

HONORING GOD AND MY CHILDREN

Dec. 12, 2010

Sermon in a sentence: I fully commit myself to raising godly children, by my own godly example, and through teaching.

Scriptures (NASB): Mal. 4:4-6; Luke 1:5-17; (Mt. 11:14; Mal. 3:1); 1 Kings 18:21,37; Luke 3:3-14; Psalm 127:3; Mark 1:7-8; Deut. 4:40; 6:4-7; 12:28; Prov. 19:18; 22:6,15; 29:15,17; Eph. 6:4

Key Points:

The fifth commandment states: “Honor your father and mother”. This is definitely God’s requirement for children, but what about those of us who are parents? Are we living in a manner that will make it easy for our children to honor us?

Here are excerpts from a CBC news report:

<http://www.cbc.ca/canada/story/2007/09/12/census-families.html>

Married people are in the minority in Canada for the first time, according to information released by Statistics Canada following the 2006 census. The data shows 51.5 per cent of people over age 15 were unmarried in 2006, marking the first time married people have been outnumbered in the census, which began nationally in 1871. Other highlights include:

- For the first time, there were more families without children (42.7 per cent) than with children (41.4 per cent).
- The number of common-law families surged 18.9 per cent since 2001, to nearly 1.4 million families.
- Common-law families now make up 15.5 per cent of families, while 20 years ago, they only represented 7.2 per cent.
- Twenty-six per cent of families with children are headed by a single parent.
- [Over 80% of single parent families are headed by women.]

Parents. We must do better than this!

God spoke to Israel through Malachi, the last prophet of the Old Testament. Here are the last words he spoke (Mal. 4: 4-6):

Malachi 4:4-6(NASB) "Remember the law of Moses My servant, even the statutes and ordinances which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel. 5 "Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord. 6 "He will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, so that I will not come and smite the land with a curse."

- Israel was told to “remember” – (hear and obey) the law (v. 4).
- God said: “I am going to send you Elijah the prophet (v. 5) ... He will restore to turn hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers” (v. 6)!
- This would keep God from cursing or destroying the land (v. 6).

These are the last words of the Old Testament.

They are also included in the first words from God in the New Testament (Luke 1:13-17).

Luke 1:13-17(NASB) But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your petition has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will give him the name John. 14 "You will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth. 15 "For he will be great in the sight of the Lord; and he will drink no wine or liquor, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit while yet in his mother's womb. 16 "And he will turn many of the sons of Israel back to the Lord their God. 17 "It is he who will go as a forerunner before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers back to the children ,

and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous, so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

(See Mt. 11:14 where Jesus identifies John as "Elijah who was to come". See also Mal. 3:1 regarding the "messenger").

What was the 1st Elijah's message? Repentance (1 Kg. 18:21, 37)

What was the 2nd Elijah's message? Repentance (Luke 3:3)

John's answers to the questions posed to him explain ways in which fathers' [parents'] hearts can be turned to their children and vice-versa (Luke 3:3-14).

Luke 3:3(NASB) 3 And he came into all the district around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins; 7 So he began saying to the crowds who were going out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? 8 "Therefore bear fruits in keeping with repentance, and do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham for our father,' for I say to you that from these stones God is able to raise up children to Abraham. 9 "Indeed the axe is already laid at the root of the trees; so every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire." 10 And the crowds were questioning him, saying, "Then what shall we do?" 11 And he would answer and say to them, "The man who has two tunics is to share with him who has none; and he who has food is to do likewise." 12 And some tax collectors also came to be baptized, and they said to him, "Teacher, what shall we do?" 13 And he said to them, "Collect no more than what you have been ordered to." 14 Some soldiers were questioning him, saying, "And what about us, what shall we do?" And he said to them, "Do not take money from anyone by force, or accuse anyone falsely, and be content with your wages."

Here are his seven instructions that we need to model and teach to our children:

- Repent – change direction (v. 3,8)
- Bear good fruit – live a life of example (v. 9)
- Share what you have with those in need (v. 11)
- Do not steal. Be honest and upright in your dealings (v. 13)
- Do not take advantage of your physical strength or position (v. 14)
- Do not lie (v. 14)
- Be content with what you have (v. 14)

If you are a married couple and God has blessed you with children, they are not a bother and an inconvenience. They are God’s reward (Psalm 127:3)! Raise them in the fear of the Lord. Taking care of your own wishes and desires cannot supersede giving our best to our children!

If you have had children outside of marriage, or you are a single parent, abandoned by the other party, or you are a widow or widower just trying to cope, God can, and will, strengthen you to accept the incredible role and responsibility of raising godly children.

We need to point our children to Christ as John pointed Israel to Christ! “After me One is coming who is mightier than I...I baptized you with water; but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit” (Mk. 1:7-8).

Parents. This is our God-given responsibility!

Deuteronomy 4:40

40 "So you shall keep His statutes and His commandments which I am giving you today, that it may go well with you and with your children after you, and that you may live long on the land which the Lord your God is giving you for all time."

Deuteronomy 6:4-7

4 "Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one!

5 "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.

6 "These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart.

7 "You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up.

Deuteronomy 12:28

28 "Be careful to listen to all these words which I command you, so that it may be well with you and your sons after you forever, for you will be doing what is good and right in the sight of the Lord your God.

Proverbs 19:18

18 Discipline your son while there is hope, and do not desire his death.

Proverbs 19:18 (NIV)

18 Discipline your son, for in that there is hope; do not be a willing party to his death.

Proverbs 19:18 (NLT)

18 Discipline your children while there is hope. Otherwise you will ruin their lives.

Proverbs 19:18 (RSV)

18 Discipline your son while there is hope; do not set your heart on his destruction.

Proverbs 19:18 (MSG)

18 Discipline your children while you still have the chance; indulging them destroys them.

Proverbs 22:6

6 Train up a child in the way he should go, even when he is old he will not depart from it.

Proverbs 22:15

15 Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; the rod of discipline will remove it far from him.

Proverbs 29:15

15 The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child who gets his own way brings shame to his mother.

Proverbs 29:17

17 Correct your son, and he will give you comfort; He will also delight your soul.

A special word to fathers is in order:

Ephesians 6:4

4 Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

Boys need fathers they can look up to and emulate. They need the love, attention, discipline and correction of a father.

Girls need fathers they can look up to with love and respect. They need to experience the pure godly love of a father so they don't seek love, approval and acceptance in all the wrong places.

Let your children grow to honor you because you have played an active role in their lives. Let your children honor you because you have set a godly example for them. Let your children honor you because they can see and feel your love for them. Let your children honor you because you exercise strict discipline, for their good and not simply out frustration. Make it easy for your child to honor you!

Appendix:

Orphaned male adolescents go on killing sprees if mature males aren't around. (Nature, Nov. 23, 2000, R. Slotow)

<http://www.nature.com/nature/journal/v408/n6811/full/408425a0.html>

Between 1992 and 1997, young orphaned *musth* male African elephants (*Loxodonta africana*) that had been introduced to Pilanesberg, South Africa, killed more than 40 white rhinoceros (*Ceratotherium simum*). (*Musth* is a state of heightened *sexual and aggressive activity* in male elephants.) The killing ceased after six older male elephants were introduced from the relatively normal Kruger Park population. The deviant behaviour of the young Pilanesberg males was rectified by the consequent reduction in *musth*.

20 Reasons Why Your Child Needs You to Be an Active Father

Prepared by Stephen D. Green, Ph.D., Child Development Specialist, Texas AgriLife Extension Service, October 2000.

<http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/For%20Parents/Everyday%20Parenting/Fatherhood/20ReasonsWhyYo.htm>

Fathers play a critical role in the development of their children; however, many fathers are uncertain about the responsibilities and privileges associated with this role. Children need fathers who love and care for them on a consistent basis. The latest research indicates that fathers who are actively involved in raising their children can make a positive and lasting difference in their lives. In contrast, this same research reveals a number of potentially negative outcomes for children whose fathers are not involved. Listed below are 20 reasons why your child needs you to be an active father. Being an active father:

- Lets your child know that you love her.

Love involves more than saying the words, "I love you." Fathers who love their children demonstrate their love by spending quality and quantity time together. Children who feel loved are more likely to develop a strong emotional bond with their father and a healthy self-esteem.

- Provides your child with greater financial resources.

Research clearly indicates that families with an active father are "better off" financially. This means that children with active fathers will be more likely to have access to resources that facilitate healthy development (e.g., food, clothing, shelter, quality medical care).

- Provides your child with a positive male role model.

Children, regardless of gender, need positive male and female role models. Children tend to model behavior (positive and negative) that they witness on a consistent basis. Active fathers can promote positive behaviors by setting a proper example for their children.

- Provides your child with emotional support.

In addition to financial support, children also need emotional support from their parents. Active fathers listen and support their children when they experience joy, sadness, anger, fear, and frustration. Fathers who support their children emotionally tend to raise children

who are more in-tune with the needs of others.

- **Enhances your child's self-esteem.**

Self-esteem refers to how a person feels about himself. Children with high self-esteem tend to be happier and more confident than children with low self-esteem. Active fathers promote their children's self-esteem by being fully involved in their lives and letting them know that they are highly valued.

- **Enhances your child's intellectual development.**

Children who are raised with actively involved fathers tend to score higher on measures of verbal and mathematical ability, and also demonstrate greater problem-solving and social skills.

- **Provides your child with guidance and discipline.**

From infancy, children need proper guidance and discipline. Active fathers play an important role in teaching their children proper behavior by setting and enforcing healthy limits.

- **Gives your child someone to play with.**

One of the primary ways that fathers bond with their children is through play. According to researchers, there are qualitative differences in the ways fathers and mothers play with their children. Fathers tend to use a more physical style of play (e.g., wrestling) that offers a

number of benefits to children, including enhanced cognitive ability.

- **Provides your child with someone to talk to when she has questions.**

Young children are full of questions. This natural curiosity helps them learn about their environment. Active fathers can be a valuable source of information for children who are seeking answers to life's important questions.

- **Increases your child's chances for academic success.**

Children whose fathers are actively involved in their lives are more likely to achieve academic success than children whose fathers are not actively involved. These academic benefits appear to extend into adulthood.

- **Provides your child with an alternative perspective on life.**

Research indicates that men and women often differ in their parenting styles; however, one style is not necessarily better than the other. Instead, it can be healthy for children to be exposed to different perspectives on life, such as a father's.

- **Lowers your child's chances for early sexual activity.**

Children with actively involved fathers are less likely to engage in early sexual activity, thus reducing their chances for teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases.

- **Lowers your child's chances for school failure.**

Children with actively involved fathers are less likely to drop out of school than children with uninvolved fathers.

- **Lowers your child's chances for youth suicide.**

Children with actively involved fathers are less likely to commit suicide than children with uninvolved fathers.

- **Lowers your child's chances for juvenile delinquency.**

The benefits of having an active father throughout a child's early years extend into the teen years as well. Children with active fathers are less likely to commit juvenile crimes than children with inactive fathers.

- **Lowers your child's chances for adult criminality.**

The chances that a child will commit crimes as an adult also diminish when he grows up with an actively involved father.

- **Provides your child with a sense of physical and emotional security.**

One of the major benefits that fathers can provide to their children by being actively involved is a sense of security (physical and emotional). By being actively involved in a child's life, a father promotes a trusting relationship. The child does not have to worry about being abandoned.

- **Facilitates your child's moral development.**

Children need a moral compass to guide them when they face difficult moral choices. Fathers, like mothers, help children to develop a sense of right and wrong that serves as a foundation for establishing moral character.

- **Promotes a healthy gender identity in your child.**

Boys and girls benefit from having healthy role models from both sexes. Research points to the fact that mothers and fathers socialize their children in different ways. Fathers can help their children, especially boys, to develop a healthy sense of what it means to be a male.

- **Helps your child learn important life skills.**

Most of the essential life skills that children need to survive are learned within the home. Fathers have a unique opportunity to teach their children valuable skills that will enable them to grow up to be healthy and productive adults. Fathers, your children need you! Make a commitment to be an active father. Your children will greatly benefit from your involvement in their lives.

Source: Wade F. Horn, David Blankenhorn, and Mitchell B. Pearlstein (Eds.), *The Fatherhood Movement: A Call to Action*. New York: Lexington Books.