

[HOME](#)[ABOUT](#)[RESOURCES](#)[ARTICLES](#)[LISTEN](#)[CONTACT](#)[DONATE](#)

search



SHARE

New Search



Select an article

Navigation key

The Article ArchivesTopic: **Marriage & the Natural Family****Fathers: Key to their Children's Faith**

June 13, 2006

S. Michael Craven



I originally published this article last year in conjunction with Father's day and given the overwhelming response I thought it worthwhile to offer it again this year as we approach another Father's Day. I hope you enjoy.

I am afraid that our culture in general and subsequently too many fathers themselves have reduced the role of fatherhood to something nonessential or unnecessary. Many men today regard parenting as being primarily the mother's role and somehow no longer associated with masculinity or "real" manhood.

Instead they have bought into modern cultural caricatures along with [radically] feminist psychology and its label of "hunter-gatherer" and thus assume this to be their primary and sometimes only contribution to the family. As a result too many men, including professing Christian men, express their role as "father" exclusively in terms of financial provider. The fact is children are not looking for financial provision; they are looking for love, guidance and a role model for what it means to be a man.

During the Colonial period in America men defined themselves by their level of community involvement and fatherhood. Marriage and fatherhood were seen as being among the highest aspirations in a man's life, namely because that generation was less individualistic and self-centered. Today the highest aspirations of men seem to be career success and personal leisure and against these they seek to "balance" marriage and family.

The lack of actively involved fathers is producing societal conditions necessary for the intervention of government. It is a sobering fact when the government is forced to respond to the failure of such a fundamental institution as family! In 2001 the US Department of Health & Human Services launched its "Fatherhood Initiative" with this statement:

"The President is determined to make committed, responsible fatherhood a national priority... [T]he presence of two committed, involved parents contributes directly to better school performance, reduced substance abuse, less crime and delinquency, fewer emotional and other behavioral problems, less risk of abuse or neglect, and lower risk of teen suicide. The research is clear: fathers factor significantly in the lives of their children. There is simply no substitute for the love, involvement, and commitment of a responsible father."

While the research does indeed show that paternal absence (whether it is physical or practical) is a significant contributing factor in almost every category of societal ill my concern here is the spiritual effect.

A rather obscure but important study conducted by the Swiss government in 1994 and published in 2000 revealed some astonishing facts with regard to the generational transmission of faith and religious values.

In short the study reveals that "It is the religious practice of the father of the family that, above all, determines the future attendance at or absence from church of the children."

The study reported:

"If both father and mother attend regularly, 33 percent of their children will end up as regular churchgoers, and 41 percent will end up attending irregularly. Only a quarter of their children will end up not practicing at all.

If the father is irregular and mother regular, only 3 percent of the children will subsequently become regulars themselves, while a further 59 percent will become irregulars. Thirty-eight percent will be lost.

If the father is non-practicing and mother regular, only 2 percent of children will become regular worshippers, and 37 percent will attend irregularly. Over 60 percent of their children will be lost completely to the church!"


Let us look at the figures the other way round. What happens if the father is regular but the mother irregular or non-practicing?

From "The Role of the Father in the Family" by S. Michael Craven, [http://www.battlefortruth.org/ArticlesDetail.asp?id=174](#)

In short, if a father does not go to church, no matter how faithful his wife's devotions, only one child in 50 will become a regular worshipper. If a father does go regularly, regardless of the practice of the mother, between two-thirds and three-quarters of their children will become churchgoers (regular and irregular).

This confirms the role of father as spiritual leader which I would argue is exactly what fatherhood itself is, to love our wives as Christ loves the Church, to model Christ-like love for our children in our most important earthly relationship, to care for our children as our Father in heaven cares for each of us and finally, that we diligently teach our children the truth about reality. This means that we instruct them in their understanding of life and the world and everything in it using God's revelation as the basis by which they analyze and assess life's challenges and opportunities. It means that we send them forth with a biblical view of the world and a faith in Jesus Christ that is rooted in solid understanding and not merely blind tradition.

Dear brothers I pray that as we lead our children to Church this Father's Day that we will reflect deeply on the vital role of spiritually mentoring our children in the faith of our Lord Jesus and put into practice the admonition of the Lord to teach our children 'when they sit at home, when they walk along the road, when they lie down and when they wake up.' (Deut 6:7) Happy Father's Day!

New Search 



Select an article

Responses

Currently there are no responses.



Select an article

Respond to This Article

Form Authentication:

Refresh the page if image does not appear



Please enter the form validation code you see displayed above.

Your Information:

Name:

Email Address:

URL:

Respond to This Article:

Your comments will be reviewed and either approved or denied publication.





Submit Response

New Search 



Select an article

Navigation Key

-  Return to topics
-  Return to articles
-  Read article with responses
-  Respond to this article