

SHOWING THEM THE WAY

1 Timothy 4:12-16

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Fathers day is a special time of year in which we as dads reflect on becoming more like our Father in heaven. All of us want our children to know God and be more like Him but living in a fallen world makes this endeavor very difficult.

There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one. Romans 3:10-12, NIV

In Paul's letter to the church of Rome he reminds them that this world has become drunk with sin and as a result humanity prefers to emulate each other's sin, rather than be on the narrow path to God. This condition of sin has been a problem for humanity ever since the Garden of Eden.



“You will not certainly die,” the serpent said to the woman. “For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” Genesis 3:4-5, NIV

The serpent was truthful in his statement “you will know both good and evil” but neglected to tell us that we would love evil more than good. As a result, it is extremely difficult for our children to obey God and stay on the narrow path because Satan offers them a path of disobedience that is broad and full of many choices (Matthew 7:14). Each path he offers our children is enticing because it gratifies the evil desires within their hearts (James 1:14) and gives them temporary pleasure.

Teaching our children to be more like God the Father is exceptionally difficult because there simply are too many competing voices in this world trying to get their attention! Consider the facts:

1. 60% of your child's time is spent sleeping, eating and going to school
2. 37% of your child's time is spent on social media – internet, TV, texting, video games
3. 3% of your child's time is spent on physical activities

This means that Dads the best you will get on average is about 1.5 hours a day with your child in which you have to compete against the internet, TV, texting and video games to get their attention. How does one reach a child when one is faced with such steep competition? The

good news it that studies show that while your child spends most of their time living in a world full of temporary pleasures, it is your love and time they value the most! The following sermon is going to examine how Paul's message to Timothy on becoming a credible witness of God in the face of all odds has much to teach us about being a good parent.

Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity. 1 Timothy 4:12, NIV

Paul was Timothy's mentor. Apparently many believers in the church looked down upon Timothy because they thought he was too young to mentor the older people of the church. What could Timothy do? Waiting until he got older to serve for God was not an option for God had asked him to serve as an area minister precisely at that point in his life. Ministering to other church leaders, however, would be extremely difficult because of his youth. After all, what could a young man possibly know about church leadership? To overcome their perceptions that young must mean not wise, Paul tells Timothy to live the Bible!

In a similar manner dad, we need to live the Bible to reach our children. Like most young people your child will often look at you and question what you really know about his/her world. "After all, it has been a long time dad since you have been a teenager. Also dad, times have changed. You simply do not understand the pressures of this new world!" While you have probably heard these statements many times from your child do not give up hope. To make a difference your child's life point him/her towards someone who has not participated in the fall and is sinless, God the Father. Fortunately for us God has given us a road map to raising our children to be holy as He is holy, the Bible. Living God's word in speech, conduct, love, faith and in purity is the five keys to becoming a profound influence in your child's life!



Lead by Holy Speech from a Holy Mind

But the things that come out of a person's mouth come from the heart, and these defile them. For out of the heart come evil thoughts—murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, and slander. Matthew 15:18-19, NIV

Speech is like a barometer for your thoughts. Just before this passage the Pharisees accused Jesus and his disciples of eating food before washing their hands. Jesus stated it is not the food that goes into the stomach that defiles but the heart. 2 Corinthians 10:3-5 states the battle is in the mind because there are evil desires in our hearts that entice us and when left unchecked lead to sin and death. Dads you gave your whole heart and made Jesus Lord of your life (Romans 10:9) but did you truthfully give Jesus command over all your life, including your thoughts? How can you claim that you love God with all your heart, mind, soul and strength when you think or speak harshly towards another person created in the image of God? How can you keep your marriage bed pure if you have lustful thoughts towards others? How can you claim to be the salt and light of the world when you are constantly bearing false witness and gossiping towards another person? If your child hears gossip about one of your supposed friends, then why would he/she want to tell you anything ... after all what is the guarantee that you will not pass their words onto others? If the thoughts are bad so will your speech be bad. And if the speech is bad then the witness you have – to point your child to God – will be very bad indeed!

Lead by Holy Conduct

Dads not only does your speech need to be holy but your conduct as well. While you cannot be sinless dad you certainly can strive to avoid some of the biggest sins of life. Even the world in all of its foolishness knows of the “Seven Deadly Sins:”

1. **Lust** – to have an intense desire or need: “But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (Matthew 5:28).
2. **Pride** - quality or state of being proud – inordinate self esteem: “Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall” (Proverbs 16:18).
3. **Sloth or Laziness** – disinclined to activity or exertion: not energetic or vigorous: “The way of the sluggard is blocked with thorns, but the path of the upright is a highway” (Proverbs 15:19).
4. **Wrath** – strong vengeful anger or indignation: “A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger” (Proverbs 15:1)
5. **Envy** – painful or resentful awareness of an advantage enjoyed by another joined with a desire to possess the same advantage: “Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all

deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind. Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation” (1 Peter 2:1-2).

6. **Gluttony** – excess in eating and drinking: “for drunkards and gluttons become poor, and drowsiness clothes them in rags” (Proverbs 23:21).
7. **Greed** - excessive or reprehensible acquisitiveness: “Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more” (Ephesians 4:19).

While you might say “whew I am good, my sins are not on this list,” are you certain? Did you know that the average person lies three times every ten minutes? Have you not looked at another person’s body and fantasized? Have you not been angry enough with another person to slander them to try and gain support for your own position? Even Apostle Paul wrestled with sin:

For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it. Romans 7:18-20

1 John 1:8 if we claim to be without sin we make God out to be a liar. There is an internal struggle within our souls, between what is called the sinful nature and the Spirit that lives inside of us. Sins are numerous and it is hard to avoid them all. What then? Because living a sinless life is impossible, Dad should you just give up on being a holy role model? NO. Listen to what Scripture says concerning overcoming sin:

In fact, this is love for God: to keep his commands. And his commands are not burdensome, ⁴ for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. 1 John 5:3-4, NIV

While it is true that greater is the Spirit of God that lives in you than the Prince of the Air (1 John 4:4), if one deliberately keeps on sinning God will not listen to that person (Psalms 66:18) and can only expect His wrath and judgement (Hebrews 10:26). God does not expect you to be sinless but to be constantly asking for forgiveness (1 John 1:9) and then to rely on Him to stop sinning. That is why Paul in Romans 7 said O wretched man I am – who will save me from this body subject to death – Jesus Christ! Dads it is precisely in your confession that you teach your child how to repent and make the course directions in life needed to stay on that narrow path!

Lead by Love

³²“If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them. ³³ And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do that. Luke 6:32-33, NIV

As you run inside of God’s kingdom make sure you can see the eyes of Christ in all people! Everyone is an image bearer of God. When Christ was on the cross Scriptures says that He died even for those we were His enemies. Can we not love each other in the same way? Your children want to see how you treat those who abuse you. It is how you make room in your heart for you enemies that points to the fact that you do in fact love God and those around you (the summary of all the laws). There will come a time when your son/daughter will say nasty things towards you and maybe even treat you horribly. It is in times like these that he/she needs to know your love is unconditional and you will never stop loving him/her and providing a way back!

Lead by Faith

For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse. Romans 1:20, NIV

To help your children to come to know that God exists start by showing them the complexities of those things made. The universe for example has approximately 100 billion galaxies (100 billion stars in each) according to the Hubble telescope but as technology improves that is expected to reach 200 billion. The human body has approximately 37.2 trillion cells. Questions such as why do we have finger prints, what do probiotics really do, why so many blood types, how does one cure cancer, heart disease or Alzheimer’s; remain unanswered. Considering the complexities of the universe, your child can’t help but ask who holds everything together? When they ask point them to God their Creator.

Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. ² This is what the ancients were commended for. (Hebrews 11:1)

In the book “A New Day” by Reginald Bibby he explains that the number one thing the church has to offer the people of this world is hope that death is not the end but merely the beginning. Your child is not just the product of simple biology but also represents a miracle, God gave your child a soul! Explain that it was by making Jesus the lord of your life (Romans 10:9) that you were washed (Titus 3:5) and sealed (2 Cor. 1:22) by His Spirit guaranteeing eternal life in His family. Since one cannot go to heaven and return one must take these matters

as being true. Show your faith by living God's word in your life. When tragedy strikes – your car breaks, your house leaks, you lose your job, get a serious sickness – then show your child the unspeakable joy (1 Peter 1:8) in your heart by praising God who always does good to those who love Him (Romans 8:28).

Lead by Being Pure

¹³ Therefore, with minds that are alert and fully sober, set your hope on the grace to be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed at his coming. ¹⁴ As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. ¹⁵ But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; ¹⁶ for it is written: “Be holy, because I am holy.” ^w 1 Peter 1:13-16, NIV

Living in a fallen world it is very difficult to find people who are truly obedient to God. Your child will naturally look for role models to emulate. Show that you really are the salt and light of the world (Matthew 5:13-16). As His ambassadors (2 Cor. 5:20) show your child that you no longer conform to the standards of this world (Romans 12:1-2) but have chosen to let self die so that Christ might reign supreme in your heart (Galatians 2:20). While you have sinned many times in your life let your child know that purity is not being sinless but is found in continual repentance! After all, Job was considered right in God's sight not because of being sinless but because everyday he repented for his sins and had them washed as white as snow. Your child needs to know that following God and being holy is possible because you have shown them by example.

Conclusion

Let this Father's day truly be a special day of the year. All of us want our children to know God and be more like Him but living in a fallen world makes this endeavor difficult but not impossible. Like Timothy, one can overcome the world's perception, that attaining holiness is an impossibility, by being an example in one's speech, conduct, love, faith and purity. While there will be many times dad when you sin and produce flaws in your example of what it means to be a Christian, never forget that repentance restores holiness! While one cannot guarantee salvation for one's child one can point them to the light and give them every opportunity to know God the Father in heaven!