

The Teaching Father



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James Dobson told of the story of how a "Mothers' Day Card" project was so well-received in a particular US prison that the cards were literally sold out when they were offered to the prisoners for expressing gratitude to their mothers. So, the next logical sequence is – "Hey why not duplicate this endeavor for Fathers' Day as well!" You guessed it – none of the cards were taken. In fact, most prisoners felt that it was their fathers who got them into trouble in the first place and do not wish to be reminded of their involvement .. or lack of it.

Do you wake up earlier than your child and sleep later than them? I don't buy the tagline – *It is not the quantity but the quality of time that matters*. This is one of those clichés which sounds good but tastes horrible! The quality of your connection with your child comes as a result of deliberate, intentional time spend in significant "chunks". A "chunk" of time in my opinion should be at least 30 minutes. Although there is plenty that a father can do with the child, I would like to encourage you to concentrate on your role as a *teacher* rather than a buddy. Why a teacher (and not a buddy)?

Here are three reasons why fathering involves the act of teaching :

Reason 1 : Your Character Speaks Volume!

There is an innate difference in the leadership "presentation" of the father and the mother. While the mother instructs the family in day-to-day matters i.e "make sure you clean this up, sit up straight, don't talk with your mouth full, etc", the father is expected to be the one who "connects the dots" and draw conceptual lessons for life. My role as a father is to communicate the *value lessons* in such a way that my child sees the connection between choices and consequences. Although your wife speaks more (in terms of word count), make sure that you contribute by offering a value-based story or translate your wife's words into character lessons. For example, if my wife highlights an incident of sibling squabbling, I will contribute to add in on why the character qualities of tolerance and meekness is important .. and relate a story from my own personal childhood. Fathers, your child loves to know your childhood!

Reason 2 : Your Involvement Sparks Interest!

Long ago, it was assumed that the son would carry on the family trade because the transfer of skill was an important element in the father-child relationship. Although, in today's context – our children grow up with more career choices – yet, it is not surprising to find confused youth who are so much spoiled for choice that they do not know what to choose! Our child needs a glimpse into the "world out there" and he desires the opportunity to hold your hand and share your enthusiasm and your hobbies. You like gardening – well, train up little gardeners! You like to blog – well, teach them how to start one! You love to tinkle around with car engines, then get an extra pair of hands to help! Do not wait for the career counselor to show up before your child discovers her purpose in life. Get involved by sharing your life and you may be surprised and how much they can learn from you!

Reason 3 : Your Commitment Secures a Legacy

Your commitment as a *husband* – yes, you heard me right – husband (not father). In as much as I am committed to my children, my objective is to parent my children to leave me but as for my wife, she stays! In fact, after the children are long gone, my commitment to my wife remains. The biggest problem facing our kids when they are grown-up is society's diluting standards of what constitutes a solid marriage relationship. If I as a father and husband do not model that for them, they will grow up mirroring my lack of commitment and the story continues.

Your aspirations for your child's character begin with the actualization of your own. Think about it.

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