



### THE BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE ON THE ROLES OF FATHERS IN CHILDREN'S UPBRINGING

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#### Abstracts

The study is a conceptual investigation of the biblical ideas that address and support the fatherly role in children's upbringing both spiritual development and at-home training. The information was acquired using a biblical lexicon, commentaries, the internet, journals and other sources that discuss at-home instruction on children's spiritual development. The primary claim of responsibility for children's upbringing belongs to the parents. The father's involvement has huge implications on their children in terms of cognitive, social and emotional developmental abilities and a decrease in negative behavioural outcomes. The study exposed the fathers to the reputation of raising their children in the way of the Lord. It was deduced that God holds parents responsible for the teaching and upbringing of their children. The father-child relationship quality plays an active role in organizing family life and also strengthens the relationship with the children's upbringing. It was recommended that Christian fathers should be educated about their role and responsibilities in children's upbringing, live an exemplary life for their children and disengage from using abusive words or curses on their children.

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#### Introduction

The Ten Commandments were first taught to the children of Israel by Moses in the Old Testament, marking the beginning of parenting. Moses admonished them to obey the commandments and told them to pass them down to future generations by teaching their offspring. The father is the first instructor, and throughout the history of the Jewish people, the family home served as a crucial educational setting. Both the parents and the priests, who served as national teachers, failed to raise their people properly. The authorities failed to uphold and support the legal curriculum. All of these resulted in godlessness, which drove the people into captivity in Babylon (Polhill and Latters 1999). To construct a nation, parents are the designers of raising generations of godly children (Islahuddin, Yahya, and Besar 2021). God designed men and women for various roles and purposes in life. Parents have a lot to do because they must provide their children with both religious and secular education before those aims may be achieved in their lives. Family life is currently in a state of disintegration in Nigeria. As it is frequently said, "Husband in Kano, wife in Calabar," it is not unusual to find. Even housemates

have various work schedules, and kids are left in the care of housemaids, nurseries, daycare centres, etc. The primary claim of responsibility for children belongs to the parents. Before the Jews' liberation, no institutions were offering a western education. The original classroom was the family; lessons were initially taught in the area where life begins, the home. Children should be taught the will of God in the family and encouraged to live it out (Uche 1980).

It is clear from society's current state of affairs that fathers do not devote enough time to raising their offspring. Even if they do, these kids are not provided adequate and efficient training to show them the route they should travel so that when they grow up, they would not stray from it. Many social evil activities exist in the nation today at various levels, including moral decay like armed robbery, test fraud, violence, and most recently, secret cults. Children are a gift from the Lord, and they are a recompense from him, as the Bible accurately states (Psalm 127:3). But sadly, for so many parents today, this reward has turned into a pain in the neck (Huther 2011). Due to inadequate guidance from parents, society, and the church, many children in our generation become victims of oppression, immorality, and unintended pregnancies. Due to one criminal offence or another, many parents have lost their children, many children are in prison yards, and many more are being expelled from their colleges.

According to a writer, "There is disagreement regarding whether the current situation of children is better or worse than it was in the past, and the strictness of these difficulties is extensively debated." (Chum 2003). One wonders what hope the future generation will have if this way of living persists and what type of spiritual basis the fathers are laying for them.

The researcher wants to make sure that people are aware of the impact that a good father has on his children's spiritual development and early education (Adams, Bull, and Maynes 2016; Schein 2013). This study will aid in illustrating to the reader the numerous implications of early learning. The adage "charity begins at home" is frequently used (Giesenberg 2000). This study will expose the fathers to the importance of raising their children in the way of the Lord, just as Eunice did in the life of Timothy, which enabled him to have a positive testimony and Paul's endorsement about Timothy.

This study is intended to educate fathers on the relationship between proper home instruction and children's spiritual development (Adams et al. 2016; Bornstein et al. 2017; Schein 2013). The study will assist fathers in fulfilling their responsibilities to their offspring, raising them in the Lord's way, and making sufficient provisions to meet their basic needs. Every father should strive to give his kids a well-balanced personality.

## **Methods**

The study is a conceptual investigation of the biblical ideas that address and support children's spiritual development and at-home training. The information was acquired using a biblical lexicon, commentaries, the internet, journals and other sources that discuss at-home instruction on children's spiritual development.

## **Results and Discussion**

### **Fatherly Roles in Children's Upbringing**

Fatherly roles are viewed as the level of participation that a father has in the child's education and upbringing. Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL), found out that, when schools, families, and community groups work together to support learning, children tend to do better in school, and stay in school longer (Jackson et al. 2004). The report, a synthesis of research on father involvement over the past decade, also found out that, regardless of family income or background, students with involved parents are more likely to; earn higher grades, enrol in higher-level programs, pass their classes, attend school regularly, have better social skills, show improved behaviour, and adapt well to school (Ashaver and Igyuve 2013). One of the most important influences a father can have on his child is indirectly influencing their children

in large part through the quality of their relationship with the mother of their children. A father who has a good relationship with the mother of their children is more likely to be involved and spend time with their children and to have children who are spiritually, psychologically and emotionally healthier (Fernandes et al. 2020; Wiles, Cooper, and McWey 2019).

Similarly, a mother who feels affirmed by her children's father and who enjoys the benefits of a happy relationship is more likely to be a better mother. Indeed, the quality of the relationship affects the parenting behaviour of both parents. They are more reactive, friendly, and self-confident with their children; more self-controlled in dealing with disobedient children; better friends for adolescents seeking advice and emotional support (Lamb 2002). The Bible has provided several instructions to Christians on home and family life. While the Bible commands children to obey their parents in the Lord; parents are also commanded to rise to their responsibilities towards their children. The book of Ephesians 5 and 6 laid out the duties of each member of the family. The marital roles are made clear in these Bible verses for both wives and husbands Eph 5: 22-28. It is the researcher's opinion that each Christian parent is expected to seek to understand the book of Ephesians otherwise his marriage and family life can be chaotic or problematic.

### **Biblical Standpoint on Fatherly Roles in Children's Upbringing**

According to the writers of the Hebrew Bible, Infants and young people were viewed as the Lord's gifts to the Israelites."(Bunge 2001). This view is demonstrated throughout the narrative literature and Psalms, for example in the words of Joseph; who said this when presenting his sons to his father "They are my sons, whom God has given me here" (Gen. 48:9). The prophetic voices of Israel, as many scholars have noted, continue the biblical tradition of valuing children as important members of the community of God. Paul's words were directed to fathers "Fathers, do not frustrate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4). At the time, the father was responsible for training and instructing his children in many matters, including religion (Thomas 2002), even if this involved choosing a teacher. Instruction was often imparted to children through beatings and harsh treatment, which were common throughout the Roman world (Keener 2014). With his words in v. 4, Paul is exhorting fathers to maintain the role of the one responsible for providing their children with religious education.

Paul encourages the parent to be gentle in their approaches and avoid excessive violence and abuses of male-controlled power. What Paul is arguing for is a mutual relationship between parents and children in which all parties find their humanity, purpose, and identity in the Lord. Children are to obey their parents in the Lord, and fathers are to be loving and respectfully train their children in the way of Christ. What could have caused Paul to exhort this congregation to act in such a counter-cultural manner? Following in the way of Jesus, Paul recognized that "children, while they are expected to obey their parents in the Lord, are persons in their own right who are not to be manipulated, exploited or crushed." (O'Brien 1999). Therefore, parents must take care to nurture the entire being of their children, which is done through Christian discipline and instruction (Patzia 1993). Gundry Volf briefly summarizes Paul's view of children as "*members of the community to be shown the compassion and care of Christ, who welcomed little children and taught all his disciples to do so.*"(Volf 2001)

### **The Biblical Command to Train up a Child**

The book of Proverbs is filled with information for "children" or "sons." Much of the material in this book is meant for the instruction and training of children. Proverbs, therefore, offers clues about the religious upbringing and formation of children in ancient Israel. It is acknowledged that Fathers, assumed the role of instructor once children passed through early

childhood. Since the writer of Proverbs says, “Hear children, your father’s instruction,” it can be assumed that the instruction contained within the pages of this book is meant for relatively older children, those that had completed the mother’s early training.” (Murphy 1998). The father had now become the primary trainer and planned on passing on the instruction and advice that he received from his father (Prov. 4:3). The very existence of this book and the advice directed toward the father’s children demonstrates the love that ancient Hebrew parents had for their children. At least some sections of it are written by a father to his children, one can conclude that the writer had so much love and concern for his children that he took the important task of training his child into his own hands.

Proverbs 22:6 offers an interesting view of children in ancient Israel. Some believe that this verse means that one should train children according to their natures, considering individuality, personality, and peculiarities. It can be deduced that God holds parents responsible for the teaching and upbringing of their children.

### **Principles of Training Up A Child**

Raising children is one of the most rewarding and difficult things that parents are likely to do in life (Burrows and Keenan 2004; Dye 1992; Wright 2013). And what makes it even harder is that they do not come with instructions. The opportunity for social interactions with parents is important for the growth of all children. Through social interactions, children begin to have a sense of “self” and to learn what parents want them to do. Social interactions for young children usually happen within the family, but as children grow and develop, they want to play with other children. When interacting with a parent, children learn social skills, such as sharing, cooperating, and respecting the things of others.

### **Benefits of Fatherly Involvement in Children’s Developmental Outcomes**

Based on the collected research, it is evident that a father’s involvement has huge implications on their children in terms of cognitive, social and emotional developmental abilities and a decrease in negative behavioural outcomes (Al-Qinneh and Abu-Ayyash 2022; Freeark et al. 2008; Hewlett 2000; Marsiglio, Day, and Lamb 2000; Soukup-Ascençao et al. 2016; Torres et al. 2014).

### **Cognitive Development**

The cognitive benefits of a father’s involvement are evident starting in infancy to school age and even apparent as adults (Lloyd et al. 2017). Children of highly involved fathers are more cognitively competent at six months, have a higher cognitive function at 12 months, are better problem solvers at age two, and have higher IQs at age three. Children are also better academic achievers and are more likely to receive good grades, better quantitative and verbal skills, and often perform a year above their expected age level of academic tests. These children are more likely to live in homes that are more cognitively stimulating. During adolescence, they are more likely to have higher IQs, better attitudes toward school and participate in extracurricular activities (Morgan et al. 2011). They are also likely to become young adults with “higher levels of educational achievement, career success, occupational competency, and psychological well-being.

### **Emotional Development and Well-being**

A father’s involvement has been positively correlated with overall life satisfaction and fewer depressive symptoms. Young children who had encouraging, accessible, and supportive fathers during childhood result in “high measures of self-acceptance and personal and social adjustment, and see themselves as dependable, trusting, practical, and friendly” (Kohn,

Schooler, and Miller 1983). The variable that is most consistently associated with positive life outcomes is the quality of the father and child's relationship.

### **Social Development**

A father's involvement and commitment to their child's care is positively correlated with the child's overall "social competence, maturity, and capacity for relatedness with others" (Lankinen et al. 2020; McKay et al. 2018; Potter 2017; Wilson and Prior 2010). These children are more apt to have positive peer relationships and be classified as popular and well-liked by their peers. The greatest predictor of empathic concern in children is constant high levels of paternal involvement. A father's warmth and attention significantly calculate a child's moral maturity and are associated with more pro-social and positive moral behaviours in both boys and girls.

### **Decrease in Negative Childhood Outcomes**

Father's involvement protects children from engaging in criminal behaviour, misbehaviour, drug use, absenteeism, stealing, and drinking. It also lowers the frequency of externalizing and internalizing symptoms such as acting out, disruptive behaviour, depression, sadness and lying. Adolescents who had a nurturing and positive relationship with their fathers were 80% less likely to have been caged and 75% less likely to become compassionless/unattached parents themselves.

### **Fatherly Responsibility to Children**

The role of the father in the lives of children has received little attention in psychotherapeutic literature. Indeed, the father has been termed "The Forgotten Parent" because of this lack of discourse. Concerns about sexism have often meant that the role of fathers has been sidelined in discussions about children, in favour of emphasizing the mother's perspective. The role of the Father From the mid-1800s, fathers came to be seen principally as economic providers for their families rather than active members of it. The father's role has frequently been viewed as a supporting one, which suggests a certain distance from direct caring. Sigmund Freud stated that the father plays an important role in between the pre-Oedipal (0-2yrs) and Oedipal stages (3-5yrs) of child development (Freud 1955). For Freud, a loving attachment to the father, particularly for boys, was essential for healthy development and resolution of the oedipal stage. Freud saw the father as a protector who is idealized by the small child while Jacques Lacan viewed the father as the personification of the law (Lacan 1980).

Madeleine Rose perceives a father in a mentor-like role, determining a boy's readiness for tenderness as well as his acquiring the means for work and productivity (Rose 1992), while Kyle Pruett stated that fathers show a tendency to stimulate their *children* in more unpredictable ways than mothers to interact with them (Pruett 1989). An absent father gives a boy less chance of channelling his aggression, which then needs to go toward combatting any feminine identification. The loss of a father is suggested to increase the risk of ego deficits, such as impaired intellectual functioning, poor frustration tolerance, inability to delay gratification and susceptibility to learning disabilities. Furman sees the father as another source of love who heightens self-esteem and whose absence leads to poorer self-image and higher levels of aggression (Furman 1991). The age of the child when the father ceases to be a part of their lives can play a critical part in how it is experienced.

### **One-way parents unconsciously train their children.**

1. Children often admire and do whatever their parents love and admire to do. Examples of such are: dressing, habits, and things parents love to take (that is eat or

drink) like alcohol, cigarette etc. parents who are contrary to God in these things cannot force their children to fear God, (if such parents did not have the fear of God in their hearts).

2. Our dwelling together with neighbours will show how liberal we are, or how irritable (hostile) we are to them. Parents that love or care for their neighbours will by example help their children become merciful, tolerant, and ready to help and help their neighbours.
3. The various types of pictures we hang on the walls in our rooms could teach our children a lot of things, e.g. pornographic pictures with naked women. When children are exposed to all these, and allowed to see such and other bad pictures they may be corrupted and it may result in immoral practices. Your children might develop an interest in going to parties if they are exposed to pictures showing disco party scenes. But the contrary is the case if your children are used to seeing pictures showing Jesus alone and that of the child of God. Your children will develop love and admiration for Jesus and they would like to take after the behaviours of the good men and women of God. Therefore, parents are implored by the mercy of God to remove and destroy their room's unwholesome pictures and attitudes.
4. Our ways (manners) of speaking are very important also children whose parents love to take pleasure in gossiping, backbiting or reproaching others are likely to reproach their neighbours later. If such parents take pleasure in idle talks and show no regard (respect) for people in their speeches, their children likely do not have the opportunity of having graceful words seasoned with salt in their mouths.

## Conclusion

The efforts of the fathers in bringing up their children were to fear God. Some rewards await such parents, scripture says: "Correct thy son and he shall give you rest, yea, he shall give delight unto your soul" (Prov. 29:17.) Rest is sweet after labouring and the course of bringing up children by Christian parents as expected is protracted and needs rest after it. Rest not only restores the body but refreshes and gives peace to the mind and spirit. The father-child relationship quality plays an active role in organizing family life and also strengthens the relationship with the children's upbringing.

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