

DISCIPLINE FOR GODLINESS

DISCIPLINE OF FATHERHOOD

Listen to Kent Hugh's testimony: "I REMEMBER WITH technicolor clarity when our first child was born — August 10, 1963 — a blazing-hot Southern California night. It had been so hot that I had taken my round little wife to the ocean — Huntington Beach, to be exact — to cool off. There I hollowed out a place in the sand for her tummy, and we stretched out under the sun while the cool breezes of the *Mar Pacifica* refreshed us, as we both unwittingly began to sunburn.

It was midafternoon when we headed back to the heat and smog of L.A., so we rolled back the sunroof of our VW and foolishly baked some more. We soon looked like Maine lobsters.

After dinner, as we lay smarting on the hot sheets of our bed, labor began, and that is about all we remember of our sunburns. My wife was occupied with another kind of pain, and I was so excited I forgot about mine. That night brought one of the greatest events of our lives — for God gave us our firstborn, a beautiful little girl we named Holly. I remember everything, even the color of the hospital walls. It seems like only yesterday.

Another event has lodged in my mind with similar vividness. July 23, 1986, twenty-three years later, in another hospital in far-off Illinois, my baby Holly gave birth to *her* firstborn, a beautiful little boy, Brian Emory, and his father held him with the same rapture.

Both experiences were profoundly supernatural, for I saw God's creation: blood, earth, water, wind and fire. Though just a speck on time's continuum, I felt a sacred solidarity with the past and the present. I also felt *grace*, the unhindered flow of God's goodness to me and my family.

Today, as a grandfather of six (with promises of more to come), it is increasingly apparent that my most treasured possessions, next to life in Christ, are the members of my family. I share the universal reflex that if a fire occurred, after getting the kids out, I would go back for the photographs, the scrapbooks, the birthday cards and notes.

Someday, when all is gone, when I can no longer see or hear or talk — indeed, when I may no longer know their names — the faces of my loved ones will be on my soul.

At mid-life I am finding increasing satisfaction in my family and in their families. All my children are serious Christians and want to make their lives count for Christ. I say this

Bible Study: Discipline for Godliness

Discipleship Series:

Pastor Eddie Idefonso

humbly, because parents often take too much blame for their children's problems and too much credit when they turn out well. I realize that my children are what they are by the grace of God and that for me and them the road has not ended.

I have mutually fulfilling relationships with all my children. They are independent of me, but they desire my company and counsel. We have mutual respect. They call me, and I call them, and we all live for the holidays when we can be together.

I have shared all this because, though I have not been a perfect father, I have learned some things along the way which I must pass along, man to man, to those of you in the midst or at the beginning of fathering.”

Men, the mere fact of fatherhood has endowed you with terrifying power in the lives of your sons and daughters, because they have an innate, God-given passion for you. Recently, in reading **Lance Morrow's** *The Chief, A Memoir of Fathers and Sons*, I came across a remarkable expression of this:

“From time to time I have felt for my father a longing that was almost physical, something passionate, but prior to sex — something infantile, profound. It has bewildered me, even thrown me into depression. It is mysterious to me exactly what it is I wanted from my father. I have seen this longing in other men — and see it now in my own sons, their longing for me. I think that I have glimpsed it once or twice in my father's feelings about his father. Perhaps it is some urge of Telemachus, the residual infant in the man still wistful for the father's heroic protection. One seeks to return not to the womb ... but to a different thing, a father's sponsorship in the world. A boy wants the aura and armament of his father. It is a deep yearning, but sometimes a little sad — a common enough masculine trait that is also vaguely unmanly. What surprises me is how angry a man becomes sometimes in the grip of what is, in essence, an unrequited passion.”

Our sons naturally want us! Perhaps, men, you have experienced something like this. You have just finished a run, and you are sitting on the porch sweating like a horse and smelling like one, and your son, or perhaps a little neighbor boy, sits down next to you, leans against you, and says, “You smell good.” This is the primal longing for one's father. And our daughters' hearts are naturally turned toward ours with parallel longings.

The terrible fact is, we can either grace our children, or damn them with unrequited wounds which never seem to heal. Our society is awash with millions of daughters pathetically seeking the affection their fathers never gave them — and some of these daughters are at the sunset of their lives. In the extreme, there are myriads of sons who were denied a healthy same-sex relationship with their father and are now spending the rest of their lives in search of their sexual identity via perversion and immorality.

Men, as fathers you have such power! You will have this terrible power till you die, like it or not — in your attitude toward authority, in your attitude toward women, in your regard for God and the Church. What terrifying responsibilities! This is truly the power of life and death.

Bible Study: Discipline for Godliness

Discipleship Series:

Pastor Eddie Idefonso

For these reasons we live in a time of great social crisis. Whole segments of our society are bereft of male leadership. At the other end of the scale, there are strong men who give their best leadership to the marketplace, but utterly fail at home. We are the men! And if God's purpose does not happen with the sons of the Church, it will not happen.

Men, there are few places where sanctified sweat will show greater dividends than in fathering. If you are willing to work at it, you can be a good father. If you are willing to sweat, you will see abundant blessing.

Helpfully, God's Word provides us with an outline for a fatherly workout — in one pungent sentence: **“Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord”** ([Ephesians 6:4](#)). This outline is easiest remembered as a **“do not”** and a **“do.”** The **“do not”** is: **“Fathers, do not exasperate your children”**; the **“do”** is: **“instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.”**