

What is a Father?

By: David Burruss

Father's Day always gives me a reason to stop and think about the men who shaped my life, the ones who walked with me through hard seasons and helped me become who I am today. And as Christians, this day means even more than just cards and cookouts. It's a chance to look at God's design for fatherhood and remember just how important that role really is within the family.

We live in a world that often shrinks the role of fathers down to almost nothing, but the Bible never does that. Scripture treats fatherhood as something sacred, something weighty. A father isn't just someone who pays the bills and keeps the lights on. He's meant to be a leader, a teacher, a protector, and most of all, an example of what faith actually looks like when it's lived out day after day.

One of the clearest commands given to fathers shows up in Ephesians 6:4, where Paul writes, "And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord." I love how direct this is. Fathers carry real responsibility for the spiritual growth of their children, and they're not called to rule through anger or harshness but to nurture and guide their kids toward God. A home ought to be the place where children first learn what faith looks like, what love feels like, and what it means to forgive and to obey.

Fathers are also called to be living examples, because children pick up far more from what they watch than from what they're told. Proverbs 20:7 puts it this way: "The righteous man walks in his integrity; His children are blessed after him." When a father chooses to walk faithfully before God, that choice doesn't stay contained to his own life. It ripples outward, shaping his children and even the generations that come after them.

Scripture is also clear that fathers are meant to provide for their households. Paul didn't soften this when he wrote in 1 Timothy 5:8, "But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever." That's strong language, and it should make us pause. But provision isn't only about money in the bank. It's about stability, encouragement, wisdom, and protection too. A good father builds an environment where his family actually has room to grow.

And yet, alongside all that strength, a godly father shows real compassion. Psalm 103:13 gives us a tender picture of this: "As a father pities his children, So the Lord pities those who fear Him." That word "pities" carries the sense of deep compassion and tender mercy. A father shouldn't be cold or hard to reach. He should be approachable, patient, and quick to extend grace when his children stumble, because that's exactly how our Heavenly Father treats us.

And really, when you think about it, the greatest picture of fatherhood we have isn't found in any man at all. It's found in God Himself. Jesus taught His followers to pray, "Our Father in heaven" (Matthew 6:9), and that single phrase says so much. God loves perfectly, guides perfectly, disciplines with purpose, and cares for His children without fail. Earthly fathers will always fall short somewhere along the way, but they can still strive every day to imitate that same kind of love and faithfulness.

So on this Father's Day, we honor the men who have sacrificed for their families, who have taught God's Word at the kitchen table or in the car on the way to school, who have offered wise counsel and shown steady, patient love. And we should remember that fatherhood isn't only about biology. Plenty of men have stepped into the role of a spiritual father, a mentor, a godly example for someone who desperately needed it.

Whether you're a father yourself, whether you have one who's still faithfully walking beside you, or whether you're remembering one who has already gone home to be with the Lord, today is a good reminder of just how wise God was when He created the family. Strong fathers help build strong homes, and strong homes are what help build strong churches and strong communities.

May every father seek to follow God's Word, lead with humility, love with patience, and leave behind a legacy of faith that points everyone around him straight to Christ. As Paul wrote, "Be watchful, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong. Let all that you do be done with love" (1 Corinthians 16:13-14).