

The Functional Father

Introduction:

A woman in a counselors office: My Dad was so nice but. But My father never “saw” me. He never tried to get to know me. He didn’t seem to hate me, he didn’t seem to resent me, he never called me names like stupid or ugly and he didn’t hit me, but the thing is that he didn’t really do the opposite of those things either. *He never saw me as a person. He was emotionally unavailable.* It is as though I didn’t have a father.

1) Two Most Important Childhood Questions

a) Boys and Girls

i) For all the boys the question is, “*do I have what it takes?*”

ii) For the girls that question is, “*will I be loved?*”

b) **MEN:** most men live their lives being haunted and tortured by this question. I have met men who have accomplished incredible things in their lives, still trying to prove to their dads... and often times their moms that they do have what it takes!

i) Some become workaholics. Some become crippled by the pain of never measuring up and lived discouraged lives.

ii) Where does masculinity come from? Does it just happen naturally... No, it is bestowed!

c) **Women:** most women live their lives trying to answer their question. *Am I worthy of love?*

i) One expert on marriage says every woman has a Love Tank! And, she can’t live on empty!

ii) A young girl’s greatest need is confidence... a self-worth.... A sense of value.

2) The Bible is rich with the revelation of the Fatherhood of God

a) OT - God refers to His covenant people as His children over and over. He often calls Ephraim his firstborn.

b) NT – God as Father occurs over 200 times in the NT and is the exclusive way that Jesus refers to God.

When daddy-hood goes wrong things often get terribly bad. Lets identify some typical dysfunctions of misguided fathers and then, we will go to the Bible to get some Biblical help.

Five Dysfunctional Dads

- 1) **Performance Oriented Dad** – giving love only when you performed well on things and withholding it when you didn't live up to his expectation.
- 2) **Critical Dad** – always pointing out your faults and failures to make you better, but never affirming your victories and achievements.
- 3) **Passive Dad** – no demonstration of love or affection, not emotionally supportive, no training or input into the children's lives.
- 4) **Absent Dad** – not in the home at all due to single mom or traveling with job, etc...
- 5) **Abusive Dad** – physically, verbally, emotionally, or sexually abusive.

A revelation of Fatherhood

Gal 4:4-7 (esv) But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, ⁵ to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. ⁶ And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" ⁷ So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.

Functional Fatherhood

Text: Eph 3:14-19 ESV For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, ¹⁵ from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, ¹⁶ that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, ¹⁸ may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, ¹⁹ and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Operating in the Spirit of Fatherhood

- 1) The father bestows his name (Eph. 3:14,15). IDENTITY
 - a) Paul was not saying that God is the Universal Father of all living things, but rather that He is the Prototype of all fatherhood. "Father" is derived from God, not man. He is the first Father, the only One with "un-derived" fatherhood. Thus every human family **derives its name**, that is, exists as a family with a father, because of Him. It is to this Father that Paul prayed
 - b) Men, your children need an identity... that is why they are named after you!
 - i) In biblical days a 'name' was not just a means of distinguishing one person from another; it was particularly the means of revealing the inner being, the true nature of that person... the impartation of something.

- ii) Ex: God changed Abram's name to Abraham (Abram = father; Abraham = Father of Many). Jesus changed Simon's name to Peter. (Jn. 1.42: you are Simon son of John; (common Jewish name) but you shall be called Peter which means "rock").
 - (1) Abram was NOT a Father of Many and Simon was NOT a rock.
 - (2) But the Heavenly Father imparted an Identity! And they lived up to their new names!
 - c) Btw, if human fathers love their children so intensely and care for them so generously, how marvelous must be the love and care of the heavenly Father!
- 2) The father strengthens his children's weak areas (Eph 3:16). EMPOWERMENT
- a) The Greek word used here for "strength" is the opposite of "discouraged" (in 3:13)
 - b) Paul also talks about the "inner being".
 - i) There is a place deep inside of a child that a father can reach. God the Father reaches us by the Spirit.
 - ii) I want to encourage the Dads in here to speak to that part of your sons and daughters being.
 - c) There are things that can only be done in them by the Spirit of God.
 - i) In a day when men tend to shy away from the manifestations of the Holy Spirit, you ought to strive to be filled with the Spirit.
 - ii) I love the prophetic promise to our sons and daughter concerning the Spirit: **Acts 2:17 And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams...**
- 3) The father establishes his children in his love (Eph 3:17-19). SECURITY
- "rooted and grounded in love"*
- a) The greatest gift you can give your sons and daughters is love!
 - b) The heavenly Father knows the importance of being rooted and grounded in love.
 - i) According to the scripture love is the most powerful resource in the universe. Love never fails to accomplish great things.
 - ii) Brothers don't be passive about this!
- 4) The father empties himself in his children (Eph 3:19). SUPPLIES
- "to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God"*

- a) As believers get to know Christ better, they will be filled with all the fullness of God. This “fullness” means that there is nothing lacking in our relationship to the Father.
 - b) Jesus prayed (Jn 17) that his disciples would have the full knowledge of the Father the same way He did.
 - c) Men you are a living resource to your children! Don’t hold anything back from them.
 - i) Spend time with them
 - ii) Share your failures, and fears with them.
 - iii) Speak from your hearts... be vulnerable and empty your life. Training is good; but offer more than training.
- 5) The father doesn’t quit on his lost children (Lu. 15:20). DEVOTED

“And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him”