***FOUR THINGS EVERY FATHER MUST DO***

**Hebrews 12:5-11**

**By Andy Manning**

**Father’s Day 2025**

1. **INTRODUCTION**
   1. I’m not the best father, but I know the best father – God.
   2. The Bible calls God our Father in heaven (Mt 5:16); the Father of mercies (2 Cor 1:3) the Father of all (Eph 4:6); the Father of spirits (Heb 12:9); and the Father of lights (James 1:7).
   3. If God is a Father, and God is perfect, then we should be able to learn how to be good fathers by following His example.
   4. This morning I want us to look at a passage that shows us some of the fathering traits of God.
2. **TEXT:** 
   1. **Hebrews 12:5-11** 5 And you have forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons: My son, do not take the Lord’s discipline lightly or lose heart when you are reproved by him, 6 for the Lord disciplines the one he loves and punishes every son he receives. 7 Endure suffering as discipline: God is dealing with you as sons. For what son is there that a father does not discipline? 8 But if you are without discipline—which all receive—then you are illegitimate children and not sons. 9 Furthermore, we had human fathers discipline us, and we respected them. Shouldn’t we submit even more to the Father of spirits and live? 10 For they disciplined us for a short time based on what seemed good to them, but he does it for our benefit, so that we can share his holiness. 11 No discipline seems enjoyable at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.
   2. This passage reveals four things that God does as our heavenly Father, and they are four things that you must do to be a good father.
3. **FOUR THINGS EVERY FATHER MUST DO**
   1. **Love your children.**
      1. **Hebrews 12:6** “For the Lord disciplines the one he loves”
      2. This passage is specifically about the fact that God disciplines His children. But the reason that He disciplines His children is because He loves them. God loves His children. To be a good father, the first thing you must do is love your children.
      3. How should you love your children? God loves His children by doing three things: Provision, protection, and preparation.
      4. First, God **provides** for His children.
         1. **Philippians 4:19** And my God will supply all your needs according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.
         2. God promises to provide everything you need in life. To love your children, you must provide for their needs.
         3. What are your child’s deepest needs?
            1. Spiritual.

Your child’s deepest need is for a right relationship with God.

It doesn’t matter if your child grows up to be a brain surgeon or a professional baseball player, if they don’t have a right relationship with God they will miss out on the best and most important thing in life. It doesn’t matter if your child grows up to be rich if ultimately they die and go to hell.

We will get into this one more in a few minutes, but the best way to love your child is to meet their spiritual need – introduce them to Jesus and help them grow to full devotion in Christ.

* + - * 1. Physical.

Obviously your child has many physical needs that you must provide – food, clothing, shelter, medical care, etc., it is father’s job to provide. Mom and Dad can work together, but Dad needs to be a hardworking breadwinner.

**1 Timothy 5:8** But if anyone does not provide for his own family, especially for his own household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

To be a good father, you need to be hard worker and a smart money manager. Being a good provider is not just about being a good earner. You need to be financially wise. Many men struggle with finances, and the problem isn’t with their income, it’s with their money-management. If you are feeling financially stressed, the answer probably isn’t more income, it’s more wisdom. I recommend Dave Ramsey’s book *Total Money Makeover* to help you with this.

* + - * 1. Emotional.

To really love your children you also must meet their emotional needs.

This is where many men fall short. They work hard to meet their children’s physical needs, but they are absent so often that they fail to meet their emotional needs.

What are your child’s emotional needs? Family therapist, Dr. Gary Chapman, says that your children have five emotional needs: Physical touch, words of affirmation, quality time, gifts, and acts of service.

Physical touch: Your kids needs lots of hugs and kisses.

Words of affirmation: Tell your kids that you love them and are proud of them. Tell them “good job.” Be their biggest cheerleader.

Quality time: Spend time with your kids. One of the best ways to do this is to have family supper together every day. At our house we eat together at 5 pm every day, and then we just sit and talk for awhile.

Gifts. In our family we make a big deal out of birthdays. We lavish our children with gifts.

Acts of service. Help your kids with their interests and problems – schoolwork, sports, relationships, etc.

* + 1. Second, God **protects** His children.
       1. **Psalm 18:30** “He is a shield to all who take refuge in him.”
       2. God watches over His children, making sure that nothing happens to them unless it is for their good. To love your children, you need to protect them from danger.
       3. What are the biggest dangers to your child? Physical dangers and spiritual dangers.
       4. Physical dangers:
          1. These are obvious: traffic, drowning, choking, predators, bullies, violence, harmful substances, etc.
          2. Most men are good at this. They tend to fail at the next.
       5. Spiritual dangers:
          1. It is your job, Dad, to protect your children from anything that might hurt their relationship with God.
          2. There are three spiritual dangers in particular that you must monitor.
          3. Friends (peers).

**1 Corinthians 15:33 (NIV)** “Do not be misled: Bad company corrupts good character.”

“The company you keep affects the character you reap.”

Your friends are your future.

**Jim Rohn** “You are the average of the five people you spend the most time with.”

Carefully monitor and regulate your kids closest friends. It’s your job to say, “You can’t hang out with that person anymore.”

* + - * 1. Teachers/coaches.

**Luke 6:60 (NIV)** The student is not above the teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like their teacher.

These are authority figures that you empower to teach your kids. Your kids will look up to them, respect them, and be influenced by them.

How many kids have abandoned the faith because of the influence of a teacher? Too many to count.

Carefully monitor and select who is teaching and coaching your children.

* + - * 1. Media.

Kids can be pulled away from God through worldly music, television, and social media.

Carefully monitor and regulate what your kids watch and listen to.

Be careful about social media – Snapchat, Tik Tok, and YouTube.

More and more people are waking up to the dangers of smartphones and social media on children.

In June of 2024, the US Surgeon General, Dr. Vivek Murthy, called for a warning label on Social Media platforms because they are associated with significant mental health harms for adolescents.

In November of 2024 the Australian government passed legislation banned children under 16 from using social media platforms. The bill passed with a vote of 102 to 13. The Prime Minister said, “We know social media is doing social harm. We want Australian children to have a childhood, and we want parents to know the government is in their corner.”

The UK is considering a similar ban, and France has a ban on children under 15. The United States is currently entertaining a similar bill that would ban children under 13 from social media. Florida has a ban on children under 14 from social media, and requires parental permission for 14 and 15 year-olds.

In my house, we don’t allow our kids to have phones until they turn 18. We’re not normal, but normal is not working.

Is it a sin to give your child a smartphone, or to give them access to social media? That’s between you and God. But I advise against it. I think it does far more harm that good.

And guess who agrees with me? Bill and Melinda Gates, the founders of Microsoft, didn’t allow their children to get smartphones until they were fourteen. And in hindsight, they said that was too early.

* + 1. Third, God **prepares** His children.
       1. **Psalm 119:105** “Your word is lamp for my feet and a light for my path.”
       2. One of the ways that God loves His children is by giving us His word, because the Bible prepares us to succeed in life. It prepares us to succeed spiritually, emotionally, relationally, morally, financially, etc.
       3. To love your children well, your job is to prepare your them to succeed in life.
       4. **Tim Elmore** “The purpose of our parenting is to prepare our children for life so they can eventually leave the nest ready and strong enough to fend for themselves.” (*12 Huge Mistakes Parents Can Avoid: Leading Your Kids to Succeed in Life*)
       5. One day your kids will need to get a job to provide for themselves. Your job is to prepare them for that. One day your kids will enter the workforce, and their success will depend on how well they interact with others. Your job is to prepare them for that. One day your kids will start dating. Your job is to prepare them for that. One day your kids will get married and have children. Your job is to prepare them for that. When your kids grow up they will face hardship, failure, rejection, loss; your job is to prepare them for that. One day your kids will be voters; your job is to prepare them for that. One day you are going to release your kids into world. Your job is to prepare them to be law-abiding citizens, contributing members of society.
       6. Your job is to look into your child’s future, anticipate the challenges they will face, and then prepare them.
    2. The first thing a father must do is love His children: Provide, protect, and prepare.
  1. **Discipline your children.**
     1. **Hebrews 12:5-6** My son, do not take the Lord’s discipline lightly or lose heart when you are reproved by him, 6 for the Lord disciplines the one he loves and punishes every son he receives.
     2. The next thing we can learn from our heavenly Father is that He disciplines His children. God is not a permissive parent. He is not a passive parent. When His children misbehave, He steps in and disciplines them. To be a good father, you must discipline your children as well.
     3. Many fathers don’t discipline their children in the name of love. But this passage says that God disciplines His children because He loves them. We see the same thing in Proverbs.
     4. **Proverbs 13:24** “The one who will not use the rod hates his son, but the one who loves him disciplines him diligently.”
     5. What is discipline? Discipline is “the practice of training people to obey rules or a code of behavior, using punishing to correct disobedience (Google).”
     6. Don’t think of discipline as just negative. It involves both positive and negative actions. On the positive side, to discipline is to teach your child how to behave in a way that pleases God. On the negative side, to discipline is to correct your children when they don’t behave in a way that pleases Christ.
     7. The Bible gives you two tools for parental discipline:
        1. The rebuke.
           1. **Proverbs 13:1** A wise son responds to his father’s discipline, but a mocker doesn’t listen to rebuke.
           2. The rebuke is a verbal correction.
           3. A rebuke doesn’t mean raising your voice or insulting your child. It is simply telling them to stop behaving a certain way and why. “Don’t lie. God wants us to always tell the truth.”
           4. Often a rebuke is all it will take, because a rebuke can sting. It can be humiliating. If your child loves you, it will hurt them to know that you are not pleased with them.
           5. But, when the rebuke doesn’t work, it’s time to employ the second tool.
        2. The rod.
           1. **Proverbs 23:13** “Don’t withhold discipline from a youth; if you punish him with a rod, he will not die.”
           2. The rod means spanking, or some kind of corporal (physical) punishment.
           3. Many fathers today refuse to spank their kids, but remember two things. One, the Bible says that discipline is an expression of love. Second, God is smarter than you, and He commands you to spank your kids.
           4. Let me give you Ten Quick Tips for Using the Rod:

Never spank out of anger. When you are angry, you risk spanking unnecessarily, or too harshly.

Never spank out of revenge. The purpose is not to get back at your kids, but to teach them right behavior.

Never injure. A spanking should never leave a bruise or draw blood.

Always explain why. The purpose of discipline is to teach right behavior. Be sure to explain the reason for the spanking so they can grow.

Be consistent. To effectively train your child, you can’t spank them on Monday, but then let them get away with the same behavior on Tuesday. They need to be certain that bad behavior will be met with discipline. If there’s any doubt, they will be tempted to misbehave again.

Start early. You can begin spanking a child as soon as they can understand the meaning of the word “No,” and that is very young. The earlier you begin, the easier it is to train a child.

Find what works. Every child is different. What works for one child may not work for another. If your discipline isn’t working, it isn’t painful enough. People don’t change until the pain of change is less than than the pain of staying the same.

Follow up by reaffirming your love. Before and after you spank your child, remind them that you love them, and that you are disciplining them out of love.

Dad should take the lead.

**Ephesians 6:4 (ESV)** Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

Don’t make your wife do all the dirty work. You should be involved in discipline.

Be appropriate. Not every act of misbehavior deserves the rod. The main purpose of the rod is to teach obedience. Reserve the rod for direct and deliberate disobedience. When is it appropriate to use the rod? Any time your child doesn’t obey immediately with a good attitude. For example,

Your child tells you “No” after you give them an order.

You have to tell your child more than once to get them to do something.

You have to bribe your child to get them to do something.

You tell your child to do something and they roll their eyes, or complain, or argue with you.

* + 1. I don’t know about you, but my parents spanked me, and I’m thankful. My dad used his leather belt, and it was effective. It didn’t make me hate my parents. It didn’t turn me into a violent person. It taught me how to be obedient.
    2. Do you know why discipline is an act of love? When you discipline your child, all you are doing is helping them eliminate anti-social behavior that would cause others to dislike and reject them. If you fail to discipline your child, you will still love them, because you’re their parent, but nobody else will. No one is going to like them; no one is going to want to be their friend; no one is going to want to help them, or hire them, or work with them. But if you discipline your child you are making them more likeable, and therefore setting them up for success for the rest of their life.
  1. **Let your children suffer.**
     1. **Hebrews 12:7, 11** 7 Endure suffering as discipline: God is dealing with you as sons. 11 No discipline seems enjoyable at the time, but painful.
     2. God allows His children to experience pain and suffering. This is how He disciplines us. This is how He grows us. He allows us to go through trials and tribulations. Pain is the best preacher. Suffering is the best sermon. Trials are the best teachers. And if you want to be a good father, you must let your children suffer.
     3. Earlier in the message I said a father must love His children. But I didn’t take time to actually define love. The Biblical definition of love is this: Love is giving people what they need, not what they want. It is doing what is best for people, not what makes them feel good.
     4. That’s not how many parents today define love. Many parents define love like this: Never let your child suffer, or experience hardship, or failure, or rejection, or humiliation, or pain. Never let them struggle. Never make them wait. Always give them what they want. Make their life as easy and comfortable as possible. If that’s your definition of love, then you are going to raise a wimp who is totally unprepared for life. Because life is hard. Life is difficult. Life is painful. Life is filled with rejection, and loss, and failure, and struggle, and setback.
     5. Remember, loving your kids means providing, protecting, and preparing. Most parents are great at providing and protecting, but not at preparing. The adult world is hard and complex. If you make everything easy and padded for your child, adulthood is going to smack them in the face.
     6. Tim Elmore wrote an entire book about this called *12 Huge Mistakes Parents Can Avoid*. He calls it overparenting, or the overfunctioning parent. It’s when you rescue your child from failure, and consequences, hardship, and pain. **Elmore** wrote, “Unfortunately, we began to assume that if we really care for these young people, we shouldn’t let them fail, fall, fear, or fight. Instead, we will nurture them, keep them safe from all harm, and ensure they are happy as they leave our schools and homes. In short, we made life easy and removed nearly every opportunity to grow strong through struggle and failure.”
     7. Elmore says this is an epidemic in our culture. He says that 60-80% of kids are moving home after college. That’s called failure to launch. These are kids who weren’t prepared for adult life. According to the Department of Defense, 75% of teens today are not eligible for the military. We are producing a weak generation. More kids today struggle with depression and anxiety than at any time in modern history. A life of luxury and ease does not help your kids. Kids from affluent families experience the highest rates of depression, substance abuser, anxiety disorders, and unhappiness of any group of children in the country.
     8. Consider a baby butterfly. It has to fight, struggle, and work its way out of the cocoon. If you were watching, you might be tempted to help it get out of the cocoon, but you must not. The struggle is essential. As it struggles it is developing the strength to fly. If you help the baby butterfly out of the cocoon, it will never fly.
     9. How do you prepare your kids for success in life? You have to let them suffer, and struggle, and fail, face consequences, and take risks. There’s no other way to prepare them to fly.
  2. **Make their spiritual well-being your ultimate goal.**
     1. **Hebrews 12:9-10** 9 Furthermore, we had human fathers discipline us, and we respected them. Shouldn’t we submit even more to the Father of spirits and live? 10 For they disciplined us for a short time based on what seemed good to them, but he does it for our benefit, so that we can share his holiness.
     2. A final fatherhood trait of God’s is that His ultimate goal is your holiness. He wants you to become spiritually mature. If you want to be a good father, that must be your ultimate goal as well.
     3. What is your goal for your kids? That they grow up to be happy? Rich? Famous? A professional athlete or musician? What? Actually, today most parents have very low standards for their kids. Most parents feel like a success if their kid graduates high school, is not a drug addict, and isn’t pregnant out of wedlock. But as a Christian parent you have a different goal. Your ultimate goal should be their holiness, their spiritual maturity.
     4. In other words, your primary job as a parent is your children’s discipleship. To disciple your kids is to lead them to full devotion to Jesus Christ.
     5. **Ephesians 6:4** Fathers, don’t stir up anger in your children, but bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.
     6. “Training” means teach them how to behave. “Instruction” means teach them what to believe.
     7. Every parenting decision you make should be determined by this: Will it help them grow closer to God? Will it help them to become more like Christ? Will it help them to become more useful to God?
     8. How do you disciple your kids? Three steps:
     9. First, set the example. Lead the way. Be the kind of Christian that you want your kids to grow up to be. Christianity is more caught than taught. Your kids will be more impacted by your example than your words. Do you want your kids to love Jesus? You have to love Jesus. Do you want them to hate sin and live a holy life? You must do so. Do you want them to make church a priority? You must make it a priority.
     10. Second, get them involved in church. If you want your kids to stay in church after high school, you need to get them involved in church today. Bringing them on Sundays is not enough. You need to get them involved on four levels: 1) Prioritize Sunday worship. 2) Bring them with you Home Group. 3) Help them find a place of service in the church. 4) Teach them to tithe.
     11. Third, teach them at home. Several times a week sit down as a family and have “Bible Time.” This can be as simple as reading a passage from the Bible, discussing it, and praying together. Elisabeth Elliot, who went on to become a missionary and one of the greatest Christian authors tells about how her father read the Bible to the family every morning and evening. Corrie Ten Boom, the author of the famous book *The Hiding Place*, writes about how her father would read the Bible aloud to his family each morning. This has become a lost art in Christian homes, but if your ultimate goal for your kids is to raise them to full devotion, there is no alternative.

1. **CONCLUSION**
   1. Fathers, we need you to step up. Don’t let the devil deceive you into thinking that you are unimportant. Children who grow up without a father are five times more likely to live in poverty, five times more likely to commit crime, nine times more likely to drop out of school, and twenty times more likely to end up in prison.
   2. And the best place to learn about fatherhood is from the best father of all, God.
   3. You may have made a lot of mistakes as a father. And you can’t change the past. But you can change the future. You can decide today to be the kind of father God wants you to be.