



# Dads' UNI

Understanding, Nurturing, Imparting

## INSIGHTS INTO MANHOOD



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# THE CHANGING ROLES OF MANHOOD

Most living things that grow start off in a seed form, usually in a smaller and less developed form than that which it will mature into, its the same way with men. From the moment of conception we begin a process of transformation that continues throughout our entire life as we mature physically, emotionally, intellectually and spiritually. Throughout this process we as men also take on a series of ever-changing roles, it is sometimes described as having to wear many different hats as we continue upon our life's journey. What follows is a list identifying some of the major roles we transition through in life as a man and what we learn through them.

## **The role of son**

We all start off wearing the hat of being a son. It is in this role that we begin to learn about the importance of respect and responsibility as we gain an understanding of the role that our father plays within the family. Father-son relationships ultimately create the next generation of father-son relationships, it is therefore an important time of learning in the life of every son.

## **The role of friend**

Throughout life we often make many friendships and understanding what being a friend entails is important if we are to ultimately maintain those relationships long-term. It is as we wear the hat of being a friend that we learn many lessons about loyalty.

## **The role of boyfriend**

When we finally make the connection with the girl who will become our future wife we begin to learn many new life lessons. Some of the more important lessons we learn as we wear the hat of being a boyfriend are about emotional sensitivity and treating our girlfriend with the honour she deserves as our future wife. We also begin to realise that for a relationship to truly work we must continue to work on ourselves as a man in the area of selflessness.

## **The role of husband**

After we are married our opportunity and the need to change ourselves is magnified, as we begin the life-long process of becoming one married couple rather than two single individuals. It is within the blessed sanctity of marriage as we wear the hat of being a husband that we learn much about the character trait of faithfulness. It is in this role especially that we need to learn how to lay down our own desires and understand the importance of living a life of service. As head of the home we have much to learn if we are to become effective in our leadership role.

## **The role of provider**

Traditionally most men wear the hat of being the principal provider for the marriage although in more recent times this is no longer universally accepted. Wisdom and practicality should be used as the couple assess each individual's earning capacity and choose what is right for their situation. It is often advantageous for both of them to work to help them become financially secure as a couple, especially in the early stages of marriage, before the arrival of any children.

## The role of father

Certainly wearing the hat of being a father is one of the most challenging but also most fulfilling aspects of a man's life. From the moment our child is born we will carry the responsibilities of fatherhood, as we lay down our own life for our family. It is in this role that we must attempt to master being an **example** to our children 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and although none of us do it perfectly we should strive toward this goal. It is as a father that we learn about the incredible **power of encouragement** in the life of a child, and that our words can either hurt or heal. We also learn the value of **consistency in discipline** and our need for **discernment** in our relationship with our children and their peer groups. Also as a father one of our most primary roles is that of **protector** of the family and especially the well-being of our children.

## The role of coach

As our children grow we often have opportunities to wear the hat of being a coach to them and to **pass on the skills and experience** that we have learnt in a particular sport or hobby. There is a great deal of satisfaction in watching your child pick up a skill you have taught them and reproduce it well on the playing field. Our role of encouraging them as a coach in their life often has a major influence in assisting the development of a long-term bond between you, that you can enjoy for years to come.

## The role of guide and counsellor

As we watch our children grow and stand with them through the many challenges that they will face we are able to **offer both guidance and counsel** to help them navigate through life's obstacles. As we wear the hat of being a guide to our child we are able to offer understanding and direction in specific situations to assist them. It is as we wear the hat of being a counsellor that we are able to assist their self-development into maturity. By not doing everything for them and sometimes allowing them to learn from their own mistakes along the way they learn to use reason to understand the consequences of their actions.

## The role of mentor

Later in life when our children have grown up and we have already achieved credibility as a guide and counsellor, we can begin to wear the hat of being a mentor. As an adult they should now be making their own decisions, but when they are facing things beyond their knowledge and experience they can still come to you for **advice on important matters**. The role of a mentor is that of a person with credibility, experience and wisdom that can assist another person through a respectful relationship as peers.

It is because of the **natural evolution** of the relationship over time that the father/mentor is no longer seen as an authority figure in their life that needs to be obeyed, but rather a friend to be looked to in times of need.

It is helpful to realise that as men we continue to grow into the roles of manhood along the way even as our children also grow. Although we may not be ready with all the answers for our children when they are born, we can confidently expect that our wisdom and understanding will grow through life's experiences and we will be able to be there for them in their times of need.

# THE IMPORTANCE OF TAKING SOME “ME” TIME

Throughout our hectic workaday lives as men and fathers it is not uncommon from time to time to lose a certain amount of perspective and clarity in relation to where you are going and what you want to achieve in life. It is in these times especially that you may find it beneficial and sometimes even vital for you to become a little selfish and schedule some ‘Me’ time. The most effective ‘Me’ time often involves getting away for a few days from everything and everyone that has constant access to you. It’s like putting up a sign that says ‘Gone Fishing’.

## **Do not disturb**

For many of us, our daily lives involve being plugged into everything electronic and media friendly, whether it be mobile phones, laptop computers and tablets etc. We conduct our business through many of these devices and they are extremely helpful in these endeavours, but they also place demands upon us both mentally and emotionally. I have found on occasions that the best way to maintain your long-term effectiveness in life is to unplug yourself totally for a time. This is often as simple as hitting the OFF button and trusting that the world will keep running without you.

## **Getting your mind free from stress and worry**

There are many things that men need to deal with daily in our modern lives and each of them take up room in our minds and emotions. Finding ways to free our thought life from stress and worry helps maintain our longevity and effectiveness in every area of life. I have found that writing down detailed lists of things we need to do and want to achieve helps get them off my mind and onto paper, so that I no longer have to be concerned about forgetting something important. Once I have written down my detailed list of everything that requires my time and energy in life, whether it be family, business or any other commitments you may have, I place it in my briefcase and shut it and lock it away in the boot of my car.

The physical action of locking away my written thoughts helps my mind understand and accept that all those areas are safe and secure. Each of these areas can be addressed later on at a more appropriate time, but for now I’m leaving them behind in the boot. Throughout your ‘Me’ time some of the things that are written down and locked in the boot may try to resurface in your mind, it is then that you must be adamant that they are not coming with you on this adventure.

## **Freeing yourself to dream**

Creativity is a God-given capacity that resides within each and every one of us, although some of us seem to be more adept at accessing it regularly. It is the capacity to come up with new and original ideas, but it is often only when we have effectively de-cluttered our minds that our true creativity can emerge. Once our minds are liberated from cares and concerns we find a new freedom and ability to dream creative dreams for our life through the use of our imagination.

## **Putting things into perspective**

Some of the more important times in my life when I served as a Church Pastor involved being present with families and friends of those who were about to die. Offering support and comfort to family members through these times gave me a perspective on what are the real and truly important issues that we all need to face in life. I have yet to meet a dying man who wished they had spent more time at work throughout their life, without exception I have found that the things they regret most is the lost opportunities to share their love with their family.

When it all comes down to it, most of the things we worry about in life lose their importance in the face of imminent death. To help identify the things that really matter to you in life, it may help to consider what you would miss the most if you died tomorrow. Once those things are clearly identified you will have achieved a new perspective, and are now more able to focus your energy and time into the areas that mean the most to you personally.

## **Plotting a new course**

It is only after we have achieved a fresh perspective on life and on the things that we hold dearest in our hearts, that we are able to build a better tomorrow. A better tomorrow is one that is based upon those things that will give us true and lasting fulfillment. Where do you want to be in 20-30 years time, and who do you want to share it with? What changes do you have to make to ensure that your relationships continue to prosper throughout your time of building your dream? A changed perspective automatically brings about changed priorities, and changed priorities require you to plot a new course in your life.

Once we have taken the time to put out the 'Do Not Disturb' sign, to de-clutter our minds and free ourselves to dream afresh then we are able to find a fresh perspective in life and plot a more sustainable and fulfilling course for our future.

# STANDING UP FOR WHAT MATTERS

It is important for us as men and fathers to pass onto our children the values and beliefs that we ourselves live by. Although our children will eventually make up their own minds as to whether our values are relevant to them as adults, it is vital that we instil in them a moral compass as to what is right and wrong in life. When fathers impart values and truths to their children it lays down a path for them to follow and a framework that they can build upon personally.

Throughout our own lives we learn many lessons as men, things we were glad we did and things we wished we had avoided as well. Passing on our own experience to our children can help them avoid many of the pitfalls that await the unwary traveller on the path of life. Lessons like not always trusting everything that people say is true, and that some people want to take advantage of them in life. But also that there are many good people in the world and they need to develop the ability to distinguish clearly between them.

Teaching our children about the value of honesty and kindness, and the ability we each have either to help or hinder our fellow human beings. Teaching them about the power of both giving and receiving forgiveness in life will help them immeasurably as it enables them to be successful in interpersonal relationships. Teaching them that for love to be sustainable it needs to be based on commitment and not merely on emotion. Teaching our children to be generous of heart by giving to those less fortunate than themselves opens up many opportunities in life when they will also be able to receive from the generosity of others.

Having the strength to stand up against injustice and working toward making our planet a better place for all to live will give them stature and influence in their community. Teaching our children the value of study and getting a good education will open up many doors to success in life. Teaching them the importance of having a healthy diet and exercising often will give them a better chance at living a long and enjoyable life.

The list of things we desire to teach and impart to our children may vary according to the principles we ourselves hold dear, but we as fathers have tremendous ability to influence them for good. There are many voices in the world calling out to our children. Some shine bright like diamonds but have a poisonous sting in the tail and our children are naive as to the real dangers out there.

As always the most effective way to impart our values and beliefs to our children is through our own life example. As we live our lives our children are watching and learning, and although none of us do it perfectly we should as a father strive to be the best person we can be. Our example as fathers has a profound effect on our children and they often choose to follow in our footsteps.

# WHAT ARE YOU PURSUING IN LIFE?

There are many voices in the world trying to get our attention and saying 'This is what will bring you happiness, or this is what you should be doing!' But as a man, a father and the leader of our family how should we live in this world? As we shoulder the responsibility of being a parent and raising children what path will ultimately prove to be the best for their future? Following is a list of some of the most popular modern life philosophies for your consideration:

## **The pursuit of money**

We live in a consumer society where the pursuit of monetary gain is the 'carrot' that many people reach for on a daily basis. They wake up each morning and subconsciously begin their quest to 'make a living' and 'bring home the bacon' so that their family is provided for. Although it is an honourable thing for fathers to provide for their families, should our life and thoughts be ruled by the pursuit of pieces of paper with pictures and numbers stamped upon them, is that all we are as human beings?

## **The pursuit of power**

It doesn't take too much imagination to see that there are many people to whom pursuing power and influence over others is a primary goal. Politicians and businessmen are probably the most visible of this type of person, all you have to do is turn on the television to see their impact upon our society. Power and money often seem to go hand in hand, like twins walking down the road of life. Often those with pleasing looks and personalities achieve notoriety and prominence in our society, but shouldn't wielding power be more about having a strong character, shouldering responsibility and metering out fairness to all ?

## **The pursuit of knowledge**

We also live in a society where the acquiring of knowledge is a highly prized commodity. From our earliest years we are set upon a path which often begins with Kindergarten, then onto Primary and Secondary Schools and often followed by College or University studies. The greater our educational standard the more we are respected in society, and we can expect to be paid commensurate with our qualifications. The accumulation of knowledge is commendable but shouldn't a person also possess the wisdom to apply that knowledge correctly?

## **The pursuit of pleasure**

Many in our modern society have chosen the path of 'Hedonism', this school of thought argues that the pursuit of pleasure in all its forms should be our fundamental pursuit. The proliferation of pornography across the world bears testament to its popularity, but is this the way we should live our lives? If pursuing physical/sexual gratification unhindered by any moral compass is the way we should live then why does man's conscience condemn him when he acts this way?

## **The pursuit of religion**

The word 'Religion' originally comes from the Latin word 'Ligare' which means to bind (As in tying someone up with cords) Billions of people around the world use the pursuit of strict religious practices or good works as a pathway to obtain enlightenment, inner peace or forgiveness of sin etc. Through a series of rites, rituals and observances many seek to attain a

state of spiritual righteousness to appease the wrath of God. Are those who seek God through strict religious practices or good works more qualified than others to define the path for our lives and family?

### **The pursuit of truth**

If a man had not walked on water and calmed the winds and waves with a word from His mouth then perhaps we as men could be forgiven for thinking that the pursuit of Money or Power was the path that we should follow. If a man had not healed every sickness and disease brought to Him and even raised dead people back to life, then perhaps we could not be blamed for thinking that the acquiring of Knowledge or the experiencing of Pleasure should be our ultimate goal in life. If a man had not proven the greatness of God's love for us when He allowed Himself to be condemned by the religious establishment and then willingly carried the 'sins of the world' upon His own body when He was crucified on the cross then perhaps mere Religious Observances or good works could be the way to enlightenment.

Now there is nothing wrong with attempting to acquire wealth or influence, experiencing pleasure or attaining knowledge or in doing good works, in fact we should all be involved with these activities in our life. But the central claimant upon our life is surely Him who gave us life, and revealed Himself to us through His Son. It is the miraculous transformation that comes to the human heart and the deep and abiding relationship with Him that should be our greatest goal in life. As fathers and the heads of our homes we can do no better than leading our families in the pursuit of truth.

# HANDLING SORROW AND GRIEF

## **Sorrows' entrance into mankind**

Sorrow and trouble have come as a direct result of the fall of man in the garden of Eden. Before the fall of man there was no sorrow or grief in Mankind, only the joy and peace of living in a Paradise filled with God's presence.

Read (Genesis 3 v 17-19)

We live in a fallen world where bad things often happen to good people, it is unfortunate but true that we will all face sorrow at some time in our lives. The question is not whether we will have sorrow, but how we will handle that sorrow. Many men do not naturally have the ability to handle sorrow, and feel a little overwhelmed when they feel great loss. We as men have a tendency to bottle up our emotions, thinking we may be perceived as weak or effeminate if we show grief, but actually the opposite is true. It takes great strength of character to come out from behind the facades we build around our emotions, and to be real.

## **God understands all**

God knows the pain we go through as men, and the struggles we face as fathers. He sees all, feels all, knows all. We often feel like we are alone, and no-one can understand the things we are going through, but there is One who understands, One who knows the fullness of all we are facing.

Read (Exodus 3 v 7), (1 Samuel 1 v 15)

## **Your sorrow and grief are real**

Sorrow and grief are very real emotions, they are a powerful life changing experience. If we try to ignore them they can become like a cancer inside us, that embitters us to everything in the world, and robs us of the peace and joy we long for. If we ignore these feelings, it may well be to our own detriment. It may also begin or continue a cycle in our lives of not allowing life's experiences to mould us into wiser men.

Read (Genesis 37 v 33-35)

We don't have to take our sorrow and grief to the grave, although the process to finding emotional stability and clarity may take some time.

## **God has walked with man experiencing our sorrow**

When Jesus Christ came into the world, He did not come as a king or a ruler who was cut off from the challenges of real life. He came as a humble carpenter, who lived and loved those around Him as we do. Before He went to the cross he experienced the deepest sorrow ever known by man, and came through ready to fulfill His destiny.

Read (John 11 v 33-36), (Matthew 26 v 38-39), (Luke 22 v 41-44)

## **The purpose behind sorrow and grief**

There is often a hidden purpose, or a positive outcome that is invisible in the midst of the storm of sorrow and grief. This purpose can often be seen only after the season has passed, and in the wisdom of hindsight.

Read (Genesis 45 v 5)

Joseph was a man whose life seemed to go from bad to worse, but in the end he realised that there was indeed an eternal purpose behind his path and a heavenly hand guiding and protecting him along the way. The experiences we face along life's path can be used to develop a deeper wisdom than we've known before, and enable us to reach out the hand of friendship to others suffering as we have.

Read (2 Corinthians 1 v 3-4)

## **God's willingness to help**

If God is our Creator, then He must certainly have the ability to help us, if only He were willing to do so. The life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ are an eternal proof to man that God is willing to help man, if only man will come to Him in prayer asking.

Read ( Hebrews 4 v 15), (2 Kings 22 v 19), (Job 5 v 17-27), (2 Chronicles 15 v 4)

## **God's promise for all who come to Him**

Prayer is the way we have contact with God. Because God is a gentleman and will not transgress man's free will, He waits until we humble ourselves and ask for His forgiveness and help. Then He can release His strength and comfort into our hearts, and begin to bring the emotional healing we desire.

Read (Philippians 4 v 6), (1 Peter 5 v 6), (John 16 v 33)

## **The answer to man's need**

The answer to the problem of sorrow and grief is found being able to allow God's peace to enter into your heart. He alone can take away the power of sorrow from man, and replace it with the peace our heart desires.

Read (Revelation 21 v 4), (Isaiah 35 v 10)

God alone has the power and ability to make sorrow and sighing flee away from our hearts, and to fill that space with peace and clarity beyond anything we have ever known.

## **The process**

The process of being able to receive God's healing and strengthening in our emotions is often outworked over a period of time, depending upon the individual and circumstances.

Nevertheless the process is an exchange, we must ask God to help us to yield or give our sorrow and grief to Him as we are experiencing it, and then we must receive His peace and comfort in place of it. God freely gives us of His Holy Spirit, that we may share in His peace and comfort, even in the midst of difficult circumstances. As men and fathers who are responsible for raising sons and daughters, it is important that we take the time we need to allow the healing process within our hearts.

# WINNING THE BATTLES OF LIFE

As men and fathers we will face many challenges throughout our lives, some of these will be overcome relatively easily while others may prove incredibly difficult to endure. Ultimately it is how we face these challenges that often decides whether or not we arise victorious from them. Being prepared before you ever face the battle gives you a far better chance of success.

Following are some suggestions to help us as fathers arise victorious from the battles that come our way throughout life:

## **Create a battle plan**

Every man who is raising children needs to be as prepared as they possibly can be for the unexpected events of life. Taking some time to consider how you would be able to react in different circumstances strengthens your overall effectiveness as a parent and improve your parenting decisions. Although its impossible to be prepared for everything that may eventuate in life, having a broad plan or strategy at least gives you a track to run on.

## **Protecting loved ones**

In medieval times there were many castles throughout England and Europe and these were usually owned by a regional Lord or Ruler. It was his role to protect the surrounding villagers by defending them from any invading forces of the enemy. When an enemy army was sighted the local populations were protected behind the walls of the castle or stronghold. One of the primary roles of a father is to protect his family at all costs, like those regional Lords we need to ensure that our loved ones are safe during difficult times.

## **Increasing security**

Wise Lords spent time improving the defences of their castles long before the enemy was ever sighted. They used methods and strategies that had proven successful over many years in stopping an enemy from breaking into their fortification. Some of these strategies included the digging of moats around the castles base and raising a drawbridge thereby cutting off the enemies access into the castle. As fathers we need to create an environment of peace and safety for our family, we should ensure that all access points into our home are secure.

## **Improving lines of sight**

In the peaceful years between attacks the Rulers and Lords often cleared the surrounding forest thereby restricting the possibility of surprise attacks, as the enemy could be seen coming a long way off. Farsightedness and awareness is still useful today in our parenting role and it assists us to be prepared early enough to effectively protect our family.

## **Creating alliances**

Building relationships with other regional Lords and Rulers was advantageous as they could combine their forces together to defend successfully or even attack the enemy. Wise fathers realise that creating friendships with your neighbours is helpful in case you need backup or advice in any situation you may face. Being part of a local dad network has many advantages including multiplied insights and ideas on fathering.

## **Preparing supplies beforehand**

One of the most effective ways to strengthen your ability to ward off an enemies attack in medieval times was to constantly have supplies laid up in storage in case of need. Food, water and weapons were set aside within the castle permanently and the supplies refreshed regularly. Often it might be those very reserves that gave you the victory as the enemy grew impatient and passed on to another region in search of easier pickings. As a father this could be realising that our financial position could change quickly if I'm made redundant at work etc. and setting some extra money aside for tough times.

Having a battle plan improves our ability to function in our role as a father and protector. It gives us the confidence we need to keep a cool head and make the right decisions in stressful situations. Life sometimes throws up surprises that come upon us like an attacking enemy, but being prepared beforehand gives us as fathers the best chance of arising victorious.

# MODERN FATHERING STYLES

As we grow into our role as a father, whether we are raising sons or raising daughters we will eventually develop our own parenting style. Practically put, this is the way we operate as a father, and is often influenced by the male role models we have had in life. You may find yourself repeating something that your dad said to you as a child, and this may or may not be a good thing depending upon their fathering style.

We often unwittingly take on the attitudes and mannerisms of our own fathers, although we are not bound to stick with those fathering styles if we do not find them beneficial to our own family.

What is your style of being a father? Following is a simplified list of some (but not all) of the most typical fathering styles adopted in modern times. Each of these styles of fathering brings with it a set of consequences that will either improve or trouble your future relationship with your children.

## **The absent Dad**

The absent Dad is characterised as the man who has fathered a child but takes little or no part in the child's life. This may or may not be his desire as sometimes relationship breakdowns result in the father being isolated from his child from no fault of his own.

## **The 'ask Mum' Dad**

The 'ask Mum' Dad is the father who although present in body, has yielded much of the daily decision making and disciplining of the children to his wife. He is often characterised by the man who is caught up with so many external things outside the family unit that he has nothing left mentally or emotionally for them.

## **The dictator Dad**

The dictator Dad is the father who runs the home like a Prisoner of War Camp and has the kids jumping incessantly through fear of punishment. This style of fathering is often characterised by shouting and threatening dire circumstances if directions are not followed immediately.

## **The pushover Dad**

The pushover Dad is the father that is so soft emotionally that his children are able to twist him around their little fingers and get everything they want by merely batting their eyelids and saying 'Please Dad!!!!'

## **The involved Dad**

The involved Dad is the father who has grasped the importance of taking up his role as head of the home to serve his family through leadership and self sacrifice. He ensures that he is involved in as many areas of his child's life as possible, taking an interest, encouraging and financing his child's development. He is also responsible for the loving application of discipline within the home, and one of his greatest roles is to lead by example.

It is possible for men to see elements of their fathering styles in more than one of those listed, or as the list is not comprehensive you may not see your style at all. The aim of this particular teaching is to help dads identify their own style of fathering and decide whether they wish to maintain it or try to improve certain areas that do not seem beneficial to their family.

How we as fathers are seen by our children is important, for not only do we shape young lives into adulthood but the relationship we have with them today will affect the relationship they will want to have with us in the future.

# PROTECTORS OF INNOCENCE

From the moment you transition from being a 'dad to be' to actually holding your new-born child in your arms you realise that your life has just changed dramatically. This beautiful baby, your beautiful baby, has come forth from the union of yourself and your wife and millions of new possibilities are opening up in front of your eyes. Although this child carries many of the genetic traits of both your wife and yourself, it is also without doubt unique. The child has its own fingerprints, different from every other person who has ever lived. The child has its own personality, its own natural gifts and abilities and its own dreams and hopes, but now all we see is a tiny human being struggling to become acquainted with this strange new world it has just arrived into.

As a new father we have a wonderful opportunity to take stock of our own lives, and to assess what is still and what is no longer important to us. Priorities change in our own heart when we perceive the value of this precious life we have been given to look after. It is important to realise that even though the challenges of being a father are sometimes difficult, the benefits we will receive are amazing. Fatherhood is not for cowards, but billions of men have done it before you and you are well able to become a great dad.

There are a number of main roles you will probably step into as a new father including Provider, Teacher and Friend, but one of the most important roles is that of Protector. Being a Protector of our families is one of the most natural roles we as men fall into, it seems to be hard-wired into our manhood. Keeping our families safe from the many dangers that we as men already know are in the world, is a role that requires diligence and discernment.

What are the things in the world that you as a new dad want to protect your child from? Physical danger? Sickness or Disease? Bad Influences? Wrong Relationships? Sadly to say there are many influences in the world that would take advantage of a young innocent life and twist its beauty and uniqueness into something to be regretted.

The best way to protect our children's lives is to build a stronghold of wisdom around them, so that even as they grow up and become more independent the life lessons that their father taught them will stay with them. Sharing life lessons and teaching our children is not a scheduled event each week, it happens daily, moment by moment as we impart our own lives and values to them through our own example.

How then should we live as fathers, if our greatest ability to protect our family comes from our own life example? Do you want to see your child smoking cigarettes? Then you as their example shouldn't smoke! Do you want your child to live a healthy and active life? Then you as their example should do the same! A father is a shining light to a child, an example to be followed, a life to emulate! Make a decision today to be the best example to your children that you can be, and in doing so you will go a long way toward fulfilling your role as a protector of innocence.

# THE CHOICES OF A FATHER

The future that we face tomorrow as a man and father is determined to a large extent today. Our individual decisions and lifestyle choices influence the way that society as a whole is heading, for we are re-laying the foundations of society with every new generation. This is why we as fathers must look closely at what we do or fail to do in this life, for we hold the future of the coming generations in our hands.

Becoming a father brings many changes into our lives as men, just as becoming a husband brings changes into our lives as single men. There is a responsibility that comes with relationships of any kind, and if we handle those responsibilities well our relationship has the best chance of prospering. If we treat our wife with love and respect we have a far greater chance of staying married than if we are uncaring or abusive towards her. If we build a loving and caring relationship with our children from the moment of their birth then there is a far greater chance that they will want to continue that relationship with us when we are old.

When a building of any size is constructed what is most important initially is the laying of a strong and stable foundation, so it is with building a family. There are many things that we can do as a father or fail to do that will either strengthen or weaken the foundations of our family. Every society as a whole is built up of individual families, they are the building blocks used in its construction. When individual families are strong then society as a whole is strong, when individual families fail then society also begins to fail.

Throughout ancient history we see the rise and fall of many influential societies and cultures, whether it be Greek or Roman, Babylonian or Assyrian. Each of these cultures had a time of influence upon the world stage and became the dominant 'super powers' of their time. But the influence of these 'super powers' waned as was eventually replaced by another, often because of the mistakes made by those who carried the responsibility to decide the future of that society.

Newton's Third Law states that 'for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction' or in other words there are consequences for everything we do in life, either good or bad. Good decisions lead to good consequences, bad decisions lead to bad consequences. Good parenting decisions are most often made by those who have taken the time to consider the path they want to lead their children along in life. Therefore we as fathers need to ensure to the best of our ability that we make well-informed and well-considered decisions if the future of our family is to be a successful one.

Each day we as fathers make choices that determine the direction that our family is going, and when enough families are heading in the same direction then society as a whole is too. The question I ask is this: Will the generations to come thank you for the decisions you are making today? Or will they regret decisions that ultimately proved to be short-sighted and resulted in destruction rather than blessing? Choose Well!

# RESOLVING PAST ISSUES

As we progress through life we meet many different types of people, some will become our friends for a time but fewer will be our friends for life. Personal relationships make up a huge part of our lives as human beings, how we treat our fellow man and how they in turn treat us. Everyone is wired differently, have had different upbringings and often hold different views than us, and in truth it is these differences that often make life interesting. Many may hold a different view than you on subjects like politics, morality or religion or a myriad of other subjects, and every now and then our differences bring us into conflict.

Showing respect for every person we meet in life is vital if we are to live on this world in peace, whether or not you agree with their world view. On issues that we feel deeply about personally, we often hold very strong views. When two people meet who both hold very strong but differing views on a subject there is often conflict. Conflict left unresolved can lead to one or both people having their feelings hurt, and for some this may leave an emotional scar. Those among us that are more sensitive emotionally are the most susceptible to being scarred. These are the type of scars that don't show on the outside, they can't be seen, but may be powerfully felt as they are scars upon our heart.

People sometimes do things or say things that hurt another person emotionally and these hurts often stay in their hearts for a lifetime. These hurts may often come as we attempt to resolve issues within our marriage and with our spouse or wife. Many people deny that they have had their feelings hurt, but still feel the pain inside if the other person is seen or mentioned in conversation. If we are the one who has been hurt emotionally we can either live with it or take steps to become free of the hurt, by implementing the process of forgiveness.

If we on the other hand have done or said something that has hurt another person, we have the responsibility to resolve the issue with them by asking for their forgiveness. This can sometimes happen many years after the initial event, but is no less powerful or useful. Forgiveness either given to another or received from another person is the pathway to peace both internal and external. "Peace on earth and goodwill among all men!" is proclaimed loudly at a certain time of the year, but it is a value that is best lived on a daily basis.

When a person is hurt emotionally they are far more likely to then go on to hurt someone else, for we all live out of who we are on the inside. There is a cycle that forms of people being hurt and therefore hurting others, and this cycle continues to multiply in society unless the process is broken. Forgiveness is the most powerful way to break this cycle and bring peace back into our personal relationships.

Conflicts between people are unfortunately inevitable but it's how we deal with these conflicts that can either set us and others free or leave us bound emotionally for a lifetime. For those who feel the need to be freed from the scars of the heart, I would encourage you to click on the link and read my full teaching on ['The Process of Forgiveness'](#).

# THE POWER OF CHOICE

Every man born upon the earth arrives with a great responsibility, and that is the ability to choose his own path in life. Our free will is a precious gift from God that is worth protecting at all costs, for there are those who would try to usurp our ability to choose and enforce their own will upon us. Protecting ourselves and our loved ones from enslavement to the will of malevolent forces is part of the father's role in family life.

Back in the Garden of Eden man was given a free will as part of his humanity when God breathed life into him. But man was also presented with choices either to obey or to disobey God's will. In the garden there was every kind of tree that was good for food and man was allowed to eat from any of them except the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. God gave man a free will and an opportunity to exercise that free will so that man could learn the benefits of obedience to God.

God is a kind and loving creator whose greatest desire is to love and be loved by those whom He has created. God had already made angels previously but they were not endowed with a free will, and therefore could not satisfy God's yearning for loving children. The ability to choose made man the perfect candidate to enjoy eternity with God, as it enabled him to live in a joyful relationship with his creator.

Lucifer was originally an angel of God, but when he formed sin within himself he was judged by God and thrown out of heaven and became Satan/Devil. Now Satan hates God and mankind whom God had made in His own image and likeness, and therefore Satan took it upon himself to destroy men as an act of revenge. Satan devised a cunning plan to deceive Adam and Eve into disobeying God's will by eating from the tree that they were not allowed to partake of.

As a result of Adam and Eve's disobedience the sinful nature of Satan and the Death that comes with it entered into man and they were banished from the Garden Of Eden. Now every child born on earth as descendants of Adam and Eve is born with both a free will and a propensity to use it for evil. Therefore God enacted His great plan of salvation for mankind through Jesus Christ that He might restore us back into relationship with Himself.

Satan continues to enforce 'his will' upon fallen man through the power of the sinful nature, and through it even though man may desire to do good, we all ultimately also do evil. The sinful nature compels man and drives man into evil acts against God and against each other. And yet there is still hope for man as we still retain our free will and can choose another path, God's path for our lives.

God is a gentleman and would never force Himself upon anyone, but offers the free gift of salvation to all who believe in His Son Jesus. Surely if we as men are to exercise our free will in this world it should be a choice that leads us to life and away from the death that the sinful nature brings. As a father we hold great influence over our own family and can lead them forward either towards the light or back into darkness, its our choice! Christian parents have the benefit of the wisdom and strength that comes through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

# BRINGING IT HOME

As a father we normally have the main role as breadwinner/provider for our family, and this most often requires that we spend large amounts of time away from them whilst at work. These times of separation are made easier in the knowledge that we are enabling our family financially to have food on the table and a roof over their heads. Fathers are usually the parent who is tasked with 'bringing home the bacon', but it's not just the bacon but often the cares and worries from our work lives that we also 'bring home'.

Unfortunately many fathers are being required to work longer and longer hours in jobs that are often in very high pressure environments. Man is not designed to function under high levels of stress for long periods of time. Unless a father develops the ability to off-load the cares and worries of his work environment before he gets home, he can often transfer some of that stress to his family. This will often have a negative effect upon the level of peace in the home, and the father will begin to alienate the very people he sacrifices daily to support.

Understanding the processes that continually build up the stress levels in our lives is crucial if we are to develop effective strategies to combat them. Identifying the tell-tale signs of stress build up helps men manage their mental and emotional state earlier and restricts the possibility of things spiralling out of control. Alleviating the existing stress levels through enacting procedures that bring peace into our hearts and minds ensures that we stay on top of the situation.

Often we are able to relieve stress build up by simply taking a few minutes and changing our thought patterns. This can be achieved by going for a walk or sitting in a park, many people find peace by entering into prayer or meditation. The key is to identify the actions that assist you in finding peace and release from the build up of internal stress; these actions may be different for each person.

Some simple suggestions that may assist you in arriving home ready to take up your all important role as a father:

- Take public transport to and from work and use the time to de-stress on the way home
- Get off the bus/train one stop early and walk home briskly, the exercise will do you good mentally and physically
- Find an employer who understands and promotes a work/family life balance
- Don't allow daily challenges to rob your focus from your ultimate goals
- Get out of the office for lunch as often as possible.

Ultimately fathers go to work to provide for the benefit of their families, and the finances they are able to 'bring home' enable the family to function properly. If the stresses of their work environment are not dealt with effectively before they get home it can pollute the peace of the home and the entire family may be impacted.

It is very important that we as fathers are able to put off our 'work worries' and be free enough mentally and emotionally to put on our role as a father to our children and husband to our wife.

These skills may take some time to develop but are definitely worth the time and energy it takes, as the results will benefit those you love the most.

# A LIFE OF HONOUR

I think one of the most beneficial ways for us as men to improve the way we feel about ourselves is to live a life of honour. The word 'honour' is rarely used in modern speech and understood even less in our society. To live a life of honour we as men must live by a code or belief in something greater than ourselves, something worth living for or even dying for.

Living a life of honour means living a life of integrity and being a man of your word even in the face of adversity. Standing up for those values you believe in doesn't always make you a lot of friends immediately, but what it does earn you is respect. When other men look at you they may not fully understand why you live this way, but deep inside themselves they often wish they had the strength and belief to live like you do. Being a man of honour goes a long way toward developing a healthy self-respect, and often adds meaning and a sense of fulfillment to our lives.

In the books of ancient times we see the knights in shining armour fighting off the dragon and saving the fair maiden in distress and we think that's heroic. We see Sir Walter Raleigh throwing down his cloak so that Queen Elizabeth 1 didn't have to get her shoes dirty while crossing over a puddle of water, and we think that's chivalrous. We see the Christians of the early church worshipping God in song as they were preparing to be martyred by being fed to the lions in the Roman Colosseum, and we think that's real faith.

As men we have an inherent desire to be a protector and defender of those weaker than ourselves, and it is often this compulsion that causes us to perform great acts of bravery. This desire stems from a deep place within ourselves where our core values exist, and reveals the true way that we see our world and how we believe the world should be. Living by these core values whether it be through acts of heroism, acts of chivalry or demonstrations of incredible faith, enables us as men to live a life of honour.

Living a life of honour can be something as little as standing up in a bus and giving your seat to a woman, or taking back the excess money to the store owner when you were under-charged for a purchase. Living a life of honour may mean telling the truth even though you know that you will suffer for it. Living a life of honour may mean defending someone who is being bullied or rescuing a child's cat that is stuck up a tree.

Honour is that indefinable something that rises up within a man when they see injustice in the world, and know that it is up to them to change it. Men of honour lead the way in the world, they shine as lights in a dark place and illuminate the path we are all called to walk upon. They are men that are known in their region as someone who can be trusted, and when the going gets tough they are the one everyone turns to for help or advice. We all have the opportunity to influence our world for the better and that opportunity begins with living a life of honour. Fathers have great influence upon the future direction that their children will choose in life, one of the best parenting decisions we can make is to live a life of honour.