

What Many Sons Miss From Their Fathers

Many men spend their whole life searching for something they can only get from their fathers. It's the missing link from many men's lives.

The one thing a son needs from his father is validation.

The dictionary describes validation this way, *"to recognize, establish, or illustrate the worthiness or legitimacy of."* Put another way, sons need to know they're good enough and accepted by their fathers.

Many cultures have encouraged validation through various rites of passage for young men. Young Jewish boys are confirmed to manhood through the celebration of a bar mitzvah. One African tribe requires their young men to go into the jungle to kill a lion with only a spear. The ancient Spartans would send young warriors out to see how many slaves they could kill with only a knife. All of these rites of passage were designed to validate a young man from childhood to manhood and to prove himself among his tribe.

Young men still have the need to be validated today. This is one reason gangs are so popular. When a young man doesn't have a man in his life to help him navigate this process, he'll look to his peers for it. If they don't get it from you, they'll look somewhere else for it.

I don't have all this figured out yet, but I've spent the greatest part of my ministry preparing young men and women for life and ministry. I also have a son at home who has taught me a few lessons along the way.

Here are five practical ways to validate your son:

1. Call him "Son." Your son needs to hear you call his name, but he also needs to hear you call him, "Son." Even Jesus needed to hear this from His Heavenly Father. In Matthew 3:17 at His baptism, His Father said, "And a voice came from heaven, saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.'" If Jesus needed to hear this, how much more does your son need to hear this?

A son needs to hear his father speak identity and purpose over his life. When you call him "Son" it speaks of your approval and acceptance. Your son will know he belongs to you.

2. Involve him in your day-to-day routines. He needs to feel wanted. He needs to know he was made for a purpose and to produce something. My son helped me in the yard the other day and to be honest, he got in the way more than he helped. I hate to admit it, but he slowed me down. While I felt a little frustrated I looked down at his face and it said it all. He had the biggest smile on his face as he was doing what he could to help me.

I had to take a step back and look at the situation a little further down the road. He was learning that entrepreneurial men work hard. I was teaching him a work ethic.

3. Wrestle with him. He needs to test his strength. He needs to be tested. In essence, he needs to feel resistance. Physical strength is only built through added resistance. When you engage him in sports he is put in an environment where he can face challenges and learn to grow through them. Proverbs 27:17 says, "Iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend." It allows him to face resistance and difficulty without the negative consequences. He can learn these lessons early, rather than later in life when the potential consequences cost more.

4. Avoid babying him. There are times when he's going to fall and hurt himself. It's natural to want to make sure he's OK,

but it doesn't mean you have to be the hovering helicopter parent. He needs to know there are times he'll need to get up and dust himself off.

Mothers are naturally more nurturing than fathers, but fathers need not be afraid to challenge their sons. He needs to learn to play through the pain. There are times when a man needs to rest, but there are times when he has to do what only he can do.

You're teaching him to have courage and not give up when life gets hard. I'm convinced this is one reason so many men give up and walk out on their families. They were never taught to overcome difficulty with perseverance and resilience.

5. Schedule "man-time" with him. He needs one-on-one time with you. It might mean taking him to lunch or to get ice cream. He needs your undivided attention where you spend time with him engaging in a life-sharing activity.

Every boy's personality is different, so you'll have to take some time to figure out what he enjoys doing. It's a time for you to talk about life. Why not parent on purpose and lead the conversations?

I would rather my son learn about life from me than have him learn it from a TV show or from someone who doesn't care about him as much as I do.

While no one is a perfect father, we can do our best to help our sons to grow into the man God desires them to be. I'm trying to help my son navigate this process well because I would rather be his guide on the journey of manhood than for him to wander aimlessly down the path of life. He only gets one shot at being a man, so I want it to count. {eoal}

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