

"WHERE DO I GO FROM HERE?"



Twelve Tasks of an Effective Father Multimedia CD Series

Twelve Tasks of an Effective Father is part of this Dads That Make a Difference series. These 12 CDs that contain not only Audio, but also Video and Discussion Questions! Experience this 12 week multimedia study with your small group!

Pat's insights in this 12 week series include: Creating a Grace Based Home, Decision Making – Snakes and Doves, and Becoming Independent.

Watch the video on your computer desktop, project from the computer onto your church's video screen, listen to audio in your home or car stereo, and print discussion questions.

Man in the Mirror Weekly Small Group Bible Study

Since 1986, Pat Morley has been teaching a weekly Bible Study in Orlando for 165 men. At last count, these men represented 52 different churches. God has used his weekly teaching to help disciple hundreds of men. Now you can use this tool to reach your men as well.

The Small Group Partnership is a weekly 30 minute messages on CD, which can be listened to on any CD player and viewed through your computer. This CD also contains discussion questions and a transcript of the message (in case you want to teach the material yourself). Each month you receive 4 CDs and 10 copies of A Look in the Mirror, our equipping article for men.



We want to help you invest your time in ministry to men, not creating curriculum.

Please visit www.maninthemirror.org for more details.

To order these or other resources, to receive a catalog, or to order additional copies of the Dads That Make A Difference Life Plan (quantity discounts available), call

1-800-929-2536 ext. 2

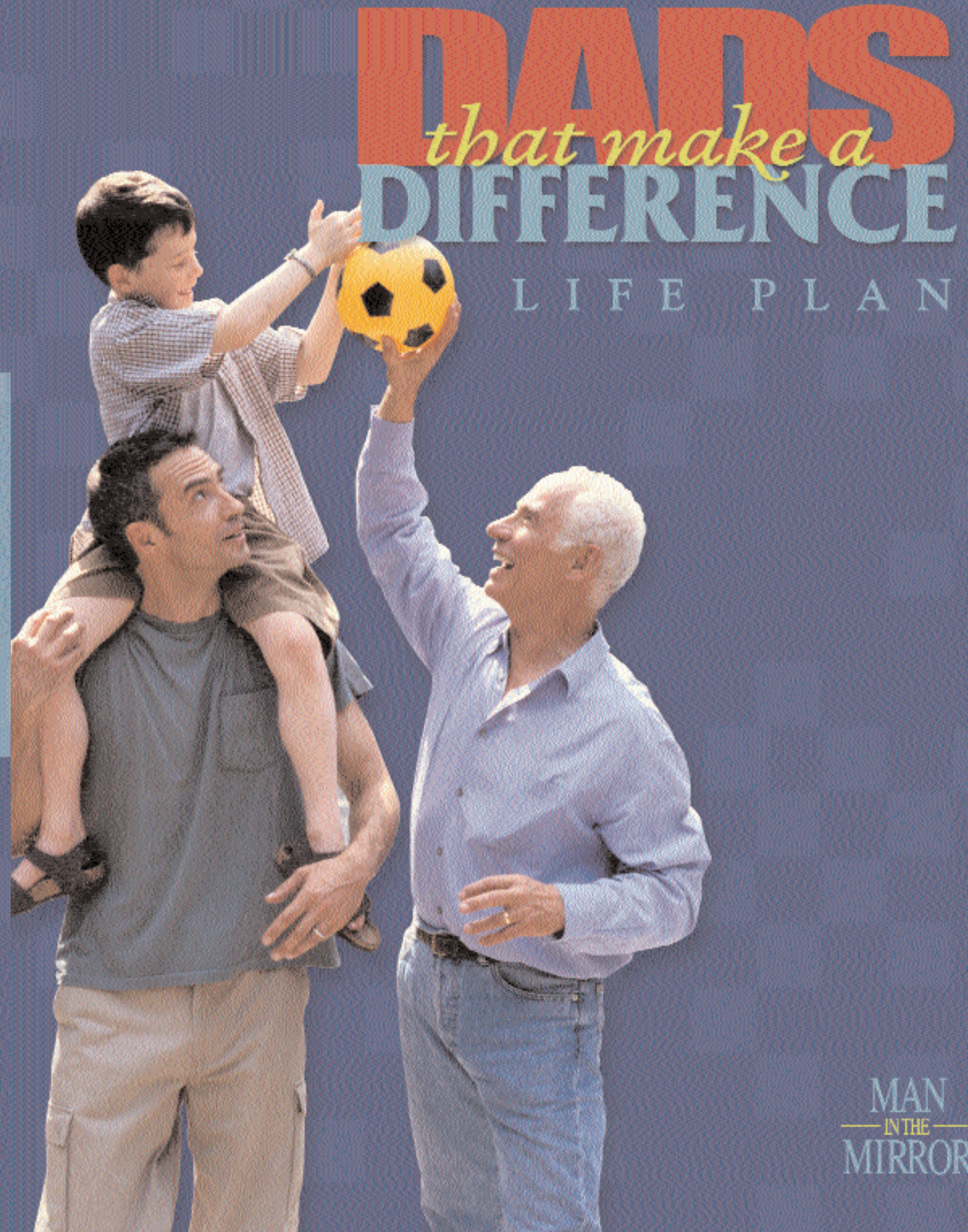


DADS that make a DIFFERENCE

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Why “Dads That Make A Difference?”

A study recently showed that the average American family will spend more than \$165,000 to raise a child to age 18. The biblical principles in this study can help you make that investment count for eternity.

The truth is that almost every problem our society faces could be solved if men would live the way God intended. Yet we are caught in a vicious cycle – men who make poor choices end up having a negative impact on the next generation.

Even among fathers who are active in their children’s lives, few are intentional about passing on a legacy of faith to their kids. This Life Plan is designed to help you do just that.

Our prayer is that you would be conquered by God’s grace so that you can teach your children to love God and others from the heart.

Pat Morley and David Delk



How To Get The Most Out Of This Life Plan

- For the next several weeks, set aside about 30 minutes each week to work on the *Dad’s That Make A Difference Life Plan*.
- Form a Man in the Mirror Group (or meet with an existing group) of 4 to 6 men and meet weekly to discuss the Group Discussion Questions.
- If married, regularly share your progress with your wife. Involve your children in the process as well.
- After completing the Life Plan, continue your Man in the Mirror Group as a Bible Study or accountability group. For suggestions regarding small group resources call *Man in the Mirror* at 888-MIRROR1, ext. 2 (888-647-7671,2) or visit www.maninthemirror.org.

For the Leader: At your meetings, talk about the Group Discussion Questions found at the end of each section. A good schedule for a one-hour meeting is 50 minutes for discussion and 10 minutes for prayer. It is more important to talk about “real” things than answer every question. Encourage each man to share his thoughts. You don’t have to be an experienced Bible teacher to lead a group. If you don’t know the answer to a question, simply say so and move on.

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The *Dads That Make a Difference* seminar was developed in conjunction with Larry Kreider and The Gathering/USA, based on the book by Chuck Aycok and Dave Veerman. The Gathering/USA has a corporate version called *Dads and Moms That Make a Difference* (www.dadsandmoms.org).
The Open and Closed Systems model comes to us from Dr. Rod Cooper, who also collaborated in the seminar development. We owe a deep debt of gratitude for his insights and generosity.
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WHAT MAKES A FATHER, ANYWAY?

Your Life Experiences ...

We are all influenced as fathers by the circumstances and experiences of our lives. Many times just recognizing the forces that have shaped us begins the process of healing and renewal.

One of the most powerful influences on our fathering is our relationship with our own father.

How would you rate your relationship with your father on the following scale...
No relationship ←————→ Ideal relationship

What about your emotional connection?
No connection ←————→ Very connected

How well do you feel you were prepared to be a father?
Not prepared ←————→ Well prepared

Almost all men can see how their father’s impact is being played out in their own behavior. For some men, this is a blessing as they see positive values being passed on to the next generation. For others, however, this is painful as they see the hurt and shame of their own past repeated in their own efforts as a father.

What is one area of your fathering that has been influenced by your father? How do you see his legacy? What legacy are you passing down to your children in this area?_____

Here’s a four-step process to assist you in dealing with the imprint your father left in your life (other men in your group can really help you here)...

- **Express your feelings to your dad** – meet face to face or write him a letter. If your dad is deceased, consider writing in your own journal. Be sure to include gratitude for the good as well as your hurt over the bad, if there is any.
- **Confess your faults** – no one is perfect. Just as they affected us, our reaction to our fathers influenced them.
- **Forgive your father, if necessary** – but don’t condone any negative behavior. Don’t deny the pain either. Face it head on, admit what you have lost, then be willing to move on.
- **Commit to the relationship** – start over where you are now. As one man says, “What really matters is how it ends.”

What the Bible says about Fathers...

The family is at the center of God’s plan for the world. It is the core unit that He has created to help people enter into a relationship with Him. There is no investment a father can make that will have more impact than his investment in his children. Review these passages and consider what the Bible says about a father ...

Psalms 78:1-8

O my people, hear my teaching; listen to the words of my mouth. I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter hidden things, things from of old – what we have heard and known, what our fathers have told us. We will not hide them from their children; we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord, his power, and the wonders he has done. He decreed statutes for Jacob and established the law in Israel, which he commanded our forefathers to teach their children, so the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would tell their children. Then they would put their trust in God and would not forget his deeds but would keep his commands. They would not be like their forefathers – a stubborn and rebellious generation, whose hearts were not loyal to God, whose spirits were not faithful to him. (NIV)

What are we supposed to tell children? _____

If we do this, what does this passage say the children will do? _____

Colossians 3:21
Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged. (NIV)

What are some ways you embitter your children or grandchildren? What is a practical way you can encourage them?

One way to summarize what the Bible says is that fathers should **disciple their children to love God and others** from the heart. In the next few weeks, you'll discover more about how to do just that.

Open Systems & Closed Systems

Much of what you will be considering for the next 4 weeks will involve the contrast between an open system and a closed system. Another word for these systems is “transformational” versus “conformity.” In a closed system, appearances are more important than substance, and external actions are more important than the heart. Everyone has to play a role for the family to function, so there is lots of fear and no flexibility.

In contrast, God uses an open system in dealing with his children. When Jesus was brought to the woman caught in adultery (John 8), he didn't deal with her harshly as the Jewish leaders expected. Instead, he showed compassion that led to transformation as he told her to go and sin no more. After Peter's denial, Jesus helped him through a process of restoration that transformed him into a bold witness for Christ (John 21).

Rank your fathering “system” on the following scale between Closed and Open.

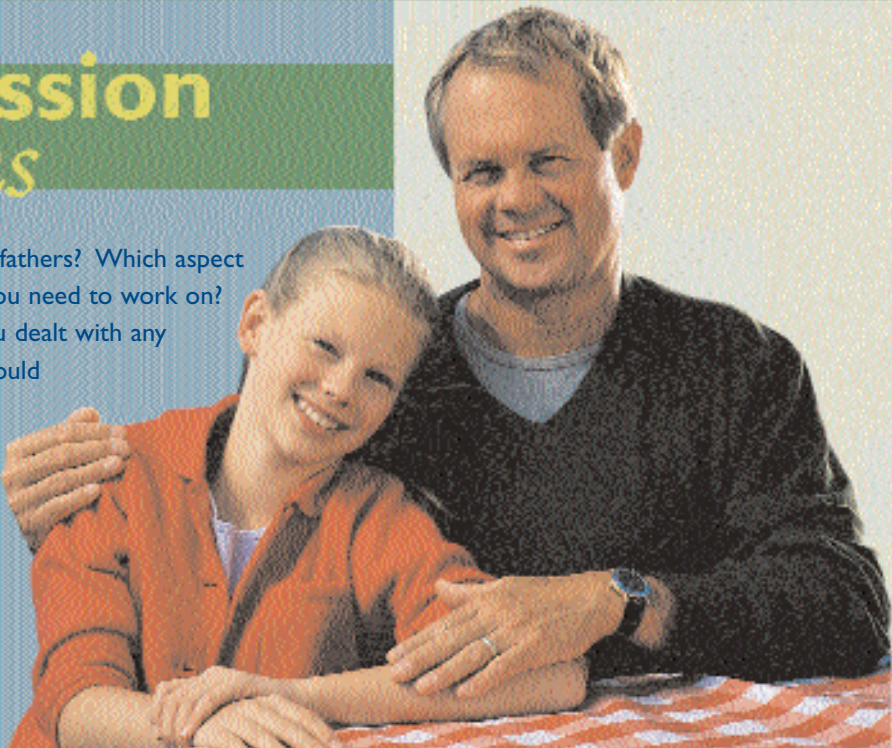
Closed System
Criticism, Shame
Fear
External conformity

←————→
←————→
←————→

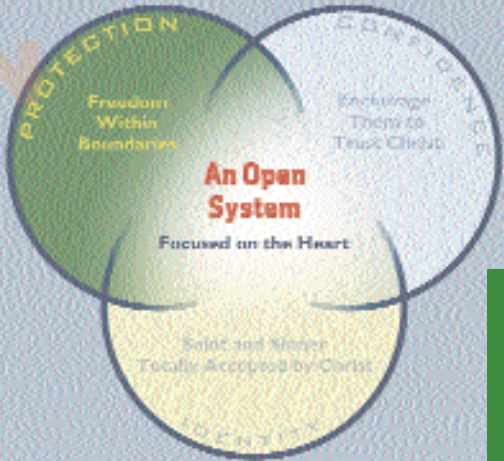
Open System
Support, Encouragement
Safety
Heart transformation

Group Discussion Questions

- How would you summarize what the Bible says about fathers? Which aspect of this are you doing the best at? Which aspects do you need to work on?
- What legacy has your father left in your life? Have you dealt with any ways he has impacted you negatively? How? If you would like to make a commitment to begin a healing process, why not ask the other men to pray for you?
- How is an open system different from a closed system? Which system did you grow up in? How would you characterize your current family system and why?



PROVIDING PROTECTION



There is no doubt that our children need protection today. The world is not the same as it was 75, 50 or even 25 years ago. Not only do we need to keep our children safe, but we also need to teach them how to interact with a world that does not love Christ.

A Biblical view of Protection...

Psalms 5: 11-12
But let all who take refuge in you be glad; let them ever sing for joy. Spread your protection over them, that those who love your name may rejoice in you. For surely, O Lord, you bless the righteous; you surround them with your favor as with a shield. (NIV)

John 17: 11-15 (Jesus prays...)
“I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name – the name you gave me – so that they may be one as we are one. While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me. None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction so that Scripture would be fulfilled. I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them. I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one.” (NIV)

What ideas or emotions come to mind when you read these verses about God's protection? Has God always protected you like you expected He would? Why or why not? _____

Why does Jesus emphasize that His followers are still in the world? What does it mean to be protected in a world that “hates us?” _____

Protection in an Open System

Protection is more than just keeping bad things from happening to your children. Biblical protection establishes the environment in which your children can become everything God wants them to be. An open system is uniquely suited to providing this type of protection. For example, while a closed system emphasizes particulars (hair length, color, etc.), an open system deals with the principles that underlie our choices (modesty, stewardship, etc.).

An open system also allows a father to be focused on future growth, not just present conformity. So, through a gentle spirit and “forward-looking” thinking, an act of disobedience can be transformed from a power struggle to the possibility of a teachable moment. The next time your child disobeys or makes a poor decision, don't just ask “How can I get him to stop?,” instead ask “What does he need to believe so that he will overcome his desire to sin?”

Rate how you are doing at providing protection in an open system.

Closed System
Focused only on particulars
Emphasis on Punishment
Control

←————→
←————→
←————→

Open System
Teaching principles
Emphasis on Redemption
Freedom within boundaries

Boundaries

Boundaries are the walls that provide safety and protection. Every child needs boundaries to provide limits and help them feel safe. A few key thoughts...

- Have “age appropriate” expectations – Don’t expect more from a child than they are capable of understanding.
- Differentiate between mistakes, playful testing, and willful defiance.
- Expect first-time obedience – Once you have established a principle-based rule, avoid power struggles by disciplining your children immediately if they disobey.
- Family council – Meet once a month or so as a family to talk about how you are doing. Allow your children to have input about the rules in a free and open discussion. Listen to their perspective and make adjustments where appropriate.

What boundaries are your children struggling with right now? Are your expectations appropriate? If they are, how can you help your children understand why these boundaries are important?_____

Modeling Values

Children feel secure in a safe and consistent environment. We all know that children are far more influenced by what we do than by what we say. Unfortunately, we don’t often stop and think about the lessons our children are absorbing from us each day. In many ways, our character and integrity will be the “default starting point” for our children’s development.



What do you think are the three weakest areas of your character that your kids are seeing (anger, lust, eating too much, too much TV, insensitivity to their mother, etc.)?_____

Listen with Understanding

Do you know what your child is thinking and what they are doing? Nothing makes a child feel safer than knowing that someone cares. Really listening to them is one of the best investments you can make.

- **Look them in the eye** – Put down the paper or turn off the computer. With small children, kneel or sit to get on their level.
- **Show them that they have your full attention** – Spend time with them alone. Go on a “date-night” with your daughter or take your son out to breakfast. Think of a few intriguing questions you can ask and be prepared to listen.
- **Listen to their heart** –What your children don’t say is just as important as what they say. Watch body language and changes in behavior or facial expressions. Draw them out with tenderness and interest in them.

Group Discussion Questions

1. What does the Bible say about how God protects His children? What does this mean for us as fathers?
2. What is the difference between protection in an open system and protection in a closed system? How does an open system better prepare a young person for life?
3. Consider the areas of “boundaries,” “modeling values,” and “listening with understanding.” In which of these areas are you doing best in and why? In which of these areas do you need the most work and why?

ESTABLISHING IDENTITY

One of the most important tasks of growing up is deciding who you are. Our actions as fathers play a critical role in helping our children form a sense of self. What does the Bible say about who we are, and how can we help our children establish an identity based on Biblical truth?

What the Bible says about our Identity...

Romans 8: 15-17

For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory. (NIV)

1 John 3: 1-2

How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. (NIV)

What does it mean to you to be God’s son and heir? How can we communicate that to our children?_____

What does “what we will be has not yet been made known” mean? How does the fact that our transformation is not yet complete affect your view of yourself? How do we communicate this to our children?_____

Here are some ideas to help you give your children an appropriate sense of identity...

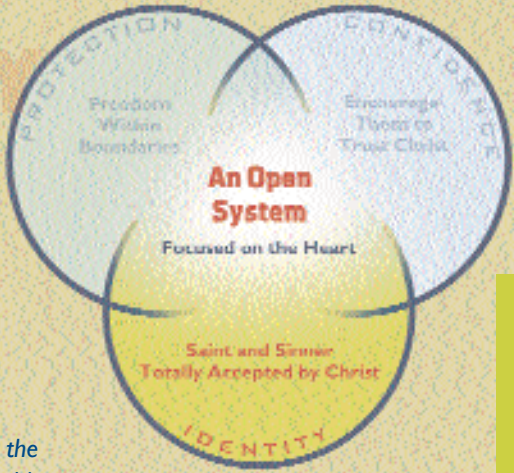
Love them Unconditionally

Use the steps of acceptance to show your unconditional love for your children.

- **Be there** – The foundation of unconditional love is time.
- **Verbalize** – tell your children “I love you!” and “I’m proud of you!”.
- **Take Action** – Actions affirm acceptance. Play catch, have a date night, or go on a camping trip. Take the initiative.
- **Build the Relationship** – The foundation of most friendships is the knowledge that you will be there for one another. That’s unconditional acceptance.



Which of the four steps are you doing well at with your children or grandchildren? Which needs work and why?_____



Establishing Identity in an Open System

An open system helps create an appropriate sense of identity in children. One of their great tasks is to get an idea of who they are as individuals distinct from their parents.

In a closed system, it is difficult for children to make real choices and to grow in their independence from their parents. In contrast, an open system bestows increasing measures of responsibility and freedom on children as they grow and develop.

A closed system also creates a sense of shame for children, since they are not good enough to live up to parental expectations. In contrast, an open system allows children to face the fact that they will sometimes fail without feeling that they are a failure.

Affirm their Worth

Affirmation goes a step further than acceptance; it says “You are somebody.” Development theorists call this “unconditional positive regard.” Let your children know that you want them around. Use physical touch to encourage them – lots of hugs or wrestling. Finally, take their concerns, fears, and trials seriously. Our children need to know that we value them as individuals.

Let Christ Capture their Heart

The bottom-line of identity is that we can never have it on our own. Without Christ, we are doomed to strive after something to make us feel complete. But in Christ, we can rest knowing we are being renewed in the image of God. Teach your children to read the Bible and pray on a regular basis. Have family devotions at least weekly and pray with your kids each day. The Bible is the truth of God and the only antidote to the lies of our culture. Find ways to help your children have both the humility of sinners saved by grace and the assurance of blessed children of God. When they succeed, help them give thanks to God for His gifts. When they fail, let them know that God does not love them any less, and neither do you. Don’t sugar coat it. As someone has said, help them understand that they are “more sinful than they have ever dared to imagine.” But also that “they are more loved than they ever dared to dream.”

How would your children rank themselves on the following scales?

Very Sinful ←————→ Very good

God’s angry at me ←————→ God loves me more than the whole world

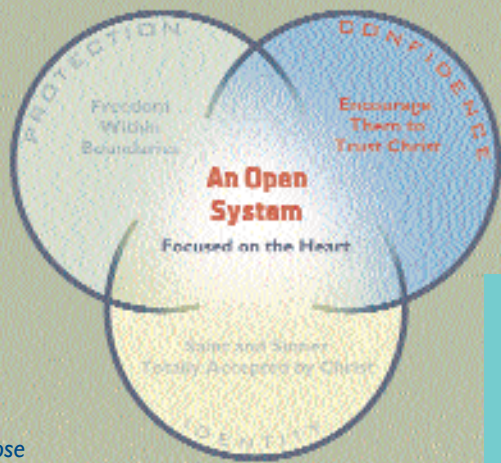
How can you help your children or grandchildren learn to see themselves as God sees them?

Group Discussion Questions

1. Where do you get your sense of identity from as a man (work, success, serving others, having a perfect family, money, pleasure, etc.)? How does this relate to what the Bible says? How do you think your perspective influences your children or grandchildren?
2. How does living in a closed system affect the identity of a child? How does an open system help a child develop a healthy view of self?
3. Do your children or grandchildren recognize their need for Christ? Why or why not? How can we help them come to the place where “Christ captures their hearts?”



BUILDING CONFIDENCE



As they grow older, one of the questions that children are trying to answer is, “Whom can I trust?” Fathers help them move from dependence on an earthly father to dependence on our Heavenly Father. We also help them appreciate the gifts God has given them and develop those talents to serve Him.

What the Bible says about confidence...

Jeremiah 17:5-8

"Cursed is the one who trusts in man, who depends on flesh for his strength and whose heart turns away from the LORD. He will be like a bush in the wastelands; he will not see prosperity when it comes. He will dwell in the parched places of the desert, in a salt land where no one lives.
"But blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, whose confidence is in him. He will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit." (NIV)

2 Corinthians 12:7-10

To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong. (NIV)

Is it true that either our confidence is in God or in ourselves? Why or why not?

Have you ever seen God’s power through your weakness? How?

Building Confidence in an Open System

For most of us, confidence comes by experience. If we try something and succeed or endure a test and survive then our confidence grows.

An open system builds confidence by giving children the opportunity to deal appropriately with both success and failure. An open system focuses on truly redemptive solutions to problems. It helps children develop a heart of faith and love for Christ, not just external obedience to rules. And when children truly believe they can trust God with their very lives, then they have the confidence to follow His call.

Here are a few ways to build confidence in your children...

Be Consistent

Children need a stable life structure to develop confidence. React predictably and consistently so that children are not confused or surprised by your responses. Be a man of your word – do what you say you will do.

How are you doing at providing consistency for your kids?

Inconsistent ←————→ Consistent

The Confidence to Risk and Grow

Our children need to have the confidence in our love and God’s love so that they can take appropriate risks. If we create a structure with the grace to deal with failure and the support to take on new challenges, our kids can be inspired to attempt great things for God.

List three or four qualities you hope your child or grandchild will have as an adult. Are they developing the confidence now to help them become that kind of person then?

Confidence in Boy/Girl Relationships

We live in a sex-saturated society. We can no longer afford to be silent with our children about God’s design for intimacy and marriage. Take your children on dates and show them how to treat someone with respect. Have frank discussions about their bodies and how they change. Help them grow up up to view their sexuality as something holy and wonderful in the sight of God.

How frank have you been with your children about sexuality? Do you know if they have a healthy view of sex? Why or why not?

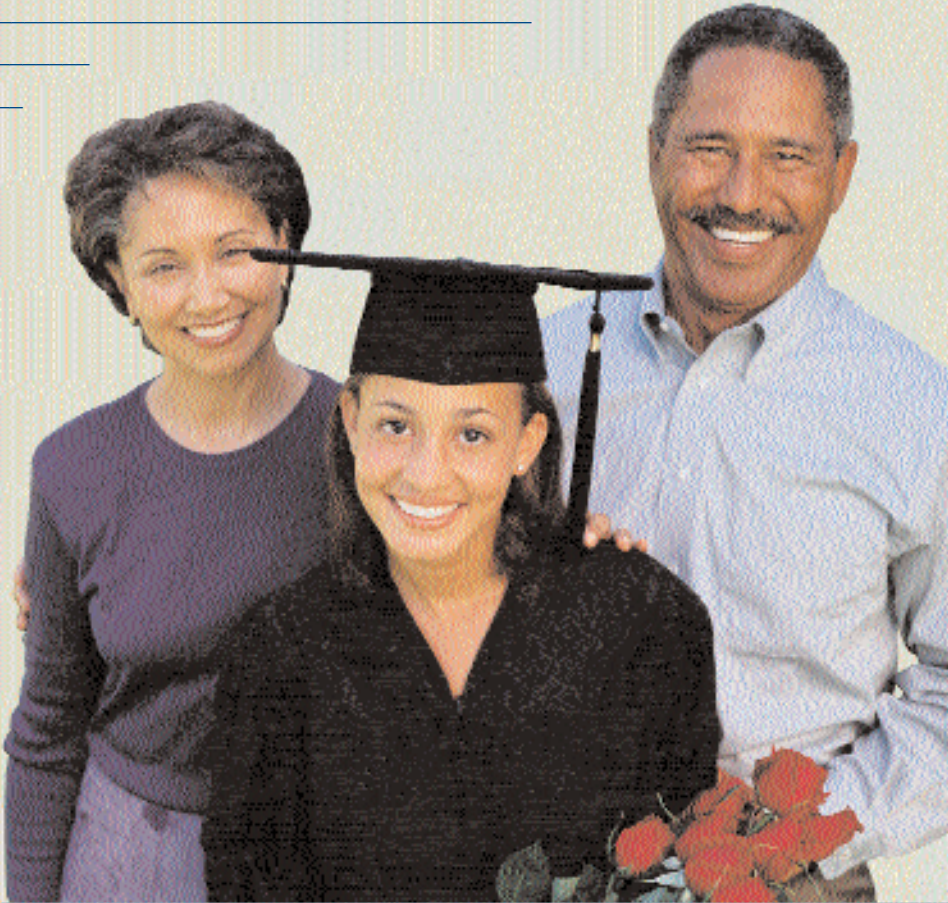
Confidence to Follow God’s Call

One of the key tasks of fathering is to help your children develop the gifts God has given. Encourage your children to explore different activities until they find ones that match their motivated abilities.

Demonstrate in your own life a willingness to do whatever God calls you to do. Lead them to follow your example by giving them opportunities to be stretched. Send them on short-term mission trips, re-roof the house of a shut-in, or serve dinner at a soup kitchen. Show that, in terms of their eternal impact, God’s power truly is perfected in weakness.

Name an area of unique giftedness for each of your children or grandchildren.

How have your children shown a willingness to follow God’s call?



Group Discussion Questions

- 1. According to the Bible, what is the basis for our confidence? How do you balance this with an understanding of the strengths that God has given you?
- 2. How does a closed system hinder a child’s confidence in himself and God? How does an open system promote it?
- 3. What things are you doing that seem to be working to promote confidence in your children or grandchildren? Share some ideas with the group. In what areas could you do better? (Allow other men to help you.)

YOUR FAMILY SYSTEM - Open or Closed?

Use the following diagnostic to help determine whether your family system is open or closed.

1. When my children make honest mistakes, I calmly treat them with respect.

Never 1 2 3 4 5 Always
2. My children are secure in my love for them regardless of how they behave.

Never 1 2 3 4 5 Always
3. I allow my children to take risks and make mistakes, helping them experience the consequences.

Never 1 2 3 4 5 Always
4. Instead of giving advice or a quick reply, I really listen to what my children think and feel.

Never 1 2 3 4 5 Always
5. I know my children’s interests and passions and am actively involved in them.

Never 1 2 3 4 5 Always
6. My children know and really believe that God loves them because of Christ, not because they are good.

Never 1 2 3 4 5 Always
7. I lovingly discipline my children to help them become what God wants them to be, not to make my life easier or avoid embarrassment.

Never 1 2 3 4 5 Always
8. I regularly encourage my children by telling them “I’m proud of you” and “I love you.”

Never 1 2 3 4 5 Always
9. My children feel like they can tell me anything.

Never 1 2 3 4 5 Always
10. I have reasonable expectations of what my children are able to do based on their age and maturity.

Never 1 2 3 4 5 Always
11. When I make a mistake with my children, I apologize and ask forgiveness.

Never 1 2 3 4 5 Always
12. Our family has rules that are clearly understood and accepted by everyone.

Never 1 2 3 4 5 Always
13. I am willing to change my mind when I better understand a situation.

Never 1 2 3 4 5 Always
14. My children feel free to pursue their dreams not mine.

Never 1 2 3 4 5 Always
15. My family regularly meets to discuss problems and then works together to overcome them.

Never 1 2 3 4 5 Always
16. I discipline the heart and attitude and not just external behavior.

Never 1 2 3 4 5 Always

SCORE:
0-25 Slammed Shut
26-45 Opened a Crack
46-65 Open
66+ Wide Open

* There are no guarantees as to how our children will respond to our parenting. However, in an open system, children are more likely to learn to love God and others.

How to move from a Closed to an Open System

If you would like to have a more open system in your family, ask God to change your heart. Use these suggestions to guide your thoughts and prayers...

- 1. Start with your own heart. Have you experienced God’s grace for yourself? Do you still believe that your relationship with God is based on your performance? Consider finding a quiet place and prayerfully read the book of Galatians in the New Testament. If you have been trying to live independently from God or justify yourself, repent. Ask God to help you learn to turn from self-reliance and instead walk with Him by faith.
- 2. Once you have experienced God’s grace this reality should overflow into all areas of your life. Do you consistently extend grace to others in the same way that God has given grace to you?
- 3. Do you consistently put others before yourself? Ask God to help you find your self-worth through your relationship with Christ and His love for you. Once you are secure in God’s love and protection, you will be free to stop “looking out for number one.” You will have the freedom to value others and seek to put their interests above your own.
- 4. This foundation of grace will allow you to create an open system to give your children protection, identity, and confidence. Loving Christ and being fully dependent on His grace instills in us the mindset we need to selflessly serve our children. To see how you are doing, ask your children the evaluation questions above and get their honest feedback about your family.