

2 0 1 6 J U N E

the PASTORAL *point*

PROCLAIMING TRUTH IN A WORLD OF UNCERTAINTY

Characteristics of a Godly Father

by [Scot Chadwick](#)

Father's Day is designated as a time to celebrate fathers, yet we live in a culture where fathers are often ridiculed and dismissed as deadbeats. The portrayal of dads in pop culture is more than embarrassing. One journalist writes in an article titled, "Dumbing Down Dad: How Media Present Husbands, Fathers as Useless,"

It's not hard to find. If you watch TV, then you've most likely witnessed the portrayal of the modern-day husband and father as lazy, incompetent and stupid.

Just these three characteristics are sure to bring to mind one commercial or sitcom that personifies this type of man.¹

How should Christians respond to this mindset toward fathers? And how should a father act by a biblical standard?

Children Walking in the Truth

Holidays like Father's Day and Mother's Day provide excellent opportunities to remember important principles and events, repent of personal failures, recalibrate toward the good and the right, and resolve to persevere toward righteousness. Father's Day should remind us that God-fearing parents of all ages have been concerned that their children would walk in the truth.

Raising godly children remains the burden and responsibility of all parents, especially fathers, as the Scripture says, "And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord" ([Ephesians 6:4](#); cf. [Proverbs 22:6](#)). This commitment emulates the desire of our heavenly Father who "seeks godly offspring" from the covenantal marriage of a man and a woman ([Malachi 2:15](#)), and hopes that those children will pass along the faith to the generation after them ([Deuteronomy 6:2, 5-7](#); [2 Timothy 2:2](#)).

Ungodly Influences

We live in a crazy, mixed-up world that is often anything but godly. Christians need to be wise to the fact that our secular culture is trying to influence us and our children to reject God and live however we please. The wise parent seeks to protect children from sinful influences such as evil company ([1 Corinthians 15:33](#)) and worldly wisdom ([James 3:14-16](#)), helping them to pursue righteousness and practice self-control as they recognize the judgment to come ([Acts 24:25](#)). But it's not enough simply to isolate our children from evil—we must help our children discern between good and evil ([Hebrews 5:14, 12:7-11](#)) and encourage them to love and pursue the good ([Psalm 34:14](#); [2 Timothy 2:22](#)). As we help them, we should remember that "more is caught than taught." What our children see in us in terms of our attitudes, affections, choices, words, and behavior can significantly influence them toward godliness or ungodliness.

A Model to Follow

One of the prevailing concerns Paul had in writing his second letter to his protégé Timothy was that Timothy would “not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God” (2 Timothy 1:8). In the context of an evil and unbelieving world, Paul wanted Timothy to “be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus” (2:1). Paul fully recognized that his life provided a model for Timothy and others to follow. He carefully lived his life in Christ, knowing that others were observing him.

But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance, persecutions, afflictions, which happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra—what persecutions I endured. And out of them all the Lord delivered me. Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. (2 Timothy 3:10–12)

In this brief commendation in 2 Timothy 3:10–12, Paul identified several observable aspects of his life to which all fathers should pay careful attention:

- **Doctrine:** Sound teaching from God’s Word should flow from the lips of a godly father so he can instruct, reprove, correct, and train himself and his family in righteousness. He should adhere closely to the Scriptures, meditating upon it constantly, speaking it to address particular needs, and ordering his life according to the Bible. This is a challenge, fathers: get into the Word and let the Word get into you.
- **Manner of Life:** A father’s daily practice ought to match his eternal position in Christ, indicating he has been freed from bondage to sin and can now live in a manner pleasing to God. His behavior should be excellent in the sight of God and man, and his mode of everyday living must conscientiously declare that Jesus is Lord of his life.
- **Purpose:** With humble submission to our gracious heavenly Father’s good will, a godly father lives intentionally according to principles derived from God’s Word. He has decided beforehand how he will handle temptations and has resolved to pursue the righteousness of God.
- **Faith:** A godly father trusts and obeys the Scripture as the written record of God’s revelation. He confidently rests upon the Bible for all matters of truth, recognizing that the eternal and all-knowing God has documented the foundation of everything we need to know for this life and the life to come.
- **Longsuffering:** *In the difficulties of life, a godly father keeps a cool spirit and bridles his tongue. Though he may become angry, he speaks and acts to promote peace. When troubles are beyond his control, he entrusts himself to a just God who directs all things according to His time and purposes.*
- **Love:** A godly father exhibits growing affection for God by delighting in His Word, drawing near to Him in prayer, and resting in His sovereignty. His love for God translates into love for others such that he purposely and selflessly serves others according to their needs and best interests, beginning with his own wife and children.
- **Perseverance:** Owing to his trust in and obedience to God, a righteous father endures challenging people and situations with hope, knowing that God sanctifies us through trials. He keeps moving forward in faith, knowing that following Christ is a long journey full of joys and sorrows, culminating in the glory to be revealed with Christ.
- **Persecutions:** Fully believing that the world hates God and those who stand for Him, a faithful father will embrace suffering for His sake and for the gospel of Jesus Christ. He is willing to struggle valiantly for the truth while aggressively loving opponents, believing that God may bring them to repentance.
- **Afflictions:** A godly father might not seek to suffer hardship for God, but he welcomes painful circumstances for His sake so that he can be purified through suffering, and this may give him opportunities to comfort others who are likewise afflicted.

A godly father does well to pay attention to his own example, knowing that his children and others are watching and may follow his lead. Paul had earlier exhorted Timothy, “Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you” (1 Timothy 4:16). While paying careful attention to these things, a godly father also remembers that his own performance is no guarantee of his child’s faith, but neither are his failures a guarantee of his child’s spiritual catastrophe. We and our children can turn from our sin, and our gracious heavenly Father is so willing to forgive and cleanse a penitent soul. A father’s influence can powerfully affect others, and he must faithfully fulfill his responsibilities, but we must leave the ultimate results to our gracious God. Happy Father’s Day, and may the Lord give you fruit for your labor.

by [Scot Chadwick](#) “**Adapted from Answers in Genesis**”

