

Chapter One

FATHERHOOD: REDISCOVERING THE PATH

"If you don't care very much where you're going, any road will get you there."

Lewis Carroll -- 1865

Please join me as we embark on a journey to rediscover the Biblical model for fatherhood. The Fatherhood of God was the central theme of Jesus' message. This makes it impossible for us to over-emphasize its importance. Our journey will take us down a path that I chose several decades ago. I find the words of Robert Frost much more eloquent than my own, as I attempt to express the value of choosing this unique road:

THE ROAD NOT TAKEN

"Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
Though as for that, the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black,
Oh I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
**Two roads diverged in a wood, and I,
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference."**

Robert Frost

March 26, 1874 - January 29, 1963

This book is written primarily to men, and for men. It comes after raising two sons, who are now fathers themselves. It comes also as a result of being a spiritual son myself and serving as a spiritual father for many persons around the world. Having ministered across the globe for several decades, **the most frequent and greatest problem that I have encountered is the lack of genuine fatherhood.** My primary purpose for writing this book is to address this problem. I hope to do this by helping us to see, understand, and walk down a path which will lead us into healthier father and son relationships. This manual will serve as our map for this journey.

Before we begin, we must settle one primary issue. What will we use as our ultimate frame of reference and source of authority? Will we use current sociological trends, cultural norms, or even church traditions? Or shall we use the Bible? **In this study we shall assume that the Bible is the ultimate source of authority and frame of reference for all of life and practice.** We are about to build on this premise, so it would be futile to venture any further unless we agree to this.

A strong framework is necessary to build a sustainable belief system

2 Timothy 3:16-17 *“All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.”*

2 Peter 1:19-21 *“So we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts. But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one’s own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.”*

Truth is personified in Jesus Christ

Biblical truth is not simply something that can be studied, taught and learned. Biblical truth is embodied in the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus did not simply say that He would give us or tell us the truth. He said, *“I am the truth.”* Truth is dependent upon revelation. Therefore, even though this Guide uses many

Scriptures to support the premise, we still require God’s revelation. What I have penned should give us a deeper revelation of Christ. If it does not, it is of little value. The ultimate issue is to know Jesus Christ. We must know Jesus before we can know how He would have us build the family and the church. As we begin this journey, Paul’s prayer for the church in Ephesus expresses my heart’s desire.

Ephesians 1:17 *“That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you (and me) a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him.”*

Numerous psychologists contend, and I agree, that our concept of God is impacted and influenced, if not shaped, by our view of fatherhood. God is not just a father, He is *the* Father. One’s view of God will be affected very significantly by the relationship he has with his natural or biological father. Any wrong concepts or false images we have of God are a form of idolatry. Consequently, it is essential that we correct any wrong view we have of fatherhood, since it is likely to affect our view of God. What you are about to study is not a system to be implemented but a life to be lived. It is not a program; it is a lifestyle. As you are aware, numerous books have been written about the subject of fatherhood. Many of these contain great insight and are useful references for us. So why have I chosen to address this subject again? Basically, I believe that my approach to

the subject of fatherhood takes a bit of a twist. I hope to convince you that Jesus Christ continues to be the example for us, and that He became a father by being a son. That is to say, when God decided once and for all to reveal Himself as a father, He sent not a father, but a son. This son, Jesus, then said to His disciples, *“As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.”*

“I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.”
John 14:6

The word 'as' is pivotal in this verse. Jesus was saying that He was sending the disciples in the same manner that He Himself was sent, 'as sons.'

John 20:21-23 *"Jesus therefore said to them again, 'Peace be with you; **as the Father has sent Me, I also send you.**' And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, their sins have been forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they have been retained.'"*

As we begin let us take heed to one of the books of the Bible that was written primarily to give wisdom to sons and daughters:

Proverbs 23:22-26 *"Listen to your father who begot you, and do not despise your mother when she is old. Buy truth, and do not sell it, get wisdom and instruction and understanding. The father of the righteous will greatly rejoice, and he who begets a wise son will be glad in him. Let your father and your mother be glad, and let her rejoice who gave birth to you. Give me your heart, my son, and let your eyes delight in my ways."*

Perhaps Paul's words can best express the urgency of this message:

Romans 8:19 *"For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God."*

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QUIZ

1. Our ultimate authority and frame of reference for all spiritual and practical discussions is the _____, not cultural norms or church traditions.
2. We accept that no prophecy of _____ can be privately interpreted.
3. Truth is revealed by the _____, not by man's reasoning ability.
4. From this chapter we realize that the central theme of Jesus' ministry was _____.
5. Truth has a name: _____.
6. Even secular psychologists agree that one's perception of God is shaped by his view of his _____.
7. Distorted concepts of God, which we draw from examples of bad fatherhood, are a form of _____.
8. To fully accept _____, we should first correct any wrong view we have of fatherhood.
9. When God decided to reveal Himself as a Father, He _____. Jesus said: "*As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.*" Therefore, our call is to imitate the life of _____ by becoming His _____.
10. In Romans 8:19, we read that Creation itself longs for the time when the _____ will be revealed.
11. We must know Jesus Christ before we can know _____.

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Topics for Reflection

1. Do you agree that the Bible provides the only valid framework for understanding life and making sound decisions or do legitimate alternatives exist? Give an example of a time when a Biblical principle helped you to make a wise decision.
2. We acquire knowledge and facts through training. However, the Holy Spirit illuminates Truth in our spirit by a process called “revelation.” Have you ever acquired a spiritual insight learned by revelation? If so, describe the moment.
3. This chapter asserts that those who reject or misunderstand God likely suffered from mis-modeled fathering. Do you agree with that connection? How did your personal, childhood experience with your father affect your view of God?
4. Not accepting God on His own terms, but rather redesigning Him based on a corrupt image, is a form of idolatry. Since the first commandment (Exodus 20:1–6) clearly announces God’s jealous nature and His hatred of idolatry, how do you feel He would respond to us believing in a false image of Him rather than accepting His true identity as a loving Father?
5. In so many ways, Jesus taught us that blessing flows to those who act in the “opposite spirit.” For instance, meekness, not selfishness, is the key to inheritance. Serving, not commanding, is the key to leadership. Sonship is the key to fatherhood. How does learning spiritual “sonship” produce the attributes needed in a good father?
6. How important do you think the subject of fatherhood was prior to Jesus coming in flesh and blood, and how important is it today?
7. Why would you say it is important to have some understanding of Judaism when we do this study?