

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.”¹ 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

¹ 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 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.

