

Father and Son Reunion

One of the songs from the 1970s that I sometimes think about is Harry Chapin's "Cats In The Cradle". Do you remember this haunting song about a father who reflects back on his life and his son, whom he remembers from the baby days to adulthood?

But there was a problem – he was always too busy for his little boy, and that never changed for many years. But the boy wanted to grow up and be like his father. The years roll on, and he is now retired and calls his adult son, asking to spend time with him. No – that wasn't possible. He was involved with his own job and family. And dad sadly realises that his beloved boy has grown up to be just like him.

Father and son relationships can have its moments. A son idolises his dad until one day he realises dad is not perfect. And that can be very disappointing. There's no doubt that dads are role models – they are being closely watched, especially in the younger years. A 4-year-old boy will often think, "My dad knows everything". You can see in your little boy's eyes that he is utterly convinced that you are without a doubt the ultimate man in the world.

Setting a good example is so crucial. Sons learn about being a man primarily by watching their fathers. A father's influence on their son's personal development is often unseen but nonetheless real. Hopefully it will be for the better. Giving advice can often not work – but your son will never forget the example you gave in living your life.

Being a father takes a lot of work, dedication, and patience. If you're a parent, you'll know exactly what I mean. Some researchers have found that having a positive relationship with the father, who is a supportive and encouraging presence in their child's life, helps the social development and self-esteem of children.

They also grow up with a better sense of their worth and are more self-confident, and kids with such qualities have a much easier time adjusting to school and new environments. I know it's easy to generalise, but studies have proven this to be so. A father is a primary role model, helping his son learn what it means to be a man.

I know that may sound simple in today's society, but I believe it to be true. If you are an attentive husband and father – providing for the family's basic needs financially and emotionally – your son grows up with the knowledge necessary to build a successful and loving family.

Being a father is a life-long commitment. It's obviously a big responsibility when our children are young, but being a father continues, though in different ways, when our children leave home.

It's important for us fathers to keep working at being good fathers, for dads these days face many challenges. Fathers can feel inadequate and insecure. Maybe you and your father were not close, and you find it difficult to get close to your children. Perhaps life is busy and demanding, and it's hard to carve out adequate time to be with your children. When our children become adults and leave home, we fathers can find it difficult to maintain a warm relationship with them.

Maybe you saw the movie *The King's Speech*. It tells the story of Prince Albert, the Duke of York, who would become King George VI, King of England. He had a terrible problem with his stutter. His public speaking was awkward and embarrassing, for him

and for his audience. The movie shows that one of the major reasons for his speaking problem was his father, George V. His father was a confident public speaker, who forced his shy son to speak in public.

In one scene of the movie the father mocks his son for his inability to present a speech. We learn that even as a young boy the stern expectations of his father caused Albert to lose confidence and feel insecure. It's terrible to see the depth of impact that harsh, loveless words and attitudes can have on the vulnerable heart of a child.

How can I be a more effective father to my son? Giving him more of my time and love – yes, for sure. That's always been important. But, if you're a father, *the best thing you can do is to be committed to Jesus Christ as your Saviour and King*. If you commit to follow Him, love Him, and serve Him, you'll find that God will fill your heart with love for your children and for others too.

It's an irony. We might think that if we put our children first and God lower down the list, we'll be better fathers. But it's the opposite. If we put God first and get to know Him, we'll have more capacity to be loving and wise fathers. God will give you wisdom and expertise to be a more effective father because He is a Father God who loves to give us good things, if we ask Him.

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