

Fathers: Life Is a Battleground Not a Playground

Last year I received an email correspondence from a desperate wife and mother:

“I won’t watch my kids be physically abused anymore. I won’t listen to my girls be called vile, vulgar names. I won’t have things smashed or broken in the house. I won’t get into a vehicle and listen to him rage. No more ‘spending time together’ by me scrap-booking and him sitting two feet away running pornography on the computer! I refuse to stay home and not attend church because I feel guilty for leaving him alone. I will not worship quietly or secretly again ... I never believed in divorce so I just kept trying. I can no longer bear it. I’m not dying inside, I have died.”

We are in desperate need of broken, humble men—men who are not afraid to admit that they need God; men who are more worried about prayer than about status and recognition; men who petition God rather than position themselves.

The state of the family today is disheartening. Men have largely forsaken their God-given role as spiritual leaders in their homes ... that, no one can deny. For example:

- Bible reading and prayer are called fanatical while working twelve hours a day is called success.
- We build our career and neglect our marriage.
- Corporate executives are praised and family men frowned upon.
- We’ve increased our wealth but decreased our values.
- We search the heavens for answers and turn from the One who created them.
- Pride is considered an asset and humility a liability.
- We know more about our favorite athletes than our wives

and our children.

- We'd rather be seen leaving a bar than leaving a church.
- We praise our favorite team yet fall asleep in church.

Men, you're not called to be a passive, weak, indecisive partner—you're called to protect, lead and guard your family. You are to initiate prayer, defend your wife, shepherd your children and make your home a holy sanctuary not a breeding ground for Satan. You're called to fight the enemy, not flee from him.

I'm tired of weak, passive men who never contend, stand or fight for anything worth dying for. Our nation is looking for character, our wives are looking for leaders and our kids are looking for fathers.

Men, *stop* the silly video games, get off of Facebook, kill your porn habit, tell your ungodly friends to hit the road. You're called to lead, love and die, if necessary, for your family.

We are the reason that the nation is deteriorating. We are the reason the family is breaking down. We must stop blaming everything from God to the government; we are the stench in the nostrils of a righteous, holy, pure God. Dads ... wake up! Life is a battleground, not a playground!

I can hear it now, "Shane, you're being too hard on the guys. Back off." Really. Step into my world for a moment. Recall the excerpt of an email that opened this article. Sadly, this is not an isolated situation; it's happens all the time. After re-reading it, you tell me if this message is too strong.

Men who are hurting their families don't need to be encouraged and coddled; they often need to be confronted and challenged. Then encouragement can take place. Change is difficult if we always encourage but rarely challenge, and coddle but not confront. For example, the man referred to in the opening email was lovingly confronted, repentance took place and his

marriage is stronger than ever.

How many of our wives could say similar things? Many years ago, I stumbled across a journal entry from my wife that broke my heart, but first I felt betrayed and angry. She wrote, "I married a man who doesn't care about my dreams and goals in life. I've learned to live with this since separation isn't an option, but I will not allow him to do this to our kids."

I was very angry because the truth hurts. But I began to realize that she was absolutely correct. I was a controlling man with no regard for the dreams, ambitions and goals of my family. Granted, I was not mean-spirited about their dreams, but I was controlling. I'm embarrassed that I used to think things like, "That's stupid, immature and ridiculous; why would you want to do that?" I felt terrible and asked for forgiveness. I realized that I was breaking the spirit of my family; controlling and manipulating because of pride, and how things would make me look.

That experience was a turning point—I now encourage my family versus discourage their dreams. I'm writing this, not to compare situations, but to illustrate the fact that God often uses confrontation and exposure to break us.

While dads jockey for position, build reputations, chase careers and so on, it's often mothers who pray, petition, nurture, care for and lead. Granted, there are men who, through no fault of their own, experience failure in their home, but for the large majority, there is a critical need for spiritual leadership. Repentance is the first step.

Knowledge is knowing that we need to repent, but wisdom is doing it. The power in the Word of God is found in the application. James 1:22 reminds us that we can deceive ourselves if we "know" what to do but fail to do it. Are you living in deception ... knowing but not doing?

Men, our families would rather "see" a sermon than "hear" one.

"The lectures that you give may be very wise and true, but I'd rather get my lesson by observing what you do. For I may misunderstand you and the high advice you give, but there is no misunderstanding how you act and how you live" (Edgar A. Guest; "I'd Rather See A Sermon").

Watch the sermon *Prone to Wander* below:

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