



5 Things EVERY SON NEEDS to hear from His Dad

Content adapted with permission from blog, copyrighted by Daniel Darling, Vice President for Communications at the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission (DanielDarling.com).

Just as there is something wonderful about being the father of a daughter, there is something wonderful about being the father of a son. In my house, my son and I are out-matched four-to-one by girls, so we sort of stick together to make sure everything is not painted pink, some football gets watched on a regular basis, and that we watch as many superhero movies as Barbie movies. Seriously though, the job of raising a son is a noble and important task. Sadly, it's a job many men abdicate, leading to what is now a full-blown crisis in our country: a crisis of fatherhood. There are devastating effects of a father's absence or lack of leadership in the life of his son. Fathering your sons is a serious job, men. And so in that spirit, I'd like to offer five things every son needs to hear from his father.

Day 1: YOU ARE LOVED.

WHAT DAD NEEDS TO KNOW

Every boy needs to hear and know that his father loves him. Without this affirmation, a man carries deep wounds that affect his most important relationships. I've talked to men at all stages of life who yearn to hear those magic words that mean the most when they come from Dad: I love you. Today, my son is only four years old, so it's easy for me to do this. I suspect as he gets older, it will grow a bit more awkward, but I plan on doing it still. Behind the sometimes rough exterior of every young boy there lies a heart that longs to experience the love of their father. Oftentimes the first image a boy will have of his Heavenly Father will be the image of his human father looking down on him. It's important to tell your boy you love him.

QUESTIONS FOR YOUR SON

- What makes you feel like you are loved?
- What types of things happen that make you feel like you are not loved?
- What do you think you have to do to be loved?

THE TRUTH: 1 John 4:10 (NLT)

¹⁰ This is real love — not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins.

Day 2: I'M PROUD OF YOU.

WHAT DAD NEEDS TO KNOW

I can't tell you how many men I know who, to this day, are still living their lives in search of their father's approval. Down deep in their hearts they wonder, Am I good enough? Did I make it? Is Dad proud? I'm learning that it's important for us dads to be hard on our sons in many ways (see below), but we should never withhold our approval. They need to know, at periodic junctures in their lives, that they measure up, that there is nothing they have to do to earn our favor. Sure, at times they will disappoint and they should know and feel this. And yet we should not be the taskmaster who, in trying to motivate our sons to greatness, withhold the very ingredient that will fuel their success: confidence. I'm reminded of God's approval of Jesus as His Son was baptized by John the Baptist, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. (Matthew 3:17; Mark 19:35). Yes, there are important theological ramifications to that phrase beyond mere approval, but still I can't help see God's approval for Jesus as a model for our relationship with our sons. If your son doesn't make Division 1, if he gets accepted into a school other than Harvard, if he becomes a truck driver instead of a pastor, don't ever give him the impression you like him less. Don't damage his soul this way.

QUESTIONS FOR YOUR SON

- What makes you feel proud of yourself?
- Tell about a time when you felt like I was proud of you? How did you know I was proud? How did that make you feel?

THE TRUTH: Galatians 2:20 (NLT)

²⁰ My old self has been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So I live in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.



Day 3: YOU ARE NOT A SLACKER, YOU'RE A SOLDIER.

WHAT DAD NEEDS TO KNOW

Today the culture presents such a confusing picture of manhood. What is a man supposed to be, anyway? Pop culture tells him he's sort of unnecessary and the best he can do is idle away his adolescence by satisfying his sexual urges, simulating warfare through gaming, and lacking any kind of noble ambition. But God did not make your son or my son to be a slacker, but a soldier. It's good to encourage our sons to be masculine. There is a vision of manhood in the Bible, one of nobility and strength, of sacrifice and courage. A real man fights for what he loves. A real man cherishes the women in his life, and he doesn't exploit them. A real man pursues the calling God has stamped upon his soul, one that is discovered through intimacy with God, identification with gifts and talents, and meeting the world's deep needs (to paraphrase Buechner). Nobody can help guide our sons along their mission more than we can as fathers. Let's not leave our sons' futures to chance. Let's stand beside them, modeling for them what it looks like to live on purpose.

QUESTIONS FOR YOUR SON

- Tell me about a time when you felt like you were being manly. What types of behavior went along with that?
- What does it mean to be a man?
- What are ways you can be a "soldier" in your daily life?

THE TRUTH: Psalm 1:1-6 (NLT)

¹ Oh, the joys of those who do not follow the advice of the wicked, or stand around with sinners, or join in with mockers. ² But they delight in the law of the LORD, meditating on it day and night. ³ They are like trees planted along the riverbank, bearing fruit each season. Their leaves never wither, and they prosper in all they do. ⁴ But not the wicked! They are like worthless chaff, scattered by the wind. ⁵ They will be condemned at the time of judgment. Sinners will have no place among the godly. ⁶ For the LORD watches over the path of the godly, but the path of the wicked leads to destruction.

Day 4: HARD WORK IS A GIFT, NOT A CURSE.

WHAT DAD NEEDS TO KNOW

Idleness, laziness, and indecision are the devil's best tools for ruining the lives of young men. Guys, our sons need to see us work hard and to be encouraged, made to work hard. They need to see that work is harder because of the fall, but it was actually given by God to experience His pleasure. Getting our hands dirty, straining, struggling, sweating — these are all good things, not bad. Sadly, many young men have not actually seen what it looks like for a man to work. Let's show them that work brings joy. Work honors God. Work done well brings glory to the Creator. It may be done with fingers on a keyboard or by swinging an axe-head or by maneuvering a fork lift. It can be done in air-conditioned offices, muddy swamps, and underneath a car. But make no mistake: work matters and what we do with our hands, done well, is a testament to the Creator.

QUESTIONS FOR YOUR SON

- What do you consider hard work?
- Tell me how you feel after you have worked hard at school or in doing chores around the house.
- Why do you think God wants us to work hard? What is accomplished when you work hard?

THE TRUTH: Colossians 3:23-24 (NLT)

²³ Work willingly at whatever you do, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people. ²⁴ Remember that the Lord will give you an inheritance as your reward, and that the Master you are serving is Christ.



Day 5: YOU ARE GIFTED, BUT YOU ARE NOT GOD.

WHAT DAD NEEDS TO KNOW

Let's imbue our sons with a sense of confidence, of approval, of dignity. But let's remind them that while they are gifted by the Creator, they are actually not God. Let's teach them that genuine masculinity doesn't strut. It bows. It picks up a towel and washes feet. A real man is as comfortable praying as he is preaching. He knows that his strength isn't found in his exploits or what he thinks people think of him. His strength comes from God. This humility will fuel his compassion and will allow him to forgive those who deeply wound him. Let's let our sons know that their lives really begin, not when they walk down the aisle at 18 and graduate or when they get their first employment contract or when they fall in love with a woman. Their lives began on a dusty hill over 2,000 years ago, at the foot of a Roman cross, where justice and forgiveness met in the bloody sacrifice of their Savior. Let's teach them that to live their whole lives without Jesus is like playing a concerto on the deck of the Titanic. It's beautiful while it lasts, but it ultimately ends with sorrow. If we do anything at all with our sons, men, let's point them to the Jesus we know.

QUESTIONS FOR YOUR SON

- What do you think being a manly man looks like?
- Who can you think of that you feel is a manly man? What is it that he does that seems manly?
- How do you think Jesus modeled being a REAL man? How does His example differ from what you see in today's world?

THE TRUTH: **Philippians 2:5-8 (NIV)**

⁵ In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: ⁶ Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to His own advantage; ⁷ rather, He made Himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!