

Proverbs: Living Just in an Unjust World

Study Guide

**Session 2
The Voice of the Father**

by George Stagg

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Family Study Guide 2: The Voice of the Father
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All Bible references and quotations, unless noted, are from the English Standard Version (ESV).

The Voice of the Father

As we have learned already in this series, the father plays a critical role in guiding children towards and in the path of wisdom. Mothers play a key role as well, but as we will see, the influence of the mother is more certain. While men can easily engage in the biological act of creating a child, they are far more challenged to stay the course and play the critical role of being a father to the child. Increasingly, mothers are finding themselves alone in the raising of children, and this unfortunate dynamic has catastrophic consequences not only on those children and families, but of society as a whole. Effective societies find ways of reinforcing the role of fathers, but as the statistics show, American culture finds itself increasingly impotent in encouraging young men to become responsible husbands and fathers. One does not need statistics to see what is going on around us. Young men and women are increasingly demonstrating the symptoms of growing up without dad. David Blankenhorn, author of *Fatherless America*, states the following:

Fatherlessness is the most harmful demographic trend of this generation. It is the leading cause of declining child well-being in our society. It is also the engine driving our most urgent social problems, from crime to adolescent pregnancy to child sexual abuse to domestic violence against women.

This session will emphasize the role of fathers in raising children who fear God and pursue wisdom. Our goals for this week, in our churches and in our households, are as follows:

1. Seeing the effects of growing up without a father.
2. Understanding why fathers are so critical to the development of children and the formation of adult men and women.
3. Encourage fathers, to-be-fathers, husbands, and to-be-husbands to increasingly take their responsibility as fathers more seriously.
4. Encourage children to heed the instruction and guidance of their fathers.

The supreme test of any civilization is whether it can socialize men by teaching them to be fathers.

Marriage, Family, and Child Statistics

- 25% of all U.S. children under 18 live with a single parent. This number is doubled among the black population.
- In the mid-1990s, 86% of single parents were mothers.
- In the mid-1990s, close to 40% of all children in the U.S. did not live with their biological father. The number has increased since then.
- 67% of all U.S. children under 18 live with two married parents. For blacks, the number is 35%.
- 41% of live births in the U.S. are to unmarried women. This number was 5% in 1960. For blacks, the number is 72%.
- 56% of both male and female high-school seniors believe that having a child without being married is a worthwhile lifestyle that doesn't affect anyone.
- From 1979-1987, 1.3% of married women fall victim to violence, while 4.4% of never-married women and 6.7% of divorced or separated women fell victim to violence.
- Married fathers have a very low rate of committing crimes of any kind.

Effects of Life Without Father

- From 1960 to 1992, juvenile violent crime increased by 600%.
- Child neglect and abuse increased by 500% from 1976 to the early 1990s.

- Eating disorders, depression, suicide, substance abuse, poverty, teenage pregnancies, and academic decline have all dramatically increased in children in the last 50 years.
- 60% of rapists, 72% of adolescent murderers, and 70% of long-term prison inmates come from fatherless homes.
- 43% of children reported being sexually abused were living in female-headed, single-parent households. 18% reported being abused in the general population.
- Stepfathers commit abuses of more serious nature almost twice the amount of biological fathers (47% vs. 26%).
- Severe violence towards children was 71% higher by single-mothers than mothers in dual-parent households.
- 64% of non-parental abuse towards children was perpetuated by mothers' boyfriends, 15% by non-relatives, 7% by aunts and uncles, 7% by grandparents, 4% by siblings, and 4% by other relatives. However, mothers' boyfriends only provided 1.75% of the non-parental care.
- Preschoolers have been found to be 40% more likely to be victims of child abuse in parent/step-parent homes than in homes with two biological parents.
- Fatherlessness causes poverty. Families headed by single women are the poorest of all major demographic groups.
- Among white families, daughters of single parents are 53% more likely to marry as teenagers, 111% more likely to have children as teenagers, 164% more likely to have premarital birth, and 92% more likely to dissolve their marriages.

Fathers in Proverbs

Father as Source of Instruction and Guidance

1:8, 4:1, 6:20, 13:1, 15:5, 22:6

Father as Disciplinarian

3:12, 22:15, 23:13, 29:15

Fatherhood as a Source of Glory and Happiness

10:1, 15:20, 23:24-25

Father as a Focus of Childrens' Pride and Admiration

17:6

Father as Source of Provision and Security

13:22, 14:26, 19:14

Father as Source of Tradition, Heritage, and History

22:28

Father as Source of Life

23:22

Father as an Example of Virtue and Integrity

20:7

Father as a Good Husband

31:28

Discussion Questions

1. What factors do you think have contributed to the decline in the role of fathers over the last 50 years?
2. In what ways have you experienced or observed the loss of fatherhood in the US?
3. How and to what extent can the church help children without fathers? Mothers without husbands? Societies without fathers?
4. How do you think the US can reverse its slide away from fatherlessness?

Exercises for Individuals and Families

1. From the categories on the left, select 3-4 verses to memorize this week. Try to select verses that broaden your understanding of biblical fatherhood.
2. For Men. Whether married, unmarried, with or without children, is your life characterized by the complete picture of a father as portrayed in the Proverbs reflected at the left? What can you do to become a more mature and capable man and father?
3. For Women. Whether married, unmarried, with or without children, how can you help and support the men in your life to become better men? If you are unmarried, how can the Proverbs help you select a man who will make a good husband and father? If you are married and with children, how can you orient your children towards their fathers that will increase their likelihood of becoming wise children?