



HERE'S TO YOU, DAD

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I remember going into their bedrooms in the evening and just staring at them innocently sleeping in their beds. Thoughts of many things drifted through my mind: how fortunate I was to be the father of three young children; love; hope for the future; good times. But in the depths of my memory, an experience of later years still lingers.

It was the evening of Father's Day and I recall resting my head on the pillow and sighing out loud, "*It's now up to you, Lord.*" As a divorced dad with three teen-age children to raise by myself, I had done everything I could for that day. I had prayed for God's guidance, and talked, laughed, and played with our kids. It was shortly after the end of the Vietnam War, the hippie movement was in full swing and drugs were everywhere. There were times of loneliness and hurt. Men hurt too, but I got through it. For most of us, life is a museum of memories.

This letter is about fathers and a culture that is being destroyed from within.

Because our society no longer understands or appreciates the importance of a father, fatherhood has become a vanishing art form. If you recently arrived on earth from another planet, you probably haven't heard the term "father" used to any great degree. **You see, television has successfully eliminated fathers from the American scene.** What we usually witness on TV today is a mother and HER children. We own, we possess things now, to be wanted, or unwanted!

The Madonna philosophy is a trend that is growing within our society among financially independent younger women. Devoid of any suggestion of shame, she boldly promotes selective breeding as a selfish means to obtain her possession, her child—a home without a father. Single female movie stars are given Mother of the Year awards though they never bothered to provide a father for their offspring.

Media continually belittles fathers, generally portraying them as stupid stereotypical goofballs and misfits with multiple hang-ups and glaring idiosyncrasies. With few exceptions, dads are mocked and criticized as profoundly incompetent. In three short decades, we have gone from "*Father Knows Best*" to Homer Simpson.

The radical feminist movement is as much an attack on men as a beckoning call to women. **Never before in history have women attacked men with more verbal violence.** "The days of the cave man are over," men were told. "The liberated woman now wants a real man, one that is understanding, tolerant, and supportive of this new age of thoughts, ideas, and lifestyles." Insecure men fell over themselves to accommodate. In a frantic attempt to maintain his position as rooster of the house, men started taking sensitivity training, communication courses, and blaming themselves if their wife had a headache. While men became more unsure, fearful, and needy, women became more independent. The sexual revolution was birthed, and as a result, the divorce rate in the U.S. soured to over 50%. Well known feminist author Gloria Steinem wrote, "*A woman without a man is like a fish without a bicycle.*"

"*Feminists take the position that fathers are largely irrelevant in terms of child rearing,*" states Free Congress Foundation director Michael Schwarz. The National Organization for Women agrees. A December 3, 1999 Action Alert contains this statement, "*It's a father's presence, not his absence, that is harmful to kids.*"

A strategy of these male-bashers is to cry victimization in every relationship and eliminate male direction and fatherhood from the family circle—to first change our attitudes and eventually our laws. Inch by inch, over the course of the last 30 years, their tactics have been very successful. **When the framework for the traditional American home breaks apart, a spin-off of everything that is ugly follows.** The shock waves roar through our schools, churches, and neighborhoods, destroying everything within its wake. From abortion to AIDS, from school violence to drugs, nothing is sacred. What we are witnessing and tolerating is the destruction of western civilization!

Phyllis Schlafly of Eagle Forum states, "*Feminists want the battered woman syndrome to free any woman from conviction of violent crime.*" But although more women file domestic violence reports, surveys show that men are equally victimized. A survey by UW-Madison psychologist Terrie Moffitt states that 37% of women and 22% of men stated they had perpetrated violence against their intimate partners within the past year. Additionally, a University of New Hampshire Family Research Laboratory has found that 12% of men and 11.6% of women reported being physically abused at some time. A significant finding in the survey was the fact that most men apparently don't report abuse perpetuated against them by women because of shame. It's embarrassing!

Interestingly, facts show that mothers are responsible for more violence toward their young than fathers. Did you know that the U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics shows that between 1976 and 1998, 31% of murdered children under the age of 5 were killed by their father, 31% by their mother, and 23% **by her live in acquaintances?**

Churches did their part in spreading this degrading and less than factual view of men. To this day, and almost without exception, when clergy make reference to the breakup of a marriage because of unfaithfulness, men are assumed to be the culprits. **A physical impossibility.** In every adulterous affair, TWO people are involved, one of whom used to be referred to as the "other woman."

The popular men's retreat, Promise Keepers, implies that men are more likely to renege on their marriage vows than women, when actually the **OPPOSITE** is true. **Of the 1,563 divorces in Dane County during 1999, approximately 79% were filed by women!** "*It's shocking to see a man in a three piece suit cry,*" said prominent Michigan divorce lawyer Kay Schwarzberg. "*This society talks about men in different context than women,*" she added. "*We talk about men's responsibilities and women's rights. We don't talk about women's responsibilities and men's rights.*" **In the past, fathers have been entirely at the mercy of the mother in child custody cases.** When a friend of mine was kicked out of a home that **he paid for** and separated from their two children, his wife bid him farewell by handing him a paper sack containing a peanut butter and jelly sandwich and a clean set of shorts.

A major function of crisis pregnancy centers (in addition to the obvious) is to provide nurturing services for women. Although fathers are defenseless when it comes to protecting their unborn children from death at the hands of the abortionist, crisis pregnancy centers do not provide an equal amount of services for men as they do women. I personally know of men that suffer nightmares many years after the fact. **Regardless of all the rhetoric, women decide if their unborn child lives or dies – that's the law!**

Why the double standard? I believe our society tolerates abortion because the murders are performed under the direction of the mother. Atrocities committed by women are considered by the general public to be less offensive than when committed by men. Brace yourself for this! **There is no doubt in my mind that if men were having the abortions, the offense would be considered a capital crime.** Do men sometimes suggest, even insist that their child be aborted? Of course they do, but as was stated previously, the final decision and responsibility rests with the mother. **We cannot on one hand insist that women are at least equal to men in every aspect of life except when it comes to abortion, when they somehow become, once again, victims of men. There is simply no denying that the majority of abortions are performed for the convenience of the mother, and the baby is the victim!**

How are fathers valued within our pro-life community? The following information should give you some insight. For years, Dane County Right to Life and Alliance for Life Ministries has conducted rose sale fundraisers in area churches on Mother's Day. Most Catholic and Evangelical churches have participated. A similar effort for Father's Day has been attempted many times but has met with little or no interest. In fact, fathers are seldom mentioned on their day in any of our churches. **This undeniable fact alone should prove a point!**

I'll give you two more points to ponder. Andy Rooney recently painted an interesting scenario on CBS 60 Minutes. He stated, *"If the father of Elian Gonzalez had been lost at sea and Elian's mother made a plea for HER son to be returned to her, Elian would have been shipped back on the next plane flight."* Last, but very definitely not least, advertisements and posters promote *"Race for the Cure,"* a fundraiser for breast cancer. For your information, in 1997, state and federal funding in Wisconsin for breast cancer (which took 785 female lives) totaled \$3.5 million. That same year 691 men died from prostate cancer for which there was, and still is, **NO funding! I wonder why?**

A few years ago, Louis Sullivan, the secretary of Health and Family Services, made this perceptive statement, *"Male absence from family life is the greatest challenge of our generation."* You have probably seen the statistics. Fatherless daughters are 53% more likely to marry as teenagers, 111% more likely to have children as teenagers, 164% more likely to have an out-of-wedlock birth, and have a 92% higher divorce rate than girls that are raised with a dad at home. **Because children raised in fatherless homes typically do not form successful marriages, the dismal pattern tends to reproduce itself.** Fatherless children are twice as likely to drop out of high school and are 50% more likely to have learning disabilities. According to the National Center for Health Statistics, fatherless children are 200% more likely to have emotional problems, and twice as likely to need psychological help. Eighty percent of adolescents admitted for psychiatric reasons come from fatherless families.

A Heritage Foundation study found that growing up without a father is now the single most reliable predictor of crime. We come face to face with that reality as we walk the dreary cell blocks across our state. Seventy percent of all juveniles and long term inmates, 60% of rapists, and 72% of adolescent murders come from fatherless homes. From relationships to crime, one factor looms as the most significant contributor—**A HOME WITHOUT A DAD!**

But our story does not end here. The purpose of our problems is to strengthen us, not defeat us. Realization of this monumental truth can change a person's perspective. **I am ashamed to say, however, that I believe most Bible-believing men could have prevented or corrected much of the moral mess that we are in today if it were not for their spineless lack of courage.** Being conditioned to compromise, and for fear of rocking the boat, we have traded our self-respect for peace and ended up losing both. And there you have it!

Many years ago, a lawyer stood up to test a Jewish carpenter and asked the fateful question, *"Who is my neighbor?"* Christ stunned the audience by telling the story of the Good Samaritan. Then He admonished the questioner by adding, *"Go and do likewise."* This was not a suggestion, but an order! He was making a point about the need for His followers to demonstrate **what they believed by what they do.** His game plan was uncomplicated, clear and simple. **It was not enough for the Samaritan to only pray about the problem.** Jesus was stating that it was not right that a Jewish traveler should lie on the ground bleeding to death, while men stepped over and around him.

God has no room for a surrender that is up in the clouds but not also down on the earth. The Samaritan had courage. Most men today do not! Many times I have had men privately confide in me their respect for some of my feeble attempts concerning moral issues. When I ask them why they are not also involved, their answer is always the same—**they are afraid.** He is afraid of what his wife might say, what his children might do, what his friends might think, and how his pastor or business associates might react. He is afraid of everything and does NOTHING!

More than once over the last few years I have been invited to participate in a group composed of men from various area churches. As I understood it, most of these men had been involved with Promise Keepers at some time and were now pumped up, wanting to do something to impact our community. **I hope this is not a smug illustration, and I do not mean to be disrespectful, but I have never been associated with a more confused group of people.**

Although all of these men acknowledged the fact that our communities were going to hell in a hand basket, they were absolutely paralyzed when confronted with the opportunity to do anything about it. Obviously intimidated and frightened with the prospect of leaving their safe zone, they choose not to follow the wisdom of The Carpenter. **Unlike the Samaritan, they decided to step over and around the vulnerable of our society and let them "bleed to death."** But not before praying that God might perform a miracle—one in which they would not be involved!

Throughout the history of our nation, when immorality invaded our shores, men with faith and courage worked to crush it. **But times have changed.** Twenty years ago, our culture was no longer shocked by immorality, but actually started to tolerate it. Ten years ago, our culture was not only embracing immorality, it was snickering at morality. Today, our society not only celebrates immorality . . . **it is working to crush morality.**

There is a question I have been considering. **At what point will men rise to defend their family, their faith and our culture for what they believe?** Is there anywhere you would draw the line and say "enough is enough, I'm going to DO something about this?" Two thousand years ago, frightened men stood at a distance and watched while the one they called Christ was crucified. Some made excuses or claimed they didn't know who He was. Others just denied Him. As it was then, so it is today. **For a Christian man, the desire to learn without an equal desire to do is shallow salvation, and merely lust of the wind!**

We start by not looking the other way and pretending there is peace when there is no peace. By not expecting someone else to do our work for us. **And by admitting that if God ordered it, we don't need to pray about it. We're not going to simply pray away our problems!** For example, have you **done** anything to block pornography from invading your home through the Internet? Are you aware that Gay Straight Alliance clubs are being formed and polluting the minds of our young people in many of our local schools? I honestly don't know how Christian men can allow these to exist! Before spending your money, do you check to see which organizations support family values? Do you contribute to fund-raisers that indirectly support abortion or alternate lifestyles? Are messages in your church relevant to today's issues and satisfy you morally? If not, have **courage**, and take your tithe elsewhere!

My father never talked to my brother and I much, but he taught us a great deal. He never laid a hand on us in the form of discipline—his look was enough. **We respected him.** Abortion and the term "sexual orientation" were not discussed around the breakfast table back then. If they would have been, I know how he would have felt. Tolerance, in the context in which it is used today, was not part of his lifestyle.

Dad never played with us, and yet, he always managed to support me and to be in attendance when my high school baseball team took the field. I could tell he was proud of my achievements. I remember some heated discussions he had with teachers at school regarding subjects in which they obviously did not agree. He was never shy about expressing his feelings concerning social and moral issues with neighbors. **It took courage to do that, but I believe he was respected for his views.** He never seemed to worry about it though, one way or the other. Fr. Blinker from St. Mary's would stop in to help with the haying during the summer months, and I recall politics being part of their conversation. They usually seemed to agree. I can never recall an election in which my father did not vote.

By today's standards, Dad probably would have been considered "insensitive." He probably didn't understand much about women's emotions or mood swings, but he didn't need counseling to show our mother he loved her. She was committed to him and loved him. Their lives were not complicated. Mother was the heart of our home

and Dad was the head. I do not believe he ever thought about another woman. He had taken her for his wife to care for her—to love her. Nothing would ever change that. He did not display showy outward affection toward our mother, but he would have done anything in the world for her—**and she knew it!** She was never the same after he passed away.

These are but a few of the memories I have of my father, and I am sure many of you could write similar stories. If you can't, you have truly missed out on a portion of life that can never be replaced. I have been fortunate. It's funny though. If I had to list one image of Dad that stands out beyond all the rest, it would be the memory of him on his knees in prayer, leaning on the seat of an old wooden chair in our farmhouse kitchen each evening before retiring. I don't know why I still think about that. His grandchildren mention it also. He would then climb the stairs to their second floor bedroom, and after kissing my mother good night, sigh, and utter these words, "*God have mercy on us.*" They had labored, side by side, from 4:00 in the morning to 10:00 in the evening, and now there was rest.

My father prayed about our problems, and after resting—did something about them! "*Go and do likewise,*" The Carpenter ordered. I don't believe I appreciated Dad as much then as I do now. I'm sorry about that.

My parents were a part of the last generation of farmers who literally dug a living for their family from the soil with their bare hands. High tech machinery and cooperate farms are now the rule.

Much has changed, Dad—too much. Your views would now probably be considered old-fashioned!

There wasn't a lot of money to be made on a small dairy farm in southwestern Wisconsin in the forties and fifties, but we never worried about what we lacked. He was there and we knew our family would be okay.

Here's to you, Dad.

We need more **MEN** like you today!