care of Mary, and got Jesus to church (Temple) regularly. He protected his family by fleeing to Egypt to avoid Herod. He stood up for his wife in not divorcing her. He was not perfect, but he was good. His example is related in Matthew 2.

The power of a good father is immeasurable. I wonder often if dads were not so "absentee" what difference it would make in our culture. Would our prisons be less full? Would our children be more self-confident if they did not so often feel abandoned? Would our wives be less stressed if dad were more helpful and available? For that matter would there be less divorce if dads were more attentive?

This Father's Day I'm praying for more dads to listen to God's voice and answer God's call... to Fatherhood. To be "just a dad" is such an awesome calling.

I'm praying for you
Jerry Rea