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THE STAND
FATHER

I and the Father are One, said Jesus of Nazareth, the Lord of the Christian.

The Man, the carpenter from Nazareth, said that about the Creator of the universe. He called this God, far beyond our comprehension, Abba, Father. So that, Jesus took something awesome and unknown and personalized this potent force so that those who believe can understand that there is for us an eternal father, a cosmic father, a universal father. So that, we are not mere specks in the universe, dust in the wind, but sons and daughters of a heavenly Father. Such a concept, were it not for Him, would be almost impossible to fathom, imagine or even hope for.

But we are, we truly believe, sons and daughters of a Heavenly Father. That is an Almighty Father, a Creator Father who loves us. God is love we are taught from childhood and it is our lifelong task to understand that. No matter what happens God Is Love. God the Father loves us! Even as The Father loves us, so should we love our children. If a Heavenly Father loves, unconditionally, so an earthly father should love unconditionally. The highest attributes of any earthly father are the adoption, the integration of the characteristics of the Heavenly Father. Love is first, and love is best.

But the Heavenly Father shows us another side of love, a Tough Love which disciplines. Though love indeed may be meek, warm, gentle and forgiving, it must also be tough, demanding, disciplined, and concerned for things Right. When the heart produces conduct which is wrong, then the father, heavenly or earthly, meets out discipline. That discipline can be hard, punishing and hurtful. But all of that is necessary for growth. For no man or woman grows without discipline. Not one.

The love of The Father is very concerned with children spoiled and selfish. Don't spoil that child, the Father says, and don't spare the rod. If the Father loves, the Father disciplines with a rod. In the old days, that was literal, physical. Fathers of old had no compunction in applying that rod to the places where the child sits. The threat or promise of the rod at work, and the hurtful reminders of the actuality, were true discipline at work. But, not today. No more painful posteriors. The rod, the discipline if it is applied at all, is something else. It seems more than ever to be deprivation, taking away benefit and privilege, taking away the things a child wants and giving the child

what is needed, modern day discipline. However effective, better than nothing. But if a father truly loves a son or daughter, a father must discipline that child or they will never be a character developed with a keen sense of right and wrong. The result will be a child spoiled and selfish, a disgrace to a father. That says Scriptures is unacceptable.

Right and wrong must be deeper than the character of the father, not only taught or preached, but lived. By their fruits ye shall know them, The True Fathers. A father says what he means and means what he says. The father does not negotiate or ask permission of the child (ok?) but rather clearly indicates the standards by which the child must live, standards which must be obeyed while the child is under the tutelage and care of the father. When comes the time for the child to leave the father, those incredibly necessary standards leave with him. And when that child is old, the Scriptures promise, that older man or woman will Not Depart Therefrom! Those standards will be what he is, what she is. If the father does not discipline, teach and form the child, then the sins of compromise, indifference and placation will live after him, in the lives of his children, and even worse their children. What a father sows, he reaps, often for generations. Sowing of all things disciplined can produce fruits for years and years to come.

Things today are not so much right as they are relative. The standards of old are whittled down and are often meaningless. Fathers sit back and watch, or are too busy to be involved, or perhaps do not truly care about the leadership role a father must play. There is little demand, and little creative influence in so many cases. So many are fatherless whether physically or spiritually. A son or daughter, in love with father, desperately seeks guidance. That child wants to understand exactly what a father believes and in almost every case, wants to believe the same, to replicate the father in every way possible. That is especially so in the formative years, the first decade of life. If the influence of a true father is missing, the child seeks father surrogates and substitutes. The child can learn at school from classmates and educators things different from what the father might believe. Conduct becomes permissive, even unlawful. Standards of morality are worn down and compromised. And the child goes a different way, not the way of the father. And the seeds are sown for that child to become a different kind of father in ways the father never wanted or intended.

The scripture is clear. If you become a father, then you must train up that child in the way the child should go. You must. There is no other moral option. The training up of that child must be a First Priority of the father, without conditional qualification. The training up of that child is job one and nothing but nothing must interfere with that. If a man is unwilling to make that commitment, then a man should not be a father, so says the scripture. Train up a child and tend to your household before you do anything else. Otherwise, do not be a father.

So there comes that little bundle of joy, your very own son, your very own daughter, you in every way. You, privileged father, are one with him, one with her. What a joy, what a privilege to be a father. That privilege has a clear priority, a demand for time and commitment. It just seems natural to love what is yours, what is you. In so many ways, you are one with that child and the beginning, the birth is much like the words of Jesus. It is as though the child when first looking into the eye of the father says like Jesus did:

You And I Are One!

It is as though the child is saying if you love me, show me what is right, correct me when I am wrong, help me build my character and morally equip me for my life to come. You made me, you fathered me, now help me be what I should be with all your might. Perhaps those are the words behind the first infant cry. Those first primal outbursts can be heard as a cry for help not only then but for all the formative years. Help me, Dad, help me be what I should be.

What an awesome challenge. Think of the time and effort that challenge requires. Think of the sacrifice. The problems. The difficulties. The demand. That challenge could never be met without love. Never. It is the love between father and child which sustains, motivates and makes right things happen. Even as God is love, so Father is love to the child, every bit as much so as mother. A father's love, disciplined love is critical, indispensable to the child. Now and always.

So, we salute fathers, real fathers who love, heavenly and earthly and who train up their children in the way in which they should walk, live and conduct their lives. That is the father's absolute priority, first priority. The love of a father, like mother, is the most important thing in the life of any child!