

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.

