

Fatherhood: The Pressures Can Be Crippling

A few years ago, I had to write a paper on the Trinity for a seminary class: God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. I studied the subject intensely for weeks.

I got commentaries, dictionaries and even the Bible in Greek and Hebrew. For a period of a few weeks, there was nothing on my mind except the fact that I had to write a paper on perhaps one of the most incomprehensible mysteries of the Christian faith.

After I wrote the paper, I was more confused than before. Everything I thought I understood became something that could be called into question.

Recently during one of our family devotionals, I decided that perhaps it's time for my three-year-old to suffer like I did. I lost a good month of my life trying to comprehend the incomprehensible, and in the end I was less certain than ever.

So why not bring it to a toddler? Fatherhood 101.

We sat down for our "devo" time and made our way in conversation to the Trinity. I held up three fingers and said how many Gods are there, to which she answered "three." Ha! I hooked her.

I then proceeded to tell her that there is actually only one God in three persons, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Her response is one that I will never forget.

She said: "OK."

What? OK? How dare she? I had waged the mental war on this concept for weeks and here she is with the audacity to just

accept it?

Now, days later, if I hold up three fingers she will say that God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and will then say that there is one God. She received the truth and trusted my knowledge.

See, that's the thing ... she trusts me. If I say the Trinity is one God, she says "OK, Daddy." If I tell her the sun goes to sleep every night just like she does, she says "OK, Daddy." If I tell her we don't run away from Momma and Daddy because dinosaurs may get her, she says "OK, Daddy." (Not my best moment.)

As the man of the house, there is an expectation that we are to provide for the family, be strong, be courageous, and be trustworthy.

More often than I'd like to admit, the pressure of trying to be a father and a husband are crippling. At times, it seems like I have to have everything in life figured out so that my wife and daughter can see me as this man of assurance and conviction.

The issue here is that I am often a man of uncertainty, wavering desires, and weakness.

In Matthew 18:3, Jesus asks his followers to enter the kingdom like children.

If Jesus gives us the greatest depiction of how to live life, then the best thing I can do for my wife and daughter is to become like a child. A toddler. An infant.

Now, the three-year-old and father relationship in our house is a two-way street that works this way:

Daughter to father: She gives me absolutely nothing I need to survive, but everything a man needs to live. She adores me. She thinks I am infallible. She trusts her daddy.

Father to daughter: I provide her with things she needs to both survive and live. I give her things. I provide food, shelter and sanitation. I also provide her with love, affection and attention.

Oftentimes, we dads do really well at giving our children what they need to survive, but fail miserably at giving them what they need to truly have life.

A son or daughter who knows they can trust their father lives life in the clouds. They are free to fail, fall short and disappoint.

What's important to understand as a father is that you will fail your child. I fail Kate daily. There is no perfect father. Don't try to be perfect. You'll only frustrate yourself and withdraw.

I will fail, but my daughter's trust in me will only grow as she constantly sees her daddy fail, and in my failure I look to my father and say "OK, God." Our children must see this trust. It's the Christian's proper response to God.

Whether we've lost our job, lost a home, lost direction, lost a family member, we must hear the Lord speak to our lives saying "I've got you taken care of." Our response should simply be, "OK, Father."

I can't wrap my mind around the three-in-one God. But my three-year-old daughter has no problem with it. She trusts me. That's the final word.

We can have all the right answers ... but if we don't trust Him, what's the point?

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