

Father's Day 2026 – Biblical Responsibilities "As a father"

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

Fatherhood is a role that you step into when your wife has a child. Fathers have many biblical responsibilities toward their children. One of the great tragedies of our modern age is that many fathers neglect their children in various ways.

Christian fathers must not neglect their children. We must fulfill our biblical roles as fathers.

The Bible uses the phrase "as a father" three times, and in each case, the authors tell us what fathers do or are supposed to do for their children. So I'd like to look at each of these three verses and see what they have to tell us about the biblical responsibilities of fathers. I invite you to turn to each of these three passages as we go along this morning.

I. Fathers ought to have love and compassion for their children.

Ps 103:13 *Like as a father pitieth (אָהַב) his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him.*

A. This verse is not referring to pity in the same sense we think about pity today—i.e., to feel sorry for someone.

B. The original word here means "love deeply; to have compassion, to have mercy." The word is used of a mother's love for her nursing baby.

Quote: This root [word] refers to deep love (usually of a "superior" for an "inferior") rooted in some "natural" bond. ... it is used for the deep inward feeling we know variously as compassion, pity, mercy.¹

C. Biblical authors use the same word to describe God's love/compassion for his people:

¹ Leonard J. Coppes, "2146 אָהַב," in *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, ed. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999), 841.

Deuteronomy 30:3 *the LORD your God will bring you back from captivity, and have **compassion** on you, and gather you again from all the nations where the LORD your God has scattered you.*

Isaiah 49:15 *Can a woman forget her nursing child, And not have **compassion** on the son of her womb? Surely they may forget, Yet I will not forget you.*

- D. Just like God loves those who fear him, fathers love their own children. God loves by nature; it's an attribute of his character or being.

That's the way it ought to be for fathers—love for one's own child is natural or normal. There is something wrong if a father does not love his own children.

Paul describes that failure to love in Rom 1:31 ... *without natural affection...*

Not having natural affection for one's own children is abnormal and tragic. Sadly, it's quite common in our world today.

- E. And notice the next verse:

Ps 103:14 *For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust.*

One of the ways fathers display love and compassion is that they are sensitive to childhood weakness and failure. We recognize that our children are far from perfect. We don't expect perfection; we extend grace and mercy to them. We don't tolerate sin, but at the same time, we are flexible and understanding when our children fail and do childish things.

Probably, one of the worst things you can do for your child is to expect perfection. Nobody is perfect; we are all made of "dust." We all fail and make mistakes. Fatherly love takes that into consideration.

I think this is where Paul's admonition is helpful (Eph 6:4)

Eph 6:4 *And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: ...*

How do fathers provoke their children to wrath? By being too strict and inflexible; by having unrealistic expectations and unreasonable rules. We must remember that our children are children, not little adults. We should have reasonable expectations of them and not be overly stern when they fail.

- F. We demonstrate love for our children by being compassionate and merciful toward them. That's not the *only* way we demonstrate love, but it is one of the ways that we do so—show mercy and grace when they make mistakes or show bad judgment.
- G. Love means doing what is in the best interests of your children.
 - 1. That does not mean doing whatever your children want to do. Children usually do not know what is in their best interests.
 - 2. As a parent, you probably have a good idea about what is in your child's best interests. So do what is best for them.
- H. Love means showing affection for your children. This word is used of a mother nursing her child. So the picture is of tender, warm affection. Children need loving affection; they need hugs and kisses. They need to hear from us that we love them. We must demonstrate our love through appropriate physical contact.

BTW, if children do not receive loving affection from their fathers, they may go looking for that affection and attention from other adult males. Neglected girls often report that they went looking for love from males because they did not get that from their fathers.

One of the great tragedies of single motherhood is that the children raised without a father in the home do not have the influence of an authoritative, love adult male family member in their lives. And that creates all kinds of problems.

Fatherly love and affection is very important for children.
- I. We express love by spending time with them and interacting with them.

Illus.: An interesting study came out recently showing that fathers today are spending considerably more time with their children than fathers of previous generations did. That's good.

According to the report: In 1965, the typical married father barely spent half an hour each day actively engaged in childcare, Today, [dads in their 30s] typically spend more than 80 daily minutes engaging with their children.² That's a good trend.

- J. Another way of showing love is to extend mercy. Mercy is withholding the punishment that is due. We are responsible to correct and discipline our children, but we also must extend mercy to them. We can ease up a little and not give them exactly what they deserve. Or we can be less stern or strict with them.

Child discipline requires a lot of discernment. We need to be stern and authoritative, but we also must show mercy and compassion. So we need good, godly judgment to know how to deal appropriately with our children. In some cases, being more lenient and merciful might be the better option.

Mothers usually have plenty of loving compassion for their children, but often fathers often do not display this kind of attitude toward their kids. Fathers can be rather stiff and standoffish toward their children. As the children grow up, some fathers stop showing tender affection for their kids. But this passage shows us that fathers are responsible to love their children like God loves his children—with compassion and mercy.

Probably the most significant thing a child needs from his father is godly, compassionate, tender love. Love your children as God loves his children.

² <https://www.derekthompson.org/p/why-do-richer-dads-spend-more-time>. Albert Mohler cited the report in his Briefing podcast, 6/19/26.

II. Fathers ought to correct their children.

Love does not prevent us from correcting our children. Children need both love and correction. They need loving, compassionate correction.

Pr 3:12 *For whom the LORD loveth he correcteth (יִכַּח); even as a father the son [in whom] he delighteth.*

A. God demonstrates his love through correction. Fathers demonstrate love in the same way.

B. This word "correcteth" means "to admonish, to warn forcefully; to express strong disapproval."

The use of the word seems to imply judgment or justice; the word appeals to what is right or legal. A father should be a kind of judge or referee/umpire—he calls balls and strikes; he judges the problems and settles conflicts. He finds people guilty or innocent and doles out rewards and punishments.

C. So the sense is that the father sees a fault or failure in his child, expresses strong disapproval, and corrects him forcefully.

D. We can demonstrate love and also show our strong disapproval of our children's behavior at the same time.

Illus.: David never said anything bad to his son Absalom—big mistake. Likewise, Eli failed to discipline his sons.

E. Different situations call for different responses.

1. Sometimes compassion and mercy are the suitable response to something our children have done. We acknowledge human weakness and failure without condemnation or punishment.

When a child makes a simple mistake, this is probably the best approach. E.g., spilled milk—don't make a federal issue of it.

2. On the other hand, sometimes a strong, forceful rebuke is the best response—we express strong disapproval for our children's behavior. And we would usually reserve this kind of response for some kind of sinful action, e.g., disrespect, rebellion, direct disobedience—we must respond forcefully to some behaviors.

3. That's where fatherly judgment comes in to play—know when to show mercy and grace, and know when to rebuke soundly.

We do not want to be overly lenient when we should be stern, and we don't want to be overly strict when we should be merciful. So we have to be wise about these things.

- F. Note that this kind of strong, forceful rebuke is appropriate for "the son in whom he delights" (רִצְיָה). So this kind of forceful rebuke or warning is appropriate even for a child in whom the father is delighted. He loves this child, and because of that love, he rebukes him sharply; he warns him forcefully. He judges the situation and expresses strong disapproval and warning. That's what fathers do because they love their children.
- G. Children should be aware that a forceful rebuke from their father is a sign that he delights in you. If he didn't care about you, he would not say anything; he would leave you alone and not correct you. Children should see correction as an evidence of love.
- H. This is a very important principle: neglect of a child is a very unloving thing to do. Some children will misbehave just to see if their parents respond. If parents do not respond appropriately to bad behavior, it just reinforces to the child that his parents don't care.
- Children will often misbehave just to see if their parents are paying attention to them. They test the limits just to see how far they can go before they get a response. Neglect often results in further misbehavior. So it's best to correct bad behavior immediately.
- I. Misbehavior should *not* be the only time you pay attention to your children. Some fathers are guilty of that; they have little contact with their children unless they misbehave. That is not right. Correction should not be the only time you show up or interact with your children.

- J. It is your responsibility to correct your children, but that should be only a minor part of your relationship to your kids. Mostly, you should show love, compassion, and mercy toward them. Occasionally, you have to correct through strong, forceful rebuke. But hopefully that is fairly rare.

If you correct and discipline your children appropriately when they are young, you will not have to do much of that when they are older.

III. Fathers ought to exhort, comfort, and advise their children.

1 Thess 2:11 *As ye know how we **exhorted** and **comforted** and **charged** every one of you, as a father doth his children,*

- A. "exorted" (παρακαλέω) – urge, implore; to earnestly encourage a response or action; to call for a response

1. Fathers are responsible to tell their children what to do. Command your children, and then make sure they respond correctly.
2. What we often see is parents who plead with their children to obey them. Or they bargain with them or bribe them to obey.

One of my pet peeves is when parents continuously ask the child "would you like to..., can you do this for me? Will you please..." It's almost like the parents are asking the children for permission. Constantly asking a child if he would like to do something puts the child in charge. Parents should be in charge, not their children. Young children especially need to be told what to do, not asked if they want to do something. Asking the child to do things is putting too much responsibility on him.

And that idea of calling for a response is important as well. Children should be taught to respond to their parents. If you tell your child what to do, he should respond in some way—"yes sir/ma'am, yes Dad/Mom, OK, I'll be right there..." The child should affirm that he heard the directions and is planning to obey.

And the parent should listen for that response. Make sure that the child heard you and is planning to obey. Require a response.

- B. "comforted" (παραμυθέομαι) – to console, to alleviate suffering, to strengthen, to encourage
1. Good fathers certainly do not want their children to suffer. They want to reduce or remove the things that cause pain for their children.
 2. When their children are suffering, fathers want to console them or comfort them.
 3. Of course, there are different kinds of suffering. Children often suffer with non-physical problems. Children may be disappointed, sad, or worried for various reasons. It may be some failure or some relationship problems that cause suffering. Whatever is the cause, fathers ought to seek to reduce or remove the things that cause discomfort.
 4. That does not mean that we seek to remove *all* sources of difficulty. Children need to face and overcome obstacles; they need to experience difficulties in order to grow. They need to jump over a few hurdles.

Some parents try to prevent their children from experiencing any kind of difficulty or hardship. They intervene to help their children succeed and to avoid problems. That is not in the best interests of the child.

In many cases, parents should let their children sort out their own problems. Parents should not intervene; they should allow their children to struggle a little and find their own solutions to their own problems. We should not be trying to alleviate all inconvenience and struggle. Kids need to struggle a little in some cases. We need to help them develop some independence and self-confidence. And that means that we allow them some discomfort without fixing things for them.

5. This simply means that as fathers, we seek to comfort our children when they are suffering, sad, or disappointed. We want to encourage our children when they are upset.
- C. "charged" (μαρτύρομαι) – to solemnly assert the truth of something. The sense is of a witness giving a testimony or attesting the truth of a claim.
1. Fathers should be a source of truth and wisdom. Your children should feel welcome to talk to you about various issues, and they should be confident that you will tell them the truth.

These days, children have many influences, and many of them are not very good. Fathers should be the primary source of truth and wisdom for their own children.
 2. Fathers must give good advice and counsel. Your children should feel comfortable seeking advice from you.

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

Fathers should give their children biblically sound advice and counsel. They should urge their children toward spiritual growth and maturity. They should set a good example for their children to follow.

Fatherhood is a wonderful role, but also a difficult one.

These "as a father" passages give us some important responsibilities that all Christian fathers ought to be fulfilling.

Fathers demonstrate love, compassion, and mercy toward their children. This is probably the most important quality that fathers can have. Demonstrate tender love and affection for your children.

Fathers need to correct their children. Love and correction go together; children need both. Correction is a demonstration of love.

Fathers must exhort, comfort, and advise their children. Command their obedience, encourage them when they are discouraged, and give them good advice.

Father's Day is a good occasion for us to be reminded of these fatherly responsibilities.