

Fathers of the Word

We do not find any perfect dads in the Bible. The only perfect father is our heavenly Father. The fathers from Scripture we are going to look at all had faults, but that's not what mattered to God. What mattered most was that the overriding virtue of their lives was pleasing to God.

Dads, you are indispensable, and there are little lives out there that need you. In our world today, dads are a rare and precious commodity. God has given us the children we have to raise into the image of Christ. Let's look at three dads from Scripture that we can learn from.

Cheer For Dads Who Pray!

Fathers of the Word will be like Job who prayed for His family. "So it was, when the days of feasting had run their course, that Job would send and sanctify them, and he would rise early in the morning and offer burnt offerings *according to* the number of them all. For Job said, 'It may be that my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts.' Thus Job did regularly" (Job 1:5). Wow! Do you see how serious this dad was? Job was a godly man who was constantly in touch with God. He communed with God. Prayer requires more than just talking; it has a lot of elements. Job had five objectives in order to pray for his children effectively.

He studied his children: Job knew what was going on in his children's lives. He had learned what their patterns were, even though they were grown. He knew when his daughters were at home and when they were at his sons' houses. Make time to study your children's lives.

He sought spiritual goals for his children: Job desired for the personal lives of his children to be consecrated. He had spiritual goals for his children. The three greatest questions you need to know the answers to about your children are:

1. What kind of friends will they choose? Who are the friends that they gravitate towards? Jesus at age twelve sought out the older, wiser, temple elders.
2. What are they going to have as their purpose in life? Jesus sought His Father's business even as a teenager. His purpose in life was not to do His own thing, but to do the will of His Father. (Will your children be givers or takers in life?)
3. Will they yield to the authority of their parents? Jesus subjected Himself to His parents. If your children never learn to be in subjection to you as their parents, they will never learn to be in subjection to other authorities in their lives.¹

He sanctified his children: Job personally stood as priest of his family by offering atoning sacrifices for sin in general for each of his children. He was their intercessor. He prayed and sought God for each of them. Begin praying the Scriptures for your children.

He saw his children from God's perspective: He was not so concerned about their externals, but he was vitally concerned about their hearts! Some of the most outwardly conforming children have the most rebellion in their hearts. "My son, do not forget my law, but let your heart keep my commands" (Proverbs 3:1).

Look at your children from God’s perspective—learn to look at their hearts. “But the Lord said to Samuel, ‘Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature, because I have refused him. For the LORD does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart’ ” (1 Samuel 16:7).

He stayed faithful in praying for his children: Job was a man who modeled praying through his life. He stayed faithful in praying for his children and did so with spiritual persistence.

Fathers of the Word will be like Job who was involved prayerfully with his family. A praying father will make it his objective to:

- Always know his children deeply, personally, and directly.
- Always get involved in making sure they keep pure.
- Always stand ready to seek their repentance and restoration.
- Always look at their heart attitudes.
- Always continue praying for his children.

Cheer for Dads Who Lead!

Fathers of the Word will be like Noah who led his family. The inspired writer of Hebrews condenses Genesis 6–9 into this one verse: “By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark **for the saving of his household**, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith” (Hebrews 11:7, emphasis added).

Noah led because he believed God “by faith.” Male leadership is a lost art. Noah stood alone against the world. How bad was it then? “Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man *was* great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually” (Genesis 6:5). How bad is it now? “But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: for men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!” (2 Timothy 3:1–5).

Noah led because he stayed in touch with God. Noah listened to God when no one else was listening; he had spiritual perception. This is walking in the Spirit! “I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit” (Galatians 5:16, 25).

Noah led because he obeyed God. God told him to prepare an ark. What in the world was an ark? Noah had never even seen rain before let alone an ark. Yet, by faith, he obeyed God and saved his entire family.

Noah followed God in spite of his failures. Yes, he had a drinking problem once in the record, but his life was a life of obedience! Remember it is not the perfect that God

uses, but those whose hearts are pleasing to Him. In their book *Fearfully and Wonderfully Made*, Paul Brand and Phil Yancey write:

“Novelist Frederick Buechner playfully describes the motley crew God selected in Bible times to accomplish His work:

“ ‘Who could have predicted that God: would choose not Esau, the honest and reliable, but Jacob the trickster and heel, that He would put the finger on Noah, who hit the bottle, or on Moses, who was trying to beat the rap in Midian for braining a man in Egypt and if it weren’t for the honor of the thing, he’d just as soon let Aaron go back and face the music, or the prophets, who were a ragged lot, mad as hatters most of them . . . ?

“ ‘The exception seems to be the rule. The first humans God created went out and did the only thing God asked them not to do. The man He chose to head a new nation known as “God’s people” tried to pawn off his wife on an unsuspecting Pharaoh. And the wife herself, when told at the ripe old age of ninety-one that God was ready to deliver the son He had promised her, broke into rasping laughter in the face of God. Rahab, a harlot, became revered for her great faith. And Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived, went out of his way to break every proverb he so astutely composed.’

“Even after Jesus came the pattern continued. The two disciples who did most to spread the word after His departure, John and Peter, were the two He had rebuked most often for petty squabbling and muddleheadedness. And the apostle Paul, who wrote more books than any other Bible writer, was selected for the task while kicking up dust whirls from town to town sniffing out Christians to torture. Jesus had nerve, in trusting the high-minded ideals of love and unity and fellowship to this group. No wonder cynics have looked at the church and sighed, ‘If that group of people is supposed to represent God, I’ll quickly vote against Him.’ Or, as Nietzsche expressed it, ‘His disciples will have to look more saved if I am to believe in their Savior.’ ”²

How wonderful that God is more gracious than men. God never excuses disobedience, unfaithfulness, or any other sin, but He will forgive every sin that is placed under the atoning death of His Son, Jesus Christ.

Noah led because he had the respect of his family. Noah encouraged his family to follow him. As a result, he saved his household. Look at Genesis 6:9–10: “Noah was a just man, perfect in his generations. Noah walked with God. And Noah begot three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth.” Noah’s three sons went along with the project of building an ark. They trusted and respected their father.

Noah led because he called sin what it was. Hebrews tells us that by faith Noah “condemned the world.” He called sin what it was and sinners who they were! Remember what Romans 12:2 tells us: “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.” James 4:4 further tells us that if we have friendship with the world (are comfortable around), we are the enemies of God.

Noah led because he trusted in God’s salvation. Noah demonstrated genuine trust in God alone for salvation. He was saved by faith, not by anything that he did! Our greatest goal and joy in life should be to take our children with us to heaven: “For what

is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? For you are our glory and joy” (1 Thessalonians 2:19–20).

Fathers of the Word will be like Noah who saved his family by warning with word and example! Dads ask yourselves the following questions:

- Am I leading my family in the faith department?
- Am I leading my family in the spiritual life department?
- Am I leading my family in the obedience department?
- Am I leading my family in the consistency department?
- Am I leading my family in the discipleship department?
- Am I leading my family in the looking for heaven department?

Cheer for Dads Who Command!

Fathers of the Word will be like Abraham who commanded his family. Again the writer of Hebrews distills several chapters of Genesis (chapters 11–25) into a few verses: “By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (Hebrews 11:8–10).

Abraham was a father who commanded his family to look beyond the passing fancies of this world’s system. By example he taught them to look beyond the materialism of the day (in Ur of the Chaldees) and beyond the gods of this world. He rejected the sun and moon gods and chose rather to obey the true and living and only God!

There is still a world system to renounce. Dads, are you doing so? Our world is constantly bombarding us with the following mindsets:

- Egalitarianism (all equal)—God says we are all of equal worth, but we do not have equal responsibilities.
- Relativism (no absolutes)—God says, yes, there is truth and it matters!
- Exploitationism (get all you can; gusto; go for it)—God says that if you lose your life for His sake you will find it, but if you try to save your life, you will lose it.³
- Hedonism (please me now!)—God says that we are to deny ourselves and follow after Christ.
- Materialism (life consists of the multitude and quality of possession and privileges)—God says that a man’s life is not made up of the things that he has.⁴

Are you rejecting the gods of this world—the gods of substance abuse and sexual license for self-gratification? Are you fleeing from the sounds of sin—the language and music of rebellion, wickedness, and occultism?

Abraham was a father who commanded his family in the ways of the Lord: “For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the LORD to do righteousness and justice, that the LORD may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him” (Genesis 18:19). God chose him to “command his children.” Does he? We see through his dealings with his son Isaac that Abraham obeyed God’s rules in raising him, and he showed a loving personal concern for each of his sons. But above all, he was willing to sacrifice all for God, even that which was his closest and most precious possession, his son.⁵

Abraham was a father who commanded his family by example. The single most effective way to command your family is by example. Let’s look at the condensed version again in Hebrews 11:8–10. Abraham followed God. He obeyed what God commanded and went out from his land even though he did not know where the final destination was. He gave up the highly advanced civilization where he lived to live as an alien in a foreign land even when it meant dwelling in tents!

Abraham looked for God. He realized that there was more to this life than what meets the eye. He looked for a city “whose builder and maker is God.” There is not only a world and its system to renounce, but a kingdom to seek! Dads, do you live for things that are eternal? Are you daily reading God’s Word? Do you seek you lead your family, serve in the church, and reach out to the lost?

Fathers of the Word will be like Abraham who commanded his family to reject this world’s system headed away from God and toward judgment, leave the quest for things, and start seeking the only things that last—God’s kingdom. By God’s grace, let’s purpose to be fathers who pray for, lead, and command our families according to His Word.

¹ Luke 2:46, 49, 51.

² Philip Yancey and Paul Brand, *Fearfully and Wonderfully Made* (Zondervan, 1987), p. 29–30.

³ Luke 17:33.

⁴ Luke 12:15.

⁵ Genesis 21:1–22:12.