

Mistakes Fathers Make

I ~~am at~~ have gotten to the age when I can look back on my personal mistakes and ~~those mistakes~~ of others in child rearing. God gave us Fathers a lot of responsibility, "And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord" (Ephesians 6.4). Husbands/Fathers are to provide for their family but one can argue the responsibility to teach ~~ones~~ ~~them~~ children is of greater importance. Our children are born into this world as clean slates. They know nothing until we start to teach them. (Tabula rasa is one theory. There is now evidence though that babies in the womb ~~are~~ recognize their father's and mother's voice and respond to music and other stimuli.) Those early years of teaching and training will mold the rest of their lives. "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is ~~old~~ old, he will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22.6).

Most of our children turn out the way we train them. Therefore, I can say there are ~~some~~ common mistakes father's make ~~with their children~~.

Some teach their children about God and His law but they do not follow God and His law. Solomon is known as the wisest man in the Bible and for good reason. "I have done according to your words; see, I have given you a wise and understanding heart, so that there has not been anyone like you before you, nor shall any like you arise after you" (1 Kings 3.12). We read of Solomon's wisdom in handling a dispute between two women. Each claimed to be the mother of a child. Solomon said to saw the child in half and give half to each mother. He knew the real mother would want to spare the life of her child, even if it meant to give her child to another woman, (1 Kings 3). We read of Solomon's wisdom in the Proverbs. He often spoke as a father would speak to his son in imparting wisdom. There is no doubt that Solomon knew and understood God's word. However, He did not actually walk in the ways of the Lord. "Solomon did evil in the sight of the Lord, and did not fully follow the Lord, as did his father David" (1 Kings 11.6). Rehoboam was the result of Solomon's example. He did not walk in the ways of the Lord either.

Many a father has told their children to place God first in their lives, to read the Bible, and live so as to go to heaven. Then that father places other things ahead of God, ~~does~~ not read ~~his~~ Bible, and lives ~~s~~ without a thought of heaven. Our children will follow our example more than our words.

Some fathers may actually teach their children to do evil. ~~Some fathers~~ by their example. They teach their children to lie, steal, cheat, get drunk, use profanity, and do whatever they can get by with. Manasseh was an evil king. In reading 2 Kings 21, ~~one reads of Manasseh building~~ wooden altars, worshipping idols, offering human sacrifices, was involved in witchcraft, and encouraging others to do likewise. After being punished by God and taken off into captivity, Manasseh repented, (2 Chronicles 33). ~~He returned to Jerusalem, removed the altars, and tried to undo a lot of the evil things he had done earlier.~~ However, his son had already learned to serve foreign gods. "Amon was twenty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned two years in Jerusalem. But he did evil in the sight of the Lord, as his father Manasseh had done; for Amon sacrificed to all the carved images which his father Manasseh had made, and served them." (2 Chronicles 33.21-22)

Many fathers realize their mistakes later in life and turn to serve God. However, their children had already learned to live contrary to God's word. At one congregation we had a number of restorations. Many were older couples as ~~who they had forsaken~~ the Lord earlier in life due to work, having young children, and other reasons. Later they realized their mistake and wanted to serve God. They were often surprised that their teenage or married children were not interested in coming to "church." Why should they? They grew up without God and were not about to change now. If we teach our children to be worldly then they will be worldly.

Some father's simply do not try to teach their children anything. As one father said he did not want to prejudice his children in their beliefs so he taught them nothing about God. We are not told much about David as a father. As a king he did a lot of good things. He expanded the territory of Israel and defeated many of his enemies. We know some of this family's problems were due to his sin with Bathsheba. I notice in reading about Absalom that David appeared to be AWOL (Absent Without Leave). Absalom appeared to be a child who took matters into his own hands. When Amnon raped his half sister, Tamar, Absalom had Amnon killed, (2 Samuel 13). One can argue that David should have been the one who handled this situation. Instead, David does nothing about the rape and nothing about Amnon being killed. Absalom left Jerusalem for a while, perhaps fearing what his father would do. Eventually he did return at which time we read, "So Absalom returned to his own house, but did not see the king's face... and Absalom dwelt two full years in Jerusalem but did not see the king's face" (2

Samuel 14.24, 28). David was AWOL for two years. I realize Absalom was a grown man by this time but I have to wonder if David had been AWOL before this time.

Fatherhood requires men to be hands on. You cannot teach your children without interacting with them. This means you have to talk and reason with them. You ~~must have to~~ listen to them and you ~~must have to~~ discipline them. Discipline means to disciple or teach them. Some of this teaching is by example, ~~some~~ by talking, and some by "corrective discipline." A child without an active father is a child by him or herself. "But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons" (Hebrews 12.8). Being a father means you ~~must have to~~ say no and mean it. Being a father means you have to punish when a child is being rebellious. Being a father means you give out hugs.

Sadly, ~~some~~-many fathers never know the joy and blessings of fatherhood. They isolate themselves from their family and watch as total strangers. Others reap when they have sown in previous years and then wonder what happened. One thing a young father can do now is to be active in ~~his~~ children's upbringing and set the proper example by serving God yourself. -- Dennis Tucker