

Hey Duche!

Hope all's well with you. Attached is the cover story for the June edition of the Good News Paper in Syracuse, NY. This article has materialized thanks to you and others that God used to bring the theme to my attention.

Enjoy brother!

John Petrilli

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GOD'S DESIGN FOR DADS

By John R. Petrilli

It's a date we will never forget ... 9/11/01. While the impact of the events of that day are still being felt, the American people have responded, once more, with courage, nobility, honor and grace. As we speak, men and machines are at work at Ground Zero constructing the new Freedom Tower. The project is scheduled to be completed in 2018. Designed by Skidmore, Owings and Merrill, the Tower will stand 84 stories and have a base measuring 200 feet by 200 feet. The design of the building is such that each facet has some kind of symbolic value. For instance, the base is the same size as that of the original twin towers. The observation deck will be located at 1,362 feet, the height of the former World Trade Center Tower Two. The glass parapet will be at 1,368 feet, the height of the former World Trade Center Tower One. The 186 foot tall square base of the Freedom Tower will be clad in glass prisms that will refract light into color and make the monolithic structure an eye-pleasing curiosity. And, last but not least, the spire at the top will point viewers towards the heavens. The design is officially known as "Memory Foundations" because it leaves room for several memorials in the 16 acre complex. Everything about the design of this new tower and its surroundings speaks of memorial.

Designs are fascinating. The architects that produce them have a specific purpose in mind. The same can be said about God's plan and purpose for the family. He didn't haphazardly throw some things together and hope everything came out right. Not on your life! The family is such an important and integral part of God's creation that He designed a pattern for how each of its members should function. Being Father's Day month, this article will consider what our loving Creator has in mind for those who are dads.

DAD, YOU CAN BLESS YOUR CHILDREN WITH THE GIFT OF TENDER AFFECTION

“See, I will send the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the Lord comes. He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children.” Malachi 4:5-6 [NIV]

Imagine, these verses are among the last few words anyone would hear from God for 400 years! And, of all the things He could have addressed, God chose the family unit as His closing topic. Through the prophet Malachi God predicted that a future day would come when a man with Elijah-like qualities would usher in the ministry of the Messiah. That day came when John the Baptist was born, even as the angel of the Lord’s words to Zechariah confirmed (Luke 1:11-17). God began the New Testament record by picking up right where He’d left off in the Old Testament. Amazing! What is of interest to us in this article is the kind of heart attitude that fathers could have toward their children once the age of grace was ushered in. It would be a heart attitude of love. When someone’s heart is turned toward another, it’s an indication that they have tender, affectionate feelings for them. Such an attitudinal shift implies that the fathers during Malachi’s day may not have been known for the fondness they possessed for their kids. If news reports of the alarming rise in child abuse are any indicator, we may be living in a similar day. We need not look very far to find a father whose heart was tender toward his offspring. God said of Abraham, “Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and sacrifice him on one of the mountains I will tell you about” (Gen. 22:2). Dads, you’ll never know just how much of a blessing it will be for you and your kids as you turn your heart away from selfish pursuits and towards your children.

DAD, YOU CAN EDUCATE YOUR CHILDREN VIA THE TOOL OF TIMELY INSTRUCTION

“Impress these commandments upon your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.” Deut. 6:7 [NIV]

Once again teachers are in the news. Ever wonder why our society places such a strong emphasis on the education of our children? Did you know that God has the same priority in this regard? Wherever you find parents and children mentioned together in Scripture, it’s almost always within the context of educating them.

By educating them, we’re not talking about the three R’s here. Thankfully, that base is usually covered by whatever formal educational option you’ve chosen for your kids. We’re referring to something altogether different. You see, the primary responsibility for spiritual instruction falls squarely on the shoulders of parents in general and fathers in particular (Eph. 6:4). While we can be thankful for the spiritual reinforcement our kids get through Sunday School and Children’s Church lessons, nothing can replace parental instruction. This is because that “teachable moment” can take place anytime, anyplace, not merely in a classroom. Kids are famous for their natural and perpetual curiosity, as evidenced in that one profound (and sometimes

annoying) question, “But why?” As a former child educator, I can assure you, the best teaching takes place “on the fly”. Whether it’s inside your home or among the great outdoors, your kids will most remember the things you share with them in those informal moments. Dad, if you’re wise, you’ll capitalize on those teachable moments when your child’s spiritual curiosity is peaked and they’re searching for the deeper meaning behind the things they see and hear.

DAD, YOU CAN INFLUENCE YOUR CHILDREN WITH WORDS OF PERSONAL AFFIRMATION

“You are my son, and I love you. I am very pleased with you.” Luke 3:21-22 [Everyday Bible]

Just WHO was it who SAID those words? Well, it was God the Father. He chose the occasion of Jesus’ baptism to publicly affirm His approval and love for His Son. Research has shown beyond a shadow of a doubt the power of a parent’s words to influence the identity, self-esteem and destiny of a child. A study was made of one race of people known for their consistency in placing their sons and daughters in the highly accomplished professions of law, medicine and engineering. Among many findings, one important factor that distinguished these parents from their contemporaries was that they constantly told their children they were going to grow up and do great things. This type of “self-fulfilling prophecy” actually works. Parental affirmation of the child’s intrinsic worth and potential for greatness rubs-off on them until they truly believe it. Conversely, when inmates were interviewed at penitentiaries, it was learned that their fathers and mothers frequently pronounced a curse upon them, telling them they were no good, and would never amount to anything. Unfortunately, most of them believed this and lived it out in their adult lives. The raw power of positive personal affirmation can never be underestimated (Pro.18:21). Dads, (and Moms), be careful to speak words of approval and affirmation when your kids display ability and skill in an area. Consistent, genuine affirmation may well be the key to their developing a positive self-image that will enable them to identify their gifts and perform the work which God has planned for them.

DAD, YOU CAN SHAPE YOUR CHILDREN WITH THE TOOL OF CONSTRUCTIVE CORRECTION

“Fathers, don’t exasperate your children by coming down hard on them. Take them by the hand and lead them in the way of the Master.” Eph. 6:4 [Message]

None of us comes into this world unscathed by the fall. We’re all born with a handicap known as sin (Psa. 51:5). God understands this and we need to remember it too when we deal with our kids (Psalms 103:13-14). Disobedience should not surprise us, for our kids have a natural, inborn bent in this direction. According to renowned child psychologist Dr. James C. Dobson, a parent’s job is to shape the child’s will without breaking their spirit. That can be a mighty challenging job at times, no doubt. But, as we rely on God’s wisdom and grace, He’ll show us the best timing, methods, and

procedures to implement when correcting our kids. If that correction is to be successful it must be constructive in nature, not destructive. Constructive correction explains to the child why their behavior isn't acceptable before administering the board of education to the seat of learning (Pro.22:15). Contrary to pop child psychology, withholding discipline from a child is actually a form of child abuse, not love (Pro.13:24). Fair, loving discipline prepares a child for the real world where self-centered and anti-social behaviors have very real and highly undesirable consequences.

DAD, YOU CAN PROTECT YOUR CHILDREN WITH WISE DIRECTION

“Listen, my son, to your father's instruction and do not forsake your mother's teaching (Proverbs 1:8). My son, do not forget my teaching, but keep my commandments in your heart, for they will prolong your life many years and bring you prosperity.” (Proverbs 3:1-2) [NIV]

Many voices, both secular and Christian, are telling us they've found the secret to prosperity and longevity. According to Solomon's dad, both are the reward of following godly parental advice. Life is filled with many decisions, both great and small. God's Word says that parents are an indispensable guidance resource for their children, whether those children are youthful or fully grown. I've found the Scriptures to be true in my life in this regard. I believe it is so because, in most cases, our parents know us better than anyone else does. They watched our personalities develop as we grew up. They closely observed us as we decided which things we liked and those things we didn't like. Parents know their kid's tendencies in even the smallest of areas. That being said, it's the better part of wisdom to consult one's parents when making decisions that have far reaching

consequences. On the parental side, there needs to be a readiness and willingness to hear out the child's concerns, then weigh the options and give advice which is in the child's best interests. Jumping in with a premature decision doesn't serve the child, but really listening to their heart when they open up to us does. They will appreciate your respect, and might even follow your advice! May God bless each and every dad reading this, and a Happy Father's Day to you all!