

Father(Reprint)

Honor your father..., which is the first commandment with promise (Eph. 6:2)

For some reason I find it much harder to write a special message about fathers than it is about mothers. I do not know why that is so. The reason may be found in the differing natures of men and women and in the different roles God has given to them. Mothers are, generally, more nurturing, kind, gentle, and tender than fathers; thus, it is easier to write intimate and gentle words of praise about them. Mothers are the nurses, nurturers, and care-givers, while dads are the soldiers, protectors, and leaders. Mothers mend their children's injuries; fathers toughen their children for those injuries. Mothers try to shield their children from the evils that abound in the world; fathers try to equip their children to face those evils. Mothers compassionately weep over their hurts; fathers stoically train their children to endure them. Mothers help their children down the wilderness path of life; fathers blaze the trail through it. Fathers may sometimes see their role too narrowly, over-emphasizing leadership over compassion. Paul described himself as a father to the Thessalonians (1 Thess. 2:10-12) as he "exhorted" them to walk "worthy of God." But, he also "comforted" and "implored" them to that same end. Maybe in the burden of being a soldier, leader and protector, fathers fail to develop, or reveal, a tender side. Being a father is not a simple role. It can be overwhelming when we consider that our God, who sits on heaven's throne, has presented Himself to mankind in the image of a father. A child's image of his Father in heaven will derive more from his earthly father than from any other source. No father will measure up well against that standard. Maybe Father's Day would be best devoted, not so much to paying honor to fathers for a job well done, but to recognizing the ominous task that they have to bear. If fathers seem not to respond as well as mothers to fine words of appreciation, perhaps they would at least covet prayers on their behalf.

...that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth (Eph. 6:3).

JLH