

Father Knows Best

by Mike Ford

Forerunner, "Ready Answer," June 1994

Remember the 1950's television sitcom *Father Knows Best*? Robert Young starred as the mythical father of the Anderson family. His wife was a homemaker and mother to their three children. Each week an opportunity arose for "Dad" to solve a problem.

What happened to those wonderfully innocent and uplifting days?

But what kind of fathers are portrayed on television today? Homer Simpson, simple-minded buffoon, or the jovial Dr. Cliff Huxtable, dominated by his wife and manipulated by his children. Or worst of all, the male-chauvinist, crude and perverse Al Bundy.

What has happened to fathers in our society? Have you ever stopped to think of the diminished role fathers now play in western civilization? For many in western society, men have become nothing more than sperm banks! Life as we have known it is deteriorating rapidly—decaying from within. The basic building block of society, the family, is being destroyed. We can lay much of the blame for this at the feet of fathers who are not fulfilling their responsibilities.

Quayle Vs. Brown

A few years ago, former Vice President Dan Quayle made comments about the television show *Murphy Brown* during a speech. This is a typical sitcom where the heroine, Murphy Brown, is intelligent, articulate, independent and self-sufficient. The men around her are depicted as fools, idiots or otherwise unrealistic. At the time of the Vice President's speech, Murphy (unmarried) became pregnant and decided that she would "have" this baby, but she had no need of a man as a father to the child or a husband to her.

Mr. Quayle remarked that it was this kind of example that helped to destroy traditional family values. As soon as the words left his mouth, he was absolutely vilified in the American media. Editorials and talk shows argued about his statement for weeks. Media reports to the contrary, he was right on the money with his comments.

Over twenty-five hundred years ago, the prophet Isaiah predicted that men would abdicate their rightful roles. He writes, "As for My people, children are their oppressors, and women rule over them" (Isaiah 3:12). Despite what "enlightened society" would have you believe, the Bible teaches that a father is meant to be a loving authority figure, the head of his home, his wife and his children.

Yet in today's world, many families do not contain a father, or if they do, the father does not properly fulfill his role. Increasingly, we see one-parent families with that one parent being the mother. In 90% of divorces in the America, mothers are awarded sole custody of the children.

The word translated "fatherless" in the Bible comes from Hebrew and Greek words meaning "orphans." In current language an orphan is "a child deprived by death of one or usually both parents." But to God, an orphan is a child without a father, which should give us some idea of the importance He places on the father and his role in the family and society.

In no way does He diminish the role of the mother. From necessity in many cases, she has taken on the role of both parents. The mother is every bit as vital to the family as the father. And that is the point! Families—especially the children—*need* both parents.

But more and more often families in American society do not contain a father. Some 35% of all children now live apart from their biological fathers, according to *Washington Post* writer Paul Taylor (*Charlotte Observer*, "When Fathers No Longer Figure," June 21, 1992). Furthermore, says Mr. Taylor, a white child born today has only one chance in two of living continuously with a biological father through age 18. A black child has one chance in 12.

Why are so many of our families without fathers? Husbands and fathers have abandoned their God-given responsibilities as leaders, guides, establishers and maintainers of standards in their families. As a result, wives and children fill the void. Without fathers in the position of final arbiter, families are chaotic, their children out of control. Isaiah also foretold this result: "The child will be insolent toward the elder" (Isaiah 3:5). In other words, children will be disrespectful to adults. While much of the day-to-day childrearing may fall to the mother, the support and strength of the father is necessary to raise balanced, obedient children.

Again quoting from Mr. Taylor's article, "Fatherlessness consigns children to poverty; children in father-absent households are six times more likely to be poor. Anthropological studies have suggested that it may lead boys in particular to become hypermasculine and violence prone. It deprives inner-city neighborhoods of the quasi-policing function played by good family men." It is almost humorous that mankind needs an "anthropological study" to tell them what any Bible student already knows: A family without a father is unbalanced and ripe for problems.

Satan Hates Families

Why have so many fathers run from their responsibilities? Why have they let their shoes be filled by others? It is simple, really. Satan. Satan hates the very thought of a happy, healthy and whole family. He will do everything in his power to destroy it.

Consider one of the major foundations of this world: Nimrod and the Babylonian Mystery Religion. It began as the worship of Nimrod. Idolatry is bad enough, but it soon evolved into the worship of Semiramis, Nimrod's spouse and mother of Tammuz. There is considerable reason to think this evolution was directed to obscure and counter the worship of God the Father!

In the first century AD, the New Testament church began. But, over a period of many years and after many changes, the Catholic church, with its worship of the Virgin Mary and the Christ-child, appears and dominates Christendom. Satan has turned this world from a proper worship of God to that of worshipping women and children. When today's religions mention Him at all, God the Father is pictured as a cruel, harsh individual, while the Virgin Mary—and even Christ Himself!—are feminine, forgiving, gentle images.

Satan does not want us to have a relationship with our Father. He would have us believe that a mother is all that is necessary. Though the expression "The church 'is the mother of us all'" is biblical (Galatians 4:26), Satan twists and perverts its meaning in his religions. Some of the New Age religions revolve around mother goddesses like Gaia.

Throughout history Satan has attacked the father. Wars kill mostly men in their prime, fathers and potential fathers. Homosexuality is practiced mostly by men. Satan inspires actions that take men from their rightful positions.

In today's society only about 10% of the families in America are traditional father-breadwinner, mother-homemaker families. Those types of families are portrayed in the media as dinosaurs—something to ridicule. Men are shown as either bumbling idiots (e.g., Dagwood Bumstead and Homer Simpson) or too cool for the mundane job of fatherhood (James Bond and Thomas Magnum). Yet the wives, if they have them, are always smart and so very kind to carry the deadbeat husband through life.

Take Action!

What can we do about this sad state of affairs? First of all, be aware of the subtle influences of this world! Everywhere we turn it seems that men in general and fathers in particular are being subtly undercut. Radio commercials, movies, newspapers, magazines, advertising—they all are guilty of portraying men negatively and women positively.

Second, understand that everyone has a God-ordained job to do. In my family, my wife fulfills her role as mother and homemaker in an exemplary manner. I could not do her job nearly as well. Fathers have been given the responsibilities of providers, protectors and leaders. Sometimes these are thankless, grueling, unexciting jobs. Fathers need support, understanding and appreciation from wives and children. As big and gruff as they are, men often have fragile egos! Let them know they are appreciated.

Third, follow the guidelines God sets forth for fathers. For example, "And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4). Fathers have to fill their role in self-control, not being so harsh as to alienate, anger, and frustrate their children, but raising them with discipline, instruction and guidelines.

Proverbs 22:6 says, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." The Jewish Publication Society translation correctly includes the word "even," rendering the second clause as "even when he is old. . . ." This translation stresses that with right leadership and instruction by parents in agreement, a child reared in God's way will not depart from it, even in old age.

The family, whose structure mirrors that of God's government, should function as God's Kingdom in microcosm. How well we fulfill our responsibilities as fathers will partly determine our places in the Kingdom. It is that important.

In our families, we must ignore a society ruled by Satan that has largely replaced fathers with welfare systems, and pray daily for more of God's Holy Spirit to give fathers the strength and wisdom to do their jobs correctly. We must not bend to Satan's view of the family, but stand firm in God's Word. If we do these things, "the father of the righteous will greatly rejoice" (Proverbs 23:24).