

God's design for the family is a father, mother and children. Both father and mother are necessary in a child's life. The cooperative input and influence of a male parent and a female parent is essential for proper child development. There are many simple and obvious reasons for this.

As fathering expert, Dr. Kyle Pruett, of Yale Medical School explains in *Fatherneed: Why Father Care is as Essential as Mother Care for Your Child*, "Fathers do not mother."<sup>1</sup> *Psychology Today* explains, "Fatherhood turns out to be a complex and unique phenomenon with huge consequences for the emotional and intellectual growth of children." A father, as a male parent, brings unique contributions to the parenting project.

Likewise, a mother's female attributes uniquely impact the life and development of her child, as Dr. Brenda Hunter explains in her book, *The Power of Mother Love: Transforming Both Mother and Child*.<sup>2</sup> Erik Erikson, a pioneer in the world of child psychology, explained that father love and mother love are qualitatively different kinds of love. Fathers "love more dangerously" because their love is more "expectant, more instrumental" than a mother's love.<sup>3</sup>

The following are some of the most compelling ways mother and father involvement make a positive difference in a child's life.

### Fathers and Mothers Parent Differently

God designed man to be the provider, protector, and priest for his family. He is to work in order to eat bread (Genesis 3:17-19). A man is expected to defend his family. A real man does not hear a noise at night and send his wife to investigate the problem. A real man leads his family to

attend church, read the Bible and pray. The man is the head of the home.

The father tends to parent his children by rules. He sets limits (the time you have to be home, financial budgets, etc.) Fathers tend to talk briefer than mothers, being more direct and to the point.

Mothers are the heart of the home. They provide the compassion and care that every child needs. The Apostle Paul referred to his care of the Thessalonian church as "...*We were gentle among you as a nurse (or a mother) cherisheth her children.*" Everyone needs a mother's love!

There are exceptions to this, of course. There are feminine men and masculine women. But a father and mother is the general pattern that God set for the family. It is interesting to note that God uses the image of the family to describe His relationship to His people. Most of the time, the image is that of father and child.

### Fathers and Mothers Play Differently

Fathers tend to *play* with, and mothers tend to *care* for, children. Fathers play catch; they tickle more, and they throw their children in the air (while Moms sigh, "Not so high!"). Fathers are louder at play (although I have heard some loud mothers at ball games).



Mothers cuddle babies, and fathers bounce them. Fathers roughhouse, while mothers are gentle. Fathers encourage competition; mothers encourage equity.

One style encourages independence, while the other encourages security. Fathers

encourage their children to play to win and to take risks. Mothers are more concerned about their child not getting hurt. Fathers encourage their children to swing higher, climb higher, and throw the ball harder. Mothers are more protective. Together, Fathers and Mothers provide a balance.

Children who roughhouse with their fathers learn that biting, kicking and other forms of physical violence are not acceptable. They learn self-control by being told when enough is enough and when to settle down. Girls and boys both learn a healthy balance between timidity and aggression. Children need mom's softness, as well as dad's roughhousing. Both provide security and confidence in their own ways by communicating love and physical intimacy.



### Fathers and Mothers Punish Differently

Fathers stress justice, fairness and duty (based on rules), while mothers stress sympathy, care and help (based on relationships). Fathers tend to observe and enforce rules systematically and sternly, which teach children the objectivity and consequences of right and wrong. Mothers tend toward grace and sympathy in the midst of disobedience, which provide a sense of hopefulness. Again, either of these by themselves is not good, but together, they create a healthy, proper balance.

Most of us have heard those dreaded words when we were children, "Wait until your father gets home." We knew what that meant—a spanking was coming. Mothers are not incapable of spanking, but some things dad needs to handle.

Proverbs 29:15 & 17 states, "The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame. Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest; yea, he shall give delight unto thy soul."

### Fathers and Mothers Prepare Their Children Differently

Glen Stanton from Focus on the Family notes, "There is an absolute mountain of social science research showing that children who are raised with their married mother and father do far better in every measure of well-being, than children who grow up in any other family situation."<sup>4</sup>

Why is this true? It is true because a child needs both a Father and Mother in his/her life. A boy needs a Dad to show him all the things that go into being a man, such as how to shave, tie a tie, work in the yard, be a gentleman, and how to treat a woman.

A girl needs a Mom to show her all the things that go into being a woman, such as dealing with her monthly menstrual cycle, how to sit properly, proper feminine responses, and how to care for a family (cooking, cleaning, etc).

It is not that a man cannot teach a girl these things (or vice versa), but children learn proper roles by watching their Father and Mother. Parents teach a child about the opposite sex. Boys learn about women

by observing their Mother, and girls learn about men by observing their Father. Together, they teach a child how to respond properly to the opposite sex. If you eliminate one parent, a child's life will lack something. I believe that the rise in homosexuality, sexual abuse of children, spousal abuse, etc. is directly related to the break down of the American family.

Divorce divides children between two parents. One weekend they are with dad and his new wife, the rest of the week with mom. Sometimes, one parent will abandon the children after a divorce. Divided custody or abandonment confuses children.

To produce children who will build strong families, we need to do all that we can to keep families together. State officials need to support pro-family legislation and programs that will help, not hinder, families. Churches need to develop strategies that strengthen the couples and families in their church. Children (and teens) from broken homes need a church that will love and help them. These children (and teens) are everywhere; let's reach them for Christ!

Endnotes:

1. Kyle D. Pruett, Father-need: *Why Father Care is as Essential as Mother Care for Your Child*, (New York: The Free Press, 2000), pp. 17-34.
2. Brenda Hunter, *The Power of Mother Love: Transforming Both Mother and Child*, (Colorado Springs: Waterbrook Press, 1997).
3. As cited in Kyle D. Pruett, *The Nurturing Father*, (New York: Warner Books, 1987), p. 49
4. *Why Marriage Matters: Reason to Believe in Marriage in Postmodern Society*: NavPress, Colorado Springs, 1997.

# The Truth About Parenting

Children Need Two Parents



*"My son, keep thy father's commandment, and forsake not the law of thy mother: Bind them continually upon thine heart, and tie them about thy neck. When thou goest, it shall lead thee; when thou sleepest, it shall keep thee; and when thou awakest, it shall talk with thee. For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life:"*  
Proverbs 6:20-23

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