



# **SPIRIT- EMPOWERED DAD**

**A TARGETED DISCIPLESHIP SERIES FOR MEN**



# SPIRIT- EMPOWERED DAD

DEVELOPED BY THE  
**Assemblies of God**  
**Men's Ministries Department**

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# SPIRIT-EMPOWERED DAD

## START HERE

**Spirit-Empowered Dad has been created to assist every man in the development of becoming a healthy dad. Becoming a Spirit-empowered father is the most important position or appointment anyone on the planet could receive. Your effectiveness in your role could make or break your child in the future. Your children will model their lives after your example when it comes to living life, how they treat their spouses, what they will do for a living, how they will serve God, and how they view themselves as people.**

Your role as a Spirit-empowered dad can be the greatest time of your life. Unfortunately, some men view parenting as a mother's job, and every time she leaves the house, he feels stuck at home to babysit. What a tragedy!

As their father, you must seek to discover the individual personality of each of your children and work to bring out the best in your kids by being their biggest fans. You cannot be just one of their friends. They may have lots of friends, but they only have one dad.

Your kids are a precious gift from God, and you are charged to take care of them for Him. He has given you a tremendous responsibility to nurture and teach your children to know and love God. Our goal for **Spirit-Empowered Dad** is not just to help you raise great kids but to raise kids who become great adults.

Each lesson has four sections. The first is called **SIGHTLINE: Align the Target** and gives an overview to the subject. The second section is called **CROSSHAIR: Focus the Target**, and it helps you bring the subject into clearer focus. The third section, called **BULLSEYE: Hit the Target**, is intended to bring the entire study into clearer focus. The fourth section is called **Next Step**, which is designed to help you deepen your relationship with God by taking measures necessary to reach your goal. This section offers an idea you can use to apply your new knowledge in an action step. Men's Ministries realizes that not all relationships are created equally. If these action steps seem too difficult, simply adjust your next step so it will better fit into your relationship grid with your child.



These lessons have been built using several resources to provide you with an in-depth study without having to purchase every single resource. However, there are a few recommended tools available for purchase that will enhance your engagement with the lessons:

- FireBible®: English Standard Version® ([www.MyHealthyChurch.com](http://www.MyHealthyChurch.com))
- Journal
- Colored Pencils
- Fine Point Pen

The ultimate goal of this study is to equip you to walk in Christ and grow as the priest in your home, church, and marketplace as a **Spirit-Empowered Dad**. By building a strong foundation for your own life as a spiritually healthy disciple of Jesus, these lessons will also equip you to lead your family safely through life's storms and battles.

Dads are not handed an instruction manual when their children arrive. Many men fear four things prior to becoming a father. One, that they will not be as good a dad as their dad was. Two, that they will be as bad a father as their father was, and that their children will grow up feeling like they do about their own dad. Third, that since their dad was not present in their lives, they do not have a good role model and so are at a complete loss as to how to be a good dad. And fourth, that because of their weaknesses, their children will not be able to love them.

As you develop into a Spirit-empowered dad, your sons will grow up wanting to be like you. Your daughters will grow up wanting to marry someone like you. Men's Ministries has a passion to reverse one of the most significant problems facing America - fatherlessness. Generation after generation of children fall prey to the same flaws as their father. This is a call for dads to protect their children from the hurt and harm of the outside world. This is a call for men to sharpen their skills so their children benefit from having dads who have been trained and empowered by God to raise the next generation.

In these lessons, you will discover core practices which will help you develop into a "worthy" dad of your home, church, and marketplace. The goal is for you to use this resource often, measuring and building your spiritual strength. Men's Ministries does not give a prescriptive formula to follow for developing into a Spirit-empowered dad because we believe every man is at a different place in his journey. However, each man, with counsel from his pastor,



should seek out the appropriate next steps as he continues to mature in Christ. Men's Ministries believes the Holy Spirit will guide you in how best to use **Spirit-Empowered Dad** in your life. As Paul states, "You have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator" (Colossians 3:9-10 ESV).

## For Group Leaders

As you plan to use this material in a group format, below are some tips to help you get the most from these lessons:

- Determine who will be the group leader. The leader will be responsible for making copies, coordinating meeting times, and facilitating discussions.
- The group leader should select individuals to read aloud the **SIGHTLINE** and **CROSSHAIR** sections.
- Before a session begins, the group leader should read through the questions in the **BULLSEYE** section. Many lessons have more content than can be covered in one session, so the leader may choose to use only some of the questions or assign group members to work through some or all of the questions before arrival.
- If your group is very large, dividing into groups of three to four people is the best way to work through selected questions from the **BULLSEYE** section for 30 to 40 minutes. These groups should also commit to work together throughout the week.
- If you've divided into smaller groups, rejoin the entire group together after small group time. Discuss as a large group a few of the selected questions from the **BULLSEYE** section for 10 to 15 minutes.
- Finally, the leader is responsible to hold group members accountable for completing the reading before each session and ensuring that they are writing in their journals.



## **Lesson Breakdown**

### **Start Here**

**Lesson 1: A Spirit-Empowered Dad Provides Spiritual Leadership**

**Lesson 2: A Spirit-Empowered Dad Is a Man of Integrity**

**Lesson 3: A Spirit-Empowered Dad Guides His Family's Spiritual Journey**

**Lesson 4: A Spirit-Empowered Dad Serves with Humility**

**Lesson 5: A Spirit-Empowered Dad Loves His Children Like God Loves Him**

**Lesson 6: A Spirit-Empowered Dad Creatively Communicates His Love**

**Lesson 7: A Spirit-Empowered Dad Loves His Children's Mother**

**Lesson 8: A Spirit-Empowered Dad Makes Time for His Children**

**Lesson 9: A Spirit-Empowered Dad Helps His Children Develop in All Areas of Life**

**Lesson 10: A Spirit-Empowered Dad Knows Why His Children Misbehave**

**Lesson 11: A Spirit-Empowered Dad Helps His Children Learn Self-Control**

**Lesson 12: A Spirit-Empowered Dad Balances Discipline with Grace**

**Lesson 13: A Spirit-Empowered Dad Challenges His Children to Dream Big**

**Lesson 14: A Spirit-Empowered Dad Is His Children's Biggest Cheerleader**

**Lesson 15: A Spirit-Empowered Dad Helps His Children See Beyond Themselves**

**Lesson 16: A Spirit-Empowered Dad Makes a Lifetime Commitment to His Children**



# SPIRIT-EMPOWERED DAD

## Lesson 1: A Spirit-Empowered Dad Provides Spiritual Leadership

**Main Idea:** Dad should be the spiritual leader in his home. In this lesson, you will learn how to develop your personal spiritual leadership.



### SIGHTLINE: Acquire Your Target

The spiritual development of the family is usually linked directly to the spirituality of the dad. Dads should provide for the emotional and physical needs of their children; however, children also have spiritual needs, and a dad should be equally concerned about them. A dad who wants his children to be spiritually minded must be an example of one who is spiritually minded. If dads communicate to their children the philosophy of “do as I say, not as I do,” they will lose the respect of their children and their leadership will be ineffective.

The Bible has much to say about leading by example. Paul instructs Timothy to be an example in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity (1 Timothy 4:12). Paul encourages the church at Philippi to follow after his example (Philippians 4:9). For dads, being in right relationship with God themselves is the first step in leading by example. The Bible provides the pathway.



### CROSSHAIR: Focus On Your Target

Becoming a godly leader for your family simply means that, as a Spirit-empowered dad, you do your best to reflect the character of God as revealed in the Bible. You can discover from the Bible that as a man you have a body, soul, and spirit. It is your spirit that is able to communicate and be in a relationship with God. Through sin, the world’s relationship with God is broken. God sent Jesus to the world so that relationship could be restored (John 3:16).

As a Spirit-empowered dad, when you repent of your sin, believe in Jesus as your Lord and Savior, and decide to follow Jesus, you will be changed dramatically. The Bible describes you as a **new creation** (2 Corinthians 5:17). This is when you become spiritually alive. If you are going to lead your family spiritually and desire to meet the spiritual needs of your children well, then deciding to be spiritually alive through trust in Jesus is the starting point.

A Spirit-empowered dad has a divine command to be the spiritual leader of his family. Being the spiritual leader of a family is not easy, and unfortunately, many dads do not know how to fulfill this role. Often, dads abdicate the role to the mom, the child, the school, or the church. Dads who do not fulfill their role as spiritual leaders rob their family of important elements they need for healthy spiritual growth.

Spirit-empowered dads understand the value of spiritual leadership in the family (Proverbs 22:6). While dads cannot force their family to serve God, they can lead their family in the things of God that make the decision to serve God natural, logical, and easier. Every day a Spirit-empowered dad looks for opportunities to demonstrate and teach their family about the things of God in the daily activities of their life. These moments become crucial in the development of a child's understanding of God and the development of godly values they can follow in their life.

Throughout history, men have struggled with how much they should love God and the priority that love for God should take in their lives. The most important thing you can do individually and as a dad is to love God more than anything or anyone else (Matthew 22:36–38). This is a challenge for all dads. The love a dad feels for his family can be very powerful, and the idea that this love is to be secondary to one's love for God is sometimes difficult to comprehend. As a dad, how can you increase your love for God?

The secret may lie in Jesus' words in John 14:15: "If you love me, you will keep my commandments." Your first priority to increasing your love for God is to know His commandments found in the Bible. The Bible is the revelation of God to man, and your love for God will grow in proportion to your knowledge of God as revealed through Scripture. If you would like to grow in this area, Men's Ministries recommends going through the ***Spiritual Disciplines Study*** which may be accessed at <https://men.ag.org/Targeted-Studies/Spiritual-Disciplines>.

Another suggestion to help increase your love for God is to spend time with Him in prayer. When you are in His presence, you will begin to know Him more and increase your love for Him. Love for God is more than just knowing information about God; it involves your heart. When you commit to praying, reading the Bible, and worshipping, you will fall more in love with Him.







## BULLSEYE: Zero In On Your Target

- What are some things that can stop a dad from taking on the role of the spiritual leader in the family?
  
- What dads love can be seen in their priorities. Take a moment and honestly reflect on the following five priorities. Put a number (1-5) beside your priority with one being high. This is a time of honest reflection. Be careful not to make your list on what the expectation is but rather on what the reality is.
  - Job
  - Hobbies
  - Friends
  - Family
  - God
  
- Write a plan for spending more time with God.
  
  
- If you were to pursue God and place Him first in your life, how would your children be impacted?

## **NEXT STEP:**

This section gives suggestions for how to turn your new knowledge into an action step. Men's Ministries realizes that not all relationships are created equally. If these action steps seem too difficult, adjust your next step so it will fit into your relationship with your child.

- **Courage:** Look at the example personal growth chart below.
  
- Write and implement a 30-day personal spiritual growth plan.
  
- **Strength:** Look at the example personal growth chart below.  
Write and implement a 90-day personal spiritual growth plan.
  
- **Endurance:** Look at the example personal growth chart below.  
Write and implement a year-long personal spiritual growth plan.



## Personal Growth Chart

GROWTH QUESTION		GROWTH ANSWERS
<b>T</b>	<b>TARGET</b> What is my growth goal?	<b>SPIRITUAL</b> Cultivate a closer walk with God through consistent and meaningful prayer, Bible study, and Scripture memorization
<b>R</b>	<b>ROAD MAP</b> How do I plan to grow? What training, resources, relationships, & experiences will I use as growth steps?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Schedule a personal prayer and devotional time from 6:30–7:00 Monday – Friday.</li> <li>Interview my pastor on the topic of prayer</li> <li>Draft a list of 22 Scriptures that address topics of _____.</li> <li>Create a waterproof version of my Scripture list and hang in my shower.</li> <li>Do a character study of one biblical leader—Joseph.</li> <li>Read and study the Synoptic Gospels this year.</li> </ul>
<b>A</b>	<b>ACCOUNTABILITY</b> Who will hold me accountable for my growth?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Every Monday of each week accountability meeting with Brian at gym.</li> <li>Questions: How consistent has your prayer and Bible reading been this week? Quote the verses you’ve memorized. What are you learning from your character study on Joseph? What are you learning from your study of the Synoptic Gospels?</li> </ul>
<b>C</b>	<b>CHECK-UP</b> When and how will I evaluate my growth process?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Begin a morning prayer routine in January.</li> <li>Create Scripture memorization list in February.</li> <li>Interview pastor on prayer in May.</li> <li>Begin study on Joseph in September and finished by December.</li> </ul>



# SPIRIT-EMPOWERED DAD

## Lesson 2: A Spirit-Empowered Dad Is a Man of Integrity

**Main Idea:** A Spirit-empowered dad who has inward convictions will never betray them because he has the integrity to live out these convictions. In this lesson, you will begin to learn what it means to live a life of integrity.



### SIGHTLINE: Acquire Your Target

A Spirit-empowered dad who has inward convictions will never betray them because he has the integrity to live out these convictions. If there is any diversion from these convictions, it is seen as personal failure or hypocrisy. A Spirit-empowered dad must establish their convictions on truth and then have the integrity to stick with them. A deep sense of values based on truth will help a dad to never waiver in his priorities.

Many things in society depend on public opinion, which changes like the wind. It is critical for a man to know the difference between his convictions and his opinions. An opinion can be changed by gaining information. A conviction is solid and must be based on an absolute bedrock truth. It is from the bedrock of absolute truth that integrity is established.

A dad's commitment to his convictions makes or breaks him. If you forget your commitments to your inward priorities, you will be off course and headed for disaster. Your life will not be one of integrity. A Spirit-empowered dad will live with integrity in his convictions and not his opinions. When a dad establishes his convictions on absolute truth, they will not change. Determine to be a man who lives his life with integrity. A Spirit-empowered dad recognizes that his integrity as a man of God determines whether his children are blessed or burdened. Ultimately, your family becomes a reflection of you.

Becoming a man of integrity begins with self-examination, knowing who you are and what you value. Most dads have some values but realize there are others they need to develop their life. By focusing on values—both those you have and those you want to have—will help you live with integrity.





## CROSSHAIR: Focus On Your Target

Becoming a dad of integrity takes time. There will be times when you will do something that is not consistent with your values. When you make a mistake, acknowledge it and determine not to make that mistake again. You should continually ask God to help you become the dad you want to be. He is always there to help you.

Integrity is consistently living one's life according to a set of moral values. Dads who have integrity have a clearly defined set of internal values that can be seen externally through their words and actions. For example, a dad who values honesty will not be a liar. He will be true to himself and his beliefs.

Developing integrity in your life may be the most important thing you can do to lead your family. Acting with integrity in every area of your life sends a powerful message to your family and is one of the biggest things you can do to earn their respect and admiration. Consider the following points about integrity:

- Dads with integrity are the same in public as they are at home.
- Dads with integrity do the right thing when no one else is looking.
- Dads with integrity speak truth in love.
- Dads with integrity keep their word.
- Dads with integrity can be trusted.
- Dads with integrity show respect to others.
- Dads with integrity are fair.



## **BULLSEYE: Zero In On Your Target**

- Describe someone in your life whom you respect for their integrity.
  
- How do you know they are a person of integrity?
  
- What are your top three priorities? On a scale of 1 to 4 with 1 being very well and 4 not well, how well do you live out these priorities? Write a plan to improve.
  
- If your children grow up to be just like you, will you be delighted or depressed? Why?
  - 
  - 
  -

## **NEXT STEP:**

This section gives suggestions for how to turn your new knowledge into an action step. Men's Ministries realizes that not all relationships are created equally. If these action steps seem too difficult, adjust your next step so it will fit into your relationship with your child.

- **Courage:** Sit down with your family and tell them about your decision to live a life of integrity.
  
- **Strength:** Find an accountability partner and set up a system to hold you accountable for living with integrity.
  
- **Endurance:** Write six to eight personal values you will live out.



# SPIRIT-EMPOWERED DAD

## Lesson 3: A Spirit-Empowered Dad Guides His Family's Spiritual Journey

**Main Idea:** Your children will have a relationship with God. As a Spirit-empowered dad, you get to help shape what type of relationship they will have with Him. This lesson will focus on how a dad can guide his family's spiritual journey by taking the lead and setting the example. In this lesson, you will learn how to begin taking your family on a spiritual journey.



### SIGHTLINE: Acquire Your Target

There are benefits when a Spirit-empowered dad leads his family on a spiritual journey. He will see an increased spiritual understanding, and his family will draw closer together and become a family that honors God. Dads play an important role in their family's spiritual life by laying a strong foundation that helps children grow up to be healthy adults. Laying the foundation involves helping kids understand their identity, develop moral values, deal with the difficulties of life, and realize their purpose in life.

Two areas of spiritual development a Spirit-empowered dad guides are in spiritual disciplines and prioritizing church involvement. Spiritual disciplines are activities families can engage in to grow spiritually. Dad, as the spiritual leader of the family, you must be the one to initiate and foster spiritual disciplines in your family.

A Spirit-empowered dad not only needs to be a good example of someone who is pursuing their own spiritual growth, but they should also join with their family in various spiritual disciplines together. These times of growing together spiritually will also result in drawing family members closer together.

There are many spiritual disciplines a dad can lead his family to practice. Consider going through the **Targeted Series** called ***Spiritual Disciplines*** to discover what you can best implement in your home. ***Spiritual Disciplines*** may be accessed at <https://men.ag.org/Targeted-Studies/Spiritual-Disciplines>. At a minimum, Men's Ministries recommends practicing the following three: Bible devotions, prayer, and worship.







## CROSSHAIR: Focus On Your Target

**The Bible is filled with topics suitable for all ages.** A Spirit-empowered dad will focus on making family Bible studies a group activity rather than a lecture. Don't be afraid to talk through Bible stories or act out the stories with your children. Make the Bible come alive in front of them. Read often from the life of Jesus, use the Book of Mark, or talk about the importance of the Book of James. Be sure to use a Bible translation that is easy to read and your children will understand. Take them on a reading journey through the Bible. Don't be in a hurry; set aside an amount of time to study, not an amount of Scripture to finish. For example, consider working through a single passage for five minutes, 15 minutes, 30 minutes, or an hour, depending on age and ability.

The discipline of prayer is also well suited for families. Even young children can pray. These family times should be a **safe** time for all family members to learn to pray. Opportunities should be given for each family member to lead in prayer. Teaching a child to pray is one of the most important things a Spirit-empowered dad can do.

Prayer is personal communication with God. It seems simple, because it is simple. Prayer is spending time with God, communicating with Him and listening to what He says in your heart and through Scripture. Communication is key to every relationship, especially a dad's personal relationship with God. In the same way that every relationship grows and revolves around communication, so does your relationship with God. The result of regular communication with God is a deeper connection to Him. Have your children pray with you about needs in your family's and friends' lives. Pray for your church and leaders in their lives. Pray for their teachers, coaches, and friends. Model the importance of praying for people by name.

Worship is a very important part of a believer's life and can be defined as giving God the reverence and adoration of which He is worthy. Leading the family in worship at home is a great way for a dad to guide his family's spiritual journey. Family worship takes many forms, such as singing together, talking together about how good God is, or taking communion. It should be simple and fitting for the ages of the children. All family members should attend and be engaged in worship activities. Family worship times should allow for open discussion; questions and comments should be welcomed. Keep in mind that family worship time is not a substitute for church attendance but should complement the worship experience at church. Many families use family worship to reinforce what was preached or taught that week at church.



In addition to these three spiritual disciplines, spiritual leadership means a dad will make church attendance a priority, both for himself and his family. Being part of a local group of believers characterized the earliest disciples of Christ and, as a fellow disciple, a Spirit-empowered dad understands this principle (Hebrews 10:25). Children will not always appreciate regular church attendance; however, dads must be firm and insist that church attendance is one of the ways that you show obedience and love for God and His people. Men' Ministries recommends establishing a pattern of church attendance and involvement in church ministry.

Children learn patterns of behavior from their parents. What you do as a father is what your children will do in the future. It has been said that what a parent does in moderation, a child will do in excess. As a Spirit-empowered dad, you get to help establish your children's dependence upon God through church involvement when they are young.

Dads should lead the family in volunteering and ministry involvement. There are a wide range of opportunities to serve in the local church. Find your area of gifting and help your children discover their gifts as well. When all members of the family are actively engaged in the ministries of the local church, it benefits not just the church but also the family.

Too often, dads think of opportunities for Christian service only in the context of the church, but opportunities also abound in the wider community. A Spirit-empowered dad who serves send a powerful message to his children of what being a Christian really is. For a more in-depth study, see Men's Ministries ***Spiritual Disciplines Targeted Series. Spiritual Disciplines*** may be accessed at <https://men.ag.org/Targeted-Studies/Spiritual-Disciplines>





## **BULLSEYE: Zero In On Your Target**

Has your family ever had a time when you read the Bible, prayed or worshipped together? If you haven't, why not? If you have, what was it like?

- Describe your family spiritual life growing up.
  
- Why do you think it is important for your children to be equipped spiritually?
  
- On a scale of 1-4 with 1 being very important and 4 not very important, rate how important it is for a dad to be the spiritual leader in his home? Why?

## NEXT STEP:

This section gives suggestions for how to turn your new knowledge into an action step. Men's Ministries realizes that not all relationships are created equally. If these action steps seem too difficult, adjust your next step so it will fit into your relationship with your child.

- **Courage:** Read from Proverbs every day as a family. Use the date to read the corresponding Proverb and ask your children what stood out to them. Encourage participation with high-fives or small prizes, such as a sticker or stamp.
- **Strength:** As a family sign up to serve together either in your local church or in a non-profit in your city.
- **Endurance:** For the next 12 months, once a month find some worship music your children enjoy and after a time of worship serve communion to your children as a family.



# SPIRIT-EMPOWERED DAD

## Lesson 4: A Spirit-Empowered Dad Serves with Humility

**Main Idea:** A Spirit-empowered dad who walks in humility before his family will reap the many rewards God has promised to people who are humble. In this lesson, you will begin to learn how you can serve with humility.



### SIGHTLINE: Acquire Your Target

It has long been recognized that organizations tend to mirror the example of their leader(s). In families, this same mirroring can be found. The culture of a family is a product of how parents lead. Godly leadership in a family must be servant leadership.

The key characteristic of a servant leader is humility. A Spirit-empowered dad understands this important principle.

Jesus' humility is the pattern for dads to follow. In Mark's gospel, you can find these words: "But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:43-45, ESV). Jesus' humble life reflects the value God places on humility.

The Old Testament speaks to God's view on humility often. Proverbs 3:34 says, "Toward the scorners he is scornful, but to the humble he gives favor" (ESV). Proverbs 22:4 says, "The reward for humility and fear of the LORD is riches and honor and life" (ESV). Psalm 25:9 says, "He leads the humble in what is right, and teaches the humble his way" (ESV).

God places a high importance on humility. This humility is required in all areas of life. A Spirit-empowered dad who walks in humility before his family will reap the many rewards God has promised to the humble.





## CROSSHAIR: Focus On Your Target

The servant-leader style of leadership has been around for a long time. Jesus himself modeled this style. In 1970, Robert K. Greenleaf brought this style to the modern business world through his leadership writings, saying, “The servant leader is servant first.”

A Spirit-empowered dad will be a servant-leader who will focus on how best to serve his family. Dads who lead their families using the servant-leader model instill important values in how to treat others and each other as a family. These values of servanthood impact a child’s entire life.

True humility is an attitude of the heart. It is having the desire to serve rather than be served. A dad who embraces an authoritarian, dictator-like style of leadership and wants to be “the boss” does not reflect the servant heart of Christ. If you do this, you may create deep resentments and anger, triggering family members to rebel. Children raised in this atmosphere often question their dad’s love for them or develop insecurities. The great Christian writer C.S. Lewis defined humility this way: “Humility is not thinking less of yourself, it is thinking of yourself less.” What does humility look like for a Spirit-empowered dad? Consider the following:

- A humble dad knows his own weakness and relies on God’s strength.
- A humble dad knows his are not perfect.
- A humble dad admits his mistakes.
- A humble dad is quick to ask for and give forgiveness.
- A humble dad is transparent and open.
- A humble dad does not mind doing thankless jobs for his family.
- A humble dad does not need to be the center of attention.



## **BULLSEYE: Zero In On Your Target**

- How did Jesus model the servant-leadership style? Give some examples.
  
- Describe the leadership style in your home as a child.
  
- Look at the list above of what humility looks like and rate yourself on a scale of 1-4 with 1 being the best and 4 not very good. Write a plan to improve the low areas.

## NEXT STEP:

This section gives suggestions for how to turn your new knowledge into an action step. Men's Ministries realizes that not all relationships are created equally. If these action steps seem too difficult, adjust your next step so it will fit into your relationship with your child.

- **Courage:** Read through Proverbs and highlight in yellow every verse that uses the word “humble” or speaks about humility. What are your takeaways?
  
- **Strength:** Read through Luke and highlight in yellow every verse that speaks about the humility of Jesus. What are your takeaways?
  
- **Endurance:** Read C. Gene Wilkes' book *Jesus on Leadership: Timeless Wisdom on Servant Leadership*. Write three to five things you gleaned from each chapter.





# SPIRIT-EMPOWERED DAD

## Lesson 5: A Spirit-Empowered Dad Loves His Children Like God Loves Him

**Main Idea:** A Spirit-empowered dad will see the importance of expressing love, as well as the need to express love in different ways. In this lesson, you will begin the journey of loving your children like God loves you.



### SIGHTLINE: Acquire Your Target

A dad who is a follower of Christ is actually a child himself, since he is in a relationship with his heavenly Father. These dads can look to their relationship with God the Father for direction and guidance in their relationship with their own children. Dads often are weak in this area. Most see the importance of expressing their love, but Spirit-empowered dads also see the need to express that love in different ways. Here are some ways God loves His children.

First, God knows His children. Psalm 139:1-3 says, “O LORD, you have searched me and known me! You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from afar. You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways” (ESV). What we learn from these verses is this: God desires to know all about His children, and God is active in His pursuit to know all about His children, all because He loves them.

Second, God provides for His children. Philippians 4:19 says, “And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus” (ESV). God desires to make sure His children have the necessary provision for life.

Third, God is accessible to His children. Hebrews 4:16 says, “Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need” (ESV). God the Father invites His children to come to Him. You can approach Him with confidence knowing that He cares for you and His ear is open to your cry.

Fourth, God has His children’s best interests at heart. Jeremiah 29:11 states, “For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope” (ESV).



Fifth, God's love for His children never changes. James 1:17 says, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change" (ESV). The gift of God's love is unchanging. It cannot be bought or earned. It is given freely.



## **CROSSHAIR: Focus On Your Target**

You may think, "I am not like God and cannot know my child(ren) like He knows me." However, when a Spirit-empowered dad takes a strong interest in all aspects of his child's life, it assures the child that they valued and loved by their dad. Get to know your child's likes and dislikes. In other words, study each child. You cannot assume they are all the same, and you should strive to know what is different about each one of your children.

Providing for your children's physical needs is essential. However, being a provider is not just putting food on the table and a roof overhead. A Spirit-empowered dad is a critical provider of the emotional and spiritual needs of their children. Be present for your child. Too many dads assume providing for their child means making money to pay the bills; that is just part of what you need to do to provide for your child. Provide a shoulder for them to cry on. Provide a smile to brighten their day. Provide an encouraging text message to help them on a tough morning. Provide for all your child's needs. As a Spirit-empowered dad, you can develop an attitude of availability to your children. Each of your children should feel as if they can come to you with their questions, with their fears, with their hopes and dreams.

A dad who loves the way he is loved by God is always looking out for his children's best interests. A lot of tension in the home occurs when that love is not expressed. A child often does not have the maturity to see what is in their best interest. They focus on the present moment, whereas a loving, Spirit-empowered dad will focus not just on the moment but on the future as well. He won't give in when he sees that the child he loves will be harmed if a particular course of action is taken. This is particularly applicable to younger children. As a child matures and comes of age, loving dads may give more freedom to make decisions. Children may make some wrong choices with this freedom and choose not to accept your guidance. However, learning from their mistakes is an important part of their growth process.



Ultimately, a Spirit-empowered dad's love should follow the example of Christ's love, which is unchanging, cannot be bought or earned, and is given freely. There is great security in the father-child relationship when the child understands that they are loved because of who they are not because of what they might do. Do not misunderstand; this does not mean that if the child does wrong, a loving dad will not discipline them. You may strongly disapprove of some behavior and still love your child. In fact, many times, Spirit-empowered dads "speak the truth in love" (Ephesians 4:15).





## **BULLSEYE: Zero In On Your Target**

- Describe how love was expressed in your home as a child.
  
- Describe how approachable your dad was in your childhood.
  
- How can you become more accessible and approachable to your children?
  
- Read through the five ways God loves His children in the Acquire the Target section. Rate yourself on a scale of 1-4 with 1 being great and 4 needs improvement. Write a plan to improve.

## **NEXT STEP:**

This section gives you suggestions for how to turn your new knowledge into an action step. Men's Ministries realizes that not all relationships are created equally. If these action steps seem too difficult, adjust your next step so it will fit into your relationship with your child.

- **Courage:** Sit down with each of your children and ask them what their favorite drink, candy, or activity is. Then, take the opportunity to enjoy it with them.
  
- **Strength:** For the next 30 days, sit down with each of your children and ask them what went well and what didn't go well in their day.
  
- **Endurance:** Take each of your children to their favorite restaurant and ask them how you can express your love to them better.



# SPIRIT-EMPOWERED DAD

## Lesson 6: A Spirit-Empowered Dad Creatively Communicates His Love

**Main Idea:** D. Ross Campbell, in his book *How to Really Love Your Child*, says, “A child is the most needy person in our society, and the greatest need is love.” A dad who does not show love to his children can harm them in many ways. In this lesson, you will learn how to communicate with your children in a loving manner.



### SIGHTLINE: Acquire Your Target

One of the most effective plans of action as a dad is to make you communicate love to your family. This communication must begin with your wife. Your children will sense if your love is genuine or conditional with strings attached. They need to see that you are totally committed to your wife.

Selfishness is a relationship killer. It has at its core the idea, “I have to be right and my needs have to be met.” A Spirit-empowered dad understands that when he conquers selfishness, he will be happy in all of his relationships, especially with those closest to him. When you have a disagreement, it is human nature to feel the need to be correct or to feel resentful if your needs aren’t being met. But a Spirit-empowered Dad understands that the most important issue is what is right for the family long-term, not just who is right in the moment or whose needs get the most attention at the time.

You must learn to communicate to your family both verbally and nonverbally. For a more in-depth study on how to do this, Gary Chapman’s book *The Five Love Languages* is filled with practical suggestions.



## CROSSHAIR: Focus On Your Target

Lack of love can lead to low self-esteem and feelings of isolation. Misbehavior is common among children who do not feel loved. A child's misbehavior is often a cry for love. When dads do not show their children love, they may turn to other people or things to satisfy their desire to be loved. This search for love often leads them to very detrimental situations and relationships.

Dads cannot assume that their children know they love them. Even if you are a good provider and do things for them, your children still need to hear three powerful little words: "I love you." The first benefit of speaking love to your child is that it helps them have a healthy view of themselves. When a child hears "I love you" from their dad often, even when they have been acting badly, the child comes to know that they are loved not because of what they do, but because of who they are. Second, expressing love to your child will help them have a greater sense of security. Children who are told they are loved are less likely to develop unhealthy fears and phobias. Their home is a safe place. The third benefit that occurs when fathers speak love to their children is that they develop understanding of their emotions. A Spirit-empowered dad who says, "I love you" with feeling and sincerity helps his children learn about one of the most important emotions in life. Their future relationships will be patterned on spoken expressions of love.

Of course, "I love you" does not always have to be verbalized. A very effective non-verbal way is to put it in writing. Taking time to write your loving thoughts for your child can make a big impact. Saying "I love you" can be communicated in other creative ways. Some families have developed code words or phrases that everyone knows to mean, "I love you." Others have come up with hand signals or some other creative signal that sends this important message. These do not take the place of the verbal expression but are simple ways to add depth and significance to expressions of love.



## **BULLSEYE: Zero In On Your Target**

- Why do dads sometimes have problems saying “I love you” to their children?
- What evidence do your children have that proves you love your wife?
- What evidence do your children have that proves you love them?
- On a scale of 1–4, with 1 being very well and 4 being not well, rate yourself on how well you know each of your children and write a plan to improve in the following:

when your child has a difficult day.

when your child is upset.

the names of your child’s best friends.

what encourages your child the most.

when you hurt your child’s feelings.

strengths and weaknesses of your child.

what motivates your child.

what embarrasses your child.

what disappoints your child.



## NEXT STEP:

This section gives suggestions for how to turn your new knowledge into an action step. Men's Ministries realizes that not all relationships are created equally. If these action steps seem too difficult, adjust your next step so it will fit into your relationship with your child.

- **Courage:** Write a note to each of your children expressing your love for them and what you desire most for their life.
- **Strength:** Commit to read *The Five Love Languages of Children* by Gary Chapman and Ross Campbell in the next 30 days. Work through the study guide at <https://www.5lovelanguages.com/store/62>.
- **Endurance:** With each of your children, work through the love language mystery game and the children's love language quiz at <https://www.5lovelanguages.com/quizzes/3> and <https://media.5lovelanguages.com/6999bbff-1858-40a2-a503-5ac57dd62e8d/5LLChildrenMysteryGame.pdf>.  
What did you learn about your children?



# SPIRIT-EMPOWERED DAD

## Lesson 7: A Spirit-Empowered Dad Loves His Children's Mother

**Main Idea:** When parents do not treat each other with respect, it creates an environment that may be very harmful to a child. This lesson will help you process the value of loving your children's mother.



### SIGHTLINE: Acquire Your Target

During the last century, Rev. Theodore Hesburgh, former president of the University of Notre Dame, made this profound statement: “The most important thing a father can do for his children is to love their mother.”<sup>1</sup> These words are still true today. Children need their dad to love their mom. Relationships between parents are often filled with tension and fighting. These battles take place in both custodial and non-custodial settings. In contrast, a Spirit-empowered dad will show love for a child's mother in a variety of ways. It is important that a child sees their father express love and respect towards their mother.

There are two types of dads in today's world, the first being a custodial dad. If you are married to your children's mother, the Bible gives very clear guidance as to how marriage relationships should be. How should a man measure his love for his wife? Paul tells us in Ephesians 5:25, “Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her” (ESV). The love a man has for his wife is measured against the great love Christ has for the church. While romantic love is very important to the relationship, the most important kind of love in marriage is agape love. Agape is the word Scripture uses to describe the self-sacrificing love Christ has for His church. This kind of love cannot be generated in your own strength. It is God's love that grows within us as the Holy Spirit works in our lives. In fact, agape love is listed as one of the fruits of the Spirit.

At the heart of a Spirit-empowered dad's love for his wife must be the understanding that she and he are “one.” In marriage, they become one in

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/theodore\\_hesburgh\\_114459](https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/theodore_hesburgh_114459) (Accessed January 20, 2023)



their purpose and they became one in their intimacy with each other. This unique relationship in marriage is sacred and it is designed to reflect the sacred relationship between Christ and the church: As a man and woman become “one flesh” in marriage so also the believer becomes “one body” with Christ at salvation.

The Song of Solomon has much to say about love. One thing that stands out as is how often Solomon praises the woman. He is continuously complimenting her looks and her actions. Solomon, being a wise man, understood how important praise was to her. Likewise, a Spirit-empowered dad understands his wife needs to hear she is attractive to him and that she is of great value to him. Solomon’s advice for husbands can be summed up in Ecclesiastes 9:9: “Enjoy life with the wife whom you love, all the days of your vain life that he has given you under the sun, because that is your portion in life and in your toil at which you toil under the sun” (ESV). This is God’s perfect plan for marriage: that a husband and wife love and enjoy each other. Each should find great satisfaction in striving to meet the emotional and physical needs of the other.

The second type of dad is non-custodial. For the non-custodial, Spirit-empowered dad, his relationship with the mother of his children involves complexities not experienced by custodial fathers. Chief among these is the fact that his relationship with his children’s mother has been strained, resulting in his current position. The blame for this disruption of family life is usually shared by both parents, although not always. But despite where the blame may lie, a Spirit-empowered dad, for the sake of his children, is able to submit his negative feelings to God for help and commits to behaving honorably toward their mother, despite them. Children have real difficulty dealing with these issues and a dad must be careful not to put his children in the position of having to take sides.

Loving and honoring your child’s mother means following the biblical commands to forgive. It means telling the truth about what has happened, while at the same time speaking with dignity and respect. You can tell the truth in love. It also means at the appropriate time and in the appropriate ways you take responsibility for your actions that are wrong. Even though it will take effort, no matter what the relationship you have with your child’s mother, you can still choose to love and honor her. If you ask God to help you do this, He will certainly do so. After all, Jesus even said, “Love your enemies” knowing such love is impossible for us unless we allow Him to change our hearts.





## CROSSHAIR: Focus On Your Target

You can be a Spirit-empowered dad even if your kids are not living with you. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, one in three children are growing up in homes without their biological father. Studies have shown that over half of all marriages end in divorce. Your child's mother may be difficult to love. She may have done things that are difficult to forgive. She may even be difficult for your children to love. What's more, your child's mother might not be your current spouse, which means showing love to her can be both difficult and dangerous.

For others, loving and honoring your child's mother is no problem. She is the love of your life. You might think you can't treat her any better. But, just as every man can be a better father, every man can also be a better husband. Regardless of whether or not you are married to your children's mother, how you treat her will make a lasting impression on them. Part of being a Spirit-empowered dad is that you do what is right in any situation.

When you love the mother of your children, there are at least three positive results you can expect. First, your children will develop a sense of security, which is a primary need they have during their formative years. A child's world is constantly changing as they grow, and dads and moms who constantly fight will create further instability. Children see their friend's families breaking apart and wonder if theirs will be next. Children of parents who divorce already have their security damaged and when parents continue to fight, it further erodes their sense of security. With God's help, a Spirit-empowered dad can work through negative feelings and strive to be at peace with his child's mother.

Second, love your children's mother will form a healthy view of relationships in your children's minds. Children replicate their parents' relationship. Therefore, dads shape their children's future relationships whether they realize it or not. Their children learn valuable life lessons that will affect future relationships with the opposite sex. Boys learn how to treat women and how to be a husband. Girls learn what true love really is and how they should be treated by men.

Third, when a Spirit-empowered dad loves his child's mother, the quality of his relationship with his child improves. Exodus 20:12 commands children to honor their father and mother. But a dad who dishonors his child's mother makes it hard for his child to honor him. A child is naturally protective of their mother. But when you show love and respect to her, it makes it easy for the



child to respect you and have a meaningful relationship. A Spirit-empowered dad shows his love for his children's mother by his

- Actions
- Words
- Respect
- Time
- Protection
- Provision
- Keeping his commitments and responsibilities





## **BULLSEYE: Zero In On Your Target**

- Describe how your dad loved your mom when you were a child.
- Write three positive characteristics of your wife. Discuss with her what you wrote down. What was her response?
- On a scale of 1-4 with 1 being very well and 4 being not very well, rate how you display your love to your spouse, using the list above. Write a plan to improve.
- Read Ephesians 5:25-33. Circle the word love. How many times did Paul use the word? What are three things you can glean from this knowledge?
- Discuss your child's development with their mother.
- Discuss your child's problems with their mother.
- Discuss your child's goals with their mother.

## NEXT STEP:

This section gives you suggestions for how to turn your new knowledge into an action step. Men's Ministries realizes that not all relationships are created equally. If these action steps seem too difficult, adjust your next step so it will fit into your relationship with your child.

- **Courage:** If you are a custodial father, have your children watch you write a love note to your wife.
- **Strength:** If you are a custodial father, read *The Five Love Languages* by Gary Chapman and go through the free study guide at [https://media.5lovelanguages.com/4305d954-2a9f-457e-b40b-55237a6b717a/5LL\\_StudyGuide\\_2015.pdf](https://media.5lovelanguages.com/4305d954-2a9f-457e-b40b-55237a6b717a/5LL_StudyGuide_2015.pdf) and take the free quiz at <https://www.5lovelanguages.com/quizzes/5>.
- **Endurance:** If you are a custodial father, go through the free seven-day devotional at <https://media.5lovelanguages.com/b608412c-3798-4fbf-818c-c0dd2a50d6df/5LLforMenDevotional.pdf>.

If you are a non-custodial father this section is designed to help you take small action steps to reinforce what you have learned. Depending on your situation with your children's mother, we encourage you to think of three different actions steps you can do to reinforce to your children what you learned from this lesson.

- Write a thank-you note to your ex-wife, with the help of your children.
- Read a book containing wisdom for divorced parents.
- Seek help to assist in processing any negative feelings.



# SPIRIT-EMPOWERED DAD

## Lesson 8: A Spirit-Empowered Dad Makes Time for His Children

**Main Idea:** A Spirit-empowered dad knows how to say no to temporal pursuits in order to spend time with their treasured family. This lesson helps you discover why a dad doesn't find time but *makes* time to spend with their kids.



### SIGHTLINE: Acquire Your Target

A Spirit-empowered dad knows how to say no to temporal pursuits that steal time away from his family because he recognizes the treasure his family is. An effective dad is willing to sacrifice short-term rewards for long-term riches.

The amount of time a dad can spend with a child varies considerably. A custodial dad will usually have much more time available than a non-custodial dad. So, the question that often comes up is whether quantity or quality of time spent with your kids is more important. Dad, your children need both quality and quantity time with their loving, involved, and committed dad.





## **CROSSHAIR: Focus On Your Target**

As a busy dad, it may be hard to find time for your child. After all, there are only 24 hours in a day. However, any amount of time a Spirit-empowered dad spends with his child can be very beneficial. Time spent together:

- Strengthens the relationship
- Gives opportunity for better communication
- Shows your child they have value and builds their self-esteem
- Helps reduce behavior problems
- Gives opportunity for your child to learn from your example
- Shows love for the child

Common sense suggests that if a dad does not have much time to spend with his child, then that time should be highly valued and the quality of the time should be emphasized. A key part of making quality time is to schedule it. While it is true that some great quality times may just “happen,” for most dads, good quality time is planned and scheduled.

When a dad has several children, it’s possible for one child to monopolize the time. Furthermore, some children by nature seem prone to getting left out, particularly if they tend to be non-assertive. A dad may not even realize this is happening. For this reason, dads need to know their children well so they can meet the individual needs of each. One way to address this problem is to have one-on-one time with each child. This special time alone can be very meaningful to your child. It sends them a very important message that they are important and valued by you. As you and your child get to know each other better, your relationship strengthens. These times also gives you a chance to address the unique needs that particular child may have.



## **BULLSEYE: Zero In On Your Target**

Describe how your dad spent time with you growing up.

What are some ways you can spend time with your child?

Write in your journal some of the special characteristics of each of your children (great attitude, enthusiastic, gets along well with others). Then, take each of your children out for a meal separately and tell them how much you appreciate the special gifts God has given them. Journal your thoughts and emotions from the meeting.

How do you plan to sacrifice short-term rewards for long-term riches?

## NEXT STEP:

This section gives you suggestions for how to turn your new knowledge into an action step. Men's Ministries realizes that not all relationships are created equally. If these action steps seem too difficult, adjust your next step so it will fit into your relationship with your child.

- **Courage:** Write the special abilities each of your children have.
  
- **Strength:** Schedule a meal once a month for three months with just you and each one of your children at their favorite restaurant. Ask them about what they sense God has for their future.
  
- **Endurance:** Plan a special overnight getaway with each of your children this year. Ask them questions to get to know them. (What makes you laugh out loud? If this year was a meal/song/color, what would it be and why? What gave you a sense of accomplishment this year? What did you learn this year? Afterwards, journal what you learned about each of your children.



# SPIRIT-EMPOWERED DAD

## Lesson 9: A Spirit-Empowered Dad Helps His Children Develop in All Areas of Life

**Main Idea:** Children need to grow and develop in four main areas, the first being spiritual (see lessons 1-4). This lesson brings awareness to how a Spirit-empowered dad can help their children grow in the other three areas—emotional, social, and intellectual.



### SIGHTLINE: Acquire Your Target

Paul writes in 1 Thessalonians 2:8 as a spiritual father to his spiritual children, saying, “So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us” (ESV). Likewise, a Spirit-empowered dad gives of himself to train his children in all areas of life. If you are going to be effective, you will do more than watch; you will be involved in your children’s lives. You may have to roll up your sleeves and get on your knees, but time and energy invested into your children is never wasted.

A Spirit-empowered dad knows the benefit of personalized training. Proverbs 22:6 says, “Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it” (ESV). This is a powerful principle in raising children. The word train means to develop personal habits that lead to success. The word child refers to the child still under your roof. The phrase the way he should go refers to the uniqueness of your child, challenging you to study them. The phrase when he is old speaks to the notion that your child will always know the way and the way back.



## **CROSSHAIR: Focus On Your Target**

One of the areas that a dad needs to make sure he helps his children develop is emotional health. A Spirit-empowered dad can help shape this in a healthy way. Emotional health includes the thoughts, feelings, and accompanying behaviors of a person. A child is usually considered emotionally healthy when their behavior is appropriate for their age and has positive outcomes. In children, thoughts, feelings, and behavior are continually evolving.

One of the most effective emotional-health building tools a Spirit-empowered dad can use is the tool of listening to your child. Listening is not just hearing but also watching. Their behavior may speak volumes about what they are feeling. It is natural for children to become angry and get upset from time to time. Many things happen to them that they feel they have no control over. For children, life is often very confusing. They need to let their feelings be known. Holding those feelings inside can lead to a number of serious problems. Dads, sometimes when you get upset, you need someone with whom you can discuss these issues; it is your way of venting. Your children are the same way. Sometimes the best gift you can give them is to listen. After you give them the chance to ‘vent,’ most children will begin to calm down. As they calm down, you can talk about the emotions they are feeling and how best to deal with them.

These times when children become upset should be viewed as opportunities to help them become more aware of their feelings and to problem solve and detach. Strong emotional feelings are a normal part of life. A Spirit-empowered dad can empathize with his child and acknowledge that he understands why they are upset. Real growth and maturity come when a dad leads the child into problem solving. Problem solving is simply helping your child learn ways to deal with their feelings without hurting others. This opportunity is all about your child learning self-control, and it takes lots of practice and time.

The power of a Spirit-empowered dad to shape how his child thinks and feels cannot be overstated. There are two particular aspects of emotional health to focus on for your child to grow up healthy. First, you can help your child develop their unique identity. Identity is defined as having a sense of who you are and why you are here. You can help your children find their

identity. Children who do not have a strong sense of identity may be adversely impacted by the negative labels others might place on them. Second, you can help your child develop healthy self-esteem. Self-esteem is closely linked to identity and is centered upon the value person places on themselves. Healthy self-esteem is very important, and a Spirit-empowered dad must help develop it in his child. Low self-esteem and insecurity are rampant today. To combat this, you can affirm your child and build them up, while at the same time not letting them think more highly of themselves than is healthy. A Spirit-empowered dad should teach his kids to see themselves for who they are in Christ and teach them not be consumed and shaped by how others might view them.

A second area a Spirit-empowered dad needs to help develop in the life of their children is social health. This includes helping children develop the social skills of talking to others, listening, getting along, having good manners, and having empathy for others. Social skills play a very important part in every area of life since interaction with other people occurs daily. Social skills will impact every area of your child's life. This is why a Spirit-empowered dad must be concerned about how his child is interacting with others. Much of their future success in life will depend upon how well they develop social skills.

The learning of social skills starts in the home when children are very young. Dads must always remember that their children are watching them. Much of what they learn in social skills will come not from what you tell them but from what they see you do. Some of the ways you can help a child develop social skills include:

- Teaching them respect for others
- Teaching them conflict resolution
- Teaching them respect for rules and authority figures
- Teaching them empathy for others
- Teaching them how to make friends

It has often been said that the best way to learn is by doing. A dad should always be looking for opportunities where his child can use the skills they are learning. Having play dates with friends, joining school clubs and groups, and participating in sports are all ways for children to become socially involved. Closely observe how your child is interacting with others. Problems should be addressed at the appropriate time. Remember, children don't always "get it" the first time. It is normal that your child may require you to explain to them multiple times how to deal with certain issues.

Technology is great, but it can have a detrimental impact on the development of social skills in children. A number of studies show children



spend five to eight hours or more per day using some form of technology (phone, TV, computer, tablet, or gaming device). Today's children are missing person-to-person interaction. The result is children with fewer friends and limited social interaction. In addition, they are not getting the physical activity they need for good health which impacts overall development, including social skills, because of spending so much time with media.

The third area a Spirit-empowered dad needs to encourage and help develop in their child is intellectual growth, or cognitive development. This begins soon after birth and is often referred to it as simply "learning." Young children seem to want to learn everything, but sadly, this desire seems to decline in the early teen years for many children. However, a love for learning can be fostered at any age.

Encouraging a child's intellectual growth and motivating them to want to learn can be done; however, it is not always easy because there are no precise ways to accomplish this goal. A big problem is that what motivates one child doesn't motivate another. Children are all different and finding out their passions and interests can be challenging. Dads must also be careful not to project their own interests onto their children. When a child's interest is found, a dad should encourage and support that interest even if it is not interesting to him personally. Here are some ways a Spirit-empowered dad might help encourage the intellectual development of his child:

- Problem-solving games and puzzles
- Memory games
- Singing
- Imaginary play
- Reading
- Becoming involved in schoolwork
- Taking educational field trips
- Exploring new places
- Meeting interesting people
- Taking a class to learn a new skill together
- Speaking highly of the benefits of learning





## **BULLSEYE: Zero In On Your Target**

- Describe how your dad helped you grow emotionally, socially, and intellectually.
  
- What can you do to make sure “screen time” is not taking over a child’s life? How much is too much?
  
- Write each of your children’s unique strengths and weaknesses. What can you glean about your child?



## **NEXT STEP:**

This section gives you suggestions for how to turn your new knowledge into an action step. Men's Ministries realizes that not all relationships are created equally. If these action steps seem too difficult, adjust your next step so it will fit into your relationship with your child.

- **Courage:** Write a plan to help you guide the development of your children's emotional health, social skills, and intellectual growth.
  
- **Strength:** Take each of your children to a restaurant and talk about how you have seen each of your children grow over the last year in the following areas: emotionally, social skills, and intellectually.
  
- **Endurance:** Take an educational field trip with each of your children four times this year and talk about the value of intellectual development.



# SPIRIT-EMPOWERED DAD

## Lesson 10: A Spirit-Empowered Dad Knows Why His Children Misbehave

**Main Idea:** One of your greatest hurdles as a Spirit-empowered dad is wisely setting and enforcing rules for your children's good. In this lesson, you will begin the process of learning what may be behind children's bad behavior and how to respond effectively.



### SIGHTLINE: Acquire Your Target

Raising children is not easy. One of your greatest hurdles as a dad is setting rules for your children. As a dad who desires to be empowered by God's Spirit in your parenting, these questions may help you assess your current position. First, do you let your kids do as they please? Second, do you gauge your rules by what other parents allow their kids to do? Third, do you have the propensity to be too strict, which can trigger rebellion and lead to losing your influence in their life? Fourth, do you believe it is your responsibility to raise your child with rules and parameters for their life?

Here are some thoughts you might want to consider as you work through this lesson. First, you should not allow rules to be dictated for your kids by anyone other than you and their mother. You and their mother decide what is best for your children. When the rules are set, make sure your children know that you are not trying to be more holy than other people, but that you simply believe God has given you specific wisdom for them. Second, know the difference between opinion and conviction. An opinion can change, based on new information. However, as a Spirit-empowered dad, your convictions should be firm and based on biblical absolutes. Third, you should provide an explanation for the rules you have put into place. Fourth, you should be sure that your children understand there is safety in obeying the rules. Help your children understand the spiritual, emotional, and physical consequences of failing to adhere to the rules. Fifth, do not be afraid to have rules that others do not have. Your children may not agree with your rules, but they will eventually honor you for holding to your convictions.



## **CROSSHAIR: Focus On Your Target**

What happens when your child breaks the rules? Many times, bad behavior is just a symptom of something else going on with the child. This is particularly true with very young children. In these instances, punishing the child usually doesn't help change the behavior. There are many reasons why children misbehave. Some of the more common reasons are:

- Sickness
- Hunger
- Desire for attention
- Tiredness
- Desire to test the rules
- Not understanding, or forgetting, the rules
- Disbelief that you really mean what you say
- Learning and behavioral disorders

If you see a sudden, unusual change in your child's behavior, it often means something, or someone has influenced them. They may simply be copying someone else's behavior. For this reason, you need to know the people your children spend time with and the activities they engage in.

Bad behavior can also be a result of bad experiences the child has gone through or that are happening currently. Communication is extremely important in these situations. You want your child to feel that they can talk to you about anything going on.

Some bad behavior is preventable. A good first step is to always make sure the rules and expectations are clearly understood. Modeling and rewarding good behavior also helps reduce inappropriate behavior. A Spirit-empowered dad who takes an active interest in his children and who provides a safe physical and emotional environment for them will deal with fewer behavioral problems.



## **BULLSEYE: Zero In On Your Target**

Describe your dad’s “rule book” growing up. How do you think this affects the way you parent today?

Why is it important to know what causes children’s misbehavior?

Describe why healthy relationships with your children are important in disciplining them.

## Next Step:

This section gives you suggestions for how to turn your new knowledge into an action step. Men's Ministries realizes that not all relationships are created equally. If these action steps seem too difficult, adjust your next step so it will fit into your relationship with your child.

- **Courage:** Write and evaluate your rules for your children. Write an "o" for opinion or a "c" for conviction beside each rule.
  
- **Strength:** Write an explanation for each of your rules. Sit down with your children and explain your rationale for each rule, inviting them to give their thoughts. Make any necessary adjustments, and be sure to pray together at the conclusion of the conversation.
  
- **Endurance:** Take each of your children to their favorite restaurant and ask them to tell you what they think and feel about the family rules and your discipline. Be ready to acknowledge areas of weakness and to ask for forgiveness if needed. Be sure to pray together at the conclusion of the conversation.



# SPIRIT-EMPOWERED DAD

## Lesson 11: A Spirit-Empowered Dad Helps His Child Learn Self-Control

**Main Idea:** Spirit-empowered dads have a clear responsibility to help their children develop self-control. This lesson will help you assist your children in learning self-control.



### SIGHTLINE: Acquire Your Target

The Bible's perspective on self-control is clear. Consider Proverbs 29:11: "A fool gives full vent to his spirit, but a wise man quietly holds it back" (ESV). The New Testament shows the importance of self-control, as it is listed as one of the fruits of the Spirit. A Spirit-empowered dad has a clear responsibility to help their children develop self-control.

The earlier a child learns self-control, the more likely the child will grow up to be a productive and mature adult. One of the dangers dads must avoid is the natural tendency to use discipline just for the sake of controlling behavior. The primary purpose of discipline should always be to change and positively shape behavior, not just to punish or control unwanted behavior. Dads who use only threats, intimidation, and the fear of punishment to try to control behavior will only temporarily control behavior at surface level. But the development of self-control is internal, and unless a dad focuses on shaping the internal values of the child, he will have minimal success at developing self-control in his child. Self-control is largely a learned behavior. Patience is required because the development of self-control continues through life.



## **CROSSHAIR: Focus On Your Target**

The ability to regulate one's behavior varies from child to child. Depending on the child's age, their ability to control their impulses is naturally greater or less. For a dad with children who have behavior disorders or developmental impairments, teaching self-control can seem overwhelming. With God's help, community assistance programs, school support, and sometimes medication, it is possible to make it through trying years and help your child learn self-control.

A Spirit-empowered dad plays a major role in helping his children learn self-control. It begins with dad staying in control of himself. When you lose control, it sends the message that it is okay to be out of control. As a Spirit-empowered dad, you can help create an atmosphere where self-control is rewarded. Take note of instances where your preschool child has to wait for something (even if only for a minute or two), and praise them. Praise the self-control of older children when they do homework or chores without complaining, or when they keep their words respectful even when upset. Children have a desire to please and often respond well to the smallest gestures of love and approval that parents give. You can also play games and do activities that require self-control. These games and activities can be great teaching tools.





## **BULLSEYE: Zero In On Your Target**

- Describe how your dad displayed self-control in your childhood.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- What are your thoughts regarding Proverbs 29:11?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- On a scale of 1–4, with 1 being very well and 4 being not so well, rate how well you display self-control in front of your children. Write a plan to improve.



## **NEXT STEP:**

This section gives you suggestions for how to turn your new knowledge into an action step. Men's Ministries realizes that not all relationships are created equally. If these action steps seem too difficult, adjust your next step so it will fit into your relationship with your child.

- **Courage:** Look up three or four games and activities for kids that teach self-control.
  
- **Strength:** Once a month, play a game or do an activity with your children that teaches self-control. Make sure you have a conversation with your children afterward about how well they did or did not display self-control, keeping it light-hearted and fun.
  
- **Endurance:** Have a discussion with your children about a time when you did not display self-control. Make sure you tell the lessons you learned and the consequences you experienced.



# SPIRIT-EMPOWERED DAD

## Lesson 12: A Spirit-Empowered Dad Balances Discipline with Grace

**Main Idea:** Too many dads see discipline as nothing but administering punishment for wrongdoing. But the primary objective of Biblical discipline is not punishment but learning that shapes a child's behavior and enables them to live the full, healthy, whole life you desire for them. In this lesson, you will begin the journey of adding grace to discipline.



### SIGHTLINE: Acquire Your Target

A Spirit-empowered dad has a biblical mandate to train his child to do what is right (Proverbs 22:6). This training includes discipline. In fact, the word discipline means “to train.” Too many dads see discipline as nothing but administering punishment for wrongdoing. But the primary objective of biblical discipline is not punishment but learning that changes and shapes a child's behavior.

Biblical discipline calls for grace. The classic Christian definition of grace is “unmerited favor.” In the context of discipline, grace can be best understood as “unconditional love.” After all, that is what grace is.

Don't misunderstand the meaning of grace when it comes to children's discipline. Some think that showing grace means a dad should not punish children—that kids do not have to face the consequences of their actions because the punishment for their behavior has been removed. While it is true that Jesus took the punishment for sin when He died on the cross (grace in action), this does not mean that punishment should never be used in parenting. In the context of disciplining a child, remembering the definition of grace as “unconditional love” can help dads better understand the relationship between grace and discipline.



## CROSSHAIR: Focus On Your Target

Many fathers struggle when it comes to disciplining children. Too many times, they find themselves swinging between being too lenient or too hard with their children. To complicate matters, each child is different and their response to different forms of discipline varies. What works well with one child may have no positive effect on another. Furthermore, a child's poor behavior often triggers a dad's emotional response. He may begin to lose control and take his disappointment and anger out on the child in an inappropriate way.

Discipline isn't easy but bringing discipline into your child's life is one of the most loving things you can do for them. A Spirit-empowered dad must remember that the purpose of discipline is not to punish but to train. Discipline is training a child to do what is right. It works best when it incorporates love, grace, and age-appropriate punishment (consequences). Punishment by itself may do nothing but put a "pause" on bad behavior. Discipline's objective is not just altering the child's behavior on the outside. For the desired change to last, it must be internalized. Discipline is most effective when it creates a desire in the child to adopt the right attitude, which leads to appropriate behavior.

Men's Ministries suggests a three-part disciplinary process for Spirit-empowered dads. The first part of the disciplinary process is to define your expectations. You cannot hold your child accountable for things they do not know they are supposed to do or not do. Often, dads do not clearly communicate to their children what they expect. The younger and more inexperienced the child, the clearer and more concrete the explanation of desired behavior needs to be. Keep it simple.

The second part of the disciplinary process is to reinforce desired behavior. Discipline is not just punishment; it is also the rewarding of good attitudes and behavior. Feel free to use creative methods to foster desired outcomes in your child's behavior. This is not "buying" good behavior but showing your child in a way they can understand why it's better to behave the preferred way.

The third part of the disciplinary process is to administer appropriate punishment for bad behavior. Children may behave inappropriately even after you have encouraged a desired behavior. Even though you may have warned them of the consequences, they still misbehave. Some form of corrective action or punishment is needed in these situations. Before acting at this point, it may be helpful to analyze the misbehavior that has occurred. Answering four questions may help clarify the problem and help to ascertain the best form of discipline or corrective action. These questions include



- Did the child know that their behavior was wrong?
- Are your expectations consistent with what the child is capable of doing?
- Is the misbehavior serious, or are you overreacting due to your own tiredness or lack of patience?
- Was this an accident or something that the child could not control?

Depending on the answers to these questions, a Spirit-empowered dad can know how to proceed in the discipline process. The effectiveness of discipline is going to depend largely upon the punishment or corrective action used. Before deciding on which form of discipline to use, consider the age, mental capacity, and uniqueness of the child.

Finally, the seriousness and frequency of the offense should be considered. A Spirit-empowered dad should ask himself

- Does this punishment fit the offense?
- Is it fair to punish the child for this?
- Are my emotions under control?
- Many times, a dad will need to be creative. Special circumstances may call for special treatment. The following are a few of the more commonly utilized forms of punishment/corrective action:
  - Time-out and/or isolation periods
  - Taking away privileges
  - Grounding
  - Assigning additional work or some form of activity that the child will view as burdensome, but which produces something of value.
  - Physical punishment, such as a single swat to the child's clothed bottom.

It is important that a dad **NEVER** strikes a child in anger or when emotions are not under control. In today's environment, any form of corporal punishment is often viewed as mistreatment of children. Regardless of your personal beliefs on this subject, the use of corporal punishment carries with it the risk of legal action being taken against you. If you should choose to do this, do so understanding the realities of our current world views.

Sometimes the best discipline decision is not to take corrective action but to allow the natural consequences of a child's decisions to play out. While you should never put your child in danger by inaction, sometimes a lesson is best learned by reaping the consequences of actions. Furthermore, it is possible to actually create patterns of misbehavior by stopping the natural consequences.

Finally, when administering corrective action, a Spirit-empowered dad needs to understand the power of words. Avoid shaming your child. Public humiliation can severely harm the psyche of a child. Be careful what you say and how you say it.





## **BULLSEYE: Zero In On Your Target**

- Describe how your dad disciplined you as a child.
  
- Fill out the type of parent and characterization checklist at the end of this lesson. Ask your spouse, a close friend, or older child for their evaluation. Write personal goals to help you overcome the areas you checked.
  
- How can the lack of discipline in a child's life affect them?
  
- How can discipline help a child?

- Give an example of how grace and discipline work together.
- Why is grace difficult to give when a child misbehaves?
- What are some ways you can define expectations of behavior?
- What are some ways you can reward and reinforce desired behaviors?



## **NEXT STEP:**

This section gives you suggestions for how to turn your new knowledge into an action step. Men's Ministries realizes that not all relationships are created equally. If these action steps seem too difficult, adjust your next step so it will fit into your relationship with your child.

- **Courage:** Write your expectations for your children. Make sure you discuss these expectations with them and ask for their feedback. Make any necessary adjustments needed to your expectations.
  
- **Strength:** For the next 120 days, reinforce your children's good behavior in their love language, at least once a day. What did you discover about your children?
  
- **Endurance:** Take your older child or teenager to their favorite restaurant and discuss appropriate actions you will take when they display bad behavior. What did you glean from this discussion?



## Parent Type and Characterization Checklist

Check the parent types that most characterize your parenting style. Ask your spouse, a close friend, or older child for their evaluation. Write some practical goals to help you overcome these areas.

1. **Authoritarian** (control without guidance)

- \_\_\_\_\_ “You will do what I said or else” motivation for desired behavior  
\_\_\_\_\_ No moral reason given behind behavior.

**Result:** Child conforms to virtuous acts out of fear or reproof

2. **Permissive** (guidance without sufficient controls)

- \_\_\_\_\_ No restrictions, child explores environment unrestrained  
\_\_\_\_\_ No boundaries, child is allowed to do what they want

**Result:** Child is addicted to the provider of their whims, no self-discipline

3. **Child – Centered**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Child is the priority over God  
\_\_\_\_\_ Child is a friend, equal peer, and tells parent what to do  
\_\_\_\_\_ Child is put on stage to act out and show off to others

**Result:** Child is addicted to being the center and equal authority in family

4. **Overindulgent/Excuse**

- \_\_\_\_\_ makes excuses for child’s sinful behavior  
\_\_\_\_\_ makes general excuses for child’s shyness, not talking, etc  
\_\_\_\_\_ makes manipulative excuses (defends and redefines behavior)

**Result:** Child is addicted to protector of their actions

5. **Domineering/Manipulating**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Conditional love used to manipulate the child  
\_\_\_\_\_ Excessive demands placed on the child to meet the parent’s expectation

**Result:** Wants to meet all expectations for fear of rejection





## 6. **Manipulating**

\_\_\_\_\_ Uses guilt statements (“You should have done better”)

\_\_\_\_\_ Uses conditional guilt statements (“I would like you if ...”)

**Result:** Prohibitive conscience controlled by false guilt and insecurity

## 7. **Martyr**

\_\_\_\_\_ Works off guilt of how much the parent has sacrificed

**Result:** Dad makes child feel guilty

## 8. **Threatening/Repeating**

\_\_\_\_\_ Coaxes, threatens, bargains, pretends to punish with little or no action taken

**Result:** Child is trained in delayed disobedience

## 9. **Bribing**

\_\_\_\_\_ Child’s outward behavior manipulated through bribes, and makes deals for good behavior

**Result:** No inward motivation to do right; dependency on bribes

## 10. **Overprotective** (shows compassion at the expense of tolerating evil)

\_\_\_\_\_ Protects child from natural consequences and reality

\_\_\_\_\_ Child is an over-sheltered and manipulated environment void of consequences and conflict

**Result:** child lives in unreality with society and consequences



# SPIRIT-EMPOWERED DAD

## Lesson 13: A Spirit-Empowered Dad Challenges His Children To Dream Big

**Main Idea:** A Spirit-empowered dad can look to the Church and the Bible for assistance in helping his child dream big dreams. In this lesson, you will begin helping your children dream godly dreams.



### SIGHTLINE: Acquire Your Target

A Spirit-empowered dad can look to the Church and the Bible for assistance in helping your child dream big dreams. Pastor Tommy Barnett, founder of the Dream Center in Los Angeles, California, writes the following:

“Dreams are not merely the nightly thoughts you experience as the brain sorts out the day’s events. They are the goals and visions that fire your heart and saturate your soul with joy at the very thought of them. They are those continuing visions of what you want your life to be at its highest level of fulfillment—what you want to do, how you want to do it, what kind of person you want to become in the process.

Your destiny and reason for living are wrapped up tightly in your dreams and desires, like the genetic information inside a seed. That dream in your heart contains your spiritual ‘DNA,’ the very blueprint for who you are. Your dream is that idea, that vision for your life that burns inside of you – something you can’t ignore for long. It keeps coming back to your mind because it is part of who you are; it will never leave you alone.

A dream doesn’t drive you; it draws you. It is like a big magnet that pulls you toward itself. I don’t believe that there is a man or woman without a dream, because God designed every member of the human race to have dreams. Without a dream, a person will be frustrated in the present and will miss his or her future.



Your dream did not even originate with you. It resides within you, but God put it there. He is the source of your dream. When people dream without God, they find it hollow and unsatisfying. Every person must come to Jesus for his or her dream to make sense. In fact, without Jesus, you might follow a dream for your life that God never put in your heart.”

Not every dream is from God. There is such a thing as godless dreams. But when your dream is God’s dream, it’s unstoppable.”<sup>1</sup>

There are some key biblical points that a dad should always keep in mind as he helps his children dream. First, a dad’s own abilities and dreams come from God. A Spirit-empowered dad points his children to God as the source of their dreams and desires. A good verse to study together is James 1:17. Second, God is working with every Spirit-empowered dad. A good verse to memorize together is Romans 8:28: “And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose” (ESV). Third, dreams must bring glory to God. Another good verse to memorize together is 1 Corinthians 10:31: “So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God” (ESV).

<sup>1</sup> Barnett, Tommy. Reaching Your Dreams: 7 Steps for Turning Dreams into Reality. Charisma House. Lake Mary, Florida. January 2005, Pages 2-3.





## CROSSHAIR: Focus On Your Target

Dreaming comes naturally to children. Their imaginations are very active. Their minds are not full of all the realities of life, and thus their dreams can be really big. For adults, this unbridled optimism may seem to be just foolishness. However, dreams are very important for children. Their dreams give them hope and something to work toward. There is a strong correlation between children who have big dreams and successful adults. Some of the world's greatest achievements and inventions have come from those who continued to dream big and be passionate about the future well beyond childhood. Sadly, adults sometimes kill the dreams and passions of children. What could those children have become if their dreams and passions had been nurtured and encouraged?

One of the greatest things a Spirit-empowered dad can do for his family is to be a dreamer. Not the kind who just dreams, but one who dreams and then takes action to make those dreams come true. Children are watching, and they know when Dad has given up hope and stopped dreaming. A dad who has a passion for life and hope for the future will see those same attributes in his child. Former President John Quincy Adams said this about leaders and dreams: "If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader."

There are many things you can do to coach your children to dream big, including the following:

- **Expose your children to big dreamers.**  
History is full of dreamers, like Amelia Earhart, Martin Luther King Jr., and Thomas Edison. Don't be limited to historical figures. Let your children meet and have opportunities to be around people with big dreams.
- **Do something new with your child.**  
Going to a new place or meeting someone new may plant a seed from which a big dream will grow. Perhaps a museum might encourage your children in their current dreams or help inspire new ones. You could also look around for classes and hobbies your children might enjoy.
- **Encourage curiosity and creativity.**  
Don't ignore questions. Play with toys and games that require creativity.



Encourage building things and repairing things. This could take the form of building blocks, puzzles, role-playing games, arts and crafts, costumes—the possibilities are endless! Play with your child and encourage them to see the big picture by looking to the future.

- **Be there for support when a dream seems to fall apart.**

Help them see that sometimes success comes through failures. These times are great teachable moments. Praise your child's work, persistence, and patience, even when the task is difficult, long, or doesn't turn out like they hoped. Focus on the process more than the outcome.

- **Help your child set goals that are part of their dream.**

Remember, it is their dream, not yours. Make the goals realistic and let them be achievable in a short period of time. Small successful steps towards their dream will build confidence and give hope that will keep their passion alive.





## NEXT STEP:

This section gives you suggestions for how to turn your new knowledge into an action step. Men's Ministries realizes that not all relationships are created equally. If these action steps seem too difficult, adjust your next step so it will fit into your relationship with your child.

- **Courage:** Have each of your children draw or write their dreams on paper to show you. What did you learn about each of your children?
  
- **Strength:** Sit down with each of your children and go over their dreams. Write an action step you can take together now to encourage and/or help them fulfill their dreams.
  
- **Endurance:** Do something new with each of your children that might inspire them to dream big. What was your takeaway from the event?



# SPIRIT-EMPOWERED DAD

## Lesson 14: A Spirit-Empowered Dad Is His Children's Biggest Cheerleader

**Main Idea:** A Spirit-empowered dad will not just coach his child but will also be their biggest cheerleader. This lesson will show you how to cheer for your children.



### SIGHTLINE: Acquire Your Target

Your children need to know you take great pleasure in them. They need expressions of your approval and pleasure. Too many dads try to win their child's approval and acceptance. As a Spirit-empowered dad, your objective is not to win the approval and acceptance of your children but for you to give your children approval and acceptance. Dad, you are the spiritual priest of your home. You, not your children, are responsible for settling your own acceptance issues.

If you feel a wall of rejection from your children, continue to express your approval and acceptance. Your children are a reservoir that you must fill with love and acceptance. Sooner or later, your children will discover the source.

There are two opposing principles concerning acceptance and approval. The first principle is from the worldly philosophy that you must perform in order to be accepted. The second principle, from God, says you perform because you are accepted. As a Spirit-empowered dad, you should want to raise your children under the second principle, in which they perform because they are accepted. Dad, you make all the difference. If you are a dad who does not lead from the second principle, you will exasperate your children.

What type of father exasperates his children? Here are some examples. The first is the absent father. This is the father who is away from their children most of their waking hours. The truth is that children do not know the difference between a justified or unjustified reason for being away. All they know is their dad is not there. Second is the silent father. This is the father who is present in the household, but because of fear and insecurity is silent when



he is needed most. He does not assume the role as the priest in their home and is silent at key moments. The silence is painful. Third is the abusive father. This is the father who is verbally, sexually, and/or physically abusive. Children of an abusive father are crushed in their self-worth. The scars from a father's tongue can be as damaging as those from a father's fists. Fourth is the violent father. This is the father who has fits of anger, temper fits, and outbursts of coarse language. Children who grow up in this environment conclude that the only emotion a real man can display is anger, and the only way to resolve their own emotional problems is through violence and anger. Fifth is the immoral father. This is the father who breaks the rules. When fathers break the rules themselves, they will produce children who are comfortable crossing the line. Sixth is the incestuous father. This is the father who exploits his own children sexually to satisfy his lusts. This is a man who will pay any price for pleasure, including sacrificing his child's life, self-respect, and future. As most states now consider same-sex relationship to be legitimate family units, it is more important than ever to communicate sexual purity and integrity to your children. You cannot expect others to educate your children. Proper education must include more than the do's and don'ts. It must also include a child's lived reality at home, which should reflect the way God designed sexuality to function, based on biblical truth. Seventh is the non-expressive father. This is the father who never offers appropriate expressions of love to his children (words of affirmation; hugs, etc.). When this happens, the children are left with a void in their hearts.

As a Spirit-empowered dad, you must decide you are not going to leave this type of inheritance to your children. When you exasperate your children, they will lose respect for you. "Do as I say, not as I do" is not an effective model for being a dad. Your children do not have the emotional maturity to overcome a father who exasperates them. That is what exasperation is all about: behavior that will bring about a negative or sinful reaction in the lives of your children. This does not mean that you will be a perfect dad, or that you are solely responsible for your children's decisions. However, if you want to be their biggest cheerleader you must learn to express your love, approval, and training in healthy, constructive, and edifying ways.





## **CROSSHAIR: Focus On Your Target**

Cheerleaders do many things, but the most important thing they do is cheer. The word cheer means to shout for joy, to encourage, and to praise. As a Spirit-empowered dad, your children should see you as being the one who is always there to shout with joy over their accomplishments, encourage them to always do their best, and praise them for their efforts.

Notice there is no mention of winning or losing. That means that as a Spirit-empowered dad, you cheer for your child regardless of the outcome. Cheer when your child wins, and cheer when they lose, praising effort as much as you praise success. It sends a powerful message of love to children when you are there supporting them regardless of the outcome of the game or activity. Just seeing you there cheering them on speaks volumes about how you feel toward them.

Another concern of cheerleaders is the team's spirit because it reflects the team's willingness to work together and to succeed as a team. A Spirit-empowered dad understands that his child needs to be encouraged and inspired. The game of life is not always easy; it can be very discouraging and even overwhelming at times. Dads can play a huge role in determining the "team spirit" of their children. Encouraging words when things are not going well will always be remembered and treasured by your child.

Another important thing cheerleaders do is to console their team when they lose. A good dad is going to be there for his child when they don't succeed. Cheerleaders don't take off from the next game just because their team lost the last one. They are right back out there the next time, helping the team come back from defeat and continue to press forward. This is what a Spirit-empowered dad does.



## NEXT STEP:

This section gives you suggestions for how to turn your new knowledge into an action step. Men's Ministries realizes that not all relationships are created equally. If these action steps seem too difficult, adjust your next step so it will fit into your relationship with your child.

- **Courage:** Write out what type of father you want to be to your children. Sit down with your children and share with them what you wrote. Ask them for patience as you learn to walk this path and for forgiveness if you have not measured up. Make sure you pray together.
  
- **Strength:** Every day for the next 13 weeks, make sure you cheer for your children in some fashion. What was their response? What did you glean from this step? How did you feel after the 13 weeks?
  
- **Endurance:** Take each of your children out to eat for a celebration of a great accomplishment. What was their reaction? How did you feel after the celebration?



# SPIRIT-EMPOWERED DAD

## Lesson 15: A Spirit-Empowered Dad Helps His Children See Beyond Themselves

**Main Idea:** One of the most important things a Spirit-empowered dad can do for his children is to teach them to look beyond themselves and consider the feelings, interests, and well-being of others. In this lesson, you will begin the process of helping your children to develop godly relationships.



### SIGHTLINE: Acquire Your Target

The Bible gives great advice on personal relationships. How you relate to others is something with which God is very concerned. Genesis 4 tells the story of Cain and Abel. God is very upset after Cain kills his brother Abel. In response to God's question about Abel, Cain says, "Am I my brother's keeper?" From the way God punishes Cain, one can deduce that God does hold Cain accountable for his brother Abel. Another crucial biblical passage for how believers are to treat others is the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20. In fact, six of the commandments address relationships with people. A well-known New Testament passage is Matthew 22:37-40, in which Jesus is asked to identify the greatest commandment. His reply began with the greatest commandment but expanded to include the second: "love your neighbor as yourself." He says essentially the same thing in Matthew 7:12, the famous verse known as the Golden Rule: "Whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them" (ESV). There are many other Scriptures concerning relationships with other people. They can all be summed up with three words: "Love one another."



## **CROSSHAIR: Focus On Your Target**

One of the most important things a Spirit-empowered dad can do for his children is to teach them to look beyond themselves and consider the feelings, interests, and well-being of others. Much interaction with others is outside of the family circle, so the importance of having healthy social skills cannot be overemphasized. Dads encounter friends, co-workers, neighbors, and strangers on a daily basis, which means they have lots of opportunities to teach and model healthy relationships with others, which will have a great impact on the future relationships of their children.

A dad is watched by his children. One of the most valuable lessons you can give each child is how to get along with others. Not only does your home need to be a place of peace, but you must also strive to live peacefully with those outside it. If a dad is continually having altercations and disputes with people outside of the family, a child will think that not getting along with others is okay. Do you really want your child to grow up always fighting with others?

There will be times when someone hurts you. When this happens, you have an opportunity to model the power of forgiveness. Someone who cannot learn to let things go and who refuses to forgive will live a very unhappy and bitter life.



## **BULLSEYE: Zero In On Your Target**

- Describe how well your dad taught you to see beyond yourself.
  
- Describe how you have demonstrated a life to your children of seeing beyond yourself.
  
- Describe a time when you didn't get along with someone. How did you react and how did you feel?
  
- Describe a time when you had to model forgiveness.

## NEXT STEP:

This section gives you suggestions for how to turn your new knowledge into an action step. Men's Ministries realizes that not all relationships are created equally. If these action steps seem too difficult, adjust your next step so it will fit into your relationship with your child.

- **Courage:** Write the Golden Rule and tape it to your refrigerator. Every day for 30 days, discuss with your kids how you practiced the Golden Rule. Ask them how they practiced the Golden Rule. What did you glean?
- **Strength:** Describe a time to your children when you responded correctly to someone who hurt or wronged you. Make sure you include with them how you felt. Then, describe a time to your children when you responded incorrectly to someone who hurt or wronged you. Make sure you include with them how you felt. What was their response?
- **Endurance:** Take your children to a restaurant and pay for a stranger's meal. Explain to your children that generosity is a way that helps you to see beyond yourself. What was their response?





# SPIRIT-EMPOWERED DAD

## Lesson 16: A Spirit-Empowered Dad Makes a Lifetime Commitment to His Children

**Main Idea:** It is very important that your child knows that you will be there for them, not just today, but also in the future. In this lesson, you will begin the journey of a lifetime commitment to your children.



### SIGHTLINE: Acquire Your Target

What kind of legacy will you leave your children? Your legacy will be established over your lifetime and your children's lifetimes. As a Spirit-empowered dad, you must live for the finished product. To do this, you need to understand the power of a life. A legacy or heritage is passed on like a birthright or an inheritance. In order to make sure you leave a powerful legacy, you must understand that your children are the greatest investment in which to put your time, energy, and life.

This study has hopefully challenged you to improve your dad skills. As the priest of your home, you must commit not only to pray with your children but also for them when they are not present. By praying, you are building up a line of defense between your children and the harm Satan wishes on them. You are standing in the gap for your children and the legacy you want to leave them. You determine by your actions that the legacy you desire to leave will not be lost on your watch.



## CROSSHAIR: Focus On Your Target

Most people remember the good coaches they had. Out of respect and appreciation, you may still call those coaches “Coach,” even though they haven’t been your coach for years. But for a dad, the coaching never stops. You know you have been a good coach when your child still values your coaching even when they are out on their own. You will never get too old to guide your children.

A Spirit-empowered dad should always be aware of the life-long responsibilities of fatherhood. It is very important that your child knows you will be there for them, not just today, but also in the future. Don’t be afraid to speak often of the future and remind your children that you will always be there for them.

When a dad is there for life, his child feels great security. This security is important to children no matter their age. Your child’s need for you to be their “rock,” the one that they can always depend on, doesn’t change just because they become adults. You can still be that rock in their life, no matter their age.

Make a lifetime commitment to your child. Let them know you will always be there for them and will never stop loving them. No matter how old your children become, they can benefit from your experience, wisdom, and knowledge. Remember, you will always be their dad.

A story from the 1924 Olympics drives this point home. Bill Havens was expected to bring home the gold medal in the Canadian canoeing singles event. Bill’s wife was expecting their child, and her due date coincided with the Olympics. Bill decided to stay home with his wife and welcome his son into the world. During the 1952 summer Olympics Bill received a telegram which read, “Dear Dad . . . Thanks for waiting around for me to get born in 1924. I’m coming home with the gold medal you should have won.” It was signed, “Your loving son, Frank.” Bill’s son won the gold medal in the ten-thousand-meter Canadian singles canoeing event.<sup>1</sup>

A dad may never receive his own accolades , but every effective Spirit-empowered Dad will still win gold.

1 <https://momentaryreflections.wordpress.com/tag/bill-havens/> accessed (June 3, 2021)





## **BULLSEYE: Zero In On Your Target**

- How do you think your responsibilities as a dad will change during the different stages of your child's life?
  
- Write the legacy you would like to leave your children and grandchildren.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- Write your hopes and dreams for each of your children. How would you script their life?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- Spend some time asking the Holy Spirit if there is an area of your parenting that needs improvement. Write a plan to make this area better.

## **NEXT STEP:**

This section gives you suggestions for how to turn your new knowledge into an action step. Men's Ministries realizes that not all relationships are created equally. If these action steps seem too difficult, adjust your next step so it will fit into your relationship with your child.

- **Courage:** Sit down with your children and ask them to tell you what they see you doing in your life that they would like to do. What did you learn?
  
- **Strength:** Discuss with each of your children your hopes and dreams for their life. What was their response?
  
- **Endurance:** Sit down with each of your children and tell them about the legacy you would like to leave them. What were their thoughts?

