



June 16, 2003
Donald B. Crawford, President

THE STAND **FATHER**

We set aside a day, we Americans do, to honor fathers. Men who have become husbands, who have become, by the grace of God, fathers. Some thoughts about these special people.

All of us sons and daughters are commanded-ordered to honor our fathers. That is indeed right provided that the man is truly a father and not merely a biological one. For it is relatively easy to make a child. But it is extremely difficult to make a son or daughter. The honor rightfully goes to a man who becomes a father by training, nurturing and loving his son or daughter.

It is the duty of a father, biblical and otherwise, to teach and train a son and daughter. A great man once said: "The father who does not teach his son his duties is equally guilty with a son who neglects them." No teaching, no duties done. The best teaching in the world is by example. Tell me, then show me. Train up a child, the biblical admonition, in the way in which the child should go and when old, that child will not depart from that training. And so a father must commit to take the time to train, to teach, for it takes time, and lots of it. Children who don't get the quality time of a father in training, loving training, are deprived of one of the most essential things in life. Nothing but nothing substitutes for a father's hand upon the life of a child. Nothing.

It falls to a father to discipline his children. Discipline is sorely lacking in today's family household. Spare the rod, say scriptures, and spoil the child. But to use the rod today is to risk society's wrath, even punishment. It is not fashionable (psychology) or even legal (criminal punishment) to use force and discipline. Yet nothing seems to get the attention of a child more so than a well placed whack well timed. Lectures, sermons, talk are cheap. One wonders how the sparing of the rod negatively affects the growth of the child. Loving discipline, however it is applied is the responsibility of the father, the duty of the father and perhaps even fully expected by the child.

The father-husband says scripture is head of the household, and consequently of the wife and children no matter how unpopular that notion may be. It is his duty, biblically, to run the household. As such, father must make the tough decisions. In so doing, the father must honor, respect and love the mother who bore their children for the love and respect of a father for a mother is absolutely critical for any child to see and learn.

Even as our Heavenly Father forgives us, so fathers must be ready to forgive the mistakes and transgressions of their children. Many children do more things wrong than right. Fathers must be ready to correct and just as ready to lovingly forgive.

“He who is taught to live upon little owes more to his father’s wisdom than he who has a great deal left him does to his father’s care.” So said William Penn, and rightly so. A father can not grow a child by making life easy. Nothing worthwhile in life comes easy. Every child must learn to live on little and even more importantly, live by the fruits of his own efforts. That little workman must learn early on that he is worth his hire, and no more. The more a father does, supports, or makes easy, the more difficult the life of the child will be.

A good father, with no jealousy, wants his child to do better, go further in life than he. William Allen White said:

“Everyone expects to go further than his father went.”

Perhaps there is such built-in, genetic competition between father and child. If so, that is a good thing for as generations pass and the world changes, so must the ability of children grow to meet new challenges from such changes which requires them in many ways to be different from and better than their parents, to go further. A father takes great pride in a child when the furthering occurs.

Then comes the time when a son or daughter should leave father (and mother) and live life independently. Though a father should always be there to advise and consult, a father should move out of the way and let a son or daughter follow their own path, live their own life, as God would direct. The leaving is hard, but necessary. Go and do what should be done in a different and better way. When a child does that, a father has done his job.

“There is only one way that we can be true to our fathers and that is to carry on to completion the work they have so nobly begun.” So said John S. Bonnell. Often sons follow fathers. The footsteps are large enough and clear enough, and it is right for the son to carry on. If so, sons are true to the father, carrying on and growing the work entrusted, knowing that at the same time the son or the daughter can find fulfillment for themselves, bonded but independent. The work done by a father should carry on well beyond the financial. The work carried on to completion is moral, one of values, standards. A right thinking father is clear about morals, standards, truth and instills the understanding and desire of those things in the child so that what the father thinks and believes lives on in the child. The children carry on to completion the work the father has so nobly begun. So that, when the son himself becomes a father, the best of his father becomes part of his son, the grandfather alive in the grandson.

It is an enormous, God-given privilege to be a father. But the duties and responsibilities of fatherhood are extremely difficult, especially in today’s society. To take on the care and responsibility of a child is a mammoth, sacred undertaking. It should be done only by those who are prepared to invest the quality time to do what is required. Every one of us should honor, respect and love a father who truly is one!