

1 Corinthians 13:1-8a

The Message

New Testament in Contemporary Language

by Eugene H. Peterson

"What's the state of your love-ship, Dad?"

"If I speak with human eloquence and angelic ecstasy but don't love, I'm nothing but the creaking of a rusty gate. ² If I speak God's Word with power, revealing all his mysteries and making everything plain as day, and if I have faith that says to a mountain, 'Jump,' and it jumps, but I don't love, I'm nothing. ³⁻⁷ If I give everything I own to the poor and even go to the stake to be burned as a martyr, but I don't love, I've gotten nowhere. So, no matter what I say, what I believe, and what I do, I'm bankrupt without love.

"Love never gives up.
Love cares more for others than for self.
Love doesn't want what it doesn't have.
Love doesn't strut,
Doesn't have a swelled head,
Doesn't force itself on others,
Isn't always 'me first,'
Doesn't fly off the handle,
Doesn't keep score of the sins of others,
Doesn't revel when others grovel,

Takes pleasure in the flowering of truth,
Puts up with anything,
Trusts God always,
Always looks for the best,
Never looks back,
But keeps going to the end.
⁸ Love never dies."

**For weeks, we've used 1 Corinthians 13 as a text.
Chapter 13 defines qualities of real love.**

**As you know, a lot that passes for love isn't love.
Decades ago, I came across this little poem:**

"THE BUTTERFLY AND THE BEE"

(Author Unknown)

Once upon a time
A handsome honeybee
Fell in love with a butterfly
He met in a tulip tree.
He said, "I love you madly
"And want to share your life
Let's fly away together,
"Will you be my wife?"
She shook her head in sorrow,
"No, no, no," cried she.
"For I'm a monarch's daughter
And you're just the son of a bee."



Every day couples fall madly in love, but a short time later call each other worse than "sons of bees."

Today we jump from Corinthians to Thessalonians.

This Thessalonians text deals with love in action, especially as needed by fathers.

We want check out its counsel.

"Bob, is this a "bait and switch"?" you ask.

A typical bait and switch usually costs you more.

No extra charge here; not a penny more.

About two decades ago, psychiatrist Dr. Alvin Poussaint said, "Many men have wondered, just what is a father's role today?"

If that question stumped most people in the year 2000, would they now just throw up their hands?

We can precisely define about any word there is—my dictionary contains about 50,000 words.

I don't know how many words you can Google.

Yet if you ask, "What is a father?" you'd need considerable clarification.

Biological father?

Adoptive " "

Stepfather " "

Foster " "

Live-in "uncle" father?

If you ask, "What does a father do?" you'll likely need more explaining.

Someone asked a young father: "Who is the real boss in your house?"

After a little hesitation, he answered, "Well, my wife bosses the children. The children boss the dog and cat, but I can say anything I want to the geraniums."

It's probably easier to define DNA than to describe what a father is or does.

Irma Bombeck once said about fathers,

"Generally they don't bake cookies, sew on buttons, take splinters out of hands, kiss anything to make it well, or dress dolls when they are naked."



Irma Bombeck usually wrote with clarity, yet I'm not sure what she meant by her last phrase: dolls or fathers sitting around naked.

Did she purposely let us wonder?

Today she'd probably have to restate what she said.

I suspect many fathers today bake cookies, sew on buttons, take splinters out of kid's hands, and kiss "ouchies."

Someone else can investigate whether fathers now "dress dolls when they are naked."

Some of us had fathers who tried hard to impress us with how difficult their childhoods were.

E.G. one comedian joked:

His father at 7 years of age got up at 4 AM, walked 23 miles to milk 90 cows.

The farmer he worked for had no bucket.

He had to squirt milk into his hand and walk 8 miles to the nearest can.

For all that he earned 5 cents a month.

In this community, we've witnessed many examples of good fathering.

I'm not referring to biological fathering, but of fathers leading their families.

- Teaching their children.
- Giving them good examples.
- Spending time with them.

It's not easy to bear children; it isn't easy to rear them.



Are you interested in good fathering principles?

The Bible contains bad news and good news.

The bad news might amaze you and dismay you.

Most of the Bible's greatest men proved to be lousy fathers.

Samuel, Saul, David, and Solomon failed miserably.

As for Moses, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, I'd put big question marks after their names.

"What about Joseph, Jesus' father?" you ask.

We don't have enough info on him to judge.

The only perfect father is the God and Father of us all.

No one knows whether Paul was ever a father.

Yet what God inspired Paul to write in I Thess. 2 is the best advice you'll find anywhere.

Many have gone to church for years and don't know what Paul told the people in Thessalonica.

If they followed this advice, Fathers probably wouldn't need to consult psychiatrists, social workers, divorce attorneys, or bartenders.

1 Thessalonians 2:11, 12:

"We dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God . . ."

This text tells three principles of good fathering.

1. **Encourage:** No English word conveys this word's full meaning:

It's the same term often used of the Holy Spirit—Paraclete, which means to:

"Go along side of and call to."

How do we encourage children?

Children find encouragement in sensing that they belong to the family.

How do parents make that happen?

It's the same way that we help people of any age feel that they belong to a group.

Partly, we give them responsibilities.

Norma and I often heard older parents say, "I had it hard when I was young, and I didn't want my kids to have to go through that."

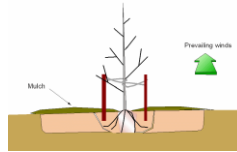
We set out some sapling trees a few years ago.

The instructions said to stake each tree, but not high on the trunk.

Give some support, but not complete.

Trees become stronger if they have to endure winds.

If you try to spare the tree by securing it all the way to the top you weaken it.



Child-rearing principles are the same.

We had to be creative in Los Angeles.

Our lot was about the size of our garden here.

The kids cleaned their rooms.

Mowed the lawns (other families hired gardeners).

Did the dishes.

We purposely didn't buy a dishwasher.

Children need testing that comes from responsibilities and accountability.

We should have done more.

- E.g. Emphasizing the child more than the gift on the child's birthday.
- Praying for the children in their presence and asking God to help them in their challenges.
- **Letting them know how precious they are.**
- **Praising them often.**

Will Sessions, discussing the topic in "*If I Had a Teenager:*"

"I would bestow praise. If the youngster blew a horn, I would try to find one note that sounded good to my ear, and I would say a sincere good word about it. . . I would be vocal."

Children need the encouragement that comes from a sense of belonging to the family.

Moving to the second word Paul used:

"We dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, (12) encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God . . ."

2. **Fathers need to comfort their children.**

How is comfort used in other places?

John 11:19 NIV reports that when Lazarus died, "Many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them in the loss of their brother."

Comforters stay as close as possible.

Fathers must understand how much their children need their presence.

Someone calculated that the average child asks 500,000 questions by the time he/she is 15.

A few years ago, a survey asked 7, 8th grade boys:

"How much time does your father spend with you?"

Average time for a week: 7 ½ minutes—
about 1 minute and 4 seconds a day.

Total for a week equals 2 ½ TV
commercial breaks.

In the men's dressing room at the Wellness Center in Cherokee, three boys entered excited about a birthday swimming party they came to attend. One of the other men present and I engaged the boys in conversation. One little boy said proudly, "Me and My dad come here sometimes, just the two of us. We exercise and then we sit in the hot tub together."

I asked, "Do you enjoy being with your dad?"

"Yes!"

"Would you rather be with your dad or your mom?"

"My dad!"

Encourage and comfort are closely related.

At times they appear as a pair.

Both have the prefix para as in the English words: *Parallel, Parachute, Paramedic.*

Para means "alongside of" which means that there's "no such thing as absentee parenting."
"We dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, (12) encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God . . ."

When we dads spend time with our sons and daughters, it's as if we're running alongside them cheering for them.

We encourage them.

We comfort them.

3. And we urge them.

How do we urge people?

Dr. Tom Stauch coached the Kingsley-Pierson HS wrestling team for many years.

When Tom coached, I enjoyed going to wrestling matches.

I wasn't so crazy about the wrestling as much as I enjoyed watching his coaching style.

Tom was regularly on the floor, as close as allowable, animated, shouting, urging his student athletes to hold on.

Listen to Paul in **Ephesians 4:17 (NIV)**:

"I tell you this and insist on it in the Lord . . ."

This is emphatic demand.



They've got to know that we care passionately about them.

Recall what we said at the start?

Perfect human fathers do not exist.

Some of God's greatest servants failed as dads.

My dad never attended any game when I played.

He hated sports.

The only function he attended was my graduation.

He was far from perfect.

I unfairly compared him with many other dads.

This son of Mr. B was far from being a perfect father, too.

But the longer I live and the more I learn about my dad, the more grateful I become because he gave me the greatest gift of all:

He introduced me to Jesus.

He believed in God and he publicly committed his life to the Lord.

In all probability, Frank Blair did the best he knew how.

I thank God for him and I thank God for the faith in Him you exhibit by being at worship today.

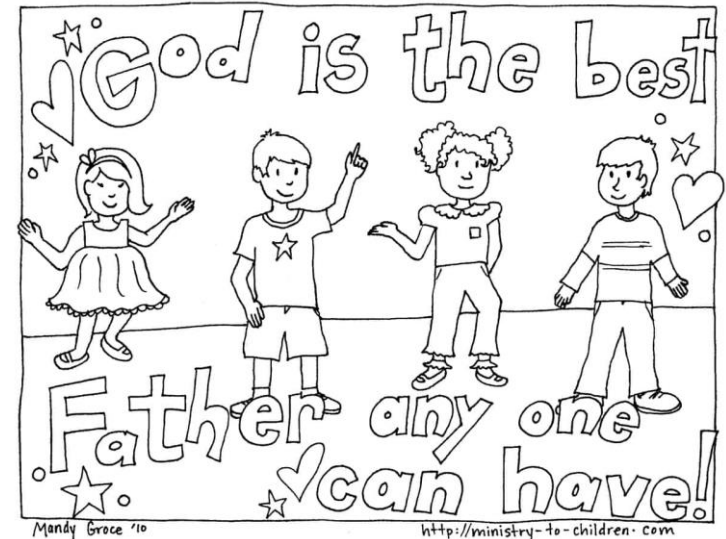
Thank you for doing your best.

Do not listen to those so-called "experts" who insist that we don't need fathers in the home.

Everyone will stand before the God and Father of us all to account for why he/she rejected His word.

Everyone who refuses to listen to God ends up paying dearly.

"We dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God . . ."



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