

# Fathers and Fatherhood – *Ephesians 6:4*

*Children of the Conquest - #7*

**Introduction** – Children are the laughter of God, and for those who see and believe the promises of God for their children, we know that these next generations coming up under our care are the Children of the Conquest. God intends to bring the salvation of the world to the nations through faithful families who bring their children up in the training and admonition of the Lord. As Psalm 127 says, they will stand at the gate with us, speaking the truths of the King Jesus out into the world – a world full of enemies of the Gospel. They will be the pillars of future church and civic life as God uses you, and all by grace through faith, to impart the faith of Jesus Christ and His authoritative rule over all the earth. We have already discussed God’s proclamation of these promises as well as the command to disciple our children in the Lord (including their education and their discipline). We have discussed the need to build a family culture of loyalty and love around these promises. One more important piece to this is the necessity of fathers to be fathers in their homes. This is a sermon *about* fathers for all to hear as well as a sermon *to* all fathers to hear, believe, and obey as we raise the Children of the Conquest.

Now as soon as I say this, all the egalitarian culture and upbringing in us causes the hair on the back of our collective necks to rise. “What about mothers? What’s so different about the two?” While it is true that both mother and father have direct authority over their children (Prov 1:8-9), fatherhood has specific responsibilities. In fact, it is all about responsibility-taking, representative, covenant headship. One of the most important responsibilities of fatherhood is promoting, protecting and providing for motherhood to flourish and be honored in the home and in society. Motherhood is mocked, devalued and discarded because of fathers. Where are the fathers? What are fathers for?

**Fathers** – The name “father” carries with it enormous strength, which is why its use or abuse is so significant in the lives of children. The first thing fathers must do in order to be faithful fathers is to know their heavenly Father – and know Him deeply.

**Learning the Father** – Surveying Ephesians on the topic of fatherhood gives us context to our verse; we learn that our heavenly Father has blessed us with all spiritual blessings (1:3). He chose us in Christ and in love (1:4). He adopted us as sons according to His good pleasure (1:5). This heavenly Father grants us wisdom and knowledge of Himself and His plans (1:17). He has provided a way by which we have direct and easy access to Him (2:18). He is the foundation through which all families, all fatherhood, is established (3:14-15), and He overwhelms us with the knowledge of His love for us through Christ (vv16-18). Any unity, any fellowship, we enjoy is from “*one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all*” (4:6).

**Adoption, Sons, and a Father** – You are either standing on the shoulders of a faithful father who raised you, or, having come to Christ, you are breaking the curse of at least one generation of unfaithful fatherhood in your family. In either case, as a Christian, you are here because you are a son, adopted by your heavenly Father, and you have not been left fatherless. In John 14:7-11, 20, Jesus instructs us that in seeing Him, we see the Father and that, being in Christ, we are as close to the Father as Jesus is. If you want to learn fatherhood, you need not look any further than Jesus Christ and His Father.

**The Command** – “*And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training (paideia) and admonition (nouthesia) of the Lord.*” We provoke our children when we do not obey the positive command – and so let us consider that first. The *training of the Lord* here involves the entire enculturation of the child into his or her people, their history, their worldview, their God, their understanding of being and purpose and calling. And the *admonition of the Lord*, in Greek, is the word that means “to set right, to lay on the heart.” It is the foundation of biblical counsel; taking the Word and applying it into every situation, struggle, and problem. What this means is that all this series on childrearing has taught must be embraced by both mother and father, but it must first of all be owned and practiced by the father as a father. That is where the responsibility rests.

**The Warning in Context** – Considering the charge is to fathers, in what ways are fathers easily tempted to provoke their children to wrath? What tempts children to turn away from the blessings of their heavenly Father and towards the wrath of God?

**Children are Provoked** when fathers do not love the Lord more than anything else, seeking first His kingdom (Matt 6:33).

**Children are Provoked** when they are not noticed, chosen, approved of and blessed by their father.

**Children are Provoked** when they are not brought up in a Christian education and culture under their father’s care.

**Children are Provoked** when they do not receive painful discipline in the context of loving instruction when they are little.

**Children are Provoked** when fathers are too lax and indifferent or when fathers are too harsh and explosive.

**Most Importantly – Children are Provoked** when their fathers do not gladly assume sacrificial responsibility for everything going on (or lacking) in their home.

**A Culture of Father Hunger** – The need for a father is built into every person, for ultimately every person has a need to know God the Father. And God has also built into all of us the need for representative fatherhood in the three spheres of government which He established. We need family fathers, church fathers, and city fathers. This is the need we have for masculine leadership – again, the glad assumption of sacrificial responsibility – to steer these governments to accomplish what God the Father called them to do in their spheres of responsibility.

Wherever there is not a strong understanding and practice of fatherhood in the family, there will always naturally follow the usurping of the family by either the church (or some false religious entity) or the state. Tyrants know that if they destroy the family, separate the kids from the parents, they will be able to take control of the society and even do so with your approval because we have a strong need for a father. *“Of all tyrannies, a tyranny sincerely exercised for the good of its victims may be the most oppressive.”* - C.S. Lewis.

**City Fathers** – And so a word on civil government and how this talk relates to our present situation. Christians ought to be the most law-abiding citizens in a society – in most cases. That is because we understand that God has delegated authority to the civil magistrate for particular purposes, *“an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil”* (Rom 13:4). All of those words, *“avenger,” “wrath,”* and *“evil,”* are not up for grabs when it comes to definitions. The One who delegates the authority is the One who defines the limits and purposes of that authority. And so there must be church fathers as well, prophets who proclaim God’s Word, God’s law, God’s definitions, to the city and to the family governments. But, if there is to be a true reformation in the city and in the church, it will only take place and last over generations if family fathers, covenant heads of families, take responsibility for their children while believing the promises of God for those children.

**Know the Father** - All of this requires that we come to know the Father – and Jesus says that all who know Him know the Father – and that means that the answer for broken families, broken cities, broken nations, broken churches, is Jesus who is the Way to the Father. There is no other Way – and that Way has been fully paid for and paved. Jesus Christ was crucified as a Father, a new Adam, a covenant head, where he took full sacrificial responsibility for all your sins. He suffered the righteous penalty for them upon the cross, and rose from the dead with power on the third day, declaring His Lordship over everything both in heaven and on earth. Jesus is Lord – and Jesus is Life. The way has been made through Jesus to know the Father, to be forgiven by the Father, to have life eternal with the Father – and to bring the powerful love of the Father to this world – to your family, to this city, to this nation – and God have mercy upon us.