

Wanted: Fathers Who Lead!

It has been said, "It is one thing to father a child and it is altogether another thing to be a father to your child." What does it mean to be a good father to our children?

Jesus Christ came to show us the Father who is in heaven. "*Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?*" (John 14:9).

All that Jesus is the Heavenly Father is: perfect, loving, kind, full of grace and truth, forgiving, full of wisdom and power, full of mercy and compassions. Jesus was firm. He lived with a purpose and a mission. He was honest and transparent. He expressed his disapproval of those who professed faith but were hypocrites.

Fathers, let us learn from the Heavenly Father. We should emulate Him. As much as is humanly possible, we should be to our children what our Father God is to us.

The writer of 1 John 2:14 said, "*I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning.*" Fathers, our first need is to know the Heavenly Father. We must emulate Him. We can then be to our children what our Father God is to us.

Consider these characteristics of our Heavenly Father:

1. He is a Father of love – John 14:21; 16:27; 17:23, 26.

Be a father who loves. It has been said that the best thing a man can do for his children is to love their mother. Love expresses itself in sacrifice and kindness. Love is the grace that makes ordinary things meaningful, dull moments shine, heavy burdens lighter, and failures forgivable.

2. He is a Father who has expectations – 1 John 5:3.

Fathers love your children, give direction and guidance. Teach your children about God. Teach them the Bible. Train them to obey. Teach the law of deeds and consequences (sowing and reaping). Teach them that we reap a good harvest by sowing good seeds.

Fill their minds with lessons from history. Show your children how to make value judgments as well as moral decisions. After you decide between right and wrong, help them to decide how to choose between the good and the best.

We know it is right to give a portion of our earnings to the Lord. It is wrong to steal from God or man. Show them that how much you give will be according to what you value. They will see this principle work out in the reading material you buy, your music, the vehicles you drive, and the clothes you wear.

3. He is a Father who disciplines His children – Hebrews 12:7.

Fathers, discipline your children. This is not a popular principle in our society. The Bible says God corrects those He loves (Hebrews 12:7). To refuse to discipline is to hate your child (Proverbs 13:24). Do not think of discipline as a punishment but as a correction that will help your child think before he acts. Timely correction given in love brings blessing to the giver and receiver. "*Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest; yea, he shall give delight unto thy soul*" (Proverbs 29:17).

4. He is a Father who forgives His children – Matthew 6:14.

Fathers, forgive your children. Forgiveness is refusing to bring up past offenses that have been corrected. It is pardoning the guilty, canceling the debt, and being reconciled to your child. The fruit of forgiveness is reconciliation. After you have addressed the misdeed and it has been corrected, let your child know he is freed from the guilt. Express love, acceptance, and good will. Commend honest effort and improved behavior. Forgiveness builds trust and makes future discipline more effective.

5. He is a Father who cares and provides for the needs of His children – Luke 6:35.

Fathers, provide for your children. *“If any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel”* (1 Timothy 5:8). Providing for the family implies sufficient food, clothing, and shelter, as well as providing for the spiritual needs. Providing for your families involves learning frugality and how to make money reach. It may mean doing without the nonessentials our culture deems necessary.

Providing for our families does not give us the option to believe it is the government’s responsibility to do so. We are thankful for a government that responds to needs and emergencies. The Bible teaches that we should identify with the people of God who are willing to share when we are in need.

6. He is a Father who communicates with His children – 1 John 1:3.

Fathers, communicate with your children. Talk to them about your walk of faith and the lessons you learn as you come to the light. Talk to them about your failures and the lessons you needed to learn. Talk to them about your convictions and your desire to serve God. Bring the Gospel of Jesus Christ into your daily experiences, and show your children how it works.

Communication involves listening. Our heavenly father hears our prayers. We need to listen to our children’s talk, to their requests, and to their troubles. Let them know you are there for them and that none of their problems are too small or too big to share with you. Teach them the truth about the Word of God and the need to know the Word of God. Teach them the fear of God and the value of the Christian brotherhood.

7. He is a Father who gives good gifts to His children – Matthew 7:11.

Fathers give good gifts to your children. Think of all the good gifts the Heavenly Father has given you. This includes sunshine, rain, health, a sound mind, and the freedom to love and be loved. The list expands when we include the spiritual blessings that come when we place our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The best gift you can give your children is a godly example. Prove to them the power of Jesus Christ that enables you to live free of covetousness, pride, envy, lust, ill will and discouragement. Give them lessons in diligence, economy, and good work ethics. When our first child was born, my father-in-law told us that if we teach our children submission and industry, we will have taught them the two greatest principles of life. Dependability, trustworthiness, and contentment are more valuable than a new car or pickup.

8. He is a Father who rewards His children – Matthew 6:4, 6, 18.

Fathers reward your children. This may seem like a repeat of what we said earlier about gifts. However, rewards differ from gifts. Rewards are earned and gifts are not. Praise your children for their obedience and cooperation. Thank them for completed tasks..

As with any other virtue, we need to be discreet that we do not leave a reward mentality. Yet our children need to hear our approval and words of appreciation and commendation. To express disapproval but never approval will discourage children from doing their best. If we only punish for disobedience, we are, in essence, only rewarding them for failure. Deal positively with your children and experience the rewards.

9. He is a Father who is impartial to His children – Luke 6:35.

Fathers, be impartial to your children. Each child is uniquely different. They differ in personality and capabilities. Some excel in academics and others in art. Boys and girls respond differently.

Partiality and favoritism in any degree destroys respect, confidence, and trust. Favoring one child and disfavoring another produces discouragement and defeat. Every child needs to feel fully accepted and appreciated.

10. He is a Father who suffers with His children – Isaiah 63:1.

Fathers, suffer with your children. To suffer effectively with the hurting is the ultimate expression of love. It is hearing the sufferer’s cry and listening to his emotional heartbeat. Growing up isn’t always easy. Our children need our understanding and sympathy in facing personal failures. Some face handicaps and need our guidance in dealing with them.

Fathers, we need to be there for our children. This takes time and devotion. Listen to them. Ask them about their friendships and school activities. Be considerate of their fears and hurts. Give them answers.

Yes, our heavenly Father cares deeply about his children—about you and me. Should we not care just as deeply about our own children? Since our children largely develop their concept of God from us fathers, should we not want to be everything a godly father can be? You are your children’s role model. I want to be a father that will lead my children to bless God and call Him Abba (Papa) Father. Thank you, Jesus, for showing us the Father.