

346 06/12/2006 The importance of fathers

Father's Day. It has been sixteen years since I celebrated a last Father's Day with my dad. Often, I think about what a special man he was, and how he exemplified what God wants fathers to be.

We celebrate our moms in a big way when it is their day and give our dads a tie a month later. Yet, dads are just as important in God's plan for families.

To a boy, Dad is his first picture of how men are different from women. He learns how a man acts around other men. He learns how men treat women. He copies the way he uses language to either build up or tear down others. He chooses the priorities in his life by the way Dad chooses his. He decides whether men are allowed to express emotions by how his dad shares or hides his feelings.

To a girl, Dad is the first love of her life. From him, she learns how women can expect to be treated by men. It is Dad's opinion that affects her belief that she is attractive...or not. And it is her relationship with Dad that helps her know she is special enough to wait for a worthy mate. Dad also teaches her that she is worth his protection.

Both boys and girls form their earliest concepts of God based on their dad. If he loves them unconditionally, they will know God's unconditional love. If he makes them earn his love, they will spend a lifetime trying to be good enough to be loved by God. If he is absent, physically or emotionally, they will have a hard time finding a personal relationship with God.

Whether you are a dad who lives with your children or not, make them a priority in your life. Talk with them and spend time with them. Keep your promises to them. If you are divorced from their mother, you still should treat her with respect and love as a fellow child of God. If your children are blessed by having you married to their mother, be sure they know that you love her. Give your children a picture of a godly man so that they can become godly men and women.

I thank God often that my children, whose dad lived in another state, had my dad to love them unconditionally, live a godly life before them and love their grandmother and me. Thanks, Dad.