

## Daddy's Home! (The Daddy Game)

Let me tell you a story. When I was growing up we used to play a game, at about 5 o'clock in the afternoon, the door would open and we kids would go running down the stairs and about 5 stairs from the bottom we would take a flying leap and dad's arms would be wide open and he would be waiting to catch us. And we played the game for years but one day dad said, **"Son, we can't play the game anymore."** I didn't want to stop playing the game. So I said, *"Why do we have to stop?"* And he said, *"I'm not as young as I used to be. And my back is bothering me. And for another thing,"* he said, **"your 18 years old now."** **Sooner or later the day comes.**

Most of us have played different versions of this game in our own home. I still remember our girls, when they were in grade school, standing on the **top of my shoes** and us waltzing around the room to the music. Wonderful memories.

Some of you may have experienced **joy** because of the years you spent as a child playing the game with dad. But for some, there may have been a fair amount of **pain**. Because of the loss of a father or because it was a difficult relationship

But I want to talk particularly to the dads who are among us, because I believe that increasingly we live in a society where there is no daddy game.

Even when we dads are physically present in our homes we **frequently wrestle with really being there**. We are often preoccupied, and distracted.

(Dave Barry) Now, this story is from an article in a Boston newspaper, It's about a father who was loading his 2 children into the car and we have to give him credit for strapping his 20 month old daughter into the car.

**But the amount of concentration** it takes for a guy to remember this child care detail can put a lot of strain on his mental equipment so he went into acute guy memory lapse and forgot that he had placed a car seat containing his three month old son on the roof of the car.

As he accelerated onto interstate 290 he sensed that something was wrong when, according to the newspaper, he heard a scraping sound on the roof of the car. **Now, this is classic guy behavior**, he doesn't notice that he only has half of his children inside the car but he does notice when his car is making a funny sound.

Anyway, the car was going about 50 mph when the car seat containing the three month old boy sailed off the roof and landed on interstate 290 where the seat skidded safely to a stop with the boy unhurt. So this story had a happy ending except

that this guy had to tell his wife what happened. Guys often wrestle with actually being there **even when they are physically present**.

Now, mothers get a lot sympathy, especially on Mother's Day. But often dads get preached at on Father's day. "*You should do more. **You ought to be more like moms.***" Dads don't get a lot of sympathy but here are some interesting statistics.

- 1.** The average American father is typically, as much as, or slightly more free in expressing verbal affection as the average American mom.
- 2.** The average American husband actually spends slightly more time doing domestic chores if you include yard work and auto maintenance than the average American wife who also works outside the home.

**Those are pretty interesting statistics.** Unfortunately, I just made them up. I did. But you have to admit they are pretty interesting.

But, it has never been harder to be a good father than it is now. And it's not just that it is hard, there is in our culture an absence of the belief in the importance of fatherhood.

So, I want to talk today about a few **myths** that are common in our culture. And then talk about things that fathers can do if they want to **win** at the daddy game.

I. The first myth is this: **Fathers are optional equipment**. But God's plan is **not** that fathers are optional. **FATHERS ARE AS NON-OPTIONAL AS MOTHERS ARE.**

Now I want to pause and say very clearly. We know that in our midst are a number of single parents, particularly single moms. And they face a **monumental task** and father's day can be painful because life is difficult enough and when they hear talk about how indispensable fathers are it makes it that much harder.

And anyone who is seeking to raise and support a family as single parents in God honoring ways, face a formidable task. And your **faithfulness**, and **determination** in the face of **overwhelming obstacles** is an inspiration to all of us and is honorable in the sight of God and **you are heroes**.

There was a television show several years ago about a **dinosaur family** and there was a little baby dinosaur in this family who had a strong preference for his mother. So when the father tried to care for him or feed him or play with him, this little character would reject his dad and he had a favorite phrase – you know what it was? "**Not the momma**. Not the momma." The world was divided into two categories, "Momma" and "Not the momma." And "Not the momma" was not liked.

Fathers often go through this. Many times there will be a time when a child will prefer the momma.

It's a very common thing, and it can be discouraging to fathers or lead them to **underestimate** the important role that they play in the life of their children. Usually, it's a phase that children pass through. And I just want to note that you are **indispensable** to the life of your child. **Because God planned it that way.**

In Ephesians, Paul says, (6:4) *“And fathers do not provoke your children to anger but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.”* Paul assumes that fathers are intimately involved in the raising of children. A father brings unique gifts to the life of his child. You are not optional equipment.

**2. Second myth: MARITAL SATISFACTION CAN BE SEPARATED FROM EFFECTIVE FATHERING.** The truth is that being a good father is extremely important to the state of your marriage. She needs you to be a good father.

Doctor Aaron Hess writes that in 20 years of counseling the number 1 thing moms tell him is, **“I wish my husband was more involved with the children.”** He writes that virtually every area of a marriage, even the physical relationship between a husband and a wife improves when the fathering quotient goes up.

He went on to say, *“there is never a more powerful **aphrodisiac** to a mother than to see their husband lovingly engaged with their children.”*

Barbara used to tell me about the impact it had on her when she saw my involvement with our kids. She said that when she saw me reading to them or involved in some kind of project with them it had an emotional impact on her. **She says when she saw me bathing the kids it developed kind of a physical attraction inside her for me.** She said, **“it's kind of a sexy thing.”**

Ladies and gentleman we had the cleanest children in the northwest. I would wash those kids sometimes three and four times a day. *“Barbara, look we're doing **shampoo** over here.”* I'm just kidding of course but what you do as a father, in addition to being a gift to your children, it is kind of a gift to your wife.

**3. Another popular myth is: That the world has become more father friendly.**

In the old days about the only thing a father was supposed to provide was a paycheck. He was the breadwinner. But today the bar has been raised. **Dads are supposed to be as successful as ever but they are also supposed to be:**

**1. Skilled now in verbal intimacy in their marriage.**

2. They are supposed to be psychologically informed about the stages their children will go through.
3. They are supposed to be nurturers just as mothers are.

**But the truth is that we still live in a world where a man's self esteem will largely be boosted by career advancement.** Achievement, promotion, and job fulfillment will get rewards for a man in our culture. **Not** what kind of father he is.

The cultural view is that becoming a mother will **totally change a woman's life** but that fathering is something that a man can **sort of do on the side**, in his spare time. And it should not be allowed to hamper his drive for success.

If you are a dad you need to see fatherhood for what it is, it **is a costly deal**. It is a call for the very best you have to give. It is not a hobby; it is not something to do on the side.

Being a father requires patience. You have to practice good fathering skills without knowing for many years if it paid off. It requires the patience to keep on playing without knowing the score, and that is very hard for most of us. But **It is just the way the daddy game works**.

These are some of the myths that we face as fathers, now I want to look at **some things that men can do that want to win at the daddy game?**

And hopefully these are helpful to everyone, not just fathers. But for anyone who wants to be fully present for the people they love.

1. And the **first thing** is this, **YOU MUST BE COMMITTED** and that involves learning **to love the journey**. **Learn to love the process of being a father**.

This is difficult because many of us tend to focus on objectives. And if you are an outcome-oriented person then your goal is to minimize the process. But childhood does not work that way, childhood is about the journey. The journey is the **gift**.

What this means for fathers is that you **don't fall into the habit of habitually deferring to the mother**. Very often around the house, "Ask your mom" becomes sort of a standard phrase. It is the default mode of dealing with eating habits or clothing styles or sleep patterns.

So today I want us to have a moment of **father empowerment**. I am going to say a statement and I am going to ask all the fathers to repeat it **with a sense of power**. So moms just sort of butt out for a minute because this is just for fathers. Fathers say these words together. **"I can decide what's for snack."** Yes! You have that power.

**The truth is**, the ability to make wise choices about a child's life is not a magical thing. It is not a result of some kind of mysterious maternal instinct. **It is based on truly knowing your child.**

Biological fatherhood may happen in an instant, but real fatherhood is something you learn by doing. And the more you practice it the more skilled you become and the more joy you will receive from it.

And **being committed means leadership**. It is God's plan. Deut 32:46-47, "*He said to them, "Take to heart all the words I have solemnly declared to you this day, so that you may command your children to obey carefully all the words of this law. They are not just idle words for you -- they are your life..."*"

2. You lead by the ROCK AND ROLL method. You are to be firm like a Rock and you are to be a ROLE model. Rock and Role. You lead by words and modeling. You are a rock, you are firm.

You must be a man of character, everyone has **convictions**. The man who allows his children to sass him has the conviction that they should not but doesn't have the character to make them stop.

Another way a man shows that he is a rock, that he has character, is that **he hangs in**. The daddy game is not a 100-yard dash; it's a marathon. Heb 12:1 says, "*...Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.*" In the daddy game it's not only **how you start, it's how you finish**.

Now another thing that goes along with this is coming to **understand your unique gifts as a father**. Because you have something to offer your child that is irreplaceable.

God has **not** put you where you are by accident. And what you have to offer will differ from what the mother has to offer.

A dad brings different gifts to the family than the mother. For instance, both moms and dads think of part of their task as **protecting** their children but they look differently at protection. Moms tend to think of protecting their children in terms of **safe guarding them**. So, a mom sees her children playing with sticks will say, "*Put down those sticks. Because if you play with sticks you will poke out a ....? poke out a eye.*" Mothers are always concerned about **eye removal** when it comes to sticks.

All though it is a fairly rare thing. I am 71 years old and I have never met a person with only one eye and ask them what happened and have them say, "**Well, I was playing with sticks and you know how it goes.**"

But mothers are always concerned. **Fathers on the other hand** understand that playing with sticks is a critical developmental task. And their job is to teach their children the **right way** to play with sticks so that if someone's eye gets poked out it won't be theirs.

Dads tend to think about protection **not so much as safeguarding** but in terms of **preparation**. So for them protection will often involve challenging and stretching their children. Now the point of all this is to simply say, that whoever you are you are non-optional equipment. You have something to offer your child **that your child won't get -- if you don't give it.**

### **3. OPEN YOUR HEART TO YOUR CHILD.**

Find ways to **value your child**, to make sure your child feels loved. Because every child hungers to know his or her place in their father's heart and that hunger never goes away. And the busier you are, the more valuable the child knows that he or she is to you, **if you take the time to be with them.**

Deep inside every human being there is a hunger to know about your place in the heart of your father. And some of you know that place. And it brings gratitude and joy. But some of you have never been given that gift and there is an ache inside of you to be held and to be loved like that.

Some of you here are dads, and I just want to invite all of us who are, to open our hearts. I want to encourage you to do it even though it might feel awkward. Because the magic in that is not that you can do it eloquently or smoothly. It is that you address a hunger that goes as deep as any hunger can go inside the human spirit.

And dads you need to know that if you have a child in this world, it is not too late. Fathers **tend to underestimate** the role they play in the heart of their children. And if you are a dad, you are likely to think that your child, especially if your child is grown, that you are some place on the **margin in your child's life.**

And you need to understand this, by your presence or by your absence, you start at the heart of your child's worth. And if your child is still in this world it is not too late to let him or her know.

And if you are a child here this morning and your dad is around then I want to encourage you **not to wait** to express your love for your father. Now your **dad may be flawed** and there may be other things that need to get expressed by way of honesty but I want to encourage you to open your heart to your father.

And I played the daddy game for five decades and I am now kind of an old man by the standards of that game. And there are sometimes when I wonder how well I played the game.

And dads think about the times when your arms **were not strong** enough to catch them. And about the times when you **were not there** for them. And it should make you want to play the game well in the time you have left.

Now we have been talking about turning the hearts of the fathers to their children but notice what else the verse says: Malachi 4:6, *“He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers; or else I will come and strike the land with a curse.”*

*“...and the hearts of the children to their fathers...”* If you have painful memories of your dad, for whatever reason, remember this, aside from the fact that he is your father, he is just **“Jim or Harry,”** just a guy trying to make his way in the world.

God is not limiting the meaning of this verse to just fathers but is using it in the general sense for parents. So if you have a dad or a mom, or you are a dad or a mom, **all these things apply to you.**

But most of all the Bible says, and **you need to hear this truth**, There is a God in heaven and **He is so filled with love and tenderness toward you** -- that Jesus teaches us to call Him Father. And one day the door will open between all of us and our heavenly Father. And then there will be no more separation.

And then all of God’s children will know the strength of the arms **that do not fail**, and we will be home with our Father, and then all of us that have committed our lives to God will play the game again.

You know where your place is in the heart of our Father in heaven – now it may be the time to let Him know that you want to accept Him into **your** heart – or to make your heart right with Him.