

Perspective

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Is the Father Figure Disappearing?

It is troubling to see society has practically gutted the nuclear family. By doing so, the traditional role of fathers has been destroyed, and, in most cases, leaving children without the stabilization a strong father can offer. Evidence suggests the traditional father figure is undergoing a significant transformation — and in some contexts, a decline. Historically, the father was seen as the moral guide, provider, and role model for their children. Today, many fathers' identities are tied more to financial success than to emotional guidance, pushing children more to look to peers as role models rather than to their fathers. This shift can erode the paternal role's influence in shaping values, ethics, and long-term life planning. Gone are the days of sitcoms like, *Leave It to Beaver*. Ward Cleaver, the father in *Leave It to Beaver*, was portrayed as the inimitable model of the 1950s suburban dad. He was someone who took responsibility, had high morals, and was protective of his family. His wife, June, was a perfect complement role model in their make-believe marriage. He was the “perfect father” archetype anyone could want. He was a white-collar worker professional, a WWII veteran, college educated, and an upright citizen. His role was central to the show's mission of reinforcing traditional family values, familial responsibility, and moral lessons in each weekly episode. Television has long jettisoned such programs, and rather produces nearly the opposite kind of content. If wholesome television is available, it is usually old reruns, like, *The Waltons*, *The Andy Griffith Show*, or *Little House on the Prairie*. What does prophecy predict for the family? What has happened to fathers?

Absence and emotional detachment

Psychology Today reported research showing children without a father present, whether physically absent or emotionally uninvolved, are at higher risk for low self-esteem, behavioral problems, academic struggles, and difficulty forming healthy relationships. A web site, attachmentproject.com, points out the term, “father wound,” and refers to the emotional damage from a father's absence or emotional unavailability, which can persist into adulthood. “Father wound” is the lasting emotional impact of growing up with a father who was absent, emotionally unavailable, overly critical, or even abusive. A person can battle lingering feelings of detachment, being unwanted and unloved. It can also leave scars, which promote the very same issues in children. So, it can become a vicious cycle of generational father wounding. Psychological studies note that men who grew up with absent or emotionally distant fathers may struggle with attachment and responsibility, perpetuating cycles of paternal absence or abuse.

Fathers are called to be leaders in their families, not through harsh authority, but by modeling Christ-like love, patience, and integrity. Their conduct profoundly influences their children's understanding of God, themselves, and others (1 Corinthians 13:4). Children are to honor their father and mother, as the fifth Commandment says, but a father and mother are to manage their households well, ensuring their children respect and follow guidance in a manner worthy of honor (1 Timothy 3:4). A father's role includes diligently teaching children God's Word and instilling moral and spiritual values. Scripture emphasizes instructing children in daily life, prayer, and worship, ensuring they grow in faith and wisdom (Deuteronomy 6:6-7; Proverbs 22:6). Fathers are to impress God's commandments on their children's minds and guide them in the fear of the Lord, helping them develop a strong spiritual foundation.

Fathers must learn to mimic our heavenly Father

Fathers are instructed to discipline without provoking or embittering their children, fostering an environment of love and encouragement rather than fear or resentment (Ephesians 6:4; Colossians 3:21). Discipline is meant to teach and correct, reflecting God's own loving correction, and should be balanced with compassion and patience. The goal is to teach without angering our children. Ephesians 6:4 clearly

admonishes fathers: *“And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.”*

Often a prison inmate will write the church and tell us their life story. It is often a life of alcoholism, drug addiction, and committing crime --- from armed robbery to first degree murder. It is a sad story often repeated in other inmates. Nearly always, their woes began because they did not have either fathers or mothers who could or would teach them. If at least one parent does not do it, then those on the street will lead them down all the wrong roads. It is ideal if the father and mother are there to teach and nurture them in how to walk in the right way. It is not a sure thing a child will turn out right, but the odds are in their favor with proper parental guidance.

The cultures and media are no help

Popular media often portrays the father figure as a buffoon, who is detached, or useless when it comes to being an ideal parent. An example of this is, Al Bundy, on the so-called comedy, *Married... with Children*. He is often cynical, sarcastic, and quick to complain about his job, his wife, Peggy, and the mundanity of everyday life. He is an awful father. Frank Barone is a father on a comedy called, *Everybody Loves Raymond*; he is often sarcastic and a clueless father figure. In the animated sitcom, *The Simpsons*, the patriarch, Homer Simpson, is portrayed as the quintessential “stupid dad.” He’s lazy, impulsive, and often argues with his children, especially his precocious 8-year-old daughter, Lisa, over issues like education and taking responsibility. This kind of mentality promotes ideas which tend to undermine the father figure of the family.

The ideas are sown far and wide that it makes it harder for a father to fulfil his traditional role. I Corinthians 11:3 clearly shows the father is the head of the family, *“But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God.”*

This verse does not say a man is head over all women, but his wife in marriage. He and his wife lead the family working in reciprocal love with one another working together. In a community, the father’s role as a moral compass and disciplinarian has been historically vital. The prototypical father is quickly dying out in this world.

Elijah must come to restore the family

End-time prophecy foretells the coming of times of great stress, when there would be a general breakdown of the family (II Timothy 3:1-5). Men will become more selfish and loving pleasure more than God, and children will be unruly and disobedient to parents. Certainly, that could be traced to the absence of the father figure or even abuse in families.

What else does prophecy indicate? Isaiah 4:1 predicts, *“And in that day seven women shall take hold of one man, saying, ‘We will eat our own food and wear our own apparel; Only let us be called by your name, to take away our reproach.’”*

The context of this verse appears in a vision of the restoration of Judah and Israel after a time of great suffering involving a great loss of men in war. Isaiah 3:25 says, *“Your men shall fall by the sword, and your mighty in the war.”*

Malachi 4:5-6 warns of the gravity of the restoration of the family unit: *“Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And he will turn The hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the earth with a curse.”*

The word “curse” means to utterly destroy, or total extermination. God will send a type of Elijah. God’s people must respond or all life will be blotted out. The father figure is to be the family’s greatest sacrifice and an example who shows his children and wife how to follow Jesus Christ. It is imperative the fathers be reconnected to children’s lives. Fathers need to stand in the gap and be counted. Our faithfulness in our families may be the reason God saves the world from annihilation!