

Dads, Satan Prowls, Seeking to Devour Your Children

I've always loved *The Lion King*. Before the Broadway musical in 1997 and Disney's remake in 2019 (both of which are really good), there was the original: the 1994 animated film starring James Earl Jones as Mufasa and Matthew Broderick as Simba.

I was 30 years old when it came out, just old enough to be a dad and just young enough to still be a child. Over the years of this story's influence, I have seen more and more how, at its core, it is filled with many biblical characters—Joseph, Moses, the prodigal son—not to mention the deep biblical themes of good versus evil, resurrection, becoming and the journey of learning how to wield power and authority for the hearts of others.

These characters and themes resonate deeply with the hearts of image bearers everywhere because the characters and themes are true. G. K. Chesterton, who was a major influence on C. S. Lewis, once wrote, "Fairy tales are more than true: not because they tell us that dragons exist, but because they tell us that dragons can be beaten."

In *The Lion King*, the theme of a father's love is central. Mufasa's provision and protection is what forms Simba into a beloved son, yet in a single moment, everything changes. Evil slithers in to separate the son from his father. Just like in our story.

Every father has let down his daughter or son. Sooner or later, we wound them with our words, actions or facial expressions, or the absence of our provision and protection when the world and its hyenas come. And they will come. As a father, the objective is certainly to wound them less.

I remember when my first child was born, a daughter. It was

1993, and the “birthing experience” was sold to us like one of those all-inclusive vacation packages, except that you went home with a baby instead of a new hat and T-shirt. We checked in, were wheeled to our luxury “suite,” and everything happened right there in that room. Meals, fluffed pillows, warmed blankets—and they treated my wife pretty well too. It was an amazing process that concluded with meeting my little girl for the very first time.

Those next several hours in our suite were wonderful. The wait staff (nurses and doctors) would check on us, even bringing our little girl in and out while we “rested” between visits. Then they did the craziest thing. They asked us to leave. The “vacation” was cut short. Something about two nights was enough, and our new family needed to go home and allow them to get ready for the next little bundle of joy.

“Really? ... She just got here, and ... she’s a little human being! ... We’ve never done this before ... Hey, can one of the nurses come home with us for a few days, a week, maybe this next year?” And so, in a single moment, life changes. In a moment, a new life begins—all in a grand and wild moment.

As a new dad, I remember thinking in a very honest and quiet moment, *I don’t know how to do this. How am I going to keep this little creature alive and provide and protect her for the years to come?* From vacation to the front lines, I wasn’t prepared; none of us are.

Being a father automatically signs you up for a battle. The kingdom of darkness is ancient, and who your enemy was is now the enemy of your child. Just like when Jesus was a newborn, hunted by evil as a baby—Herod was just a puppet being used and worked through by an awful spiritual force. It starts early. Far too often we are misinformed, ill-equipped and ill-prepared as men, and that carries into our roles and assignments as dads. Wounding also happens in a moment. This is where learning to walk with God is our only true hope and

our best chance and to defend against evil and have a fighting chance to protect our loved ones. This is what it means to be dangerous for good. The enemy knows how significant your role in their world is. You're a dad, and darkness wants to do all it can to see it go badly.

Happy Father's Day, men! Stay close to your King; we are in for a fight!

Listen to this episode of *Exploring More with Michael Thompson* on Charisma Podcast Network, *Secrets of Fatherhood*.

Check out this free resource, *Rescue at Home*: Have you ever wondered how you can bring the message of love, life and freedom home to your family? *Rescue at Home* is a three-part series for your family to journey through together as a devotional or home-church. By exploring how the themes of the larger story of the gospel show up in movies, *Rescue at Home* invites parents to guide their children into the deep places of the heart in a fun, engaging and sometimes playful way. The featured film of this edition of *Rescue at Home* is the 1994 Walt Disney animated classic, *The Lion King*. {eoa}

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