
Two Types of Fathers

Ed Dunn



One father is more than a hundred schoolmasters.

—George Herbert

Fathers, do not frustrate your children with no-win scenarios. Take them by the hand and lead them in the way of the Master.

—Ephesians 6:4 (*The Message*)

Every father should remember that one day his children will follow his example, not his advice.

—Charles Kettering

Fathering is not something perfect men do, but something that perfects the man.

—Frank Pittman

There are so many joys to *fatherhood*, and as I am learning now in a second marriage, to *stepfatherhood*. There are also real challenges, many challenges, that are both experienced and learned from, *on the job*. I do not mind admitting that I am experiencing *lots of on the job* learning each and every day. It comes with new territory.

The roles of *father* and *stepfather* come with quite different expectations. As a *father*, I was directly responsible for raising a daughter (now an adult, living away from home). The *father's* role included providing food, shelter, clothing and an education. I was directly responsible for setting firm and loving boundaries, enforcing those boundaries, and, if needed, for any correction or discipline. I was directly responsible for the home environment and culture

my daughter was raised in. Most of us as biological parents share (or have shared) in these responsibilities.

As a *stepfather* of two young men, however, I contribute to the home environment and culture in quite different ways. Sure, I share in the provision of food, shelter and clothing. I certainly wholeheartedly encourage education, and try my best to help with the homework when asked, to the degree I can still remember subjects taught to me over forty years ago. You can imagine how much help I actually provide. That said, I must operate differently when it comes to setting fair and loving boundaries, to enforcing those boundaries, and even more so in the correction and discipline departments. I am *not* the biological parent. To be honest, I do not always remember this distinction as well as I should.

My most effective days as a *stepfather* are the days when I serve as a coach, a mentor, a guide and as a friend. As a relatively new blended family, it works best when I let my spouse, the biological parent, be the parent. And, I embrace the role of step-parent. I greatly enjoy my roles as coach, mentor, guide and friend. The joys and fulfillments I gain are a true gift in my life. Having been both a parent and a step-parent, I am growing in my appreciation for both roles, different though they are.

As a *stepfather*, I provide an

additional voice in taking my step-sons *by the hand and leading them in the way of the Master* (Ephesians 6:4, above). The lesson here for me is, *less voice*. It is better to love their mother well, live in Christ Jesus true to my beliefs, and wait for a question, any question, from them. With four parents in their lives, there can be many voices. Setting an example is always far better than giving advice. This is never truer than when advice has not been sought. The boys would rather *see* a sermon than *hear* one from me, any day.

Most importantly, I try to remember that *laughter is indeed the best medicine*. Approaching life in a blended family, where children share time between two homes, works a little better when humor can find its way into day-to-day living. Life for any family these days, blended or not, can be full of challenges and difficulties. There are so many demands on our time and resources. Taking the time to find the lighter side of each day's events in the lives we share can help to create that loving environment.

As a *stepfather*, I greatly enjoy the role of coach, mentor, guide, friend (and at times, comedian) I play in the lives of two young men. As a *father*, I played (and still do play, and love) these roles in the life of my daughter. Being both a *father* and a *stepfather* is a true gift, and gives such meaning and purpose to my life. The *on the job* learning I experience each day certainly keeps me on my toes. As I said, it comes with new territory; day-by-day and by God's grace. □

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