

## FATHERS, MAN UP!

## Colossians 3:21

Turn in your Bibles, please, to Colossians 3:21. Two men, two different fathers, two different paths. The first man is someone that some of you have enjoyed reading for years, columnist Cal Thomas. Cal is a committed Christian who is an unashamed voice for Biblical values. Cal had a dad that loved him and made a great impression on his life. He wrote these words about his dad years after he died:

“What he did for a living was not the most important thing in my life, because it did not seem to be the most important thing in his. I do remember the Lionel train set he bought me one Christmas. I still have it and would not sell it at any price....I remember the backyard games of catch and the movies he took me to on Saturdays, back when movies were worth seeing. None of the things I remember about my father had anything at all to do with his lifestyle or whom he knew or the places he had been or the style of the clothes he wore. I just knew he was always there”.

The second man is perhaps the greatest rock star in England during the 1990s and the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. His name is Liam Gallagher, lead singer with the group *Oasis*. But Liam's relationship with his father Thomas was radically different than Cal's. He says that as a child, his most vivid memory was when his dad was hitting his mom in the head with a hammer. Liam goes on to say that that incident caused him to stop believing in God.

Well, since then Liam's personal life has been a horror novel. Two divorces, four children by four different women, and a life of public violence. His brother Noel, who managed *Oasis* for a time, described Liam as "rude, arrogant, intimidating and lazy. He's the angriest man you'll ever meet". And concerning Liam's dad, Liam said his issues with him still remain unresolved, and I quote, "If he died tomorrow, I wouldn't go to his funeral". Two men, two dads, two ways of life.

Today my message is for all those who are fathers, grandfathers, or potential fathers. Dads, there is no way to express in words the influence that you have upon your children. But God has put you in a position that allows you to either bless them or curse them, by guiding them to a path that leads them to either eternal life or eternal death. And granddads, your role could be just as important. For how many grandparents find themselves raising their grandchildren, just as they did their children? And even if they aren't raising them in their own home, how many of their grandchildren still have no godly dad to look up to? I can tell you, plenty. Who will their godly influence be, then? It should be you. When God was giving the children of Israel final instructions before they entered the Promised Land, He told them in Deut. 4:9,

"Only take heed to yourself, and diligently keep yourself, lest you forget the things your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life. And teach them to your children **and your grandchildren,**"

Now, I find something interesting about Paul's instructions for family living in both Colossians and Ephesians. Look back up just a few verses in Col. 1 vs. 18. There Paul begins a brief section of

instruction related to the home. He says, “Wives, submit to own husbands”. And in vs. 19 he speaks to husbands, and in vs. 20 he speaks to children. And then in vs. 21 he addressed the fathers. But nowhere does he specifically speak to the mothers. And it is the same way in Ephesians. Now, this does not minimize the importance of the role of the mother at all. We know that the writer of Proverbs magnifies the role of the woman in the home, and says that the children of the virtuous woman rise up to call her blessed (Pvbs. 31: 28). But it does tell us something about the invaluable role of a father. It is potentially the greatest influence upon children of all.

So today I want us to look at God’s plan for fathering. Our text says, “Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged”. And the word “provoke” means to irritate. He is a little more explicit when he says in Eph. 6:4, “Fathers, provoke not your children to wrath..” And we can see from the testimony and the life of Liam Gallagher why this is so critical, can’t we? So how can you be guilty of provoking and discouraging your children in a less violent manner than Thomas Gallagher? There are two basic ways.

First, you discourage your children by **mistreating their mother**. Men, you don’t have to take a hammer to your wife’s head to mistreat her. You can be even more violent by taking a hammer to her heart. More than any other person in the world, your wife receives her self esteem from you. And when you ignore her and beat her up emotionally with your vicious words that cut like a dagger, you sometimes leave wounds that never heal. And don’t you think for a second that this does not discourage your children. Number one, it robs them of the security of a stable home. But it robs them of something else. It robs them of their respect for you. Proverbs 17:6 says, “...and the glory of children is their father”. Children love to take pride in

their Daddy. But when you mistreat their mother you snatch away the pride and the glory that they had for you and replace it with shame and anger. And Mr., if that should happen it should break your heart.

But there's another way that you can discourage your children, and that is by **neglecting them**. Dads, when you got married you should have understood something. You should have understood that you were not number one anymore. As a Christian you are not number one anyway. Paul says in 1 Cor. 13:5 that love does not seek its own. *Agape* love is always thinking of others ahead of itself. But when you get married this is true more than ever. From the time you say "I do", your first concern should be the wellbeing of your wife and children. And when you neglect your children's needs in favor of your own selfish desires – your job, your hobbies, your friends – brother, that will discourage them every time.

Pete Rose was one of my childhood heroes. Every baseball fan knows about Charlie Hustle. Pete set a major league record for lifetime hits that has stood for 28 years and may never be broken. But instead of making the Hall of Fame, Pete has landed in the Hall of Shame. Gambling destroyed his place in Cooperstown, but his fathering destroyed something even greater than that. It destroyed his legacy. Listen to the testimony of his daughter: "(He's) the world's worst father. I will never understand why he never had any time for us. We didn't expect anything from him, except to just like us". And here's what Pete Jr. had to say, "Even if I wanted to call him, I don't have his telephone number. I have to call his agent, and he tells my dad I want to talk to him. We don't get in touch unless my dad wants to. Still, I love him. He's my dad." And we read between the lines, and our hearts bleed for the children of Pete Rose.

So dads, love your wife as Christ loved the church, and make time to spend with your children. Keep every promise. And they will not be discouraged.

Now, for the rest of our time I want to explore the overall meaning of being a godly father. Certainly it means that we are not to discourage our children, but it means so much more than that. And I want us to learn what it means by addressing three questions. First we'll answer the question, "Who is a godly father?" And then we'll consider "What is a father's goal?", followed by "What is a father's role?" And we'll conclude by learning the blessings of a father's soul.

Who is a godly father? A godly father is a dad who treats his children like God treats His. And we see that treatment in Psalm 103:13, which says, "As a father pities his children, so the Lord pities those who fear Him". The word "pity" means a deep, compassionate, most tender love. And the psalmist says that the Lord pities, that is, He loves those who fear Him, which means those who are His. And dads, that is the starting place for being the father that God has called you to be. He calls you to **love** your children.

Let me ask you something. If you are saved, what is the one thing that gives you more peace, more security than anything else? I'll tell you. It is the fact the fact that no matter what comes into your life, no matter how bad it gets or even how bad you get, you still know that God loves you and will never leave you nor forsake you. As Paul said in Rom. 8, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" And he goes on to ask, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall, tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" And the obvious answer to all of those things is **no!** And then he adds that no created thing shall separate us from God's love, and he also says that we are more than conquerors through Him Who

loves us. We can handle anything that Satan hurls at us because we know that our Heavenly Father loves us!

And dads, so it is with you and your children. It does not matter how old they are, they still need your love and support. They still need to know that you care. It does not matter if you are able to actually intervene and tangibly help when they are in trouble or not. It's great when you can, but if you can't, just being there to encourage them and to comfort them is priceless. Paul told the Thessalonians that he had encouraged and comforted them, as a father does his children (1 Thess. 2:11).

I could not tell you exactly when it happened, but I remember how I felt the day that I realized that I could no longer lean on my daddy for support if I needed it. My daddy loved me to the end of his life, but there came a time probably five years before he died that he became the dependent one rather than the dependable one. And I realized that my rock on this earth was gone. He could no longer encourage me or comfort me when I needed it. And an empty spot emerged in my heart that day that is still there. Dads, more than anything in this world, your children just need to **know**, by your words and your deeds, that you love them with all of your heart. I don't know how old Peyton Manning's children are, but I read recently that every six months he writes each of them a letter, just to encourage them and remind them that he loves them.

So that's who a godly father is. He is a man who truly loves his children. But what is a father's goal? How can he know if he has succeeded in this awesome task of fatherhood? Well, there is no more clear answer in all of the Bible than in the book of Malachi. In Malachi ch. 2 God is chastising the men of Israel for dealing treacherously with their wives. We are not sure what they were doing, but it was not good. But then in vs. 15 He tells them why He made husband and wife one flesh in the Spirit. Look at it.

God desires that father and mother together raise godly offspring. That their children are not only saved, but that they love and serve the Lord with all of their heart. And dads, as the head of the home you must take the lead! That is your highest goal.

Most of you know who James Dobson is. There has perhaps been no stronger advocate for the Christian home in history than Dr. Dobson. Dr. Dobson likens the gospel of Christ to a baton that must be passed from one generation to the other, much like a baton is passed between runners in a relay race. Please listen carefully to his words concerning what this personally means to him:

According to the Christian values which govern my life, my most important reason for living is to get the baton – the gospel – safely in the hands of my children. Of, course, I want to place it in as many other hands as possible, and I'm deeply devoted to the ministry to families that God has given me. *Nevertheless, my number one responsibility is to evangelize my own children. There is no higher calling on the face of the earth*".

Dr. Dobson said that the burden for the spiritual wellbeing of his children is sometimes so strong that he asks God to remove it from his shoulders.

Dads, how about it? Do you have a burden for the souls of your children? If they are not saved are you earnestly praying for their salvation every day? Oh, I pray that you can answer yes! Do you bring them to church every time you possibly can, not drop them off, that they may hear the gospel and that the Holy Spirit has another opportunity to work in their hearts? I pray that you can answer yes!

So God says that the father's goal should be to raise godly children. But what is the father's role? What are his specific duties in quest of his goal? Well, there are three. First of all, a

father is to be the **protector** of his children. He is to protect them from all evil.

Sometimes this means physical evil. In Genesis 14 we read the account of Abraham's rescue of his nephew, Lot. There had been war between two coalitions of kings in the region of Sodom and Gomorrah, and Lot had been taken captive by the winning side. And though Abraham was not Lot's actual father, he was still as responsible for him as he would have been for his own son, for Lot's father Haran, who was Abraham's brother, had died, and Lot was now living with Abraham. And as soon as Abraham heard of Lot's capture, he set out with 318 of his trained servants to rescue him, and he did. And dads, there may be times when you have to man up and intervene to rescue your child from physical danger.

But the chances are much more likely that you will need to man up to protect your child from spiritual danger. And let me tell you, sometimes they'll accuse you of being the bad guy. Like when you tell them there are certain television programs that they cannot watch. Or that there are certain movies or certain parties to which they cannot go.

Now, dads, let me leave you with two thoughts about being your children's spiritual protector. First, you must, you must, know what's going on with your children as far as their TV and internet viewing, their music, and their friends. And you must be willing to draw a line and take a stand on what they can watch, what they can listen to, and where they can go. If you do not monitor and regulate these things, you run the risk of your children wounding or even killing themselves spiritually. Let me ask you, would you leave a loaded revolver sitting out in the open for any of your children, no matter what age, just to pick up and play around with? Foolish question. Well, in the very same way, failing to protect your children from the onslaught of godless



media and from unhealthy friendships may cause them to fall into the devil's trap from which they may never escape. So be a protector by being aware and taking a stand.

Secondly, if you would protect your children from spiritual danger, you must avoid the danger yourself. Dads, your mind will be poisoned by filthy TV programs just as surely as your child's. Your mind will be clouded, your body destroyed, and your testimony tarnished by alcohol just as surely as your child's. And when you tell them to abstain from these things but they see you doing them, as the old country boy said, you might as well be spittin' in the wind. So be a protector by being an example of righteousness.

There is a second role that a godly father plays in the life of his children. He is not only **protector**, he is also **provider**. Paul writes in 2 Cor. 14:4 that the children should not lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children. He writes in 1 Tim. 5:8 that if any man does not provide for his own household he is worse than an infidel. Men, your children certainly do not have to have everything they want. We know that for us to give our children everything they want would hurt them, not help them. But God has made us responsible for everything they need. And fathers, in these turbulent, uncertain times in which we live, God has given you an ironclad promise as to how you can do it. Turn to Proverbs 10:3-4. Men, if you wish to have God's perfect provision for your family, then just obey these two verses. Live a godly life unto the Lord, and whatever you do for a living, do it with diligence. Work hard! Do your best. And God promises to take care of you and your family.

There is a third role of a godly father that I want us to briefly notice. Dads, you are not only to be your children's **protector**, and **provider**, but also their **priest**. Now, what in the world could I mean by that? Well, do you know the function of a priest? A

priest in the OT was a spokesman for God and for man. He interceded before God for men, and he interceded before men for God. And dads, that is what God has called you to do for your children.

Turn please to Job 1: 1, 4, 5. Job was a godly man, and Job was forever working for the spiritual good of his ten children. After they had all gathered together for their times of feasting he would send a servant to them all to perform some act of sanctification or consecration, to restore any spiritual vitality they may have lost. And he himself would offer sacrifices for any sins that they had committed. And he did this regularly. And so we don't have to wonder whether or not Job verbally taught his children to fear God. His passion to pass the torch of faith down to his children was just as strong as James' Dobson's.

So dad's, please don't do what so many Christian men wimp out and do. Don't stop with fulfilling the roles of protector and provider and fail at being a priest for your kids. Man up and be a blameless and upright man like Job, so you'll have the spiritual strength to be a spiritual leader in your home. And then pray earnestly for your children every day like Job, and teach them the Word of God yourself. Don't leave it up to your wife. Don't leave it up to the preacher. It's your job. Paul said in Eph. 6:4, "And you fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord". There are tons of tools out there to help you. But remember this, if you will purpose in your heart to be a godly husband and father and pursue that calling with all of your being, you can be sure that God will equip you to be the priest for your children that you should be. For He wants you to lead your children to know Him and glorify Him in all they do.

And for those fathers who will man up and be a godly father, who will be the protector, provider, and priest for their children

that God has called them to be, there is a great blessing. Look at Pvbs. 23:24.

Fathers, let me share just two more words before we close. If God were to pull back the curtains and let us gaze upon the unseen spirit world, I'm certain we would be mortified at the plans that Satan has for the destruction of our children. And from time to time we see these plans come to pass with a teenager's life cut off or their future totally destroyed. And only heaven knows how many of those precious lives could have been saved by a godly dad who was the protector, provider and priest for his children. Dads, don't let it happen with you.

And you may be a dad here today and you've already made some mistakes that you regret. Well, none of us are perfect, and the beautiful thing about our great God is that He is always ready to forgive, give us a clean slate and a new start.

Some of you dads need to start being a godly dad by giving your life to Jesus. You will fail miserably at being a father and you'll answer to God one day in judgment unless you do. And some of you moms may need to do the same. Some of you dads are saved, but you've blown it in some areas and your children have suffered for it. Well, you can start afresh being a godly father today, by repenting of your sins and crying out to Jesus for forgiveness and strength.

And young people, if your dad is not what he should be, there is a God in Heaven Who is waiting for you to reach out to Him so He can be your Father. He is the father of the fatherless. And He can be your father today if you will come to Jesus and trust Him as your Savior and Lord, and He will more than make up for what you've missed in an earthly father. Friends, every one of us needs God as our Father. Is He your Father today?