

CHRISTIAN HEADS, HEARTS, AND HANDS

ARTICLES TO FORM US AS FOLLOWERS OF "THE WAY"

Being a Father Isn't Easy, But It is Simple

by Jared Olivetti

This post is intended to be an encouragement to fathers and fathers-to-be. Sometimes it helps me to boil things down to their essence, to bypass long books and deep discussions to get to a simple list of what I ought to be doing. As I've reflected lately on being a father, it strikes me that I've never seen anyone who did the things on this list fail as a father. Certainly there's more that could be written--and I know full well that making it simple doesn't make it easy--but here is what I believe to be the essence of the call of Christian dads.

Love the Lord Just as it is impossible to lift others higher than where you're standing, so it's virtually impossible to help your children while you remain distant from God. Not only for the sake of your own joy and spiritual health, but for your children's sake, draw close to God by all the means He's given.

Love your wife Our youth-centered culture is constantly trying to invert the structure of our homes, making children the center and the implicit leaders. But as loving as it seems to be hyper-attentive to your kids, it's far more important for you to love your wife, to build your home around the marriage relationship, not the relationship between parents and kids. In your love for your wife is your children's best example and great security.

Lead family worship It doesn't need to be extravagant or long or particularly deep. But it does need to be consistent and it does need to be led by you. Set a time, sing some Psalms, read a Bible passage, ask each kid a question about the passage, and then pray together. Even if this wasn't the Biblical pattern for Christian families, could you give me a decent argument why it's a waste of time or unnecessary?

Maintain a high commitment to the church One of the great tragedies of American Protestantism is the failure of fathers to lead their family into the church. Not only for God's glory but for your children's good, develop, maintain and practice a very high commitment to your church family. In years to come, may your kids be able to say, "We always knew that if the church doors were open, we would be there."

Be affectionate and communicative with your kids You can google the statistics on your own, but even the least spiritual studies tell us that, beyond the baseline of simply having a father, whether a child received affection from their father and whether their father communicated with them well are powerful indicators of their future well-being. Don't be a stoic. Tell your kids why you're proud of them. Hug them. Talk to them.