

WHY KIDS NEED THEIR DADS

by Sally Burgess, Forefront Families LLC

Brian and I run a church cell group in our home every week, and one of the first things we do as a form of worship is to have each person tell how God has blessed them during the last week. Last night, Sarah, a 27 year-old girl told us that last week, in a phone call, she had been praised by her estranged father, for the first time ever. It was something she had wanted and needed to hear all her life and, in tears, she praised the Lord for it. In my mind it was a great tragedy that she had been starved of simple affirmation for all those years.

Studies tell us conflicting results about the effect of fathers absent from the home. Some say it makes no difference, some say the opposite and yet others say that if the father were never around in the first place, how would the child know the difference. I come from a broken home. My mother left us when I was only 14 months old and my brother was 3 years old. My father raised us. I have to say he was a fantastic Dad and a very positive influence in my life. Fortunately, his sister substituted as our mother figure for a number of years so we didn't really notice the effect of being in a one-parent family in those early years. Dad was fun. He played with our friends. We had adventures together, visiting our relations in our fabulous 1946 Chevrolet complete with wooden spokes.

Fathers have a major role in creating family stability by being a role model to their children. Granted, to some men fatherhood comes easier than to others. This could be the result of positive or negative role modeling on the part of their parents. What child is not proud to have his Dad turn up at their school or to their ball games? My grandson is not yet 3 years old and he loves to tell people, "Hello, my name is Jason and this is my Daddy." Mothers tend to be the tender nurturers. Dads are perhaps a little more objective and help kids to face the harder lessons in life such as dealing with failure, learning to be tenacious, to rise beyond themselves. When my kids were small I wanted to shield them from hurts, but that would not have helped them in the long run. They needed to learn to develop stamina so they could face problems squarely and not be rescued all the time. Fathers need to make sure they are liberal in their praise. Dads need to teach boys the responsibilities of being leaders in their homes. Fathers need to teach girls about the qualities they should look for in a husband. It is not only in the telling, but also in fathers demonstrating the love and respect they have for their spouse and their own parents.

John was adopted internationally at 15 months old. During John's early life his father worked exhaustively and positive father role modeling was not very evident. Now John is facing the possibility of becoming a father himself, and he lacks confidence. He is afraid he won't be a good father. The prospect of fatherhood is a very scary thing. For him to feel confident, he needs positive

feedback about how good he is around kids. All fathers need that kind of reassurance, but often fail to receive what they deserve when they do a great job.

If you appreciate your father, then tell him. If your husband is a great dad, tell him. If you don't feel confident as a father, get help. There are great organizations supporting fatherhood. Just check them out on the Internet.

If you have any comments or questions on this subject, please do not hesitate to contact us at sally@forefrontfamilies.org. We invite you to also check out our website at www.forefrontfamilies.org and our blog site at www.forefrontfamilies.blogspot.com for further assistance.