



Fathers

- 1. Read the article that was handed out and jot down things you might say when responding to the discussion questions.**
- 2. Fill in the questionnaire yourself.**
- 3. Accept what is being said. For many, this may be a subject they have not talked about with others. So here, we are providing time for interaction that might be embarrassing or confronting, yet uplifting.**
- 4. Pray for the people in the class. Pray for the discussions that they might be helpful, supportive, and enlightening.**
- 5. God also provides what is needed to fulfill that calling.**
- 6. Ask a person who has Internet access to bring back three quotes about fathering.**
- 7. Ask another person who has Internet access to bring back two jokes about fathers.**

This session is a major challenge for any leader. In many churches, the ministry of fathers has basically been overlooked and unsaid. It is easy to go through many of the preaching texts and not focus in on the gift that fathers are to their children. A congregation can sidestep the need to lift up the challenge fathers have to actually be the bishops, the apostles, and the priests in their own homes as Luther described what parents are to be.

In this lesson, we are seeking to change all that. If a father is doing a good job, our society and the dangers it poses, call for a father to be doing a better job. If a father is too busy or too preoccupied with other matters, this session can be a wake-up call. If you see that happen, this father may need some extra support after the class. Take time to call him during the week and listen to what he is struggling with.

I once heard a brilliant hard-working surgeon tell of having a heart attack when his son was 16 years old. As this 'surgeon father' lay on his hospital bed, he realized he hardly knew his son and that his son would be out of the house and beyond his influence in just two years. Right there he decided to re-prioritize



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his life, to put in a real effort to get to know his son, to listen to what his son was dealing with, and to be the father he was called to be. For him, this was a major change in his daily life but he knew it was worth it. If a son (or daughter) does not see that they are deeply valued, loved, and treasured by their own father, what will that mean for their future lives? This surgeon began to see what had been missing in the life of his son, and what repercussions there might be from that.

As a leader, pay close attention to how fathers and grandfathers in the room are responding during discussions. What is their body language telling you? For some, this might be the first time in their lives that reality stares them in the face. The goal is to build them up and to help them start to articulate what they see as important in fathering. There may be questions in their minds. Pay close attention to what is expressed.

As we have talked about in previous sessions, the role of a parent has been undervalued in our society and often in our churches. Even what it means to be a man is not well defined or discussed. As a leader, this might be something for you to say directly to the class to help them recognize the difficulty of shifting their fatherly emphasis as we see in the life of that surgeon. Here the class can become cheerleaders and realistic acknowledgers in supporting fathers, who probably have not experienced much encouragement.

Don't take yourself off the hook here. However, realize this is only one class period. Only so much can happen. Still, keep tuned in. Many men view the church as where they go as spectators. Here, we are in an interactive discussion; to clarify why men and fathers are important. We are encouraging fathers and grandfathers to be 'out on the field', not 'sitting on the bench'. It is really a good thing. So, encouragement is in order. Pray for wisdom, discernment, courage, and grace as you lead this class.