



## **MORE FATHERS, LESS GOVERNMENT**

Mark Driscoll

In June of 2023, something unthinkable happened at a park in the alpine town of Annecy, France.

As mothers watched their children play, an insane man showed up out of nowhere with a knife. He began attacking women and children, and four young kids and two women were stabbed. One man hid behind a tree with a phone to capture it and didn't engage the assailant, while others ran for cover, out of harm's way.

Thankfully, there was a young man named Henri who happened to be in the park and witnessed the attacks. Rather than run away, he got between the women and children and the man and began to swing his backpack to disarm the man, who slashed at him with his knife. Henri didn't back down and eventually chased the man out of the park.

Soon, Henri was being called the backpack hero. When interviewed, Henri was humble and talked about his Christian faith, saying it motivated him to take action. His love for Jesus and his belief in the Bible required him to get between evil and women and children.

We universally marvel at this display of sacrifice and bravery. But sadly, it's becoming a rarity these days in our nation.

There has never been, in the history of our nation, a greater need for men who are active and step into harm's way to protect women and children.

What we really need is more fathers – men who are willing to get in the middle of situations to do whatever it takes to build up and to bless the women and children around them. This profoundly reflects the heart of God.

God reveals himself as a father, and our Savior, Jesus, comes as a son. This element of sonship and fatherhood speaks to the core of who men are, and when men truly encounter God in relationship, they will develop the heart of a father too.

The book of Malachi is the last book in the Old Testament – after which there were 400 years of silence from God until Christ arrived. And in Malachi 4:5–6, God says...

*“Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord. He will turn the hearts of the fathers back to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, so that I will not come and strike the land with complete destruction.” (NASB)*



Here's God's final word followed by 400 years of silence. He's saying men need to have a heart change so that they love their children, and children need to have a heart change so that they love their fathers.

Consider the weight of this statement: a nation's health and longevity is related to its relationship with its children. So if we fail to love our children, we will fail at everything. It all begins or ends with the hearts of fathers toward their children.

Today, our nation is cursed because there is a lack of fathers' hearts.

From this passage in Malachi, we learn that preaching will turn the hearts of men. The word of God is strategically designed to do surgery on the hearts of men. Nothing changes a man's heart like the Word of God. And when the Word of God is rightly preached, it activates men and God uses it to transform men.

An entire generation of young men today need God the Father, and they want to know how to become fathers themselves. That only comes through the preaching of God's Word and the modeling of good men. When the Word of God is preached, God changes a man's heart. He takes out the old heart and the Father gives him his heart. As you are loved by the Father, you love your child with the love that the Father has for you. Then, sensing and seeing that, your child responds with a heart of love toward you.

But when I look outside of the church, here's what I see: I see a cursed society, a cursed nation.

I want to share some statistics that can be discouraging. But they're insightful because the truth is, we can't deal with reality until we accept reality.

- Since 1968, the number of children without a father has doubled to 18.4 million children.
- Of 100 countries surveyed, the United States has the highest percentage of fatherlessness, 300% higher than the global average.
- In addition, the majority of children born to women ages 30 and under are born out of wedlock with no father.
- Fewer than half of adults today grew up with a mother and father – both of which are vitally important because they complement each other and assist one another.
- 85% of teens with a behavioral disorder have no father.
- 70% of adolescents in drug and alcohol treatment centers have no father.
- 90% of homeless and runaway children have no father.
- Children without a father are 900% more likely to drop out of school.



## We are failing our children, and we're especially failing boys.

Consider that 70% of D's and F's in school are earned by boys. By eighth grade, only 20% of boys are proficient in writing and only 24% are proficient in reading.

Today, 60% of college students are female. That is the same percentage as church attendance. Churches are on average 60% female.

These are concerning numbers, to put it lightly, because what are boys? Boys are future men.

And what are young men doing? Young men spend an average of eight hours a day on leisure and screen time, like pornography and video games. Those things do not prepare you to be a father.

You would think that given these realities, the government would say, "We need to reset all of our priorities. We need a national organization for men. We need a men's studies degree or a minor in fathering. We should add teaching 'how to love children' to the public school curriculum. We should be encouraging people to serve children in church and in the community."

Instead, quite the opposite is happening. Boys are being told that they shouldn't be masculine men.

The American Psychological Association said in 2019 that "traditional masculinity" is harmful. They defined traditional masculinity as being marked by stoicism, the ability to control your emotions, competitiveness, dominance, and aggression. These traits are considered to be harmful. So now what society has decided is that all masculinity is toxic.

This reality, alarming as it is, also presents an incredible opportunity for the church as the family of God to set a countercultural example. We can answer the call in Malachi 4:5-6 for fathers to turn their hearts to their children, and we can show the world what a good, godly, masculine father is meant to be.

I want to look at three important roles that a good father fulfills. A good father protects, provides, and pastors.

A father that protects is like a father that builds a home so that the family is safe. Then he provides so that there are resources for them to flourish in the home. And finally, he pastors, meaning he emotionally, relationally connects with his children to encourage and love them.

Let's look at each of those more closely.

### **Number one: A good father protects.**



Nehemiah 4:9 says...

*But we prayed to our God and posted a guard day and night to meet this threat. (NIV)*

Nehemiah is serving as the representative of the king. He's literally functioning as the national father. He's going to rebuild the house of God, he is going to welcome the people of God, to provide for and protect them.

And in his fatherly role, here's what he says: "We prayed to our God and we set a guard as a protection day and night." What he's talking about here is physical and spiritual protection. He says we prayed because the war is against the unseen.

The war of our age is against demons and powers and principalities in the unseen realm. If you look at our culture, does it not appear as if some evil force that is unseen has overtaken every area of culture and declared war on children?

That's the world in which we live. It's evil. So Nehemiah prayed against the spiritual warfare of his day. In addition, he set a guard as protection. This is physical defense.

Every good man understands these two things. You pray for your family and you're on guard to protect your family.

First Peter 3:7 speaks of husbands, but the principle would extend furthermore to fathers:

*Live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel. (ESV)*

Men are physiologically, anatomically different than women. I know it's very controversial, but men are stronger than women. They just are. God made us different.

What 1 Peter 3:7 says is, "Men, you're stronger. Use your strength to protect." Let me say this, you want your wife and kids to not only be safe, but feel safe. There's a big difference between being safe and feeling safe. And as men, oftentimes we don't understand how women and children feel, and sometimes they feel unsafe. Like if something happens, they worry they're not going to be able to defend or protect themselves.

I grew up in a neighborhood with a lot of violent and dangerous men. When I was a little boy under the age of 10, a friend invited to their house, and I'll never forget their dad. I didn't know it at the time, but now, in hindsight, I think he was drunk in the middle of the day.. He was just a very loud, boorish, angry guy.

Just being in that home felt very unsafe to me as a child. And I'll never forget that his little daughter was walking by and he just reached out his hand to get something, and as soon as she saw his hand, she absolutely recoiled. I remember as a little boy thinking he hits his daughter. That home was for her the most dangerous place. So I left and never went back.



When my daughters were born, I asked the Lord to help me be the safest place. When my daughters see my hand, they don't run from it, but they run to it.

Children without a father are 200% more likely to be neglected or abused, especially girls.

The statistics for trauma and abuse and neglect are at an all-time high because fatherhood is at an all-time low.

In addition, by age 30, males who grew up without a father are 200% more likely to be in prison.

A father protects you from others, and sometimes they protect you from yourself. Part of the reason that a father is in a home is to have authority over his children – especially his boys – so that they learn to submit to and respect authority before they grow up and commit crimes and have to pay for them with prison sentences.

**Number two: A good father provides.**

Genesis 2:15 says...

*The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. (ESV)*

This was pre-fall, before the curse. God put man in the garden to work. It is a man's duty to work. Second Thessalonians 3:10–12 should be the memory verse for this entire generation:

*For even when we were with you, we would give you this command: If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat. For we hear that some among you walk in idleness, not busy at work, but busybodies. Now such persons we command and encourage in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work quietly and to earn their own living. (ESV)*

What he's saying is if you are an adult, particularly a man, you need to work a full-time job at the very least, and what this means is two things.

There should be no such thing as a universal basic income. Nobody else should pay for you to spend their money. In addition, there should not be a socialistic redistribution of wealth. If certain people go to work and certain people don't want to go to work, then voting for people to take the money from the people that are going to work is called stealing.

This command to work and provide become even more forceful in 1 Timothy 5:8:

*Anyone who does not provide for their relatives, and especially for their own household, has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.*



Those are strong words. He's saying that any husband and father who is able-bodied and doesn't work is more detestable in the sight of God than an unbeliever who has rejected his son, Jesus Christ.

God made us to work. In fact, work is part of our worship. Think of the Lord Jesus. He comes to the earth. The first 30 years, 90% of his life, he's working a job. God worked a job and paid his taxes.

Historically, Protestant Christians have seen work as worship. The German sociologist Max Weber coined the phrase "*the Protestant work ethic*" and he said it was the cause of the American dream, that if you will work, you can then chase your dreams and make generational wealth possible. So Protestants started working hard as worship unto the Lord six days a week and taking a Sabbath rest. Not only that, Protestant parents started giving their children chores to teach them how to work and Protestant workers did not see a distinction between sacred work and secular work because Jesus is Lord over all.

This means whatever you're doing unto the Lord is sacred. You can be a mechanic, you can be an electrician, you can be an architect, you can be an accountant, you can be a mom, you can be a dad. It's all sacred. It's all work unto the Lord.

Sadly, 81% of single parents today are women. Children without a father are 500% more likely to be in poverty. We're not talking about a good dad, we're not talking about a dad who's reading the Bible or filled with the spirit. We're just talking about a dad who's breathing. If he can fog a mirror, he makes a difference.

What about young men who are entering into those responsible years of fatherhood and marriage? A record 7 million men ages 25 to 34 are not working or looking for work. This is the highest percentage of able-bodied men in our nation's history who are not working or looking for work.

We have even created a category for them, NILF, meaning "not in labor force."

This is where a father needs to kick in, and if a father isn't around, then an uncle or a grandfather, a pastor, a spiritual father needs to step up and challenge these young men with biblical truth. God has called them to work.

This is why we need fathers to step up. Because 19% of males ages 25 to 29 without a biological father are idle. They're not in school or work. That means one in five young men is doing nothing. That's horrifying for two reasons...

Number one, you cannot be free unless you pay your own bills. If you are dependent on the government, you are not free.



Number two, unless men go to work, you run out of people to tax to pay for all the men who don't go to work. So, if there are men that are not working, but are taking money from men who were working, eventually, there's not enough money because there's not enough men working.

This is the reality in America. We have pushed our national debt. We now owe \$100,000 in national debt roughly for every American. We owe \$250,000 for every tax paying American, and the answer just seems to be more and more debt.

Fathers and government are literally like a scale. When I was born in 1970, there was less government and government debt because there were more fathers. As we've had fewer fathers, guess what we have? More debt and more government.

We have far too few fathers and as a result, we have far too much government.

But...

**the answer is more fathers and less government.**

There's something particularly dignified about working, and for a man, there is something that strengthens him. Too many men are too soft. Too many men are too weak. Too many men have been over-mothered and governmentally dependent and have not been rightly fathered.

So if you're a father, you're more important than you think you are. You are to protect, to provide, and finally...

**Number three: A good father pastors.**

Ephesians 6:1-4 says...

*Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER (which is the first commandment with a promise), SO THAT IT MAY TURN OUT WELL FOR YOU AND THAT YOU MAY LIVE LONG ON THE EARTH.*

*Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. (NASB)*

It's important to teach kids this passage, because they like to choose to either honor mother or father. But we're called to "honor mother and father. This is the first commandment with a promise that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land."



Here's the big idea. If you obey your mother and father, you live longer and you make more, and it goes better for you. We're seeing the flip side of that today. Every generation is encouraged to rebel against their parents, and every generation is more mentally and emotionally broken, triggered, and struggling.

The passage continues, "Fathers," this is the word to the men, "don't provoke your children." Don't call them names, don't bully them, don't intimidate them, don't threaten them, don't be harsh with them. Instead, "bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord."

This means that as a father, all of our discipline and instruction must be absent of anger. Instruction and correction are not a problem. It's anger that undermines instruction and correction. To be a good father, you've got to cool down and calm down before you engage your child.

I always like to say you need to connect before you correct. And sometimes before you talk to your child, you need to go talk to your Father and get your heart right so that you're not angry with your child.

The ultimate responsibility for the raising of a child falls to one person. It's the father. And what about the mother? The father and mother are jointly responsible for the raising of the child. Hence, the text says, "Honor your mother and father." They're leading. But the father is the head of the household.

So Paul says, fathers, you go first. You be the first to initiate relationship, prayer, Bible study, church attendance, worship. Too often men think it's the job of the mother to raise the children and it's the job of the school to educate the children and it's the job of the church to disciple the children. No, those things are the father's job.

The mother can help, and the school can help, and the church can help, but fathers need to be the leader.

When you're a boy, someone takes care of you. When you're a young man, you take care of yourself. When you're a grown man, you take care of your family.

There's something particularly dignifying when a man takes on that masculine responsibility. What he's talking about here is the discipline and instruction of the Lord. The original word is *paideia*, and in the original text, it means the full human flourishing and the raising of a human being.

Are men today physically, mentally, spiritually, emotionally, financially ready to launch their children relationally into the next season of life? Many are not. Why is that?

Men are not in church and that's why they're bad fathers.





There is no other place for a man to be taught how to be a husband and father than the church. There is no fathering degree in school. There is nothing in the woke agenda of politics or entertainment that would in any way encourage a man to be a husband and father or educate him on how to accomplish his God-given role.

The church is the only place left that is for marriage, children, men, women, family. That's all we've got, but thanks be to God, that's all we need.

According to data collected by Promise Keepers in the Baptist press – the source for the other statistics I've shared with you – if the wife attends church regularly, but the father does not, there's a 2% chance that the children will become regular attenders of a church as adults.

But, if a father attends church irregularly, there's a 50 to 67% chance that the children will attend church with some regularity as adults. Finally, if the father attends church regularly, there's a 67 to 75% chance that the children will regularly attend church as adults – regardless of whether or not the mother attends. I don't say this to discourage, diminish, demean any mothers, but if the father leads, the children tend to follow, especially the sons.

That's because the father is the head of the family.

The question is not if the husband and father is the head.  
The question is, is he a *good* head or a *bad* head?

If you're a father, know that you are more important than you think and you're probably doing better than you think. And the best way you can do better is to tell your child you love them. Ask them how you have failed them. Apologize to them and ask them how you could be a better father. And even if you don't agree, listen and pray and see what your Heavenly Father says, because it's not the father who gets it all right that children love and trust...

It's the father who wants to get it right and is trying his best that children love and trust.

We need men who will step up as godly fathers who are ready to protect, provide, and pastor the next generation. To hear God's Word and teach God's Word, so that fathers' hearts will turn back to their children and children's hearts will turn back to their fathers.

This is the opportunity for the Church to lead and show the world what biblical manhood truly is.



### **Take Your Study Further**

*For passages about the role of husbands and fathers: Ephesians 5, 1 Timothy 3:1–13*

*For verses about shepherding and training your children: Genesis 18:19, Proverbs 22:6, Proverbs 23:24*

*For verses about work: Proverbs 14:23, Proverbs 18:9, Ecclesiastes 3:22, Colossians 3:23–24, 1 Thessalonians 4:11–12*

Resource based on the message “More Fathers, Less Government” by Mark Driscoll. Used with permission. Learn more about Mark at <https://realfaith.com/about/>