

It's Not Father's Day (But You're Still the Dad)

Part 2: Disciplinarian

Who was the primary disciplinarian in your home when growing up? Parents, who is the primary disciplinarian in your home now? Would it surprise you to learn that the Bible clearly designates the father as the primary disciplinarian in the home?

The Apostle Paul echoes many teachings from the book of Proverbs in a short admonition:

Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger; but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. (Ephesians 6:4)

It would be erroneous to take this verse out of context and reason that mothers are not responsible for discipline or instruction. Yet, the simple truth is that the primary responsibility falls on the shoulders of the father who is the leader of the home.

Some fathers might be tempted to simply delegate the responsibility to the mother. However, it would be wise to remember that head, or leader, is not the same as dictator. A father must never abdicate his responsibility as father. Translation: *Man Up! Don't wimp out on your God-given role as dad.*

We generally think of discipline and instruction as separate, yet related, ideas. Discipline is more about actions while instruction has more to do with the mind and attitude. However, the Israelites had a single Hebrew word that meant both instruction and discipline at the same time. Paul seems to use this marriage of concepts in his admonition to fathers.

Instruction promotes self-discipline. Yet, when simple instruction fails, a parent must take the next step: correction. In general, *correction* is verbal, a reminder of past instruction. It may

also come with a warning of future consequences if instructions are not followed.

While instruction and correction are more verbal, there is also the need for *training*. Training is a positive form of discipline that involves verbal instruction and demonstration, as well as application on the part of the child. In other words, tell them, show them, and then let them try. Additional instruction and correction, along with patience, are an important part of training.

Discipline is necessary when a child demonstrates a poor attitude at some level of instruction. Discipline is best thought of as a part of instruction and training, not punishment. Discipline has a positive goal of a changed attitude and changed behavior. Discipline may call for extreme measures which includes corporal punishment, i.e. spanking. It should not be assumed that this is the first discipline option in all cases, or the most appropriate.

Fathers, you set the tone for discipline and instruction in your home. You must communicate with your wife about the discipline and instruction of your children. While your wife is deeply involved with the children, you lead the way. You provide direction in the values and behaviors that are important for your children.

Do not abandon your wife and place the burden solely on her shoulders. There ARE times when it is appropriate for your wife to say to a child, "Wait until your father gets home!" It is your job to rescue your wife; deal with the most difficult situations; handle the hard decisions. God has given this responsibility to YOU.

Intimidating? The Book of Proverbs is a tremendous resource for being a good father. Treat it like an instruction manual. Start TODAY!

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