

Title: Fathers

Text: John 14:6-10; Matthew 6:9

Main Point: How to develop as a godly father.

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Series: None

INTRODUCTION

There are different ways to talk to fathers biblically. The Bible speaks to the importance of fathers in relationships with younger children. Not only the Bible, but also those who guide younger fathers recognize this crucial window of time. Engaged and loving fathers positively affect a child's cognitive development, language development (through talking and reading to the child), social and emotional development (risk-taking, confidence, and frustration tolerance), and academic outcomes. (These statements come from multiple studies.)

The Bible also speaks to fathers of teenagers (especially the book of Proverbs and Ephesians 6:4). Fathers of adult children likewise find wisdom in the Bible: For example, how to release a child into adulthood (Genesis 2:24), a father finding God's forgiveness for past and future regrets (Psalm 32:5), and how to finish well as a witness to your children (2 Timothy 4:7).

The Bible addresses all of these seasons and conditions of a father's life. As Castine works to grow godly men, women, marriages, and the next generation to reach the world, developing godly fathers is crucial. Because I cannot address the many aspects of fatherhood in one sermon, I have chosen to focus today on the central question: "What is a father?"

WHAT IS A FATHER: WHERE TO BEGIN?

1. I ask AI the question, "What is a father?" Here are its answers to the question.
 - 1.1. "A father is a man who has contributed biologically to the creation of a child. In this sense, he is the male parent."
 - 1.2. "A father is someone who raises, mentors, and cares for a child—whether or not there is a biological connection. This includes adoptive fathers, stepfathers, and father figures."
 - 1.3. "A father is about providing — meeting physical, emotional, and spiritual needs, protecting — offering safety and security, guiding — teaching values, wisdom, and life skills, and loving — showing consistent, sacrificial care."
 - 1.4. "More deeply, being a father is about: Teaching values, wisdom, and life skills, and loving — showing consistent, sacrificial care."
 - 1.5. "A concise way to say it: a father is not just the one who gives life, but the one who helps shape it."
2. I like the above definitions. However, what is missing, for me, is the source of these expectations. Many in current American culture disagree with this composition of a father. Can each generation decide how they wish to define a "father" and disregard what they dislike, and still do well? I say no: this approach will not work in the long term.

3. To my point, here is an example of the current moral condition regarding fathers (also mothers and families).
 - 3.1. This month [June 2026], the New York Legislature passed the “‘Gestating Parent’ bill S9316, which will replace terms like ‘mother’ and ‘father’ in certain state laws with gender-neutral language, specifically, ‘gestating parent’ and ‘non-gestation’ parent, and change ‘paternity’ to ‘parentage.’” The bill awaits Governor Kathy Hochul’s signature. ([New York Bishops Say Gender-Neutral Language Law ‘Mocks the Foundation of the Family’ | National Catholic Register](#))
 - 3.2. I strongly disagree with this bill. I pray that Governor Hochul does not sign it.
 - 3.3. Obviously, the New York Legislature thinks it can define what it means to be a father. How does a father in New York react to such legislation? Is the definition of what it means to be a father only a cultural construct? Can any society choose its value system? Should dads attempt to remain neutral and just flow with the cultural stream wherever it takes them?
4. For me, the questions distill to one answer: Are you a Christian? If a father says “no,” his worldview of fatherhood is constantly fluctuating. If he says “yes,” he does not expect any cultural “expert” to determine what it ultimately means to be a father. The Christian father defines his understanding from a moral compass located outside any cultural system.
5. The Christian father must first look to the Bible to answer the question, “What is a Father?”

WHAT IS A FATHER: CHRISTIAN DADS LOOK FIRST TO THE BIBLE, NOT THE CULTURE

1. On this Father’s Day, as taught by Jesus, Christians should continue to use and defend the title “Father/father” despite cultural and theological pressure to find a different language to describe God.
 - 1.1. For example, Dr. Dorothy Ann Lee claims: “I take as a starting point the view that the term ‘Father’ is a symbol rather than a literal description of divine essence, in line with contemporary feminist theological thinking that sees exclusively male imagery for God as idolatrous (e.g., Johnson: 33–41). The Christian tradition has tended to equivocate [ambiguous, unclear, or misleading] on the gender of God. On the one hand, the iconography [symbols and images in art], both verbal and pictorial, has been overwhelmingly male, creating the impression that the God of Israel is a male deity. On the other hand, the first creation account presents both female and male as made in the divine image (Gen 1:26–27). . . . Yet the Judeo-Christian tradition, at its most reasonable, knows that God cannot be confined to the specificity of one gender, despite the weight of its theological representation. (Dorothy Ann Lee, “The Symbol of Divine Fatherhood,” ed. Adele Reinhartz, *Semeia* 85 (1999): 176–178.)
 - 1.2. My one comment regarding Dr. Lee’s position is that God the Father and the Son, Jesus, chose to use the term “Father” to communicate and reveal Himself to the world (rather than “mother” or other terms available) and taught His followers to do likewise. I am not dismissive of the harm many carry from a terrible human father. The biblical answer, however, is not to abandon the term but to separate a man’s actions from the holiness of God as Father. His role as Father is defined by complete love and holiness, and not the evil actions of human fathers.

WHAT IS A FATHER: DADS STUDY THE LIFE OF JESUS

1. On this Father's Day, Jesus models what it means to be a father.
 - 1.1. John 6-10, "Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.' Philip said to him, 'Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.' Jesus said to him, 'Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works."
 - 1.2. Dads, if you wish to grow into a godly father, study Jesus in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and especially John. When you do, you discover qualities that should increasingly define your role as a father.
 - 1.2.1. The fundamental character of Jesus is His obedience to His Father's will in every circumstance. As fathers, we seek to represent God in our work, actions, character, parenting, and leisure. We learn from the Bible how to be godly.
 - 1.2.2. Jesus combined His obedience with self-giving love, displayed in service to others, especially the impoverished. As fathers, this should be true when we are tired, overworked, and wish to escape the pressure of being a dad.
 - 1.2.3. Jesus also modeled the balance of strength and tenderness and was approachable to His followers. Dads also should seek to be an example of strength that does not make their wives and children afraid. They should be dads who their children come to first for wisdom and advice.

WHAT IS A FATHER: CHRISTIANS CANNOT SURRENDER THE WORD

1. Jesus taught the importance of understanding God as our Father.
 - 1.1. Matthew 6:9, Jesus said, "Pray then like this: 'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.'"
 - 1.1.1. "Our Father" was startling to Jesus disciples. In all the recorded prayers of Jesus in the gospels, He addressed God as "Father," with one exception: on the cross, Jesus, instead of "Father," said, "My God." Now, in teaching them to pray, He invites them to share life with His Father, an idea no first-century Jew could readily comprehend. The same Father that Jesus modeled and prayed to, the disciples were to know as "our Father," and to share in the relationship Jesus had with His Father.
 - 1.1.2. In this prayer, Jesus invites His followers to approach God as Father, as He did.
2. By extension, the Bible often describes the role of fathers (and mothers) who are to model their Father. To forfeit the word, Father/father, is to begin a drift away from the Bible.