“And Ye Fathers...”

Four Types of Fathers

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“If any person be in Christ, he is a new creature...”
(2 Corinthians 5:17)

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This unit will look at the impact fathers have on their families. Lesson 2 will cover what happens in a family when the father is not there. Lesson 3 will look at the father as the family's spiritual leader.

This lesson will look at four different styles of fathers. **Write three or four sentences about what kind of father you are on the enclosed Response Sheet and then put it away until you finish this lesson.** Next, we recommend that you read the entire lesson through once, without looking up the scriptures. **Finally, go back for a more in-depth study, before completing the Response Sheet**.

I. Introduction

John Kitchens wrote, "Plato seeing a child do mischief in the streets, went forth and corrected his father for it—and this is the pattern of God's judicial proceedings, for he visits the iniquities of the fathers upon the children who imitate them, and the iniquities of the children upon the fathers who countenance and indulge them."

The family is not a product of chance or evolution. It was created by God as the tool to bring life into the world, to teach children the ways of the Lord and the ways of society, and to provide companionship for man. After the Fall, it has served as a haven from the stress of the world.

Within the family, God created certain roles. They are father/husband, mother/wife, children (son/daughter), siblings (brothers/sisters). As we go through life, we function in different roles. We start life as a child. If our parents have other children, we are also a brother or sister. As we mature and become adults, usually we form our own family. Although we are still our parents' son or daughter and our siblings' brother or sister, we become a husband or wife and maybe a father or mother.

God has assigned each of these roles specific functions. These roles and their functions are not whimsical. They are designed to help the family function as a unit while still allowing each member to develop his or her individual potential.

God's commands on how parents are to treat their children are given in general terms. In the Law of Moses God tells Israelite parents that they are to be righteous and holy. Their righteousness and holiness are to be a models for their children. Along with this modeling, the parents are to teach their children the ways of the Lord (Deuteronomy 6:1–9).

In the New Testament, Paul commands fathers to treat their children with respect and love, to teach them God's ways, and not incite them to anger and rebellion (Ephesians 6:4, Colossians 3:21).

From these passages, we see that God provides the great principles of raising children; however, he leaves the details up to us. It is at this point that we look to others. One place is our parents. How did they parent us? What was effective? What was not? What did we like about the way they parented us?

Another place to look is at professions who have studied child rearing. You can gain some good insights into children's different developmental stages, how to deal with different personality styles, different parenting styles, etc. Do not take everything they say as the final word. It is not. Each has his or her own goal of what the finished product (an adult) should be. Do you agree with it? If not, look at what others say and write.

If you want a spoiled, selfish, undisciplined child, you will find many experts who will help you produce such a child. Of course, they call such children creative, uninhibited, independent, free thinkers.

If you want a loving, respectful, disciplined, independent child, you will find experts who will help you guide your children in that direction.

Weigh what you read against your knowledge and feelings about child rearing. When you look at what the experts say and write, do not just accept any of them. Look for those who base their methods on Christian principles.

II. Types of Fathers

According to Calfred Broderick, there are four basic types of fathers. They are the patriarchal, the autocratic, the detached, and the responsive. Each type of father has a different philosophy of child rearing, usually based on how they were reared and on their own personality.

Children raised by a specific type of father, say a patriarchal one, will all have similar characteristics. They will, however, be different from children raised by the other types of fathers.

A. <u>Patriarchal Father</u>

The patriarchal father bases his style of fatherhood on a strong moral/religious foundation.

Because he bases his style of fatherhood on a moral/religious foundation, it is considered legitimate by his wife and children. They also believe that in matters concerning the family, he has the final say. His position as father automatically makes him head of the house. Each member of the family has a position and a responsibility that goes with it. Duty, not feelings, is the key element in a family led by a patriarchal father.

Usually, he will be distant in his relationship with his wife and children. He sees his job as providing leadership (spiritual and social) and economic resources. He is reserved in dealing with his family. Emotional ties are not stressed, nor encouraged.

He is inclined to be legalistic. His style of fatherhood is supported by his church and community. The patriarchal father does not believe that he has the authority to do as he believes. He believes that he is controlled and bound by some higher authority.

Because he believes in absolutes, he tries to pass on his principles, moral values, and doctrines to his children. Usually, the children adopt them. Often, he will elevate them above relationships with people, including his own family. In other words, rules are more important than relationships and feelings.

This can be a touchy area. Relationships are important, but there are times when God's absolutes are more important. In Luke 14:26 Jesus told the crowd that unless they valued Him more than anything on earth, even their families, they could not be His disciples. One point to remember is that although there are absolutes in Christianity, there are many more areas of opinion and freedom.

He believes he is responsible for his family's spiritual welfare. His duty is not just to teach them religious beliefs, but to assure they attend church. He wants them to learn duty to family, church, and country. Spiritual values are stressed; materialism and personal greed are discouraged.

Children raised in a family led by a patriarchal father have several common characteristics. They accept their father’s role as rational and socially legitimate. Their relationship with their father is one of responsibility and duty to him and the family.
Overall, these children are poor to average learners. Broderick thinks this might be caused by their families' cultural backgrounds, instead of by the patriarchal father's parenting style. In other words, the family's background might not stress the importance of academic achievement.

Also, these children are not highly motivated or have high morale (self-esteem). This also could be the result of their families' cultural values. The dominant American and Western European cultures place great importance on being highly motivated and on having high self-esteem. Many American sub-cultures came from cultures which place more significance on the group or family rather than the individual. Therefore, this lack of high motivation or self-esteem could be traced back to the family's culture instead of the parenting style. Children with patriarchal fathers tend to be law-biding and follow the social norms and values.

B. Autocratic Father

Autocracy is the idea of someone's having unlimited authority. Autocratic fathers are those who try use their power to control their children. This power comes from their size, strength, knowledge, economics, etc. This does not mean that the autocratic father is a large or wealthy man. In relation to children, especially in the younger years, an adult is always larger, stronger, more knowledgeable, wealthier, etc. than a child.

Instead of leading his children, he rules by force and fear. The children see him as controlling and punishing them unjustly. There is no room for discussion, disagreement, or disobedience. He makes the decisions and rules and expects them to be obeyed without question. When one of his children fails to submit to his commands or disagrees with him, punishment is swift and harsh.

On the other hand, he sees himself as demanding achievement and structure from his children. He views his children's impression of him as unfair and foolish. This difference in how the autocratic father views himself and how his children view him only worsens their relationship.

The rules (established by the autocratic father) are arbitrary, harsh, and can change at his whim. Although he denies it, the rules are designed to cause failure and rebellion in his children. They apply only to the children. They are designed to enhance and favor his exalted position as supreme leader of his family. He sees himself as above the law. He can do no wrong. They can do no right. This style of fatherhood is more widespread among step-fathers than biological fathers. Also, there is a high possibility that he is from a broken home.

Children raised by an autocratic father are not allowed the freedom to develop their own values and principles. They are expected to accept and practice those of their father. Failure to accept them is considered rebellion and will be punished.

Because of the harsh and domineering way their father treats them, children of autocratic fathers try to avoid having to deal with them. They meet their social needs outside the family, usually with their peers.

In school, they are poor learners and frequently dropout before graduation. They have little motivation to learn or to participate. They are always considered troublemakers by the teachers, administrators, and other students.

Outwardly, they appear to follow the rules and laws of their father and society. Inwardly, they are looking for a way to avoid having to obey them. When they think that they can get away with breaking the rule, they will. Also, they are constantly plotting revenge against those who make and enforce the rules.

C. Detached Father

The detached father is one who avoids any intervention in his children's lives. His involvement is usually restricted to weekend outings and vacations.

Usually, the detached father has a respectable white collar, upper middle class job and earns a good salary. He wants his children to have a good education, but he does not become involved in it.

He claims to be concerned about their intellectual and cultural lives. He shows it only through the providing of material possessions. However, he does not have or make the time to be a part of their lives. He has his life; they have theirs.

For all practical purposes, the children are abandoned. Yes, they are provided with a comfortable place to live, whatever money they want, and numerous gifts. The detached father has no positive impact on the lives of his children. Instead of providing them with love and leadership, he gives them material things.

provides them with no rules, morals, or values. The children are expected to develop them on their own. He leaves it up to others to provide moral, social, and educational leadership for his children. They look for leadership someplace else, usually among peers, peers' parents, teachers, religious leaders, and criminal elements who prey on abandoned children.

Because there are no rules in this type of family, there is a power vacuum. Both the father and the mother avoid any direct confrontation with their children. The parents' fear of confrontation is one reason the children are not provided with rules, morals, ethics, or values. If they were established and practiced, the children would be

expected to conform to them. A power struggle would result when the parents tried to enforce them.

Early in their lives children of detached fathers learn to be independent. Because he is not there to model social skills and relationships for them, they are inadequate in knowing how to deal with others.

The children of detached fathers have average to above average motivation and do well in school. It is one area in which there is some structure in their lives, and they respond positively to it.

D. Responsive Father

A responsive father is highly involved in the lives of his children. They see him as warm and loving.

There is frequent contact between the responsive father and his children. He is available to them without controlling and dominating them. They are allowed the freedom to develop into successful, mature people. They are respected as individuals in their own right. They are not ignored or treated as his clones.

He leads through love and respect. This does not mean there are no rules and morals in the family. The responsive father establishes and models rules, values, morals, and ethics. He does not, however, see them as the goal. He sees rules and ethics as a means to reach the goal of helping his children become mature adults. Love and relationships are the basis of his association with his children, not rules and regulations.

The responsive father is not closed minded in allowing his children to make decisions. He allows them to make their own decisions when it is appropriate, that is, when the decision is one that will not be dangerous, life threatening, or adversely affect the rest of the family.

When it is a decision that affects the entire family, the father will make it—but only after it has been discussed in a family council. This does not mean that the children will automatically agree with the decision, but they will understand the reason behind it and will have had a chance to make their wishes known.

Power within a family headed by a responsive father is dispersed throughout the entire family. Each member is given the amount of power, responsibility, and privilege that he or she is capable of handling. As that ability grows, his or her power grows. This

means that initially all or most of the power resides with the parents. As the children grow and develop, they slowly gain more and more power. Eventually, they develop to a point where they leave their parents' home and find their own. Because of this concept and distribution of power, there are few confrontations over power in this type of family.

Instead of fighting over power, they attempt to understand each other's point of view and keep peace in the family. This is not a peace at any price, but one of mutual respect and love.

Children with a responsive father usually are good to excellent learners. They tend to do well in school.

III. Conclusion

One reason God created the family was so there would be an institution to teach and guide new life into a mature, independent relationship with Him.

He has given us general principles of what a family is to be like. The husband and wife are to love, respect, and support one another (Ephesians 5:22-33, Colossians 3:18-19, 1 Peter 3:1-12).

The relationship between parents and children is to be one of love, understanding, and example on the parents' part. The children are to honor and obey their parents (Proverbs 22:15, 23:13-14, Ephesians 6:1-4; Colossians 3:20-21).

God does not give us the details of living together as a family. We have two choices. One, we can ignore his principles and go our own way. This creates chaos within the family. Fathers who do this generally fall into the autocratic, detached, and partially patriarchal type of fathering.

Second, there are those who follow God's principles and attempt to work out the details of parenting within them. These are usually responsive and partially patriarchal fathers.

Now, please start over and study the lesson and the related scriptures. **When you finish your in-depth study, return to the enclosed Response Sheet and write your answers to the study questions about this lesson.**