

Tips for Restoring the Biblical Role of Fatherhood in the Church

Scott Brown

"To know the true state of a nation, look at the state of the Church. To know the true state of the Church, look at the families who populate her pews. To know the state of her families, look to the fathers who lead them. Destroy the vision of the father, and you render impotent the family, thus creating a chain reaction that spreads throughout civilization" Douglas W. Phillips, Esq.

If a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God? -I Timothy 3:5

How does a church begin to restore the role of fathers to the pattern prescribed in scripture? First of all, she must deal with PMS (Passive Male Syndrome). This is accomplished by focusing the energies of the church toward men and challenging them to carry out their Biblically defined roles.

Here are some practical suggestions for moving the current state of affairs to a more Biblical state.

1. Choose Church leaders from men who manage their households well.

This has nearly been abandoned in modern church life. We seek technical abilities rather than spiritual qualities, verified by family leadership. I Timothy 3:4-5

2. Don't allow men to trade their families for public ministry.

The Bible indicates that a man should not be a leader unless his family is in order. The church in our day usually does not encourage men to excel in this primary area of discipleship. There will be times that God will call a man away from his family because of the direct call of Jesus Christ, and these times should receive arduous consideration and prayer.

3. Find role models / examples of churches which have made male leadership a central philosophy of their churches. Where are they?

4. Establish church structure that facilitates Deuteronomy six as a priority.

The passage is perfectly clear. A father is to take personal responsibility for the training of his children. The church tends to keep men so busy with work outside the home that they have no encouragement or time to read the Bible, pray or evangelize.

5. Determine the trans-generational value of your programs.

While the rest of the church exerts enormous energy for cantatas, plays, Sunday school programs, youth ministries, parties... what will you do? Where will you spend your time?

I submit that a father who spends his time praying and reading and studying for his children will be more effective than the father who organizes the cantata.

6. Resist operating and creating programs where men are not leading.

Research shows that the church is typically run by women. They bear most of the responsibility for the activity in the church. They are 100% more likely to be involved in discipleship, 56% more likely to hold a leadership position in the church, 29% more likely to read the Bible, 29% more likely to share their faith, 46% more likely to disciple others. (Barna Research Update, March 6, 2000). Change the current reality by reviewing or even shutting down ministries which do not have a male leader.

8. Be willing to send your men through the pain of leadership in their homes.

Resist the easy road and expose men to the tougher tasks. We prefer to sit in meetings in rows like cabbage heads in a field rather than going through the much more arduous task of thinking, cultivating, creating, and doing the ministry in our own homes and neighborhoods. It is easier to create and participate in church meetings, committees, programs than it is to train up children. When we take the easier road, we abdicate our primary responsibility. Why? Because it

- * Is more comfortable for us
- * Pleases the pastor and church leaders
- * We think we get spiritual points for it from peers and pastors
- * We get praise for it

9. The Pastor's responsibility to be responsible

As pastors we should not allow men to join leadership, teach Bible studies or lead programs if they are not excelling in leading their families.

When our men are too busy with the Church or some other activity to disciple their families, we need to encourage them to get back and do the basics first – when they are excelling, they are free to be involved in other ministries.

10. Refocus the men in your church

If a man is spending time preparing for Bible studies, or Sunday school classes or mentoring another person and is not doing these things for his own family, you should encourage him to stop doing these things and begin doing them for his family. After he succeeds in shepherding his own household in the Word, then he will be ready to do it for others.

Encourage men to remove items from their schedules that are of lesser importance to their primary calling.

I meet men who tell me they are so over committed, they have no time to give to the training of their children, yet they have enough time to turn on the TV every Monday night for foot ball, watch golf, read about golf and even play golf.

If you are doing any of these things, and have not led your family in worship and delighting in the Word, then you should stop and refocus your energy, no matter how important you might think it is. I recently heard someone say: "The problem is not getting your schedule priorities straight, it is scheduling your priorities".

The first thing in our schedules should be time for prayer and Bible reading and study for the preparation of our own hearts before God.

The second non negotiable in our schedule should be to nourish our wives through the Word and prayer.

The third is to strategize, pray and implement our training plan for our children.

The fourth, is ministry in the church.

The problem is not usually lack of time, but time spent in areas on little importance. Most men do not need to drop church involvement, because they engage in a host of meaningless activities that have taken on a prominent place in their schedules.

A father's priorities lived out in the church

There are a number of first level focal points that need to capture a man's time:

- * A Cultivation of a heart pliable in God's hands
- * A marriage that illustrates Christ's love
- * A family that is managed well
- * A community that is evangelized
- * Children who know the value of obedience in the big picture of their lifelong success

11. Teach Men the Management Role of Fathers in the Home:

* I Timothy 3:4-5 A man who plans and implements "Prohistemi" "manages" his household well

* Psalm 112: A vigorous man with ideas and passion

* Psalm 101 A man who manages the intellectual and visual content of the home

There is hope for the church that returns to the Biblical order for the church and the home. But there is no instant panacea. This kind of change will take a couple of generations of carefully sowing seeds.