

About Your FATHER.

J.R. Miller:

Perhaps fathers have been neglected. Volumes have been written and countless sermons have been preached about mothers. Their devotion and self-sacrifice have been commented upon without stint. Children are taught to honor their mother, to remember always what she has done for them, and what they owe to her, to think of her happiness, and to care for her in her old age, with all gentleness and thoughtfulness.

This is well. No words can exaggerate the sacredness of motherhood, or the value and importance of the mother's influence on the child. God comes to us first in our mother. We cannot pay too much honor to our mother, nor do too much to bring comfort and blessing to her.

But the fathers should not be forgotten. Where does anyone find in the Bible that mothers have all the responsibility for the training and bringing up of the children? The Scriptures certainly lay the burden upon both parents; at least, they do not put it all on the mother. The father is to teach his children the commandments of God; the mother cannot be held alone responsible, for their religious instruction. It is time some sermons were prepared and preached, and some books written, on the solemnity and sacredness of fatherhood.

Then, in the building of the home, the father, unless he is a most unworthy man, or an utter nonentity " has an essential part. There are many good fathers; not all are indifferent to their home. There are many men who are truly devoted to the interests of their families. The mother may seem to get nearer to a child's heart, and to be first in influence upon a child's life. But it is time an earnest word was spoken in behalf of fathers " of the nobleness and worth of their part in the home life, and the honor due to them from children.

What has your father done for you? He did not nurse you, and wash and dress you, when you were a crying baby. He did not . . .
rock your cradle,
teach you the hundred first lessons of infancy,
mend your playthings,
help you with your dolls and toys,
nor even train you in saying your prayers.

There are many things which were very important in your bringing up, which most likely your father did not do. No doubt there are elements in your thoughts of your mother, which have no place in your visions of fatherhood, as it forms itself before you out of memory's holy experiences.

Yet there are other elements which belong rather to fatherhood than to motherhood, and which were quite as important in the sheltering and molding of your childhood, as those which are so idealized in the pictures of true motherhood. We think of the tenderness there is in a mother's heart " something wondrously akin to the divine tenderness, inexhaustible in its patience, its thoughtfulness, and its comforting power.

But corresponding to this in the true father there is strength " strength which toils, which defends, which shelters from the rough storm, which stands like a rock. Surely strength is as divine as tenderness. There may be less sentimentality in it " but for life's practical uses, its value is no less than that of the softer quality.

Think of the sturdy side of your father's character, and of what it has been to you. If your mother's love made the home-life like a heavenly summer to you " then it was your father who built the material home in which such holy warmth was possible. It was your father who earned the money which provided the comforts. It was your father who braved the storms of winter and endured the heats of summer " to make shelter for you. You never can know just how your father toiled for you, how he denied himself oftentimes " that you might not lack anything; how he made sacrifices, that better privileges than he himself had ever enjoyed, might be yours. There is something very touching in the way some fathers struggle and deny themselves, that they may save their children the necessity for struggle and self-denial.

Then, if you have been blessed with a godly father, think of all the privileges you have enjoyed from his toil. Children are the inheritors of their father's name as well as his property. If he lives worthily " he lifts them up to a place of honor in the community. Think of the education you have had, the opportunities for growth in knowledge and wisdom. Perhaps your father had only scant schooling in his youth, and now you are in the university or the college. A little thought or reflection will show you that you owe to your father a large debt for favors and blessings which are of incalculable value to you.

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Perhaps you have been in the habit of saying that God's Providence is very good to you. Yes " but your father is your providence " under God, of course " but nevertheless indisputably; for without your father's toil and faithfulness, these blessings would not have been yours. God sent them; but it was your father's hand that earned them, and gathered them about your life.

Then, apart from all this, think what your father has been to you as an influence. All through your formative years he was ever before you " a man of truth and righteousness, diligent, punctual in his duty, brave in struggle, firm in his opinions and principles. It is no small thing to have grown up beneath the shadow of such uprightness of character. Perhaps he was stern at times, and even severe and cold, lacking the gentleness which was so beautiful in your mother; yet it was a splendid education which you got from this abiding vision of strength, truth, and justice; and you owe far more to it than you can ever understand.

Only a single glimpse of the distinguishing qualities of true fatherhood has thus been given, but it is enough to help young people to remember that they have a father as well as a mother, and that to him as well as to her they owe love, honor, and grateful treatment. Naturally, less sentiment gathers about a father in his advancing years, than about a mother at like age. But no little child should ever fail of filial duty to a father. The commandment reads, "Honor your father and your mother."

The ways in which we may show honor to our father are many. We may hold his name dear and sacred. We may surround him with love " he craves gentleness and affectionateness just as much as our mother does. We may seek to be his helper in his work, interesting ourselves in it. Children are responsible for the full success of their father's life. They may tear down all that he has built " or they may carry on to completion what he has begun, and fill his old age with joy and comfort.

But think it out for yourself " what your father has been to you personally, what you owe to him, and how you may make appropriate returns for what he has done for you and been to you.