

A Word from Woody. . .
“Father Lessons”

As Father’s Day approaches it is appropriate to reflect on important lessons we have learned over the years. These could be lessons not only on how to be a good Dad, but also on what it means to grow into godly manhood. Here are a few lessons from worthy men who, if we follow them, will teach us the wisdom of Proverbs 22:6, “Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it”.

The first lesson comes from my own Dad who set an example for me as a Father who was accessible. As we approach summer I readily recall our family vacations. My Dad, who died in 2002, was an attorney and CPA who loved his work so much that he was perfectly content to pour his energy into his profession and provide for his family. But my Mother knew we children (my two older sisters and myself) needed Dad-time, so she encouraged family trips. When I turned 10 we enjoyed about three or four summers where my Dad took an entire month off work to drive us to various parts of North America. We went to Disneyland, Disneyworld, Niagara Falls, Yosemite National Park—and even crossed the border to visit Canada and Mexico. These were great times to see the sights, but also to grow spiritually. Every morning as we drove in the car we would read from the Upper Room and have family prayer. Because my Dad was so accessible to me on these trips I got to know and understand him better and see more of his love for the Lord. These experiences laid a foundation for our relationship as I grew into adulthood, and have guided me as a Dad.

Another Father I greatly admire is Corrie ten Boom’s Dad, Casper, a strong Christian who befriended many with the gospel. Casper, born May 18, 1859 in the Netherlands, left formal education at age 14 to help his Dad in the watch repair workshop. But he was keenly intelligent and read widely, especially the Bible. When his son Willem went to university and would explain to his friends Casper’s answer to a particular problem, Willem’s friends would ask where his Dad went to study theology! One of Casper’s friends was a man who was a pastor and philosopher who became a professor of philosophy at the University of Leiden. Even though this philosopher was liberal, Casper would allow him to meet in his home with others for several weeks in the winter and hold open discussions on ultimate topics. Corrie shared, “There were agnostics, atheists, fundamentalists,

and liberals in this group, all with a quest for knowledge and none able to escape Casper ten Boom's direct answers to complex problems. 'The Bible says. . .' he would say when the arguments became involved. . . Without formal educational training, Father could debate the most brilliant with the Book he knew so well. He baffled some, converted others, and had the honest respect of all in that unusual study group" (*In My Father's House: The Years Before the Hiding Place*, pp. 111-112). Casper's example to his family of a man who was committed to God's Word and who had a humble, kindly heart in the way he shared the gospel, has been a role model for me to follow with my family.

Finally, child psychologist Dr. James Dobson, through his life and writings, has taught me much in what a godly Dad is, especially in *Straight Talk: What Men Need to Know: What Women Should Understand*. I read this book when Norwood was a year old, and I treasured it-- it shaped me as a Dad then, and still does. I recall how I was struck by Dobson's quotation of the lyrics to the song "Cat's in the Cradle" by Sandy and Harry Chapin. I was already familiar with the famous song, but when I read the insightful lyrics, as when I read them now, the tug on the emotions is difficult to control. It's about a Father and son relationship over time, which quickly passes. The Dad is too busy to spend much time with his son as he is growing up, but he promises that one day they will have time together. The son grows up and become just like the Dad. The last part of the song is especially poignant.

"I've long since retired, my son's moved away
I called him up just the other day
I said I'd like to see you if you don't mind
He said, I'd love to, Dad—if I can find the time

You see my new job's a hassle and the kids have the flu
But it's sure nice talkin' to you, Dad
It's been sure nice talking to you

And as I hung up the phone, it occurred to me—
He'd grown up just like me; my boy was just like me

And the cat's in the cradle and the silver spoon
Little boy blue and the man in the moon
When you comin' home, Son?

I don't know when
But we'll get together then, Dad,
We're gonna have a good time then."

I learned from this song the importance of making the most of such opportunities as vacation time and children's events. To be there, because the moments do not last forever. And I am comforted by the gospel, which tells me that even though there are many times I have missed the mark of being a godly Dad, I serve a God who can not only redeem me, but also redeem the time. For the Christian, eternity awaits. It is of great comfort to know that even though time moves relentlessly, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever" (Hebrews 13:8).

Who are your role models on what a godly Dad is? I would love to hear what you have learned—and I am sure your family would love to hear as well.

Love in Christ,

Woody