

Fearless Fathers With Faith

Moody Monthly published an interview with a young, successful attorney who said: “The greatest gift I ever received was when my dad gave me a small box one Christmas. Inside the box was a note that read, ‘Son, this year I will give you 365 hours—an hour every day after dinner. It’s yours. We’ll talk about what you want to talk about, we’ll go where you want to go, play what you want to play. It will be your hour!’ My dad not only kept his promise,” he said, “but every year he renewed it—and it’s the greatest gift I ever had in my life. I am the result of his time.”

This month, as we honor fathers and surrogate fathers, the gift of time is one of the most precious gifts a father can give to his children. Moms are there to birth, nurture and love their children, but there is no replacing, negating or displacing the significant benefits of a child growing up with the love, guidance and protection of a father. More than 20 documented studies confirm the positive impact that a father has on his children. Overall, these studies corroborate that fathers who take on active roles in parenting children reduce the frequency of behavioral problems in boys and psychological problems in young women. They also validate that fathers have a positive effect on cognitive development, along with decreasing delinquency and economic disadvantage in low-income families.

While the research has been done to confirm the important role fathers play in their children’s lives, it’s not earth-shattering news. Many of us hold dear to our hearts, fond memories of time spent with our fathers—or those who stood in the gap for fathers—and the imprint they have left on our hearts and made in our lives. We don’t need anyone to quantify or qualify for us the sometimes unspoken bond that sons have for the men in their lives that they look up to—be it their biological fathers, grandfathers, uncles, or even coaches. We have all seen little girls grow up seeking husbands who mirror the characteristics they grew up admiring in the men they called dads.

Unfortunately—these days—if we were to believe everything we read or see in the media, our young African American boys are ALL growing up fatherless. And, while in every ethnic group there are some dads who, for whatever reason, are absent from their children’s lives, there are also even more tremendous dads; dads who not only stepped up, but sacrificed, prayed for and helped usher their children into adulthood successfully. This month, let’s celebrate and honor those ***fearless fathers with faith!***

I sometimes chide my congregation about the fact that mothers are celebrated, and wined and dined on Mother’s Day, but fathers get the short end of the stick. While mothers are showered with gifts of love and accolades, fathers get a necktie—*maybe!* Joking aside, as the father of four boys, I can tell you that my heart swells with pride knowing that I played an active role in their lives. Watching them grow up to become responsible adults, finding and responding to their life’s purpose, and witnessing them blossom into caring, responsible young men, warms my heart and is a gift from God.

It’s unfortunate that some of our young men (*and women*), will never know the love of their fathers—for whatever reason. But, there is good news! When we give our lives over to Christ, each of us can experience the unconditional love of our Heavenly Father! Earthly fathers are important, but each of us has the opportunity to know Christ—the heavenly Father—and the greatest love of all.

Few events change a man’s life as much as becoming a father—be it biological or through surrogacy. The awesome responsibility of parenting a child and being entrusted to care for another individual is a daunting but rewarding task. I can assure you though, that there is no greater joy than seeing your children grow into adulthood, and having them return the love that you have shown them in good measure.

Here are a few parenting tips to help new fathers and to encourage others.

Spend quality time with your children. The time fathers spend with their children shows them that they are important to you. If your life is busy and you don't have much free time, make sure that the time you do spend with them is special, undivided, quality time.

Be a role model. Children do what *they* see, not what *we* say. Girls who spend time with loving fathers grow up seeking relationships with boys and men who treat them with love and respect. Fathers have the ability to teach their children what is important in life by demonstrating honesty, humility and responsibility.

Discipline with love. Every child needs positive guidance and discipline. Discipline that is administered in a calm and fair manner reinforces the love you have for your children.

Eat and pray together as a family. An important part of healthy family life is bonding that occurs through family meals and prayer. Dining together provides structure and a good opportunity for fathers to listen to and be involved in the lives of their children. Praying together reinforces your faith and demonstrates godliness to your children.

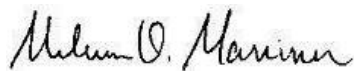
Earn the right to be heard. Start conversations with your children about important topics when they are young so that difficult subjects will be easier to broach as they get older. Listen to your child's ideas and concerns.

Respect your child's other parent. Divorce and separation are realities of life, but even when parents live together, fathers should help provide a secure environment for children. When children see parents respecting each other, they are more likely to feel that they are also accepted and respected within the father-child relationship.

Teach; don't preach. Teach your children about right and wrong. Use every day life experiences to help children learn some basic life lessons. Don't be afraid to be transparent with your children. Let them see you as the imperfect being that we all are.

This month we **honor Fearless Fathers With Faith!** Be encouraged, and be present!

Peace and power,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Melvin O. Marriner". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dr. Melvin O. Marriner
Senior Pastor Grove Church
© Dr. Melvin O. Marriner, June 2017