"And Ye Fathers... "

Life Without Father

by
George Creach, MA., L.P.C.
Hillery M. Motsinger, Ed.D., L.P.C.

Course III – Unit 9, Lesson 2

(NewLife Behavior English Edition)

NewLife BEHAVIOR Ministries

P.O. Box 72188 Corpus Christi, Texas 78472-2188

www.nlbm.org

"If any person be in Christ, he is a new creature..."

(2 Corinthians 5:17)

Life Without Father

In this lesson, we will look at what happens to a family, especially the children, when the father is absent. Before continuing, please write three or four sentences describing the impact your father's presence or absence made on you. **Write your thoughts on the enclosed Response Sheet and then put it out of your sight until the end of this lesson.** Next, we recommend that you read the entire lesson through once without looking up any scriptures. **Finally, go back for a more in-depth study before completing the Response Sheet**

I. Introduction

Modern America has become a nation in which a large percentage of families have no father in the house or only a part time father. Several years ago, at 11 p.m. several TV stations would air a short public service announcement (PSA). It went, “It's 11 o'clock, do you know where your children are?” Today, if they ran a similar PSA it would be, “It's 11 o'clock; do you know where your *father* is?”

There are many reasons there are so many families with absent fathers. These absences can be either permanent or temporary.

Within the permanent category falls the death of the father. Either because of illness or accident the father has died. Although, this is the one of the less common reasons for an absent father, it can have the most dramatic effect on the family.

Two, is when the father abandons the family. He just leaves and never returns. Normally, his location is unknown. Three, which is similar to desertion, is divorce. Although the father might have visiting rights, for all intents and purposes, he is permanently absent from the life of the family. Four, is when the child's mother and father never married. Although the father is known, he is plays no part in the family.

In the temporary category the father is absent from the family for long periods of time. A large percentage of this category is composed of fathers who are away from home frequently because of their jobs. For example, some military fathers can be away from the family for up to a year at a time. Civilian fathers with jobs that require them to travel are usually absent several days of the week, but home on the weekend. Another type is when civilian fathers are not traveling but spend a large amount of time at the job or work at two jobs to support the family.

Two, is the father who lives in the home, but neglects his children. The negative effect on the family is more disastrous than if he were permanently absent. Three, is the father who is in prison. Depending on the relationship of the father with his family, this could be included in the permanent category.

When a father is excluded or excludes himself from the life of the family, the effects on the family are extremely serious. The damage is not just to the family, but to the absent father, himself. Ashley Montagu wrote, “When men abandon the upbringing of their children to their wives, a loss is suffered by everyone, but perhaps most of all by themselves. For what they lose is the possibility of growth in themselves as being human which the stimulation of bringing up one's children gives.”

God's plan was for the family to have both a father and a mother. Regardless of the mother's strength, love, and leadership abilities, the absence of a father makes the family incomplete. Yes, I know there are times when the father is so destructive to the family that it would be better off without him. God's plan, however, was for both a strong, loving father and mother. When people refuse to follow God's pattern, harm is always the result.

II. Problems Absent Fathers Create

A. Sex Role Development

As the little boy watches his father, he is learning what it means to be a man. When he sees how his father treats his mother, he is learning how men and women treat each other. When he watches his mother, he is learning what it means to be a woman.

The same thing happens when a little girl watches her father and mother. She is learning what it means to be a woman. She is learning how men and women interact.

When one of their parents is missing from their lives, children do not fully develop as God intended. Regardless of how loving and caring a single parent is, he or she cannot be both father and mother.

Masculinity and femininity are not biological roles. Masculine characteristics are those qualities normally associated with men while feminine characteristics are those normally associated with females. They are roles assigned to us by our culture.

Sexual roles are those characteristics that are biological. Often, cultures have so combined sex and gender roles, at times it is hard to separate them. While biological roles are set and determined by what sex (male or female) we are, gender roles will differ from society to society. Sound confusing? Yes!

A boy can develop one of several ways when his father is absent. One, a male substitute can attempt to fill the absent father's place as a male role model. How effective this is will depend on the age of the child, his relationship with his father, his relationship with the substitute.

Two, he may become effeminate. The only role model will be his mother or other females. There will be on an over intimate relationship with his mother and other females. Contrary to popular belief, this does not mean that the boy is homosexual. It means that he has learned more feminine roles than masculine roles. Homosexuality is usually associated with an over nurturing mother when there is a cold, aloof relationship between the father and son. The father either ignores or dominates his son and does not encourage him to assert himself or be independent.

Three, he may become hypermasculine. To avoid being considered homosexual by himself and his peers, he feels that he has to conquer every girl he meets.

Men and boys with absent fathers often have more trouble with courtship, less satisfying sexual relationships, and more unstable marriages than those whose fathers where present.

Women and girls with absent fathers are more likely to be considered “boy-crazy.” They are looking for an affectionate male father figure. Others, might so idealize their absent father that they spend their entire life looking for this fantasy.

Often, a girl from a fatherless home will believe that men are worthless and untrustworthy. As women and mothers, they will pass this attitude on to their daughters and treat their sons as objects of contempt.

Also, a girl with an absent father is likely to become overly dependent on her mother, have unstable sexual relationships, and a poor concept of what it means to be feminine.

B. Intellectual Development

We are all born with a certain potential for intellectual achievement. Unfortunately, more often than not, most of us do not reach the limits of our potential. How far we travel down the road to reaching our intellectual potential depends on several factors. One, intellectual development will be stunted if a child lives in a society that discourages it or ignores it. Two, parents either discourage or ignore intellectual achievement. Three, although society and parents might encourage intellectual achievement, the child has no opportunity to attain it.

One major area in which the father influences his children's intelligence is in IQ scores. In IQ tests with a loving, caring father present with his children, the children scored higher than when the father was absent or was present but treated his children

harshly during the test. This is because the loving, caring father had been involved in his children's teaching, whereas the absent or neglectful father had not.

This pattern also seems to hold true in the area of analytical ability (mathematics, solving puzzles, etc.), verbal ability (speaking), and creative thinking. When a father shows positive interest and takes part in the lives of his children, he is telling them that they are important. He is encouraging them to attempt to reach the limits of their intellectual potentials.

When he does not involve himself in his children's lives, he is creating a void. He is telling them that they are not important, so why should they waste their time trying to earn his approval? Parents are extremely important to their children. Children automatically want to please their parents. When a father models a certain behavior (in this case, intellectual achievement), his children will follow him.

C. Personality Development

Trying to define the personality is not easy. There are all kinds of different ideas as to what it is. Most accept the idea that it is the sum of different aspects of our being. These include such aspects as our intellect, social skills, sex and gender concepts of ourself, our body image, education, acceptance of our culture. When combined, they make up who we are.

These concepts can be either positive or negative. If they are all negative, we will be extremely antisocial. If they are all positive, we will be extremely charismatic. Most of us, however, are neither all positive nor all negative. We have both negative and positive traits that make up our personalities. Also, the intensity of the negative and positive traits will vary in each of us.

The father plays a big part in helping his children develop the different parts of their personalities. The impact he has on the overall development of their personalities is determined by his availability to his children and how much he is involved in their lives. Even a father who is readily available to his children, but who has little involvement in their lives can have a negative impact on their overall development. This is the kind of father who comes home from work at a relatively early hour and is home on the weekends and holidays, but spends much of his time watching television or with some hobby; he is there, but he is not involved.

A father who is away often, but when at home totally involves himself in his children's lives, can also has a negative impact on their overall development. This is the father who is away much of the time, but when home tries to do everything at once. In our modern society, this is called “quality time.” It does not work. It is a

gimmick parents use to ease a guilty conscience. It is not "quality time", it is a high-speed, pressurized environment that only creates stress.

Children need parents to be available on the child's schedule, not on the parent's schedule. (Of course, *both* parents cannot be available 16 hours each day.) It is interesting to observe a child ask for the parents to do something with them, and within minutes wants to be left alone to move to another activity. Children need quiet time also, to be left alone but near the parent. What is not helpful is some pre-scheduled, made-up activity, to suit the parent.

When a father is not available or involved in the lives of his children, there is a high possibility that they will have a large number of problems in their overall development. This does not mean they will turn out "bad." It means they will have an extremely hard time in developing a positive personality. Usually, they will choose someone else as a male role model instead of their absent father.

What helps create a positive personality in a child is a father who is not only readily available to his children, but also involved in their lives. He is available to model positive self-image to his children. He interacts with his children in positive way. He helps his children. This does not mean that he controls and dominates their lives. He does not. He sets the example for them. Children learn from watching their parents. If their father is a positive role model for them, they will develop his positive characteristics.

D. Spiritual Development

God makes the father responsible for taking the lead in the spiritual development of his family. This is the father who trains his children in the ways of the Lord (Deuteronomy 11:19; Ephesians 6:1-4; Proverbs 22:6; Colossians 3:20-21).

This does not leave the mother out. She is to assist and support her husband. Often, because of the father's low spirituality, the entire job falls on her shoulders.

Each parent has a part to play in training the children. The father's is to be the source of family vigor and strength. The mother's is to provide the basic family nurturant. When both perform their part according to God's plan, the children's spiritual development will grow into what God intended.

III. Comparison of Children Reared in Homes With and Without Fathers

Leonard Benson in *Fatherhood* compared children reared in homes with a father to those raised in homes without a father. He noticed several differences between the children.

First is the mother's relationship with the child. When the father is absent, the mother is overly protective. The single mother tries to be both mother and father to her children. Because of work, she is away from home a great deal. She worries about them and goes to great lengths to ensure their safety. Often, she will demand to know everything they do and try to control those things with which she disagrees. Her attempts at tight control smothers them.

Second, the child is more dependent, immature, and if a boy, is often more effeminate. This ties in with her over protective control. She refuses to allow her children the freedom needed to develop into independent, mature adults. She uses them for the emotional needs that normally her husband would provide. A boy needs a father to provide a masculine role model. This is lacking in a home where the father is absent. His most important role model is his mother. This does not mean that the boy is homosexual. He has more feminine characteristics than a boy with a father at home. Also, because her husband has abandoned or abused her, the mother is a man hater. As she expresses this hostility toward men, her daughters learn not to trust men, and often her sons bear the burden of her anger.

Third are peer problems. A child raised by both parents learns how to act with members of both sexes. When the father is absent, children do not always learn the proper way to act with members of the opposite sex.

Fourth is anxiety about sex. This ties back in with not learning how to act with members of the opposite sex. Often they are uncomfortable and unsure in male/female relationships.

Fifth is a high rate of delinquency. According to Benson, there is a high rate of delinquency among both boys and girls from homes in which the father is absent or one in which the father fails to function as the family leader. They form a high percentage of prostitutes, drug addicts, unwed mothers/fathers, and gang members.

Sixth, boys have increased insecurity about their masculinity. Boys without fathers will often feel a need to prove their masculinity. Because they have no male to model gentleness and compassion and confirm their masculinity, they believe that they have to prove that they are real men. Also, they have a great desire to be liked by members of the opposite sex.

Seventh is a lack of assertivness. It seems like a contradiction, but studies show that although there is a high degree of delinquency and machoism among fatherless boys, this

does not translate to their being highly assertive or aggressive. Instead, they are more submissive, more dependent and more willing to accept authority. Boys who are not assertive, and do not show even some aggressive traits, will not be viewed as leaders by most females. This often shows up as a 'henpecked' husband, in marriage. The reason for this is the father provides the model for male aggression. Because he is absent, they have no model from whom to learn male aggression. On the other hand, girls from homes without fathers will be more aggressive than those from homes where fathers are present. Aggressive behavior in girls is often a 'turnoff' to their male counterparts, and lays the foundation for a troublesome marriage.

III. Conclusion

For a family to function properly, it must have both a mother and father. Each has his or her role in creating a healthy family. The father's role is that of being an active, present leader (Ephesians 6:4; Colossians 3:21; 1 Timothy 3:4, 12).

When the father is not available to fulfill his God-designed role, the family is adversely affected. The exact nature of the impact will be determined by the reason for his absence, the age and sex of the children, and the personality of the mother.
Edna M Wooten wrote:

Though his smile is gone forever,
And his hands I cannot touch,
Still I have so many memories
Of the father I loved so much.

His memories are my keepsake,
With which I'll never part.
God has him in His keeping,
I have him in my heart.

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.**