

In Defense of Traditional Fatherhood

We live in an age where almost every value and tradition is either turned upside down or is in the process of being turned upside down. We are about 60 years into a cultural and moral revolution which has resulted in the mainstreaming of promiscuity, abortion, divorce, homosexuality, same-sex marriage, and transgenderism. All of these used to be counter-cultural. These were odd and unusual ways of living. The majority of people in the culture were not in favor of such things. These behaviors were rightfully in the closet, out of public view, and not generally tolerated. The majority upheld and followed a tradition that largely reflected Judeo-Christian values.

Alas, all of that has changed; traditional moral values are far less common today than they were 60 years ago. And that, of course, affects things like fatherhood.

Today is Father's Day, so I thought it would be appropriate to say a few words in defense of the traditional understanding of fatherhood. That biblical tradition is under attack from almost every sector of society. It's important that we uphold and defend the biblical, traditional view of fatherhood.

A couple of years ago, Sir James Munby, President of the Family Division of England's High Court of Justice, said that society should "welcome and applaud" the collapse of the traditional family. Munby said, "In contemporary Britain the family takes an almost infinite variety of forms. Many marry according to the rites of non-Christian faiths. People live together as couples, married or not, and with partners who may not always be of the other sex. Children live in households where their parents may be married or unmarried. They may be brought up by a single parent, by two parents or even by three parents. Their parents may or may not be their natural parents. They may be children of parents with very different religious, ethnic or national backgrounds, [and they] may be the children of polygamous marriages. ... This, I stress, is not merely the reality; it is, I believe, a reality which we should welcome and applaud" ("England's Top Family Judge," *Breitbart.com*, Jun. 3, 2018).¹

¹ Quoted by David Cloud, *Friday Church News Notes*, June 8, 2018 - Volume 19, Issue 23.

I think Sir James is off his rocker; he's batty, loony, a nutter. He is precisely wrong about his understanding of the family. The very things that he welcomes and applauds are responsible for the breakup of the traditional family and the implosion of western culture. The farther we have strayed from traditional family structures, the worse things have become for families and for the culture in general.

I've mentioned "tradition" a few times now, and the tradition that I'm speaking about is the common way western culture has understood fatherhood for many centuries. That understanding is based on a biblical worldview. In western societies, biblical values largely set the tradition for families and for fatherhood. But after 60 years of moral revolution, that tradition is greatly weakened and diminished. I would guess that only a minority of the US population would now endorse a traditional, biblical viewpoint of fatherhood.

Sadly, many in our world today have no understanding of biblical fatherhood, no models of biblical fatherhood to follow, and no desire to adopt a biblical model of fatherhood. Our cultural institutions—government, education, athletics, entertainment, even many churches—have all undercut and weakened the traditional view of fatherhood. Today, there is little agreement in our society about what fatherhood is all about. I think that is a great shame and a leading contributor to many of the problems we see in society today.

Christians are obligated to endorse and apply a biblical viewpoint of fatherhood. We do not have to follow the direction our culture wants us to go. We must not adopt a viewpoint that contradicts what the Bible says on this topic. God designed fatherhood, and Christians must follow God's good design.

What is the traditional, biblical viewpoint on fatherhood?

I. Only men can be fathers.

Genesis 5:1–3 (NKJV)

¹ ... *In the day that God created man, He made him in the likeness of God.*

²*He created them male and female, and blessed them and called them Mankind in the day they were created.*

³*And Adam ... begot a son in his own likeness, after his image, and named him Seth.*

A. Only males can be fathers.

1. This obviously goes without saying; physically speaking, only men can be fathers. But we live in a confused, corrupt world today. Our culture can't answer the question, "What is a woman?" Likewise, our culture can't answer the question, "What is a man" or "What is a father?"
2. It's quite rare, but some confused, deluded women want to identify as men or as fathers. But they are not men and they can't be fathers. It's impossible for a woman to be a father. You can pretend to be a man, but you cannot possibly be a father if you are a woman. Only males can be fathers. It's a great shame that we even have to affirm that obvious fact.

B. Only mature males should be fathers.

1. Immature males do not make good fathers. It's in the best interests of all involved that males do not become fathers until they are prepared to take on all the responsibilities of fatherhood, including caring for and providing for a wife and children.
2. Sadly, in our culture today, millions of young men who are not ready to fulfill the role of father become fathers. They don't provide for their children; they merely help produce them. Single mothers are often left alone to raise the children of these irresponsible men. And our culture promotes this activity and encourages it.

One of the reasons there are so many single mothers is that young men father children without intending to take on the role of father. And even if they are mature men, they refuse to take responsibility for their children.

And women are equally guilty for allowing that to happen. They allow these irresponsible men to take advantage of them. Of course, many women these days get abortions to get rid of the children they don't want. That's also a great shame and a result of the moral revolution.

3. The traditional, biblical model demands that only mature men should take on the role of father. In other words, you have to wait until you can support a wife and a child before you become a father.
4. Families are more likely to be secure and stable if males wait to become fathers until they are ready to take on that responsibility.

Trans: The traditional model of fatherhood requires that only mature men—those who can provide for a wife and children—should be fathers. Which leads to...

- II. Only married men should be fathers. I.e., get married before you become a father.

Genesis 2:23–24 (NKJV)

23And Adam said: "This is now bone of my bones And flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, Because she was taken out of Man."

24Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and cleave unto his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

- A. God's design for men and women is that they would get married. Fatherhood should happen only in the context of marriage. Only after you "leave and cleave" should you consider fatherhood.
- B. Today in the US, about 40% of children are born to parents who are not married. Many children are raised in a household where the father is absent. This is especially true in ethnic minority households. In some black communities, about 75% of children have no father at home.
- C. The biblical, traditional model demands that a man leaves his mother and father and cleaves unto his wife. Only that marriage partnership is the proper context for having children. All children should be born into homes that have a married mother and father who cooperate to raise the children. Any other arrangement is less than ideal.

Quote: A child's most important parental figure is the same-sex parent because children model themselves after them. For young men, having that father figure in their lives provides a blueprint for manhood and a source of protection from the outside world.

... your father is supposed to be your source of security, a builder of confidence and a teacher for how to regulate your emotions in stressful situations. Most crucial, the father is the son's purpose compass as he helps guide him throughout the trials of adolescence towards purposeful adulthood.²

Without a father in the home, fulfilling his role as father, the children will suffer. Male children especially seem to do much better with the presence of the father in the household. Boys do not do so well without a father at home.

Trans: The traditional model of fatherhood demands that men be married before they become fathers. It's what God requires, and it works best that way.

III. Fathers are the heads of their homes.

Joshua 24:15 (NKJV)... *as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.*

- A. "Patriarchy" is almost a dirty word these days. The idea that a man should be the head of anything is heresy in our modern world. Everyone is supposed to be equal in all things, including in authority. Men should never impose their rule over the home, according to modern culture.
- B. The Bible indicates quite clearly that the father/husband is the head of the home. He is responsible for everything that goes on in his household. He's the authority in the home under the authority of Christ.
- C. Fathers set the standards in the home and demand that things done in the home are done properly. The father is not supposed to be a tyrant or a dictator, and he's certainly not allowed to be abusive. But he should have the final authority in the home.
- D. Children are obligated to honor their fathers and mothers. Fathers must demand that their children obey and that they show respect to their parents.

² Adam Coleman, "We overlook a significant factor in mass shootings: fatherlessness." New York Post, May 27, 2022. Nypost.com.

- E. In today's world, children often have more authority than their parents. The parents bend over backwards to satisfy the demands of the children. Parents have abdicated their authority, and the children take over. The children rule the roost. Parents ask children for permission. Everything revolves around the children; they set the agenda in many homes.
- F. In the traditional, biblical family, the father retains the authority in the home. The wife/mother submits to his authority and cooperates with the father in running the household. The children submit to their parents. If the children are disobedient or dishonorable, there will be swift and appropriate consequences.

Trans: The traditional viewpoint recognizes the authority of the father over his own home.

IV. Fathers are responsible for their children.

- A. Fathers are responsible to love and protect their children.

Psalm 103:13 *As a father pities his children, So the LORD pities those who fear Him.*

חַסֵּד – to have love or compassion; often translated as “mercy.”

Fathers need to demonstrate compassion, mercy, and sympathy toward their children. Fathers can retain their authority, and still be kind, compassionate, and caring.

Fathers show love by protecting their children. Like never before, fathers and mothers need to protect their children from the immoral corruption of this world. You want to preserve the innocence of your children; you don't want to expose them to the filth and vile pollution of our world today.

We are somewhat sheltered here in this small community in northern Wisconsin, but in many parts of the country, parents allow their little children to be exposed to all manner of evil, disgusting images and behaviors.

E.g., Drag queen story hour, LGBT pride parades, trans-gender discussions, gender identity questions—little children are being exposed to all of this filth and corruption today. And much of it is on media—e.g., Disney now promotes and encourages the LGBT agenda.

This corrupt, evil world wants to capture your children. It wants to indoctrinate them and get them to adopt its anti-Christian worldview. We must fight against that and prevent it from happening.

More than ever before, parents must shield their kids from this world's corruption and pollution. The least we can do is keep our children innocent while they are very young. We can hold off the filth and corruption of this world as long as possible. At some point, our children will be exposed to some of the sinfulness of the culture. But that should not be until they are a bit older and ready to understand such things.

This fatherly responsibility to protect and shelter your children is a large and important one; don't neglect it.

B. Fathers ought to provide for their children.

1 Timothy 5:8 *if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.*

1. Fathers ought to provide physically.

Fathers are responsible to provide food, clothing, and shelter for their families—the basic necessities of life.

Most fathers want to provide more than the basics.

Quote: The physical wellbeing of children largely depends on their fathers. Research shows that the likelihood of teen pregnancy, drug use, dropping out of school, and many other social problems grows dramatically when the father is absent from the home.³

³ From a statement in "Fatherhood and the Heart of God," *Church Connection* June 2022. Wisconsin Family Council.

2. Fathers ought to provide spiritually.

Ephesians 6:4 *And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.*

The spiritual leader of the family ought to be the father. It's your job to set the spiritual tone in your household. It's your job to bring your family to church and to make sure your family is walking in the ways of the Lord. The father must provide spiritual leadership for his household.

As Joshua said, "As for me and my house,"

And of course, that begins with seeking their salvation.

- C. Fathers are responsible to discipline their children.

Proverbs 3:11–12 *My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, Nor detest His correction; For whom the LORD loves He corrects, Just as a father the son in whom he delights.*

Proverbs 13:24 *He who spares his rod hates his son, But he who loves him disciplines him promptly.*

Child discipline is the responsibility of fathers. However, the Bible also warns fathers against provoking their children.

Colossians 3:21 *Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.* (cf. Ephesians 6:4a)

1. In Greek, the word "provoke" means "to rouse to anger, exasperate, to enrage." Paul is warning fathers against goading their children into a state of perpetual resentment.
2. How could a father provoke his children to wrath? Here is a list of potential ways: *By unjust demands, unreasonable severity, and constant criticism (Kent, p. 109). By fault-finding, being neglectful and inconsistent (Hughes, p. 200). Through over-protection, showing favoritism, discouragement, neglect, unfair comparison, and physical or verbal abuse (Hendriksen, pp. 261-262).*

Discipline should not “provoke your children to wrath,” but it should be uncomfortable enough to get your child’s attention and persuade him to change his ways.

And of course the punishment has to fit the crime. When children are willfully rebellious and stubbornly disobedient, then that requires strict discipline. The consequences in such cases should be significant. But when they are just being childish and immature, we should not over-react.

D. Fathers are responsible to instruct their children.

Psalm 78:4–7 We will [tell] the generation to come the praises of the LORD, And His strength and His wonderful works that He has done. ... He commanded our fathers, That they should make them known to their children; 6That the generation to come might know them, The children who would be born, That they may arise and declare them to their children, 7That they may set their hope in God, And not forget the works of God, But keep His commandments.

Maybe you can’t exegete the Bible and develop in-depth theological studies for your family devotions. But at least you can read Bible stories to your kids. You can tell them what the Bible says.

Deuteronomy 6:6–7 these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. 7You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.

Fathers should *also* instruct their children in the practical matters of life. This is especially true for boys. Boys need to learn about life from their fathers. Fathers should exemplify how to be a man and how to do manly things—e.g., how to maintain a home and a car, how to use tools and build things, how to handle money, how to handle fire arms, drive trucks and motorcycles. A boy needs to learn how to be a man from his father.

And a girl needs to see what a man should be from her father. She should want to marry a man like her dad. The father should set the example for his daughters of what a man should be.

In our confused, corrupt, chaotic world, Christians must support, uphold, and defend the biblical, traditional view of fatherhood. The traditional view stipulates that...

- ✓ Fathers are men, not women pretending to be men.
- ✓ Fathers ought to be mature men, those who can fulfill the responsibilities of fatherhood.
- ✓ Fathers must be married. It's both irresponsible and immoral to enter into fatherhood without first being married.
- ✓ Fathers must retain the authority in their homes. They are not dictators or tyrants, but they must be the heads of their homes.
- ✓ Fathers must fulfill their responsibilities to their children. They must provide for them physically and spiritually. They must discipline their children without provoking them to wrath. And they must instruct their children in the ways of the Lord and in the ways of the world.

These are traditional, biblical values, and we must not give them up easily or without a fight. Retaining these traditional values is becoming increasingly difficult in a world that rejects them. Most of the culture today is telling us to reject these values. But we must not reject them; instead, we must adopt them, affirm them, and teach them to the next generation.