

Voices: A challenge to dads at Father's Day

June 14, 2017

Father's Day is upon us once again. While it doesn't receive the fanfare of Mother's Day—and rightfully so—it is an important day for us to recognize the men in our lives who have shaped, loved, protected and provided for us.



Zac Harrel

When you look at the research, there is no doubt fathers are an integral part of raising children and providing stability to a family. In our broken world, we see so many examples of failures on the part of fathers, which means when we see godly fathers who love, encourage and build up their children, we need to praise them as much as we can.

As we come to Father's Day, I want to challenge those of us who are fathers to be the father God has called us to be, and I want to challenge us to this in three ways:

Simply be present.

Be there for your kids, for your family, as much as you possibly can. Your presence means more than you know. As fathers, sometimes we have difficulty expressing our feelings and communicating with our children. Being present allows us to say more than any of our words ever could. Showing up is not always enough, but it is a start.



We will not get to the end of our lives and wish we had stayed at work longer. The regrets we carry with us will be not being present in the lives of our family.

Be present in the moment. Give your children your full attention. Put your phone away for a while and play with your kids, listen to your family, hug them and kiss them and let them know you love them.

We will not be perfect, but we can be present.

Protect your family.

I don't just mean physically. In fact, focusing only on physical protection sometimes causes us to abandon our call to protect our children spiritually and emotionally.

I have a 3-year-old daughter. I want my house to be a place where she feels safe physically, but I also want her to feel safe emotionally and spiritually. She needs an environment where she knows her Heavenly Father and her earthly father love her. I want my daughter to have emotionally healthy attachments throughout her life, and that begins with me. I want to protect her emotions where I can. I also want to protect her spiritually from what she intakes into her mind and heart to seeing the simplicity of the spiritual life.

Our kids need models of what it means to love God and love neighbor. They need examples of humble faith. They need a place where they can ask

questions and bring doubts and struggle with the brokenness of the world.

Our homes need to be places of safety for our kids physically, emotionally and spiritually. As fathers, we must set the tone.

Pray for your family.

Pray continually for your wife and for your children. Pray with them, and pray for them. Our children should know we are fighting alongside them and for them in prayer. This is our most important work, and from the fruit of this discipline comes presence and protection. Out of the overflow of a life of prayer, we can be the fathers God has called us to be.

Pray over your children, teach them to pray and let them see you on your knees before the throne of God. Godly fathers are praying fathers.

We should celebrate the fathers in our lives. We should celebrate those who have loved us so well, even when that love has been imperfect.

For those of us who are fathers, we should take this day to reflect on how we have done in our calling. Have we been present? Have we protected our children? Have we prayed for our families?

Zac Harrel is pastor of First Baptist Church in Gustine, Texas.