



Dads' UNI

Understanding, Nurturing, Imparting

ASPECTS OF FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS



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THE POWER OF TOUCH

In many households around the world the Power of Touch is under utilised, 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 up new levels to a young child's mind through playing, touch between human beings exceeds it.

Now because of the world we live in and the widespread abuse of power in things pertaining to 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 can not learn and change as a man and become more of an affectionate father to our own children than we ever received as a child. Sometimes the pathway to our own 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 new-born 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 child 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.

DELAYING GRATIFICATION

As a father you have a huge say in deciding what you allow and what you don't allow in your own home. Each parent has to consider exactly what they will teach their children, for in doing so you will in a major way be shaping the future of their young lives. Every decision made has consequences, wise decisions well-considered usually result in positive outcomes, while rash decisions not thought through properly often have undesirable ramifications.

I have observed a growing trend of adults who are parenting toddlers and/or parenting children who consistently make decisions based upon supplying immediate gratification to their child. These parenting decisions are often made just to 'keep the peace', and avoid a 'behavioural melt down' in the middle of a department store. I don't think the parents realise that they are actually training their child that this type of behaviour is 'acceptable in society' and even 'required' in life if you want to get your own way. Their child will not thank them in the years ahead if they end up in a prison cell after having assaulted someone because they couldn't get their own way!

Many other parents get caught up in 'following trends' or the latest celebrity 'parenting styles' without any significant thought about what the results of those decisions will be. Giving your young daughter scantily clad dolls as a child will begin a train of thought in her mind that this is the way she should dress and act when she is older, because 'it's obviously alright with dad!'. The gift once given sows a seed thought in a young mind, a seed that will grow into maturity and shape a life accordingly.

A major part of being a parent is preparing your child for life as an adult. Allowing any child everything their heart desires without due consideration of the consequences that will ultimately follow is setting them up for massive failure as an adult. Delaying gratification is an effective way to train your child about the realities of life, that it often requires hard work and patience to achieve our goals in life and they don't just 'appear' because we want them to!

Self-control is only developed through having to control yourself! It is a character trait that must be exercised if it is to be developed properly. If we want our muscles to grow we have to exercise them regularly, they don't just grow big themselves unless we put in the hard work! Teaching your child to control their emotional outbursts is vital if they are to become successful in adult life, because no-one wants an employee who is 'out of control'.

There are 4 main steps in training up your child:

1. Teach them clearly what is and what is not acceptable behaviour! We must clearly articulate that there will be discipline for breaches of the boundaries.
2. Reinforce the training by utilising disciplinary tactics whenever they breach the boundaries that we have set up.
3. Appreciate their good behaviour with encouragement and praise.
4. Be consistent in enforcing both discipline for breaches and praise for their accomplishments.

Being a parent means that we can't just be the 'nice guy' all the time, there will be times when we as guardians of our children's future must be firm and say No! Every father wants his child to grow up and have a happy and successful life, delaying gratification is a big step toward helping them achieve it!

THE BENEFITS OF FIDELITY

We live in a world that has forgotten its foundations, and neglected those very things that could make it strong again. Many children are growing up today without really knowing their own father and some have never even met him. Is it any wonder that today's children struggle with a sense of identity and belonging, when the most important part of who they are and where they come from has been denied them. Now there are many reasons why couples break up and I'm not here to apportion blame, but to turn our focus toward the real victims of this catastrophe, the children.

The word 'Fidelity' is rarely used these days, but it has a depth of meaning that can empower your family with strength and endurance. 'Fidelity' means faithfulness to a person, cause or belief, demonstrated by continuing loyalty and support. The word 'Fidelity' also comes with the added sense that it is an act of honour and therefore to those who understand 'honour' it has a built-in power to bring about its own fulfillment by steeling our willpower with courage and self-sacrifice.

Consider if you will a world where a man and a woman fall in love and stay together all the days of their lives. They get married and have children and together they form a new family that loves and cherishes every member of that family, and refuses to allow that family to be divided or broken. This couple and this family are the strongest members of our society, and these are the reasons why:

- This couple has understood the value of true commitment to each other and will not allow anything to come between them
- They have both realised that although there will always be challenges in married life, that what they have is worth fighting for and 'the grass is not greener on the other side of the hill'
- They realise that when they got married they chose to lay down their own selfish desires and serve their spouse until they were parted by death
- They have become parents now and that life changing act has come with a great responsibility, a responsibility that they don't take lightly
- They realise that each of their actions have far-reaching consequences and they consider wisely before making rash decisions
- They realise that little eyes are watching them for clues and understanding of how to live life, and that if they set a bad example it will impact upon their own child's future
- They understand that one of the greatest things a parent can give his child is 'stability', and that this vital ingredient is required if a strong future is to be built
- They understand that the strength of their relationship to their spouse is the foundation of the home they are trying to build and will forever benefit or hinder their whole family.

So much of what we do or fail to do as parents will impact the lives of our children. Without doubt it is the parents who have both the greatest power and the greatest responsibility to shape the future of their child. Children prosper in a loving family environment where both parents are present and fully involved in the parenting process, and our faithfulness to our spouse enables us to build upon a firm foundation and grow the family we always wanted. If our

parenting goals include the raising of resilient children we should seriously consider the benefits of fidelity.

FINDING THE CONNECTION

I think one of the most wonderful aspects of being a father is experiencing those special times when you really seem to 'connect' with your child. These times can not 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.

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, it also has to 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 really 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 really 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 up our hearts in love continually to our children, those special times of bonding can be experienced more often. It might be found sitting together fishing by a riverbank, or 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 together, or taking the time to help a little old lady cross the street. These special moments can not 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.

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 can not assume that we know what our child wants unless we are firstly prepared to ask them. Being able to hear what your child is really saying is paramount if we are to effectively meet their needs in life. It is important that we as fathers do not 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 is 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 for eg. 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 a good listener 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 is someone to listen and hear what they are really 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.

5 BENEFITS OF TRADITIONAL MARRIAGE

What is Marriage really? I have heard it said on numerous occasions by the younger generation “it’s just a piece of paper”, and therefore by extension ‘not worth doing’. With so many people these days seeming to ‘opt out’ of the institution of traditional marriage, I thought it may be beneficial to explore some reasons why it may be advantageous for them to reconsider their stance on marriage. ” But what are the real benefits of marriage as opposed to other lifestyle choices? Without doubt one of the most effective parenting tips I can give you is to seriously consider the benefits that marriage brings to a family. What follows are 5 simple but powerful reasons that sets traditional marriage apart.

Marriage instituted by God

Genesis 2:23-24

And Adam said:

“This is now bone of my bones
And flesh of my flesh;
She shall be called Woman,
Because she was taken out of Man.”

Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

As soon as God created Eve from one of Adams ribs He ordained that their union should be permanent, this was a natural reflection of a spiritual truth. Through the physical consummation of marriage Adam and Eve’s union was already permanent spiritually speaking. Through ‘marriage’ God set in place a principle that laid a foundation for life on earth, a principle that would enable mankind to increase and prosper. Marriage between a man and a woman is the only physical relationship that has God’s seal of approval.

Marriage is a vow before God

Ecclesiastes 5:4

When you make a vow to God, do not delay to pay it;
For He has no pleasure in fools.
Pay what you have vowed—

Everything we do in life is done in the sight of God. Marriage is first and foremost a vow that we make as a man in the sight of our creator and by choosing marriage we are following the principle that God set in motion. We also recognise and accept that as a father and the head of our home, we will have to give an account to God about how we conducted ourself in our marriage. As the leader of the home we are expected to rule wisely and with compassion and mercy, showing God’s love to our wife and family. It is from God our heavenly Father that we must glean the wisdom and grace to become the best husband we can be, therefore it is vital that we continue to grow in our personal relationship with Him daily.

Marriage is a vow between a husband and wife

Malachi 2:16

“For the Lord God of Israel says
That He hates divorce,
For it covers one’s garment with violence,”
Says the Lord of hosts.
“Therefore take heed to your spirit,
That you do not deal treacherously.”

As we stand before the minister performing the marriage ceremony as a couple we are declaring a solemn vow to love and care for each other for the rest of our lives. This vow entails laying down our own selfish desires to ensure that our spouse is put first in every aspect of life. When both Husband and Wife commit to this life of selflessness they give their marriage every opportunity to prosper and grow throughout their lifetime together.

Marriage is the foundation of family

Genesis 1:27-28

So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. 28 Then God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it

Marriage is God’s way of establishing a sure foundation for ‘family’ to grow and prosper in the earth. A married couple who love and are fully committed to each other are the perfect environment for bringing up children. Within the safe confines of ‘marriage’ children grow up feeling secure and loved, knowing that ‘Daddy and Mommy love each other too!’

Family is the foundation of society

Psalms 103:17-18

But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting
On those who fear Him,
And His righteousness to children’s children,
To such as keep His covenant,
And to those who remember His commandments to do them.

Even as ‘Marriage’ is the surest foundation for ‘Family’, so ‘Family’ is the surest foundation for ‘Society’. The stronger each individual marriage is, the stronger ‘society’ as a whole is. Every builder knows how important a strong and stable foundation is when they are constructing a house, if the foundation is strong then the house can stand the test of time. So many of the problems we face in ‘society’ today stem from the fact that the family unit has broken down, and that often occurs as a result of a marriage that has broken down.

Traditional marriage as set out by God in the Bible has a blessing and an empowerment from Heaven to be successful and fruitful. It has been instituted by God as a foundation for ‘the family unit’ on earth, a foundation that enables it to prosper. As individual families prosper so our society prospers, and we all reap the benefits of that stability.

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? 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 fathers hope is 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 a unique individual. Some have blue eyes while others have brown, some have advanced co-ordination 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 in society, while others are the life of every gathering and enjoy being in the limelight.

Understanding how each particular 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 really wants to play soccer and score goals on a football field. Nor is it advantageous continually pushing 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 in? I believe the answer lies in 3 main areas:

1. Communication
2. Observation
3. Trial and Error.

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 actually identify the real areas as opposed to the whims of childhood.

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.

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 own desires for their future roles in society we open the door for them to follow their own dreams and ultimately what every father hopes for is their child's happiness.

WHAT DID YOUR FATHER TEACH YOU?

Throughout life we receive information and learn from many different areas, and some of the most influential areas are from our personal relationships. The most influential relationships we have initially as a child are with our parents and especially with our father. Normally in his role as the head of the home we look to him, as the leader and mentor more than anyone else. It is from our father that we as men learn many of the attitudes and values of life, and these greatly influence who and what we become in our own life as men. We often use our father's life example as our parenting guide and his parenting methods as our own blueprint for fatherhood.

Now it is important to realise that for a number of generations the skills required for successful fatherhood have been on the decline within our society. I have written about this previously in the teaching called [The Case For Change](#). We as fathers may need initially to decide whether we want to model our fathering role upon the example of our own father, or another male figure within our lives.

If you have had a great father and dear friend or even a good father who tried hard you should be able to glean at least some positive points from their fathering example. However there are many men in our society today who either had no father figure at all or one who lacked even the most basic skills, and in those cases you may want to look for another male figure to model your fathering from.

What did your father teach you? If he was loving and kind, supportive and encouraging then I would dare to guess that you share many of those traits in your own character today. But if your father was emotionally cold toward you or violent you may unfortunately still carry those negative influences within your life and find it difficult to 'connect' emotionally with your own kids.

It is from our fathers that we as men learn many of the concepts that we use in daily life. Concepts such as a healthy work ethic, showing respect for authority, protecting and honouring females as the 'weaker sex', standing up for what is right, helping those in need, taking care of your mates, and 'a fair go for all'.

I see that the lack of really good role models in our society as both a cause and affect of generations of decline in fathering skills. But it is also true that even the best dad will still have faults and failures, and we as men will need to be very discerning as to what to glean and what to leave behind from their example.

There is however hope for us all as men and fathers, and an example available for us to model that is without fault or mistakes. Jesus came to show us that we all as men have access to 'our heavenly Father', and that it is from Him that we need to learn the most important lessons in life. I have found that the insights and understanding that I glean from my daily Bible reading are a light in a dark place and both inspire and comfort me in my fathering role.

FATHERS MAKING FATHERS

Sometimes in life it's good to pull back a bit and look at the wider view. Like using a wide angle lens on a camera, it allows you the opportunity to see things that you might miss ordinarily, because of your proximity. Understanding how God sees our role as fathers today requires us to look from a historical perspective of how God dealt with mankind from creation.

God has always had a parenting plan. It began in the Garden of Eden and will continue throughout all eternity. When God formed Adam from the dust and breathed life into him, he created him with an inbuilt ability to have children; this of course was designed to be through intimacy with his wife Eve.

God our heavenly Father created Adam the first earthly father, with the ability to have sons who would grow and also become fathers in their time. A natural cycle was begun in Eden that we are now part of and which will continue into the future.

Unfortunately in our modern society we see that not every man who fathers children biologically actually takes up his responsibility and role as a father to raise his children in the right way, and sometimes not at all. Providing the seed for children without actually taking responsibility for the child that you have created would, in previous generations, have been seen as shameful and dishonourable, but is almost common place today. Whether we are raising boys or raising girls, doing our best as single parents or Co-parenting, we as the child's father need to be present in their lives.

There are also many men who honestly desire to do the right thing and raise their children, but are hindered or even prevented by divorce or separation from their spouses. It is also very apparent that many men find themselves in extremely difficult situations, when the tremendous love they feel for their children is restricted from flowing freely.

Men have a God given ability and drive to create the next generation, but without the guidance and wisdom of our heavenly Father I ask the question what will the next generation be like? God originally created Adam in His own image, but after Adam and Eve fell into sin and left the Garden of Eden, the bible reveals that Adam had children in 'his' image, a fallen image and poor reflection of God's original creation.

Our own children like us are born with a fallen nature, and a potential for both great good or terrible evil. How important then is it for us as fathers to guide them on the right track in life, so that their lives do not become a shipwreck on the rocky shores of life. Even the best hopes of fathers can be lost if they are not provided with the right resources and wisdom to guide their children.

Have you ever played Chinese whispers? It's a game where you line up about ten people in a row and whisper a message in the ear of the first person and ask them to pass it on likewise to the second and so on. By the time the message reaches the tenth person it is often very funny to see how the original message has been changed.

This concept shows that it is very possible to lose some or even much of a message throughout the process of time. The message that we as fathers pass to our children, they must then pass to their children, who will also pass to their children.

How important is it then to have a written record such as the Bible so that sound fathering principles can be confidently passed on to each successive generation, and to also have the Author of those words watching over us and ready to help in time of need.