

# Family Relationships

## 5 Ways To Improve Them!



# Table Of Contents

FINDING THE CONNECTION	2
THE POWER OF TOUCH	3
DEVELOPING THE ABILITY TO LISTEN	4
THE PROCESS OF FORGIVENESS	6
IDENTIFYING YOUR CHILD'S STRENGTHS	8
The Ministry Of Dads' UNI	10

# FINDING THE CONNECTION

I think one of the most wonderful aspects of being a father is experiencing those special times when you seem to 'connect' with your child. These times cannot be scheduled or forced in any way, they just seem to happen and when they do all the hard work, we have invested into the relationship with our child is forgotten in the joy of life's blessing.

## Fathers should seek to connect with their children on a deeper emotional level

To love and to be loved is man's most basic emotional need and by understanding this we are enabled both to give and to receive love at a much higher level than without it.

When our child is born it has many requirements that we as parents need to ensure are fulfilled: the baby needs to be fed and changed regularly, and it also must be washed and put to bed in a quiet safe environment. All these areas take huge amounts of time and effort for you and your wife, but they are merely physical requirements and not the total of what your child needs.

Your child needs to be loved. Your child needs the comfort of being held often and softly spoken to by the people who would do anything to protect it and keep it safe. The bond we form with our child is not merely emotional, but in truth, it has a deeper more eternal, or spiritual aspect. Finding that deep and powerful bond of love between you is what life is all about as a father.

## Finding that deep and powerful bond of love between you is what life is all about as a father.

Whether we are still developing our parenting education by reading a parenting magazine or listening to a parenting expert on the television, we can all take a huge step forward initially by parenting with love.

When fathers learn to open their hearts in love continually to their children, those special times of bonding can be experienced more often. It might be found sitting together fishing by a riverbank, celebrating a victory of their sporting team, or just sitting quietly reading together in the same room. Sometimes it may be found in sharing the loss of a family pet or taking the time to help a little old lady cross the street. These special moments cannot be orchestrated but merely experienced.

Taking the time regularly to listen to your child, really listen, enables the closeness between you to grow and not evaporate. When a father consciously seeks to take part in what the child wants to do, it makes the child feel accepted and special. It might be going shopping or having a tea party with your daughter or playing basketball or a video game with your son.

To find the connection we are seeking in our relationship with our child we need to meet our child in their world, and not expect them to come into ours! It is my greatest desire that each father would be enabled to experience the joys of really connecting with their child at a deep and abiding level, for when this happens life suddenly begins to make a lot more sense.

# THE POWER OF TOUCH

In many households around the world, the **Power of Touch** is underutilized, or rarely used at all except in a negative sense. Touch as one of our major sensory inputs is designed to help us feel our way in the world, is it hard or soft? is it hot or cold? etc. With our sense of touch, we learn much as we grow as a child, exploring new things and through it connecting to our world. As life-changing as touch is in opening new levels to a young child's mind through playing, touch between human beings exceeds it.

## Touch is a powerful way to communicate love

*\*Now because of the world we live in and the widespread abuse of power in things about the human body I must clarify some significant points. When I am speaking of the power of touch in this teaching I am not speaking in any way of physical or sexual abuse, but rather as an opportunity to communicate kindness and understanding between a father and his child.*

One of the challenges we face as men and fathers is that many of us were not raised in homes where love and affection were shared freely, and so in many ways, we remain emotionally stunted in this fantastically fulfilling area of life. **This does not mean that we cannot learn and change** as a man and become more affectionate fathers to our children than we ever received as a child. Sometimes the pathway to our emotional freedom may involve forgiving our fathers or even both parents for being emotional recluses, understanding that they too may have been brought up in homes without loving touch.

A child's needs are not merely physical things like food, shelter, and clothing, **but they also have emotional, mental, and spiritual needs**. As a father, you have a unique opportunity to impart your love to your child through the power of touch, and by doing so you will change your child's life and future. Whether it's picking up and holding your newborn baby in the hospital ward or comforting a crying child at 3 am while your wife tries desperately to get some sleep, a father's love is a powerful force in a child's life.

**Hugs and cuddles with daddy** on the bed or couch are a great way to begin to develop your child's emotional diet for the enjoyment and acceptance of touch, and once activated this often becomes a lifelong closeness in your relationship. Whether it's a ruffling of your son's hair as he heads out the door on the way to school or holding your daughter's hand as you walk through the local shopping mall, there are many opportunities daily that present themselves for us as fathers to express the love we feel for our child.

Positive parenting occurs when we as fathers communicate love and kindness to our children through touch, imparting the very best part of ourselves to their hearts. When children are lovingly held and caressed they feel an incredible sense of acceptance, they know the strengthening of belonging to a family. **Touch has the power to heal hurts both emotional and physical**, and as we develop this ability and make it part of our relationship with our child, we will go a long way to blessing their life and future.

# DEVELOPING THE ABILITY TO LISTEN

One of the most advantageous things a father can do to benefit his child in the long term is to develop the ability to listen. Every child is an individual and as such has unique dreams and hopes for their life. We as fathers cannot assume that we know what our child wants unless we are first prepared to ask them. Being able to hear what your child is saying is paramount if we are to effectively meet their needs in life.

**Our children have something to say and we must listen!**

**We as fathers mustn't fall into the habit of listening merely to reply before we first listen to understand.**

From the moment our wife's pregnancy has become full term and our children are born they begin to cry out in need, and as a parent, it is our job to meet those needs as best we can. Initially, the baby cries out because it is cold after being delivered and needs to be cleaned and warmed up with blankets. The next in a series of cries are often one denoting hunger, telling us that the baby now needs to be fed as it no longer receives nutrients automatically from the mother.

One of the challenges of being a parent is being able to identify what each cry is e.g. I'm tired, I'm hungry, I need my nappy changed, etc. The quicker we as a parent can identify what the need is, the quicker we can move to meet it. Our parenting goals should always include ensuring that these most basic needs are met.

Throughout the life of your child, their cries for help will change as they change and mature, **but our role and responsibility as their parent remains constant.** Whether we are parenting kindergarten children or parenting teens in high school we need to become good listeners if we are to succeed as a father. By really listening we begin to hear on another level, and by really hearing we begin to understand at a deeper level.

Often all our child needs are someone to listen and hear what they are saying, and then to show them loving support and encouragement. Following are some basic principles for developing an awareness of how and when to develop **a listening ear**:

- **Set aside some time each day to sit down and have a chat with your child**
- **Make sure you arrive home ready to listen, for it is in those first few moments that your child often wants to tell you about their day**
- **Ensure that you regularly ask them about how things are going at school and who they are friends with (This gives them an opportunity to vent about frustrations they may be facing)**
- **Show an interest in the things they are interested in, listen, observe and interact on their level**
- **If you miss their sporting game, make sure you follow-up by asking them how they thought they and/or the team played (Showing your interest and support encourages them to continue pursuing an active/healthy lifestyle)**
- **If they discuss something personal with you make sure you keep it in confidence**
- **Follow up on your previous discussions by asking how things are progressing (This lets them know that you really were listening and are interested and caring as a parent)**
- **Get into the habit of talking to them and praying with them before they go to sleep**
- **Ask your child what they would like to pray for tonight (this often reveals what are the real issues they are concerned about).**

Much of the relationship that is developed between a father and his child is built upon **the foundations of love, trust, and communication**. The things that you do today, as you relate or fail to relate effectively with your child, will often determine your future relationship with them when they are adults.

**Fathers who fail to communicate their love effectively through developing a listening ear miss an important opportunity to bond with their child at a deeper level. We should not be surprised that if we don't listen to them when they are children, they won't listen to us when they are adults. But fathers who develop a listening ear reap the benefits of a stronger and more fulfilling relationship with their children throughout life.**

# THE PROCESS OF FORGIVENESS

Forgiveness in a human heart is as vital as the blood that flows in our veins, without it, life as it was designed to be, stops. Both the giving and receiving of forgiveness need to be present for a man to live free and enjoy life to the fullest. When this process is not present, our lives begin to stagnate like a swamp, rather than flow like a river. Effective parenting styles need to include an understanding of the importance of the process of forgiveness, and its role in maintaining and strengthening family relationships.

Jesus taught that it was 'impossible that offenses would not come' in this present world system, so we as men need to be prepared emotionally and mentally will know what to do when offenses arrive. I suspect that most of us would have been offended or hurt already in life, by what someone said or did, or failed to do, but this does not mean that we have to carry around that hurt forever inside us.

If you have never been offended or hurt by anyone in this world, then hang around a little longer, I'm pretty sure someone will come by soon. I can usually tell when I have been hurt or offended by someone because when I think of, or see that person, I feel the hurt on the inside.

I may want to walk on the other side of the road to avoid having to speak to them, or similar sounding situations. They all point to the fact that I have been offended or hurt by that person, and the pain inside is limiting my ability to live life to the full.

But we don't have to carry that pain on the inside all our lives, healing is available through the act and process of forgiveness. Jesus taught us in The Lord's Prayer, 'forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us'. Here we see the flow of forgiveness, it needs to flow in and out like the daily tides. Through forgiveness, we can off-load the pain and hurt that we feel in our hearts, and begin to enjoy life again in a greater way.

Often when people hurt us, our first reaction or impulse is to hurt them back, but Jesus taught us 'to turn the other cheek', and not strike back. To many men, this may seem foolish or cowardly, or at the very least 'go against the grain' of what men generally do. But Jesus came to show us a better way, a higher way to live, the way that life is lived in heaven, God's way.

If we choose to follow God's way of living, we will get God's results. If we choose to merely do what comes naturally, then we will get those natural results too. It is not always easy to forgive, actually sometimes it is nearly impossible, but that is why we need to 'call upon God for help in time of need'.

Unforgiveness comes into our hearts in 'seed form' through an offense or hurt, and if we do not get rid of it through forgiveness, it grows stronger and stronger inside us, until it poisons the complete flow of life within us, and leaves us bitter and twisted. Many good men have been crippled emotionally by being ignorant of the process of forgiveness, or by being unwilling to let go of the hurts and forgive.

As I have stated in the title of this teaching, forgiveness is often a process, not just a one-time act. This can be especially true if you have harbored resentment toward another person for some time, but the process works if you are prepared to stick with it and do it in God's way.

## The Process Of Forgiveness

In Matthew's Gospel, Jesus taught the heavenly way of dealing with the offenses of this world. He said ' Love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven.'

This heavenly process of forgiveness works, even in the most difficult situation or circumstance. Even though the first time you begin the process, it may seem like scaling Mt Everest, it will get easier day by day, as long as you continue in it. Within a short period of time, if you follow the steps daily, you will be free of the pain and offense on the inside, and your prayers for this person will release God to move afresh in their lives. When the process is finished you will no longer feel the pain when you think about them, and it may feel as if a weight has been lifted off you.

### **Step 1 Love Your Enemies**

### **Step 2 Bless Those Who Curse You**

### **Step 3 Do Good To Those Who Hate You**

### **Step 4 Pray For Those Who Spitefully Use You And Persecute You**

## Dads' Call To Action:

**Speak out daily ' I am a forgiving person, I forgive every person of every offense and hold no grudges against anyone. I also receive God's forgiveness daily and walk in His ways.'**

*(Matthew 5 v 43-48 ) "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so? Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.*

# IDENTIFYING YOUR CHILD'S STRENGTHS

OK, you've become a dad, you have a child relying upon you for food, shelter, and safety, but they are only the physical needs of the child. Have you considered that this little person has emotional, mental, and spiritual needs as well?

## Identifying your child's abilities helps you support their future happiness

For your child to grow into maturity being well-balanced and prepared for the life ahead, we as fathers need to ensure that all areas of their needs are being satisfied.

Ultimately every father hopes that their child will live a healthy and happy life and our role is to help as best we can to bring that to pass. It is important therefore to have a broad parenting plan that includes some of the parenting issues that we all face in life.

Even from the moment of birth they already have many character traits hard-wired into their identity and physical make-up, and these are some of the elements that make them unique individuals. Some have blue eyes while others have brown, some have advanced coordination abilities and may become athletes while others exhibit an aptitude to become a musician. Some children are shy and need lots of encouragement before they will venture out into society, while others are the life of every gathering and enjoy being in the limelight.

## Understanding how each child is hard-wired is important if we as fathers are to be able to provide the correct stimulus required.

It's no use shelling out for ballet classes when your daughter wants to play soccer and score goals on a football field. Nor is it advantageous to continually push your son toward sports if he prefers to play with a chemistry set and dreams of curing cancer one day.

But how can we know in which direction our child's gifting and abilities reside, so we don't continue to push them into areas they are ill-equipped to succeed? I believe the answer lies in 3 main areas:

### 1. Communication

**Communicating** gently with the child and encouraging them to express the desires that are in their own heart is often a first step toward identifying areas of strength, although it may take patience and understanding to identify the real areas as opposed to the whims of childhood.

### 2. Observation

**Observing** your child as they play can also be advantageous in helping us identify natural abilities and aptitudes in certain areas. Some children excel at an early age in areas like computers or mathematics; some may show artistic flair in painting or an ability to speak confidently in front of crowds. All these are markers along the path that we as fathers need to follow to help us in finding our child's areas of gifting.

### 3. Trial and Error

Ultimately it's only through continual **Trial and Error** that we as fathers will be able to **confirm** that we have indeed identified the areas that will play a major part in our child's life. Exposing your child to a broad range of activities over the developing years gives fathers a statistically better chance of identifying areas of gifting. This can often mean financial investments in football boots this year and buying a musical instrument next year, paying for a chemistry set or workshop, or investing in a new computer program on Engineering.

**By staying flexible in our desires for their future roles in society we open the door for them to follow their dreams and find what every father hopes for their child's happiness.**

# The Ministry Of Dads' UNI

Dads' UNI is an Online Ministry based in Australia and is focused on providing simple biblical teaching to assist young men in Growing Families God's Way.

All Dads' UNI resources are provided free of charge, and we encourage those who enjoy our teachings to share them freely among family and friends.

Dads' UNI can be found online in the following locations:

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/Dadsuni/>

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You Tube: [https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCV1vuth1FMmKxiJw\\_xQZpQg](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCV1vuth1FMmKxiJw_xQZpQg)

Website: <https://www.dadsuni.com/>

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We would also like to thank the Photographer for our wonderful Cover Photo

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