

Keys To Being a Godly Father
Job 1:1-5

Today is Father's Day—in years past, this day has been the Christmas of tie gifts, with 12,600 miles of ties being sold. That's enough ties tied end-to-end to cross the country six times, with enough left over for 800,000 men to wear to church today.

This morning, as a father I'm more interested in what God wants me to give to my children than in what they will give to me. I have plenty of ties in my *life*. Much more importantly, what do my children need from me in theirs?

This special day to encourage and equip our fathers is a biblical, urgent day for us all.

To all the dads and granddads listening today, of all the things we should strive to be great at, being godly fathers should be at the top of the list. God has entrusted eternal souls to our care – one of the greatest privileges and responsibilities we will ever have.

To that end, I'd like us to meet a role model for the ages. From his example, we'll find keys to being a godly father. And we'll learn how to use them in our lives and families this week.

The first key: integrity

Our text begins: *“In the land of Uz there lived a man whose name was Job”* (v. 1). Job was a real person, referred to in Ezekiel 14:14 as a person of “righteousness.” Uz was a Gentile area, probably east of Israel in modern-day Jordan and Syria. It's interesting that one of the most godly people in all the Bible was not even an Israelite.

Our text says of him, *“This man was blameless and upright; one who feared God and shunned evil”* (v. 1b). “Blameless” and “upright” go together in the Hebrew text as two sides of the same coin. The first means to be “complete, entire, lacking nothing”; the second means “standing straight,” unwilling to compromise morally.

Taken together, they lead to our first key: integrity.

The word comes from the Latin for “one” and means “to be one person.” There’s nothing worse than when the inside and the outside don’t agree. Our children see this immediately. We can lead them no further than we are. If we want them to be people of integrity, we must be men of integrity.

The second key: spirituality

Our text also says that Job *“feared God and shunned evil.”* (v. 1b) To “fear God” is to reverence him, to respect him with awe and submission. To “shun evil” is to refuse it in all places, in every situation.

Together, these words hold our second key: spirituality. Genuine spirituality requires both commitments. If I fear and reverence God, I will refuse sin. To have his power to refuse sin, I must revere him.

Integrity and spirituality are both essential to godly fatherhood. Many fathers live with personal integrity but without deep spirituality. Others are spiritual on Sunday but demonstrate less integrity on Monday. We must have both.

It’s been said, *“Until a boy is fifteen, he does what his father says; after that, he does what his father does.”*

A famous child psychiatrist once studied the faith of children and compared it to their relationships with their fathers. His conclusion: *“No child will think more of God than he thinks of his own father.”* The point being, if we do not model our faith to our children, if we don’t possess a life of close communion with Christ, if our children do not encounter Christ through us in day to day life as they grow, then how can we expect our children to think much of God and to pursue Christ in their own life?

The third key: time together

We’ve discussed Job’s personal life; now, let’s look at his family.

He had seven sons and three daughters, seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen, five hundred donkeys, and a large number of servants (vs. 2-3).

For many fathers, this would be enough. So long as we provide for our families financially, we think we've done all we need to do. When baseball player Pete Rose was caught up in illegal gambling, his daughter told reporters he was a "crummy father." Rose responded: "What's she mean I'm a 'crummy father'? I'm a great father. Why, just last week, I bought her a Mercedes."

By contrast, Job's *"sons used to hold feasts in their homes ... and they would invite their three sisters to eat and drink with them"* (v. 4). Here we discover our third key: time together. Each of Job's sons would traditionally host dinner for their entire family. Even though they were scattered around the area, they spent time together.

Children spell "love," "t-i-m-e." They cannot distinguish between "quality" time and "quantity" time. For them, there's just time. It takes time to be a godly father.

The fourth key: worship together

Our text continues: *"When the days of feasting had run their course, Job would make arrangements for them to be consecrated. He would rise early in the morning and sacrifice a burnt offering for each of them, thinking 'Perhaps my children have sinned and cursed God in their hearts.'"* (v. 5).

As was his custom, Job would fetch his family, calling them to meet him at his house. He would "rise early in the morning," a Hebrew idiom meaning "as his highest priority." He would "consecrate" them, sacrificing an animal for each of his children.

He did this proactively, in case they had sinned. He did not assume that they were where they should be spiritually but took active steps to lead them to the Lord. He was their first pastor and priest, taking personal responsibility for their spiritual lives.

His example is in Scripture so we will follow it today. Do you have regular time to pray with your family? To read Scripture together? To worship?

We cannot lead our children further than we are willing to go. We must lead by example if we expect them to follow.

The fifth key: consistency

Our text concludes: “*This was Job’s regular custom*” (v. 5b). Not just on feast days, or special observances, or when problems arose. He was committed to personal integrity, spirituality, time together, and worship together.

No matter the stress of his work or the circumstances of his life, these priorities came first. No wonder he was known as “*the greatest of all the people of the east*” (v. 3). His family would have agreed.

Conclusion

How well would your family say you’re demonstrating these keys in your life and family? Personal integrity, spirituality, time together, worship together, and consistency—in which of these is God’s inviting you to focus and grow?

Being your family’s spiritual leader is one of the greatest responsibilities and privileges of your life. You are shaping eternal souls. What is of greater value?! So be encouraged that your work is vital. And decide what you will do to take your next step today. [P]

“A group of botanists hiking in the mountains found a very rare flower. It was growing on a ledge of rock which could be reached only at great peril and with a lifeline. None were experienced climbers, so they found a local shepherd boy and offered him several gold coins to climb down the rope and retrieve the flower.

The boy wanted the money but feared that the job was too dangerous. He would have to trust strangers to hold his lifeline. Suddenly he had an idea. He left the group, and returned a moment later holding the hand of an older man. He ran with excitement to the edge of the cliff and said to the botanists, “You can tie the rope under my arms now. I’ll go into the canyon, as long as you let my father hold the rope.”¹

Whose rope is in your hand today?

¹Dr. James Denison, “Being a Great Father,” 2019.