



Dads' UNI

Understanding, Nurturing, Imparting

FOUNDATIONS FOR A STRONG FAMILY



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LAYING STRONG FOUNDATIONS

As a father one of our main aims is to provide a better future for our children, a better life than we ourselves ever had. We need to use great wisdom in laying the foundations of this 'better life', lest it collapse like a house of cards, and our children find themselves in a worse rather than better situation. The foundations of any house are where its strength and stability are found, and if it is built securely it will last for many generations. In our modern age there are many different parenting styles promoted in the media as the latest and greatest parenting guide for dads to be or those who have just become a new dad. The foundations of those courses are often built merely on what's 'trending' rather than on proven parenting methods that really work and will stand the test of time.

Back in the 1950's there was a new wonder drug released and marketed as a 'cure' for anxiety, insomnia, gastritis and tension which became available to the public 'over the counter' at the local pharmacy. The same drug was later used to combat nausea and specifically 'morning sickness' in pregnant women, that drug is now better known as 'Thalidomide'.

As a result of using 'Thalidomide' across the world it is estimated that 10,000 children were born with severe deformities of limbs and some internal organs, of these 10,000 only about 50% survived and the remainder had to endure a life of terrible struggle emotionally as well as physically. The drug was heralded as 'a great scientific breakthrough' but became a modern tragedy.

Since the advent of computers there have been many technological advances in a relatively short span of time, although not all of these advances may ultimately prove beneficial to our society. The 'Internet' or 'World Wide Web' as it is also called has been one of the greatest advances in history and affects an incredible amount of our modern lives.

In one generation we have gone from the proverbial 'Abacus' to the 'Pentium', from the 'Model T Ford' to the 'Maserati', and without it you would not be reading this teaching today. But the same 'Internet' that allows us to access copious amounts of useful information at the touch of a button, also enables the world-wide propagation of pornography and the sexual slavery that this 'industry' is built upon.

Advances and breakthroughs need to be measured by a number of factors before we can accurately assess whether or not they have been beneficial to our society. Often the long-term results of any new 'advance' are not measurable until 20-30 years after it is released in society and if there are detrimental effects they may remain 'hidden' for a time. Sometimes we have to weigh up the benefits of an 'advance' against the disadvantages it offers, and this is most accurately done in hindsight.

We are now beginning to realize that more often than not 'technological advances' are the catalysts that bring about 'social change'. Social change is not to be feared especially if it improves the long-term well-being of the members of the society, but we would be naive indeed if we assumed that all changes are beneficial. There is a growing level of awareness that rather than improving life for the individual, many of our advances in technology are actually increasing social alienation and decreasing social interaction.

We live in a generation that has more technology than ever experienced previously in history, and yet we as individuals are not happier for it. The deeper human interactions we hoped would come from the internet have not resulted, but instead have produced in many an increased feeling of isolation. Rather than looking into each others eyes and communicating on a personal level, our children walk around with 'headphones' on or looking down constantly at their 'smart phones'.

As a father it is our responsibility to look closely at any areas that could potentially prove detrimental to our family and take appropriate action to remedy the situation. If we see a crack in the foundation of our house we need to consider wisely what caused the breach and how best we can fix it, so it doesn't collapse upon our loved ones. Whether it's the ever-increasing reliance upon 'technology' or the advertisements telling us we need to purchase a new 'wonder drug', we as fathers need wisdom to decide what we allow into our family environment if we are to protect our children's future.

PLANNING FOR EACH NEW DAY

We are all given a certain amount of time on this earth to live and to make a difference in our sphere of influence. How well we manage the time given to us often determines whether our life has a positive or negative influence on those we meet along our journey. Like drivers on a busy motorway during the peak hour rush we can either be part of the problem or part of the solution.

Considerate drivers enter into the traffic stream with a calm mind and a peaceful disposition, they understand and accept that during the daily commute to work there are sometimes delays, and they take this in their stride without becoming upset. When an opportunity to help another driver get ahead in the traffic line arises they are friendly and wave them through, realising that the way we treat each other along life's journey is far more important than competing with others to get there first!

The road rage driver has usually woken up late after forgetting to set their alarm clock, they run around madly trying to get dressed and have breakfast before they leave for work. They rush out the door and trip over the family dog, spilling much of the lifesaving coffee they are carrying. They then have to run back inside for a quick change of shirt and tie and finally jump into the car, only to realize that the petrol tank is nearly empty.

Consequently they are involved in a mad drive through the suburban streets to the local petrol station, where they perform a pit stop that would make even the professionals envious! The dash to work has now become a Formula 1 race to beat the clock, and every other driver a competitor to defeat. All they can think of are deadlines and angry bosses and this compels them to press down heavier upon the accelerator as they enter the traffic flow.

The road rage driver and the considerate driver both have the same amount of hours each day to live, so a lack of time is not the real problem here. Often a major contributing factor in the life of the road rage driver is actually a failure to prepare adequately for the new day beforehand. Preparation relieves stress and helps us to face each new day without the issue of ever-growing burdens weighing down upon our shoulders.

Remembering to fill the car with petrol on the way home and ensuring that you rise early enough to have a good breakfast and enjoy the company of your family before embarking on each day brings the peace of fulfilment and perspective. After all, providing for our family is the real reason that we spend so many hours each week working to make a living. No one in life plans to fail, but many people fail to plan. Having a daily plan or routine takes much of the stress out of life and enables us as fathers to enjoy the life we have been given and the family we have been blessed with. Developing a well researched parenting plan also helps us as a father to be better prepared to face our parenting challenges.

MORALS, ETHICS, LAWS AND STANDARDS IN SOCIETY

The complex fabric that is woven to make up the society we live in consists of many unique threads. Each of us individually has a place in the weave and without us the entire tapestry would be a lesser creation. There are however certain underpinning threads that have been woven into the fabric that are stronger than others and upon which the entire creation relies, if these threads fail then the complete design is in danger of collapsing. These underpinning threads include the morals and ethics, the laws and standards of our society and if these underlying threads are not protected then the whole institution will eventually fail. An overall understanding of these areas assists us with our parenting decisions and enables us to practice positive parenting.

Morals

Exodus 20:14 “You shall not commit adultery”.

Morals are the basis of how we determine what is right and wrong, when they are clearly defined our choices are easier to make. Our morality defines how we treat each other personally in society, and appears particularly focused upon sexual purity and fidelity. The Judaeo-Christian foundations of our society clearly identified what was acceptable in the eyes of God and assisted mankind in knowing how we should conduct ourselves. It is by standing upon these proven foundations that we find stability as a society.

There seems however in recent times to have been a concerted effort to undermine and destroy the very moral fabric of our society and replace it with ‘amoral’ behaviour which is defined as a lack of moral sensibility. The erosion of our societies moral standards has increased markedly within our generation, and what was unthinkable only 50 years ago is now accepted as normal in many areas of life.

‘Immorality’ as defined by a lifestyle outside the accepted standards of moral behaviour, is the predominant choice of many people in the world. These individuals have rejected the values that we have built our society upon and replaced them with their own ideas of what is acceptable. Sadly many people in this generation no longer have a clear understanding of what is right or wrong, and therefore fail to realise their greatest potential by living a life of honour in obedience to God’s word.

One of the benefits of having a society founded upon a solid moral code is that each and every person already has a safe track to run on in life and they don’t have to try to re-invent the wheel and figure it all out themselves.

Ethics

Exodus 20:15-16 “You shall not steal. “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour”.

Ethics simply explained is how we treat each other in a non-personal or commercial setting. This may involve but is not limited to elements of fairness, consistency, transparency and honesty.

How we treat our fellow-man in the world is in a large way determined by our accepted ethical standards or lack thereof. Those who fail to adopt the need for high ethical standards in their own behaviour tend to find it much easier to take advantage of others in many of life's situations. These people often become the con-men, the embezzlers and the criminals in our society, and they leave a trail of turmoil and distress behind them where ever they go. Their lack of personal integrity allows wicked thoughts and despicable schemes to be devised in their hearts, that ultimately lead to underhanded and fraudulent acts against innocent people.

One of the benefits of having a society founded upon a solid ethical code is so that every person rich or poor is treated with respect and a degree of honour and not taken advantage of.

Laws

Romans 13:1-2 Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves.

Laws are instituted by governments and are binding upon every member of that community, ensuring that each person has both rights and responsibilities. Laws are implemented to keep the worst elements of our society restrained and to facilitate safety and security for all it's members.

Those unprincipled members of society whose hearts are set upon chaos and maliciousness are restricted to a certain extent by the fear of judgement that the laws of the land bring. Laws would not be needed if a society was filled with people who merely loved and cared for each other, but when there are so many who are unscrupulous and set upon a path of wickedness we need all the protections that the laws can give us.

Historically any country that is run without laws is most often ruled only by the strongest and most brutal of men, those who by intimidation bully everyone else into submission. In a society where violence may be imminent at any given moment, it is the laws and regulations of the land that help to protect us and keep the peace we all deserve and have grown to expect.

One of the benefits of having a society that is based upon a system of laws and individual protections is that we are able to give each member of society an opportunity to feel safe and prosper.

Standards

1 Kings 7:13-14 Now King Solomon sent and brought Hiram from Tyre. He was the son of a widow from the tribe of Naphtali, and his father was a man of Tyre, a bronze worker; he was filled with wisdom and understanding and skill in working with all kinds of bronze work. So he came to King Solomon and did all his work.

Standards are an authoritative level of quality that is the accepted norm in our society, it is what we can safely expect in our dealings with others. We as members of society should be able to safely expect a certain degree or standard of understanding and skill from those whose services we seek out in our everyday lives.

If we go to a restaurant we should confidently expect that our food has been sourced using good quality products and has been prepared in a hygienic environment, because these are the standards that are required by our government's health department.

If we needed to undergo brain surgery we would expect that our doctor would have many years of experience in operating on people, and that they would have consistently achieved a very high standard in their profession. These professional standards are our protection as members of a society and without them it would be more difficult to have the confidence required to undergo this life saving surgery.

One of the benefits of having set standards in society is to give its citizens confidence in the quality of the items we are seeking to purchase or the services we intend to use. Standards mean that we are not playing russian roulette whenever we need to access the assistance of a business or provider in our city.

Ultimately it is the Morals, Ethics, Laws and Standards that assist greatly in keeping our society running smoothly and give each and every member the best possible chance to enjoy a good and prosperous life. I guess that is probably one of the reasons why God gave them to us in the first place.

THE INGREDIENTS FOR BUILDING A HOME

I think it is important for every family to have a place that they call 'home'. The word 'home' means more than just a house/apartment or a place to live, it has a deeper meaning than merely a physical structure. A 'home' has the added connotation of being a place of acceptance, a place of security and a place of peace. Raising children is often a challenge, but having a place to call home eases the burden that many parents face.

A 'home' is a place that you look forward to returning to after a hard days work or a business trip, it's a place that is inviting, where the doors are always open for family members and those we love. The 'home' lights shine brightly if we ever lose our way in life, it can be felt in our hearts and not just seen by our eyes. A 'home' is a place of relationship, where everyone knows you as you truly are, and where you don't need the facades we often use in the outside world.

But in truth many alive today did not grow up in a real 'home', they lived inside a house/apartment with their family but never felt the security, acceptance and peace that a 'home' brings. This sad reality is the world we live in, but although those affected may have missed out on much, they are not disqualified from building their own 'home' in the future.

The dreams we have as men often motivate us to achieve great things in life, and it is important that we follow them and build a better life for ourselves. But no matter how great our dream is in life, we will always need a solid foundation to build from and the best foundation in life is that of 'family' and 'home'.

So what are the elements that we as men and fathers need to apply to ensure that we are building a 'home' and not merely living in a house/apartment? Some I have already mentioned but here is a short list of the things I personally have found helpful in building my 'home'.

- A Place of Welcome: A 'home' is a welcoming place where all are glad to see you again and have missed you while you were away!
- A Place of Love: A 'home' is a place where you know you are loved unconditionally, and where those beautiful words 'I love you' are spoken often.
- A Place of Acceptance: A 'home' is a place where you feel accepted, where you are without doubt 'one of the team' and you have a true sense of 'belonging' here.
- A Place of Appreciation: A 'home' is a place where all that we do is sincerely appreciated by the members of the family and not merely 'expected' by them.
- A Place of Involvement: A 'home' is a place where everyone values the family life we are building and are involved together in making it work.
- A Place of Truth: A 'home' is a place where family members love you enough to tell you the 'truth' about yourself even if we don't always want to hear it!
- A Place of Security: A 'home' is a place where all feel secure and live without fear, and where all band together as one to defend it if it is ever required.
- A Place of Fun: A 'home' is a place that is filled with fun and enjoyment, where sometimes 'crazy' things happen and we get to share 'our families' uniqueness and humour.

- A Place of Peace: A 'home' is a place where you can just 'chill out' and relax and enjoy the soothing and restorative environment of peace.

This is by no means a complete list, but it is a good start for those who share the dream of having a real 'home' and not merely a place to live. As fathers there is nothing more important than building a 'home' for our family, whether we own it outright or pay rent matters little for in truth a real 'home' is built by and for the 'members of the family' that live in it.

CREDIBILITY AND LITTLE WHITE LIES

In ages past there was something that seemingly was valued far higher than it is today, and that something was a 'good name'. When people who know you well think and speak very highly of you then you have achieved a 'good name'. A good name is to be treasured for with it comes honour and credibility in the sight of your fellow-man. Credibility is valuable in every relationship for without it trust is almost impossible to form. Positive discipline is often only possible if the parent has maintained the element of credibility.

As fathers the element of credibility is crucial in our relationship with our children. If our children can not trust the words we speak as being true, then our effectiveness as a parent dissolves rapidly. Our children need to have complete confidence that 'what daddy says' is true and can be relied upon. No father would deliberately attempt to erode the credibility they have with their child, and yet in modern society the actions of many accomplish just that.

I would like to point out initially that I am really a fun-loving person, just ask my kids! But when I became a father I made certain decisions in agreement with my wife, as to how we were going to bring up our children. I considered whether or not I was going to be completely honest with my children about the very important subjects (in a child's eyes) of Santa, The Easter Bunny and Magic Wands etc. Now I know some of you will be judging me as a fun sucker right about now, but hear me out before you pass sentence on what I am saying.

There are certain things in life that I value very deeply, things that for me as a father were extremely desirable to impart to my children. After due consideration I surmised that if I wanted my children to accept my word as truth in the really important areas of life, that I had to have built that credibility in the smaller areas of life.

If I had gone along with the accepted norm of telling my kids that Santa really flew a sleigh around the world on Christmas Eve, then when they eventually found out that it was not true my credibility would have just taken a hit. If I told them that a really well natured Bunny was dropping off chocolate eggs in the garden on Easter Sunday, then when they found out that it was actually me hiding them in the bushes then my credibility in their eyes would have taken another hit!

Now I enjoy Christmas and Easter and celebrate them wonderfully with my children and their young lives were not diminished because 'the magic' of Santa and the Easter Bunny were taken from them. My children still enjoyed the joy of hunting for Easter eggs in the garden, and the thrill of waking up and racing to the Christmas tree to open presents, they have just experienced these times without the 'little white lies' clouding their young minds. I have actually found that the 'traditional' meanings of Christmas and Easter have a far greater and more beneficial impact in the lives of young children.

The little white lies that many parents tell to their children in the desire of giving them a more 'magical' Christmas or Easter will eventually return as problems as their credibility begins to erode in the sight of their children. We as fathers have a wonderful opportunity to teach our children about the value of telling the truth by the example we set, and can ensure that our relationship with them continues to grow stronger throughout the years ahead.

UNDERSTANDING GOD'S LAW

Every human being born into this world needs to gain an understanding of how to live and function successfully. We quickly master the use of the basic five senses (Touch, Sight, Smell, Hearing and Taste) with which we communicate with the physical world, but it is not as clearly apparent how we are meant to deal with things that are spiritual in nature. What follows is a basic representation of one spiritual aspect of life that has an effect on us all, and is especially important for those interested in Christian parenting.

Initially it is important to understand that God Himself makes a differentiation between the Jewish people and those of us who are non-Jews (also called gentiles). When God spoke to Abraham He called him to become separate from the other nations of the world, and through Abraham God chose to establish a people who were set apart to Himself. The nation of Israel (Jews) are direct natural descendants of Abraham and it was through this nation that God brought forth His Son Jesus Christ.

God chose Moses to bring the children of Israel out of the slavery of Egypt, and he led them (guided by God) to the mountain of Sinai, where God delivered The Ten Commandments to Israel. (Exodus 20:2-17) It is these same Ten Commandments that are the basis for much of the legal system that we use in the western world, and indeed by extension our systems of democracy and government. But the aspect I would like to deal with today is how the Law Of God (The Ten Commandments) affect us spiritually as human beings.

God gave the Ten Commandments to give mankind knowledge and understanding of what was right and what was wrong. It defined how we as created beings should relate to Him as our Creator, and how we should deal with our fellow-man here on earth. The knowledge of God's law was originally kept only by the Jewish people, but there came a day when God Himself chose to send that knowledge forth into the whole world.

Jeremiah the prophet declared under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit that God was going to do a new thing in the earth, and send forth the knowledge of His law into the hearts and minds of all mankind directly. (Jer 31:33) God did this when He sent His Holy Spirit upon the earth on the Day of Pentecost after Jesus Christ's resurrection and ascension to heaven. Now the Ten Commandments are written in every human heart upon the earth and we perceive them spiritually through our conscience.

It is the Ten Commandments and the words of Jesus Christ that are the standard by which all the world will be judged when we stand before the Throne of God on Judgement Day. Every time we break one of the Ten Commandments we are alerted in our conscience that we have broken God's law again and we feel shame as a human being. Our shame is meant to be an indicator that we have sinned against God's Law and need to find His forgiveness and mercy lest we be judged.

The way that God chose to reveal His forgiveness to man is through our faith in the Death, Burial and Resurrection of His Son Jesus Christ. Jesus came to take our sins upon His own body and paid our debt before the Throne Of God so that we as human beings would not be found guilty on Judgement Day. By turning away from our sins and asking Jesus Christ to be our Saviour and Lord we are brought back into relationship with God and are born again spiritually.

In summing up here are the main things to remember:

- The Ten Commandments teach us what is right and wrong
- We all have this knowledge written in our hearts and minds
- Our conscience is the indicator of whether we have failed or succeeded by God's standard
- We must all stand before God on Judgement Day and give an account of our lives
- Jesus Christ paid the debt for all our sins when He died for us
- Forgiveness and mercy is available to us all through faith in Jesus Christ.

SMALL CORRECTIONS

When you transition from being an expectant dad to actually becoming a parent, you realise that you now have a family to look out and provide for. Often as young men the greatest responsibility we have carried before this momentous occasion was making sure we got to work on time for our job. 'Responsibility' can be like a childhood fear of a monster lurking in a dark room, you don't really know how big it is or how dangerous because you can't see it properly. What will it take to be a father, and will I be a good one? These are just some of the questions men ask themselves, when they first step into this exciting role.

Self doubt is common at times of growth and change, and can actually be a healthy thing when understood. Self doubt alerts us to the fact that we may need to acquire some different skills to succeed in our new role properly. As each new season arrives in our life we as fathers need to be open to learning new things, new ways of communicating, new ways of doing things. The good thing about this learning curve is that it doesn't need to happen over night, we as men have time to change into the person we will need to be in later years.

I sometimes think about the famous explorers in history who travelled to places that were totally unknown previously in western society. They did what they could to prepare for the journey ahead by collecting food stores that would last, maps and a compass to give some direction, equipment for climbing, tools so they could fashion things along the way. They absorbed as much information as they could about what was known about the region they were travelling into and what potential dangers they would face.

When the explorers had done all they could think of to prepare, they set out on what would become a great adventure. Did they forget anything? Probably! Would they have done anything differently or plotted a different or more direct course if they had their time again and could start over? Almost certainly! Being one degree off course may not sound like much, but if you are travelling around the world you could miss the mark by a long way.

Life is not full of certainty, in it we as men must be prepared to take risks and step out into the unknown, and that is where we grow and develop. It takes a certain degree of bravery to face the unknown, and we as fathers will need to draw upon all our skills and wisdom to accomplish the great adventure of raising a child.

One of the thoughts that can be considered in this situation is the fact that billions of men have been fathers before you over history, and each of them grew into their role over time as you will. You don't need to be a perfect dad by next week all you need to do is be willing to make small corrections in your life when it becomes apparent they are needed. What the great explorers did and what we need to do as men when we step into the responsibility of fatherhood is to prepare as best we can, learn as much as we can, and be willing to make adjustments in our direction when we get off course.

THE NEXT GENERATION

As a father our parenting decisions are made for the benefit of our children, and our focus is toward raising resilient children well prepared to face life. Before long the children we now hold in our arms will become the next generation that will occupy the position we now hold as an adult. Their lives will become empowered as an adult to shape their world as they see fit, and this is why the next generation is always the most important generation. The history of mankind on the earth is like a relay race of life where one generation must pass on the baton to the next generation running. As fathers it is our responsibility to ensure that they receive the baton in a better position than we did from the previous generation.

It is helpful as a parent and important as a father to understand our own generation first and how we have run our race, that we may be better prepared to assist our children in running theirs. To understand how our generation has run we need to be aware of those elements that strengthen society and be able to avoid those that weaken it. Society as a whole is built upon community or common-unity, where all members play an active part in improving life for the benefit of all in that society. Each person has a role to play according to the gifts and abilities they have received in life, and as they use them for the benefit of all members of the society all are enriched.

Every society has laws and regulations placed there to protect the rights of its members and to ensure that unruly elements are weeded out as soon as possible to minimise their negative input. We all know some of the basic laws on which western society is based upon: Don't murder anyone, Don't steal anything, Don't tell lies etc. and it's these laws and rules that keep us all safe as a society from those who have evil in their hearts and would take advantage of those weaker than themselves.

The family unit is the foundation and the building block for every successful society or community, and it is within the family unit that we find the strength and stability of all society. How we treat each other in our own family is a foundation for how we will treat others within the wider community, which when multiplied by many thousands of families will ultimately affect our entire generation.

LAUNCHING FROM THEIR SHOULDERS

Each generation has the opportunity to either reject the ways of their forefathers or to embrace them. As a father we need to look carefully at the examples we have personally experienced in life and those that are presented to us and choose the best available option for us and our family. Developing a parenting plan based upon positive parenting styles is not always easy.

We live in a world where we have tremendous access to information and teaching on any number of subjects, so acquiring knowledge is less of a challenge now than it was a generation ago. It is however important that we as fathers make the right choices from all the information provided, and know how to make a wise selection. With such an abundance of information available to each of us we often find opposing views presented, how then should we choose the fathering style that will help our individual family?

I have always found the most trustworthy way for selecting between opposing views is to look at the end results of following a certain style of teaching. If you found an unidentified seed and planted it in good soil and watered and fertilized it regularly then eventually you would have a fully grown plant or tree, and you would know what type of plant it was. After the tree matured and produced fruit you could taste whether or not it was a quality tree producing good fruit or an inferior one leaving a bitter taste in your mouth.

The same principle can be applied to our selection of teachings and information on parenting and in particular fatherhood. We should look at the lives of those who have followed a particular teaching and then at their relationship to their own children and also at their children's lives, then we can easily gauge whether or not that particular teaching has borne good fruit or not. If we can find an example whose fathering style has produced outstanding children and a deep and abiding closeness with them even into their adulthood, then I believe we have found a fathering style worth emulating.

The good thing about choosing a fathering style for our family is that we don't have to re-invent the wheel ourselves, there are some excellent examples available for those with a desire to learn and we can stand on the shoulders of those who have gone before us. Fathers can make intelligent and wise decisions in many areas of life by realizing that "by their fruits you shall know them". Once we have found a fathering example with good fruit on the tree and apply it to our lives and family then we can launch from there into a wonderful future with our loved ones.

STARTING WITH THE END IN MIND

While travelling overseas in Asia I experienced a wide range of cultures and some amazing sights that will always stay with me. I tended to rely heavily upon the local tour guides or cab drivers to get me to where I wanted to go especially when we were crossing borders from one country to another, and entering places where I had little or no experience of the culture I was about to face.

Probably the most important thing I learned while travelling was the need to clearly articulate to the local tour guide or cab driver where I wanted to go, and then to periodically continue to check if we were indeed heading in the correct direction. I found it important to ensure that my directions had really been understood and not “lost in translation”, because experience has proven that if you don’t start off heading in the right direction there is a good chance you will not reach your desired destination.

The same can be said for the direction we as fathers choose for our families, if we aren’t heading in the right direction today we may not reach our desired destination tomorrow. But how can we as fathers know the direction we should be leading our families? I’m glad you asked! I believe one of the most effective ways to clarify the direction we should be heading today is to start with the end in mind. As we continue to improve our parenting education by taking parenting classes or perusing parenting magazines our confidence continues to grow. Eventually we arrive at a place in life where we feel able to make the correct parenting decisions.

By taking the time to consider clearly where we want our family to be in 10-20 years time, we can begin to clarify the type of family we need to build today. What are the things that are important to you as a man and leader of your home? By identifying the things that you value deeply you have already begun to define the type of future you are desiring for your family.

If you as a man value your health, you will lead your family in a healthy direction. If you value the benefits of a University education then you will teach your family to aspire to intellectual pursuits. If church life is important to you then you will impart your love for the church to your children. All of these areas, once identified in your own heart bring definition and clarity to the future destination of your family.

Alternately if you look at areas within your life and decide that they are not what you want for your family you can begin now to make the changes in lifestyle that will alter your future away from those areas. Each decision made brings the final destination a little clearer, a little more in focus. By checking periodically on the direction your family is currently headed you can ascertain whether or not you are getting closer to or further away from the destination you are desiring for them.

By starting with the end in mind we can begin our journey with confidence and by using wisdom we can make the desired corrections along the way that will ultimately bring us to our desired destination.