



OPINION: THE LEGACY OF FATHERS

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Since today is Father's Day, it is only appropriate that we examine the legacy that the ones who sired us leave behind. While both parents are needed to make a family, there is an exhaustive amount of evidence that children raised without fathers have a much higher rate of everything bad. Those poor kids drop out of school at a higher rate. They are more likely to abuse alcohol and/or drugs. Their crime rate is much higher. Fatherless children are more likely to be sexually promiscuous and their suicide rate is much higher than those youngsters who have a live-in dad.

The male humans, (I won't refer to them as men), who abandon their children and the woman they impregnated, have bequeathed their kids at best, a much lower potential for success. Almost as bad are fathers who are alcoholics, drug abusers and those who physically and/or mentally mistreat their spouses and children. Again, statistics point to offspring of such fathers as having a tendency to abuse their own spouses and kids.

Let's focus, instead, on the positive traits we inherit from our fathers. In most nuclear families, fathers provide stability, security, example, the passing of values, love and discipline. Until a generation or two ago, most fathers were the primary breadwinners which gave the family financial security and stability. In times of physical danger, it was usually the dad who protected the family from natural or man made threats. In most families, the mother is the nurturer, and this is the most obvious display of love. Good fathers, though, also show their affection for their kids in the form of hugs, kisses, encouragement, teaching, and discipline.

While it is so important that children know that they are loved, probably the most important way fathers can show their boys and girls that they love them, is through the example they set and through discipline. Just like the sons and daughters of alcoholics and spousal abusers have a tendency to follow in their parents' footsteps, the kids of good fathers (and mothers), have a much greater chance of being good parents themselves.

Discipline is so important because no one can learn self discipline until they have experienced discipline by a parent, teacher, coach or someone else. And self discipline is one of a major, if not the most important predictor of future success in life. Not monetary or career success, but moral success. If a person can look back on their life and answer "yes" to the question, was I a good man or woman, that is success.

I thank God everyday that he gave me my father. This man, who passed on his values that his father had passed to him, had been my hero since my first conscious thoughts. When he died in 1987, I was, at first, devastated. My dad had always been there for me. His advice was always welcome and wise. Who could I turn to now that he was gone? Then the thought came to me, he will always be there. My dad had laid down the foundation. When I reached one of life's dilemmas, when I came to a fork in the road, all I had to do was ask the question, "What would my dad do?" and I would have the correct answer.

Now, when I look at what good fathers both of our sons are, I believe that I have successfully passed on the legacy my father left me. I hope all of the other fathers reading this can do the same. HAPPY FATHER'S DAY.

