

Long-range Effects

Whenever you hear of a man doing a great thing, you may be sure that behind it somewhere is a great background. It may be a mother's training, a father's example, a teacher's influence, or an intense experience of his own, but it has to be there or else the great achievement does not come, no matter how favorable the opportunity.

—Catherine Miles

The London Times reports: Fathers who devote time to their sons—even as little as five minutes a day—are giving them a far greater chance to grow up as confident adults, a parenting research project has found.

Boys who feel that their fathers devote time especially to them and talk about their worries, schoolwork, and social lives almost all emerge as motivated and optimistic young men full of confidence and hope.

The study, from the “Tomorrow’s Men” project supported by Oxford University and funded by “Top Man” picked out youngsters with high self-esteem, happiness, and confidence as successful “can-do” kids.

The study found little difference between the positive effects of a good relationship with a father in a standard two-parent family and with an absent father who nevertheless made the effort to make time for the family. “Whatever the shape or form of a family, if you can get it together it makes a difference.”

Families who spent significant amounts of time together as a unit were also more likely to turn out confident children.

Prayers of Parents

Build me a son, O Lord, who will be strong enough to know when he is weak, and brave enough to face himself when he is afraid; one who will be proud and unbending in honest defeat, and humble and gentle in victory.

Build me a son whose wishes will not take the place of deeds; a son who will know Thee—and that in Thee is the foundation stone of knowledge.

Lead him, I pray, not in the path of ease and comfort but under the stress and spur of difficulties and challenge. Here let him learn to stand up in the storm; here let him learn compassion for those who fail.

Build me a son whose heart will be clear, whose goal will be high, a son who will master himself before he seeks to master other men; one who will reach into the future, yet never forget the past.

And after all these things are his, add, I pray, enough sense of humor, so that he may always be serious, yet never take himself too seriously. Give him humility, so that he may always remember the simplicity of true greatness, the open mind of true wisdom, and the weakness of true strength.

Then I, his father, will dare to whisper, “I have not lived in vain.”

—General Douglas MacArthur

Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it (The Bible, Proverbs 22:6).

May we so live that all our children will be able to acquire our best virtues and to leave behind our worst failings. May we pass on the light of courage and compassion, and the questing spirit; and may that light burn more brightly in these our children than it has in us.

—Robert Marshall

A Father's Acceptance

Remember how the father of the prodigal son acted when the boy returned home? (See the Bible, Luke 15:11–24.) Did he run up and sniff his breath to see if he had been drinking? Did he comment on how poorly he had cared for his clothes? Did he criticize his straggly hair and dirty fingernails? Did he inquire about the balance left in his checking account? Of course not. He hugged the boy—the hug of loving acceptance.

This story of a father's love is immortalized in the Bible primarily, I believe, to tell something of how God accepts us. Should we not consciously use His example in dealing with our children? Can we afford to neglect giving them hugs of loving acceptance each day?

This love is the warm blanket each parent can weave for his or her children—a blanket of love that accepts each child for what he is. Such love is never content to stop assisting the youngster to climb higher and higher toward the plan God has for every life.

—Dr. Bob Pedrick