

Godly Dads

1 Thessalonians 2:1-12

For you yourselves know, brothers, that our coming to you was not in vain. But though we had already suffered and been shamefully treated at Philippi, as you know, we had boldness in our God to declare to you the gospel of God in the midst of much conflict.

³ *For our appeal does not spring from error or impurity or any attempt to deceive, but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not to please man, but to please God who tests our hearts.*

⁵ *For we never came with words of flattery, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed—God is witness. Nor did we seek glory from people, whether from you or from others, though we could have made demands as apostles of Christ. But we were gentle among you, like a nursing mother taking care of her own children.*

⁸ *So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us.*

⁹ *For you remember, brothers, our labor and toil: we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, while we proclaimed to you the gospel of God. You are witnesses, and God also, how holy and righteous and blameless was our conduct toward you believers.*

¹¹ *For you know how, like a father with his children, we exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you to walk in a manner worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory (1 Thessalonians 2:1-12).*

Remember when men were men and you could tell it by looking?

Remember when men knew who they were, had confidence in themselves and in their God?

They knew where God was leading them and trusted Him to get them there.

Maybe the problem today is that our modern society has tried to convince women that they can be as masculine as men and men can be as feminine as women.

So we have put them together in one big mixing bowl and mixed them all up until many are no longer sure what their role really is.

Father's Day presents us with an opportunity to look at masculinity once again.

Not the Rambo type who walks with a swagger and cusses like a sailor.

Such men probably make bad neighbors, poor business partners and abusive fathers/husbands.

Nor am I talking about the Archie Bunker type who sits in his chair like a king on a throne, expecting the whole world to revolve around him.

I'm talking about a man who knows he is a man and is proud of that.

Yet at the same time he has a tender heart that is sensitive to others and to the will of God.

I'm talking about God's man. I'm talking about fatherhood the way it ought to be.

ABLE TO EXPRESS GENUINE LOVE

Verse 8: *"We loved you so much."*

These words expressed an intensity of love that gives over and over again.

Paul is saying, "It's hard even to find words to express how much - but we really do love you."

This is an important character trait for fathers because expressing love does not come naturally for most men. I'm convinced that is the reason the Bible tells husbands to love their wives, because we have to learn how to love.

The Bible almost never tells wives to love their husbands because that usually comes naturally. Instead, wives are told to respect their husbands, because sometimes that is hard to do.

Men, most of us have to learn how to express love. That is true about the father & child relationship, too. It doesn't usually come easy for us.

Remember when you brought your first child home?

Mom knew how to do everything – but we men had a lot to learn.

But soon we get to the place where even if we're not so good at them, we kind of enjoy them. We enjoy holding our children. We enjoy playing with them, watching them laugh, & comforting them when they are in distress.

Then what happens? They grow up, & just about the time we get good at it, it all changes.

Our best example of fatherhood is our Father in heaven – especially in the Prodigal Son.

When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men.' So he got up and went to his father (Luke 15:17-20).

NOTICE: He felt that he could go back to his father.

The relationship might never be the same. But he knew the door was open to him.

He said, *Father, I have sinned against heaven & against you.*

I think this was a speech he practiced every step of his way back home. He had it down pat.

Our Father in Heaven always leaves the door open for us to come home again.

Dads, we need to teach our kids, no matter how deep their sin, "You can always come home."

There'll be a father waiting to throw his arms around us and assure us of His abiding love.

A TRANSPARENT LIFE

We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you were so dear to us (1 Thessalonians 2:8).

NOTE the connection between the gospel and the everyday life. Not just hear – live the gospel!

If you're a Jesus follower, your kids ought to know it by the way you live. It affects the decisions you make each and every day:

The values in your home will be different than those found in a pagan home. A pagan home values things like pleasure and power and prestige and possessions. But in a Godly home, we learn that things we can't see, things we can't buy, and things we can't hold on to, are really the most precious. We have completely different values.

How do you deal with everyday issues in your home?

Stress? Finances? Humor, joy, laughter? Failures? Hard times?

Transparency is hard to deal with. But kids need to see in their fathers, not just an authority figure, but someone who is real, someone whose heart has been touched & changed, who still makes mistakes & yet has the courage to admit that he has made those mistakes.

AN UNSELFISH DILIGENCE

You remember, brothers, our toil & hardship; we worked night and day in order not to be a burden to anyone while we preached the gospel of God to you (1 Thessalonians 2:9).

If our kids don't see a father who's a hard worker, they'll never learn it.

We teach it in two ways:

First, we teach by example, by just doing it & letting our children see that.

Secondly, our children learn by doing. We give them the opportunity to do things and make their own mistakes and learn from the mistakes they make.

Story of the boy who wanted to draw a horse but was clumsy. Dad, who was very artistic, gave him advice – then drew a beautiful horse and said, copy this!

The son turned and looked at his dad: "But dad, I want to draw my own horse."

Every child has to draw his or her own horse!

GENUINE SPIRITUALITY

You are witnesses and so is God, of how holy, righteous, and blameless we were among you who believed” (verse 10).

Now let's review what Paul said:

Back in vs. 9 he said, *First of all, '...we preached the gospel of God to you.'*

Now in vs. 10 he adds, *You are witnesses, and so is God... ' of how we lived among you. We lived holy, righteous, and blameless lives.*

Our behavior was influenced by what we believe about Jesus!

God has commissioned dads to be spiritual leaders, whether you like it or not!

You will either lead your family closer to God or further away.

As spiritual leaders it's our responsibility to show that we are genuine, that our Christianity is not just something for Sunday, but something we are all week long.

Don't just come to church, carry your Bible and look spiritual. Your kids will see it! They'll watching you and they'll know.

So it is absolutely essential that we be genuine and live out the faith we claim!

Go through the 5 purposes of the church: What Every Christian Should Do!

A POSITIVE INFLUENCE

For you know that 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, who calls you into His kingdom and glory (1 Thessalonians 2:12).

That is what a father does. He encourages, comforts and urges his children to live lives worthy of God. It's all positive. But not every dad is a positive influence.

Listen to Brian's story:

I was just 12 years old when my Boy Scout troop planned a father-son campout.

I was thrilled and could hardly wait to rush home & give my father all the information.

I wanted so much to show him all I'd learned in scouting and was so proud when he said he'd go with me.

The Friday of the campout finally came and I had all my gear out on the porch, ready to stuff it in his car the moment he arrived. We were all to meet at the school at 5 to go to the camp.

But Dad didn't get home from work until 7 p.m.

I was frantic, but he explained that things had gone wrong at work and told me not to worry.

We could still get up first thing in the morning & join the others.

I was disappointed, of course, but decided to make the best of it.

First thing in the morning, I was up and had everything in his car while it was still getting light, all ready for us to catch up with my friends & their fathers at the campground.

Dad had said we'd leave around 7 a.m. and I was ready a half hour before that.

But he didn't even come out of his room until 9 a.m.

When he saw me standing out front with the camping gear, he finally explained that he had a bad back and couldn't sleep on the ground.

He hoped I'd understand & that I'd be a 'big boy' about it ... but could I please get my things out of his car, because he had several commitments he had to keep.

Just about the hardest thing I've ever done was to go to the car and take out my sleeping bag, cook stove, pup tent and supplies. And then, while I was putting my stuff away in the storage shed and he thought I couldn't see, I watched him carry his golf clubs out, throw them in his trunk and drive away to keep his 'commitment.'

That's when I realized my dad never meant to go with me to the campout.

I didn't matter to him, but his golfing buddies did.

Dan Benson, in his book "The Total Man," says that for every positive word most dads say to their children, they say 10 negative ones. They're good at words like "Don't" and "You can't" and "Stop that," and "No." But they're not very good at the positive words.

Benson suggests we could change the whole personality of our relationship with our children if we learned to be positive, and influence things in a positive way.

There was a big roll of baler twine he had saved for some reason but that he had never used. So as they were getting ready to move he told his son, Phillip, "I don't want you to mess with that baler twine. That's special, so please don't touch it."

That was like saying 'Sic 'em,' to a dog! Every day he messed with it!

One day, there was baler twine everywhere – all across the yard and garage.

As I started cutting my way through just to get the car into the garage, I rehearsed the lecture I was going to give my son. But," he said, "as I cut away I started thinking, 'What am I going to do with this baler twine?' He realized that maybe the baler twine was not nearly that important.

"So," he said, "that night when we sat down at the evening meal, & said a prayer to thank God for the food, Phillip remained with his head bowed. I said, 'Phillip, about that baler twine.' Phillip's head bowed even lower & you could tell he was really disturbed."

Then Charlie Shedd said, "Phillip, I've decided that baler twine is not worth nearly as much as you are. You're really a special son, & I love you a bunch. If you want to play with the baler twine, just help yourself."

And he added, "Phillip never touched the baler twine again." Now that is what I call a positive influence, & that's what I really call love.

How do we do that?