

## 1 Tim 4:12 Be an Example

Today is Father's Day, so congratulations to all dads.

Fathers have many responsibilities, and perhaps one of the most important of them is to set a good example for their children.

We've probably all heard the old expression, "More is caught and is taught." If a father is a bad example of what a Christian should be, then the children's understanding of the Christian faith will be wrong. If the father sets a good example, then it's likely—although not guaranteed—that the children will desire to follow the faith of their father.

In the NT, we find many exhortations for us to follow the faith of our leaders. Here are a few examples:

1 Corinthians 11:1 *Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.*

Eph 5:1 *Therefore be imitators of God as dear children.*

1Th 1:6-7 *you became followers of us and of the Lord... you became examples to all in Macedonia and Achaia who believe.*

2Th 3:9 *[we] make ourselves an example ... you should follow us.*

Heb 6:12 *imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.*

1Pe 5:3 *[be] examples to the flock*

These and other passages show us how important it is to be a good example for others to follow.

Perhaps there is no more important relationship in which to set a good example than fatherhood. Children need a good example to follow, and fathers have an enormous influence over their children. Setting a good example is important for both parents, but it's particularly important for fathers. As the leaders of their households, fathers naturally set the example in many things for their children. So it's critically important that fathers strive to the best of their ability to set a good example for their children. We want to be able to say to our children, "Follow me as I follow Christ."

1 Timothy 4:12 *Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.*

Timothy was a young pastor, and it seems as if some of the older people in his church were not taking him seriously. They were not following his leadership. Paul advises him to lead the church by setting an example for them, and then he lists various categories of life in which he should set an example.

This passage originally pertained to a pastor setting an example for his church, but I think we can apply the same principles to a father setting an example for his children. Like a pastor should strive to set an example for his church, so a father should strive to set a good example for his children.

Following this passage, let's consider how fathers can set an example in six areas of life:

I. Fathers should set an example "in word."

- A. The words we use are very important. Jesus said that our words reflect our hearts; what's inside comes out in our words.

*Matthew 12:34–37 ... out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. 35 A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things. 36 But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. 37 For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.*

- B. Paul tells us to "speak the truth in love" (Eph 4:15). We must use words that build up/edify, not cut down.

*Ephesians 4:29 Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.*

- C. The Bible says a lot about our speech, so we need to be careful to set a good example in how we speak and the kind of language we use around our kids.

Usually, the kids pick up the conversation style of the parents. If the parents use or allow gutter language or profane language in the home, the kids will talk that way too.

**Illus.:** Sometimes I hear little children using very foul, profane language. Where do you suppose they pick that up? Probably at home. Parents sometimes laugh when their kids use profanity.

Hopefully, the use of profane and vulgar language within our homes is not something we tolerate. I would hope that there would be an absolute ban on such words in our homes.

We should also be careful about language that is critical of others or demeaning of others. My dad did not use foul language, but he was at times rather harsh in his language. I recall he called me “dummy” several times. A father should not call his children demeaning, humiliating names.

Men are often rather harsh and demeaning in their language, especially toward their children when they are annoying or disappointing. Verbal rebuke is often necessary, but we should not be guilty of using overly-harsh, demeaning, humiliating language with our children. We should try to build up and encourage as much as we can. We can be strict disciplinarians without violating biblical norms for our language. We need to be especially careful in the words we use.

**Trans:** Fathers should seek to set an example of godly speech in their homes. Remember that your children will probably use the same kind of speech patterns you use. Use language that builds up, not that tears down.

- II. Fathers should set an example “in conduct” (the KJV’s “conversation” means “behavior, manner of life.”)
  - A. Children need to see their fathers behaving like Christians, especially at home. Christian fathers should model the kind of behavior that they want to instill in their children.
  - B. How are Christians supposed to behave? The Bible says a lot about Christian behavior, but a good summary of Christian behavior is found in the list of the fruit of the spirit.

*Galatians 5:22–23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.*

- C. There are many other lists of proper behaviors in the Bible, but if we would focus on this list and make sure our behavior follows these principles, we would be setting a very good example for our children.
- D. When it comes to proper behavior, fathers must both set the example and enforce that example. Your children should have no confusion as to what proper behavior looks like. You teach it clearly and you exemplify it consistently. If the kids want to know how to behave, they simply follow the example of their parents.
- E. It's easy to say one thing and do another. It's easy to require something of our children that we don't do ourselves. We call that hypocrisy.

Children are very sensitive to hypocrisy. If they sense that you are saying one thing and living differently, they'll soon realize that you are not sincere. If you demand of them what you are unwilling to do yourself, you are little more than a hypocrite.

**Trans:** Fathers must strive to set an example for their children in their behavior, their conduct, their manner of life. Fathers must live the way they want their children to live.

### III. Fathers should set an example "in love" (KJV "charity")

- A. "Love" in this case is not romantic or sentimental feelings. Love is doing what is best for the other person.

Someone defined Christian love as "the settled purpose of will involving the whole person in seeking the well-being of others" (*Integrative Theology*). I.e., love is doing what is best for someone else.

Fathers seek the well-being of their children. We have a "settled purpose" of doing what is in the best interests of our children. We want to see our children flourish and succeed, and we do what we can to make that happen.

- B. How do fathers demonstrate that love for their children? You fulfill your biblical expectations, such as ...
  1. Provide for and protect your children.

1Ti 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.*

2. Discipline your children.

Hebrews 12:6–8 ... *whom the LORD loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives.” 7 If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? 8 But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons.*

Discipline is an expression of love. If you don't love your kids, you let them run wild. If you love them, you discipline them—you warn them, rebuke them, and physically discipline them. You tell them what to do, and if they fail or refuse, you discipline them.

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

3. Raise your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

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

4. Show appropriate affection for your children. Show love by being loving.

a) Children need to feel affection from their father. I think this is particularly true of girls. Girls need their father's affection.

Song—"I want to marry daddy when I grow up" – that ought to be the attitude that our daughters have—they want someone like their dad.

b) Boys need that love and affection too. Boys especially need their fathers to show them how to be a man, how to fulfill their biblical responsibilities.

- c) Lack of a father in the home is one of the major problems in society today. Many fathers fail to fulfill their obligations.
- d) By the way, love is not letting your children do whatever they want to do. Modern parents especially seem to think that love means that they give their children everything they want. Love means affirming whatever their children think. Love means letting their children set the agenda. Love means making their children the center of their lives. Those ideas are not biblical forms of love.
- e) Love is doing what is best for your children. Christian parents know what is best, and it is best for the children to obey their parents. You have to instill that idea in your kids.
- f) I hate to have to mention it, but it's not best for anyone's children to allow a child to select its gender. It's not loving to allow "gender affirming healthcare" for a confused child. Fathers who allow that kind of thing are not showing love; they are doing just the opposite.
- g) The most loving thing to do for a confused child is to tell the child that you know what is best for him/her. As the child's father, you must do what is in the child's best interests, which would include affirming the child in his/her biological sex.
- h) Fathers have the obligation to tell their children what to do, what is best. Don't assume that children know what is good or best for them.

**Trans:** Fathers should seek to set a loving and affectionate tone within their homes. Christian love requires that we do what is best for our children.

IV. Fathers should set an example "in spirit."

- A. I believe that the "spirit" mentioned here describes the inner enthusiasm we have for the things of God. Set a good example in your good attitude about the things of God. I.e., Bible reading, prayer, church attendance.

- B. Fathers should show interest and leadership in spiritual things. They should insist that the family has devotions. Fathers should be leading in prayer. Fathers must insure that their children attend church and SS and youth group activities.
- C. If the father does not make serving God a priority, then the children won't see it as important.

**Trans:** Fathers must be very careful about their attitudes and seek to set a good example in their enthusiasm for the things of God.

V. Fathers should set an example "in faith."

- A. My understanding of this is that faithfulness is the idea. I.e., being trustworthy, reliable, loyal, committed to the things of God.
- B. A mark of genuine salvation is faithfulness—holding on to the faith and continuing to follow Jesus. We call this perseverance—we continue on in faith and in good works no matter what trials of life we may be experiencing.
- C. Christian fathers must show that they trust God and are faithful to Him, even when doing so is hard.
- D. It's sad that in many homes, the mother is the primary spiritual leader. The father may be the head of the household in other ways, but when it comes to setting an example of faith, the father bows out. The father either has no faith, is rather weak in faith, or neglects the faith. He leaves all that spiritual stuff to his wife.

If the father is not the spiritual leader, then the mother has to do that job. But it would be best if the father takes the lead spiritually in the household.

- E. Christian fathers are obligated set the example of faithfulness for their households and especially for their children.

*Abraham -- Genesis 18:19 For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the LORD, to do righteousness and justice, that the LORD may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him.*

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

**Trans:** The primary example for the children's faith is the faith of their father. Make sure that your children can follow your example of faithfulness.

- VI. Fathers should set an example "in purity" – i.e., moral purity
- A. Our society is becoming less pure all the time. We are surrounded by immoral people doing immoral things. And it's getting worse all the time. E.g., June as pride month for the LGBT agenda
  - B. The Bible tells us to keep ourselves pure in mind and body. Fathers must set the example in moral purity in their homes. Moral purity is perhaps one of the most important virtues to exemplify.  

Eph 5:3 *But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints*

Fathers should do everything possible to shield their children from the moral filth and perversion so common in our world today.
  - C. It's very sad that fathers often do not lead a morally pure life.
    - 1. Some fathers have multiple children from multiple women, none of whom they marry. In some minority communities, 75% of the mothers are unmarried.
    - 2. Many fathers today are addicted to pornography, and that creates all kinds of problems within the home.
    - 3. It's sad that so many fathers think so little of moral purity these days.
  - D. Christian fathers must be exemplary in moral purity. They must conduct themselves with high moral standards, and they must insist that everyone in the household follows high moral standards.
  - E. Christian fathers must be the moral gate-keepers of the home. They should set the standards for entertainment, media, music, recreation, etc. They must make sure that the immoral things of our culture/society remains outside and does not infiltrate the family.



- F. Christian fathers must set a moral example at home and demand that the children behave themselves according to biblical morality. Fathers need to teach high moral standards to their children and live out those standards themselves.

One of the most important things a father does for his children is to set an example for them. Fathers should seek to live exemplary lives in these areas—in language, in conduct, in love, in attitude, in faithfulness, and in moral purity. If these things are important to the fathers, they will likely be important to their children.

In spite of a father's best efforts, some children will refuse to follow his good example. You can't control that, especially once your children grow up and leave the home. But you can control whether you set a good example for them. At least, if you strive to set a good example for them, they can never condemn you for being a bad example or being a hypocrite. They can't blame you for their bad choices if you've set a good example for them.

Our hope and trust is that, if we set a good example for our children, they will follow that example for themselves. And so with God's help and relying on his grace, Christian fathers must strive to set that good example for their children.

Today is Father's Day, and if your dad is a good example, you should be thankful. Many children do not even have a father in the household, and many children do not have a father who sets a good example. So if you have a good one, you should be glad.

Perhaps the best thing Christian fathers can do for their children is to live out the principle of 1 Corinthians 11:1 *Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.* Every father should have that as his goal.