

Fatherhood- A God Squad Perspective

The God Squad will have another conference for men in March. Each year when we discuss whether we should do it again, we cannot avoid the realization that we are in a culture which contains forces hostile to fatherhood. We are in a culture uncertain about gender and sexuality, committed to experimenting with ideas, relationships and activities which are destructive to marriage, family, and the very idea of fatherhood.

Many of the Bible's two thousand references to fathers and fatherhood are rooted in the cultural and historical contexts of the Hebrew people, and so we may bring a modern cultural understanding with us when we read them. However, we cannot ignore how important the fatherhood of God is for Jesus, and therefore for us. The father is the one to whom Jesus says to pray "When you pray, say Father hallowed by thy name." (Lk 11:2) As disciples of Christ, when we identify with Jesus, we identify with the father. "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father." (Jn 14:9) At his final moment, Jesus returns his human life to the one who gives all life. "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." (Lk 23:46)

It is important to realize that God's Fatherhood has nothing to do with physical gender. We don't have to worry that God has chosen one over the other. God is spirit and therefore neither male nor female. Christianity holds a template for fatherhood guaranteed to lead to health and satisfaction and support of life, and the absolute equality before God of all men and women.

Many in our culture are arguing that we should not be emphasizing fatherhood because so many children have grown up with absent fathers, either emotionally or physically. They say that we should drop the topic, and should definitely stop referring to God as father. Their idea is that if children, especially boys, have an unwholesome or absent image of father, all we will do is stimulate any resentment or sense of loss that they may have.

Men and boys of all ages need to be taught that which will help them realize the fullness of what God has in mind for their male identity. The task is so great it seems impossible, which is the very reason that we must do it. Jesus' life, offered freely on the cross, redeems, purifies, and makes whole, every broken relationship.

This is just one more area where our culture has missed, or not heard, the point of Christianity, which is that our God is a God of redemption. God intends to redeem all of the effects of sin and death. That is the point of Jesus giving up his exalted status with God and becoming one like us. The message is that he came to redeem sinful humanity and all ideas which lead to suffering and sorrow and loss, INCLUDING the loss of a wholesome idea of fatherhood by many children.

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