A Father to Look Up To

# Scripture: Ephesians 5:1,2; 6:1-4; Joshua 24:8-24

# Thesis: Key examples in the Bible help us to describe a Father to look up to

# Introduction

* 1. Illustration of Boswell
     1. The famous English biographer named Boswell often spoke of a special day when his father took him fishing. He talked of all he learned from his father on that fishing trip. Sometime later a thoughtful researcher decided to check the journal kept by the elder Boswell and see what was said about that famous fishing trip. One sentence was found, "Gone fishing today with my son; a day wasted." How badly the father had misjudged! What a sad commentary on the attitude of busy parents then and now. Truthfully, in the light of history, it may have been the most productive single day of the elder Boswell’s life, yet he did not value it.
  2. How do we get the perspective we need to be a good father? Anybody can become a biological father but being truly a father to look up to is a different matter.
     1. This morning I want us to ask how we can be fathers to look up to; men of character and influence about whom the next generation will say without hesitation; I am so glad he is my father! And as I begin, let me specifically invite step-fathers to listen too. One of the tragedies I have observed in life is step-fathers who fail to step into and live up to their privileges. Some step-fathers don’t want anything to do with step-children. Others treat them as second class. What a tragedy. Being a Dad is much more about influence than biology. We you are a step-father, God is giving you an opportunity to step in and step up, not step away! He wants you to stand tall as a fatherly influence. He is also inviting you to love and be loved, one of the highest privileges we have. Don’t turn it down.

**How can fathers and step-fathers be fathers to look up to?**

# A Father to look up to says “I love you” in word and deed.

* + 1. God is our Father from whom all "Fatherhood gets its name" - Eph 3:14 margin reading. The reason for the marginal reading is that the Greek word for family which is found here (patria) is derived from the Greek word for father (pater). (See notes of 2011 NIV)
       1. The ancient world knew about the authority of Fatherhood but they were surprised by God the Father's love. The father-love of God is our example.
       2. I John 4:8 says simply, “God is love”

But if we act selfishly or seek first our own pleasure, that is not love. Our children will sense it. If we say “I love you” at the same time we pursue our own purposes, it will sound empty.

* + - 1. quote ‑ Roger Staubach, was a famous Dallas Cowboys quarterback for many years. Most people don’t know that he was also a father of 5 children. Once he was asked about being a parent. "I haven't completely figured out being a parent by any means. The one thing I do know is that the bottom line is love‑they have to know you love them." (Famous Fathers p. 131)
    1. Love must be both acted out in deeds and spoken as well. God’s love for us was acted out in Christ but spoken in Scripture as well. Ex. John 3:16
       1. There is a real possibility that we can love and the kids not know it. So we have to communicate it. Our deeds and words have to match.

**I highly recommend: The Five love languages for Children by Gary Chapman and Ross Campbell – you can get it on Amazon in an audio book now.**

* + - 1. One of the key things you will learn in that book is that showing love to little children means showing attention, and with your eyes as well as your presence.
      2. Showing love to children who are a little older means building up, believing in, understanding and encouraging; being their cheerleader, not their critic. They will run into plenty of critics in life.

# A Father to look up to stands up for what he believes in.

* + 1. This is why I read the example of Joshua. He was a man of spiritual leadership
       1. As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.
       2. An exemplary father has courage to stand up for spiritual things
          1. Ex. Convictions about going to church. – Let’s say the pals are going golfing on Sunday AM. Will the father say, “Sorry taking family to church?” – Example – Mark Boswell told me about his perspective on Sunday AM golfing. Was basically at church every Sunday. He loved to golf and a few times each summer he would take off and play golf on Sunday AM. But he began to feel uneasy about it so he prayed about it and asked for wisdom. He shared with me that the answer that came back. “You can’t honor me that way.” There is so much wisdom in that simple answer he received. First, it tells us that one key purpose of our Sunday worship attendance is to honor God. Second, it reminds us that our regularity in worship honors him also because it gives testimony before others as to how important it is to us to honor God and that testimony honors him too.
          2. Ex. Convictions about the welfare of their children. ill. Teen wants to attend a concert of a band that has an evil reputation. A few years ago Marilyn Manson fit that description – A Father to look up to might say to his child, “Sorry, but I took a vow before God when I dedicated you in baptism that I would do my best to safeguard you from evil influences. I believe that group is deliberately evil. No you can't go.”
       3. Teens - if you have a Mom and Dad like that - be thankful. You are blessed!

# A Father to look up to is a strong moral example

* + 1. Bad moral example's are common in Scripture and in life.
       1. David's example of multiple wives and adultery contributed to Solomon's downfall. Solomon’s multiple wives brought idol worship into Israel.
    2. A Good example ‑ Joseph ‑ Jesus’ earthly father -
       1. a man of steady faith in action
       2. He showed an attitude of mercy toward Mary before he knew the truth.
       3. He submitted to and obeyed God's directions regarding Mary despite probable ridicule and blame
       4. After Jesus birth, we see him keeping all prescribed rituals for Jesus.
       5. The trip to the temple in Jerusalem when Jesus when Jesus was 12 was part of that mentoring.
    3. A strong moral example means putting faith into action. That’s what Joshua was doing and what he wanted others in Israel to do as well.
       1. A father to look up to is a man of prayer ‑ James Dobson speaks of his grandfather's prayers
          1. let our children hear us pray for them ‑ bedtime mealtime ‑others
       2. A father to look up to is a man whose money is where his testimony is!
          1. James says that a double‑minded man is unstable in all his ways - you cannot ultimately give 1st priority to both God and money
          2. A father to look up to gives to what he believes in ‑ money is a test of motives - tithing is a test of the integrity of our testimony and of the gift of self‑discipline which is a fruit of the Spirit.
       3. A father to look up to is a man of Christian service
          1. His talents, his time are dedicated to God
          2. He expresses his faith is service to God, his family, the church and the community. – remember my Father as SS Superintendent.

# A Father to look up shows leadership at home.

* + - 1. Paul's description of church leaders
         1. 1 Ti 3:4 “He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect.” KJV rule ‑ Phillips ‑ have proper authority, Young’s Literal – lead; RSV, ESV, NIV manage (Greek proistamenon – literal root idea – to stand before – meaning to preside over, to be over.)
      2. ill Mordecai ‑ step‑father to Esther showed strong leadership. Est 2:20 But Esther had kept secret her family background and nationality just as Mordecai had told her to do, for she continued to follow Mordecai's instructions as she had done when he was bringing her up.
      3. There are various ways to have authority but not all are healthy.
         1. force ‑ domination ‑ like a sultan on a throne – leads to resentment and rebellion. There is no appreciation or respect in either direction.
         2. by serving as Jesus taught so that those you lead freely give authority. They respond in love and your influence grows. There is appreciation and respect in both directions.
      4. Two metaphors for the father’s family leadership are described by Gordon MacDonald in his book ‑The Effective Father chapter 5 - compares the father to 2 things
         1. He is like the pace care of the race track -
         2. He is like the conductor of the orchestra
         3. he sets the pace ‑gives the tempo. He provides initiative and motivation ‑ those are leadership qualities.

# A Father to look up to teaches his children to follow Christ.

* 1. Ken Taylor is the author of the Living Bible. It was originally a paraphrase which he did to help his own children understand the Bible. When asked about it he said, "You know, we just don't have very long. The children grow up so fast, and then it’s too late." (Famous Fathers p. 153)
     1. Bible contains at least one glaring negative example of a father who failed to teach and discipline his sons to follow God. It was Eli, the priest.
        1. e Eli failed to restrain his sons’ excesses as priests under his direction.
        2. Eli was severely judged by God. Eventually, the priesthood was taken from his family and given to Samuel
        3. I Sam 8:3 Unfortunately, Eli's example of poor parenting rubbed off in the way Samuel parented. Samuel’s sons also followed the way of Eli's sons. They did not walk in the way of Samuel.

Use positive instruction Eph 6:4 ‑ training and instruction

* + - 1. Famous Fathers p. 13 ‑ Rosey Grier converted to Christ after football and was trying to build a good home on a Christian foundation "Parents ought to be involved in what the kids are learning and studying. They should share with them, question them about what they're learning‑not just let the teachers take care of them."
    1. first Gk word ‑ paideuo ‑ DNTT p.620 "the practical influencing of life and moral conduct" (Lexicon – education, training, disciplinary correction)
       1. This includes discipline (used three times in Hebrews for chastening (12:5,7,8) Rev. 3:19 "those I love I rebuke and discipline." (verb form of same word)
       2. It includes training in God's Word ‑II Tim 3:16 tells us that God’s word is useful for "training in righteousness" ‑ same word
    2. 2nd ‑Gk nouthesia – admonition, exhortations

Two other occurences – 1 Cor 10:11 ”These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come.”

And Titus 3:10 where it is also translated with the word “warn” in NIV

The good father does not exasperate his children

* + - 1. Paul implies that the father to look up to holds his children accountable as Eli did not. But he does so without embittering or exasperating them.
         1. How do we exasperate or embitter our children?

lack of positive side to our relationship while negative side still there.

dad who comes home ‑ disciplines for what Mom says was wrong then doesn't relate again.

punish for things we tell them not to do while we do them ourselves

punish for our sakes not for growth and learning of the child

or because they got in our way ‑ embarrassed us ‑ caused us work

punish out of proportion to their age or responsibility or action (ex.. Punishing for an accidental spill)

children sense if the punishment fits the crime

irrational punishment creates insecurity and anger.

* + - 1. Priest who served as step‑father of King Josiah
         1. instilled a love for God's house and God's way that served Josiah well
         2. quote Dr Ken Cooper ‑ Father of aerobics ‑ Christian father of two children "There's no way I can keep my body in shape unless I practice at least three, preferably four or five times a week," Ken points out. "Family relationships are exactly the same. You can't store them. Like exercise, they're an ongoing type of thing." Famous Fathers p. 39

# Conclusion

Chicken Soup for the Christian Family Soul - p. 89 A Father’s Wisdom

About a letter from a father who was on the right track to be a great father.