



June 20, 2005

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THE STAND
DEAR OLD DAD

Now, a day set aside to honor the man of the house.

The writer, George Herbert, said:

“One father is more than a hundred school masters!”

What a responsibility fatherhood is. The child, God-given, comes and the work begins. As Herbert says, father is teacher. A child learns from a father like no other. With a clean slate, tabula rasa, the child like a sponge soaks up anything and everything sensorially and cerebrally and from day one, every association, experience and contact with Dad. Train up that child, saith the Scripture, in the way in which the child should go. The training up is critical but so is the end result, an older, mature adult not departing from those early childhood right ways. Dad sets standards. His morals are everywhere, strong and weak. His likes and dislikes become that of the child. Personality traits are handed down, almost genetic. Mannerisms are adopted and the child mimics Dad, even if Dad is unaware. The ways of Dad become the ways of the child.

Then, the admonition to train up the child IN THE WAYS OF THE LORD. Belief in God and for Christians Jesus Christ is so incredibly important in the early years. When early faith and belief take hold from birth to age 7 or 8, those beliefs last a lifetime. No adult can ever forget spiritual stories, or childhood prayers, or answers to simple and naïve questions from Mom or Dad for the rest of a life. They are the real theology, the essence of faith and the loving duty of a loving Dad.

With love comes fatherly discipline. Whom the Lord loves, and Dad as well, he chastens. Sparing that rod spoils the child. Perhaps the rod metes out a certain physical discipline, but the real rod is correction, reproof, dialogue and sincere and regular fatherly communication with the child. Discipline takes time, quality time which a man having once decided to be father must invest. It is the duty to discipline, to train, to lead, and to lead by example. By the fatherly fruits the child shall know him. The most eloquent words can never substitute for loving deeds, including deeds of discipline.

The father leads in the path of righteousness, and other paths. In church but perhaps more importantly at home, the soul develops and the hard questions, the real need of the child's heart are answered by a spiritual father who loves and cares. The only answers that matter are the truthful ones to the hardest questions. Those fatherly answers speak louder than any eloquent sermon.

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There are other paths. There is school, education and sharing, father and son, the learning experience. There is sports and encouraging the physical and athleticism. Millions of Dads share excitedly and lovingly in a child's sporting achievements. There is culture, reading, dining, theater. There are the talks, the games, the love and fun around the family table where Dad presides and where family and friends participate. All are paths, necessary paths to the full development and maturity of the child. Trained up is to be well rounded, fully exposed to all good things in life, for all things are lawful for the child and the task is to be able to select the worthy from the unworthy.

It may be easier for a mother to show and tell love. But the love of a father, male love at home, is an indispensable commodity, vital and necessary in addition to mother's love. A child's experience and understanding of love can never be complete without the full and unconditional love of Dad. It may well be the most stabilizing, supportive factor in the life of any child, early on and forever. A child for a lifetime will remember more than anything else the love of Dad in word or deed. A father's love at work is burned deep into the soul and memory of every child. Dad shows that love direct. But Dad also shows that love by loving others, other children, family and friends. Most importantly, Dad shows love which the child will never forget when Dad loves Mom. There is perhaps no greater love, no greater example for a child than a husband's love for a wife, a father's love for a mother.

This man, this Dad has an enormous responsibility. He is head of household and responsible for so much. The greatest reward for all things done for any child is to know and sense the love of the child in return. The more love the better the household. Relationships are better. Trust abounds. There is openness and ideas flow. Dad's love makes family work.

Think of the love of GOD OUR FATHER. We think in terms of God as Father so that we can understand that love, divine love for ourselves and our families. We pray OUR FATHER. Christians think of God as Father of the Messiah Jesus Christ. We understand human love so much better when we come to know and understand the love of God The Father. Life is incomplete without both our Heavenly Father and our earthly one.

There are no words to describe how a father feels at the birth of HIS child. Some actually watch the birthing process, that incredible passage from the inner womb to the outer world. For the first time, that precious life is laid on mother's breasts and the work of Dad begins. It is an experience with joy unspeakable, the memories of which last a lifetime. God has entrusted the life of HIS child to an earthly father. What a privilege, what a thrill, an honor to train up that child in the right ways.

There are men who are biological fathers but not Dads. They created a fetus but not a son or daughter. What a privilege it is to have a son or daughter, much less both. There really can be nothing better in life. I shall remember forever my father, good and bad, right and wrong as perhaps the most powerful influence on my life. I shall always be

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grateful for a human father who loved and a Spiritual Father who loved even more. I pray you had the same.

It is only right that you, all of us honor a father who is truly a Dad. For there is nothing on this earth like:

DEAR OLD DAD

DBC/dw