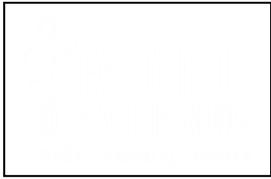


A DAD'S
ARMOR



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'Dad's Armor'©FFIT-2012

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A Dad's Armor

The impact a father has on his children continues through generations as his legacy. The impact is not optional. The only option is to either commit to doing all you can do as a dad to have a positive impact or to let it be negative. In this study you are encouraged to put on the full armor of God and to stand firm in your commitment to raise a godly generation as a lasting legacy. Through scriptural teachings, practical applications and small group discussions, you will:

1. Understand the influence & impact of a father;
2. Be alerted to distractions that can turn your heart from your family; and,
3. Be equipped in enabling a Christ-centered heart and home.

Goal: *To encourage and equip dads to stand firm in battles we face as men and fathers today.*

Issue: *Enable a Christ-centered heart and home.*

Battle plan: *Defend three key battlefronts well – a man's heritage, heart, and home.*

Introduction: *Why Armor??*

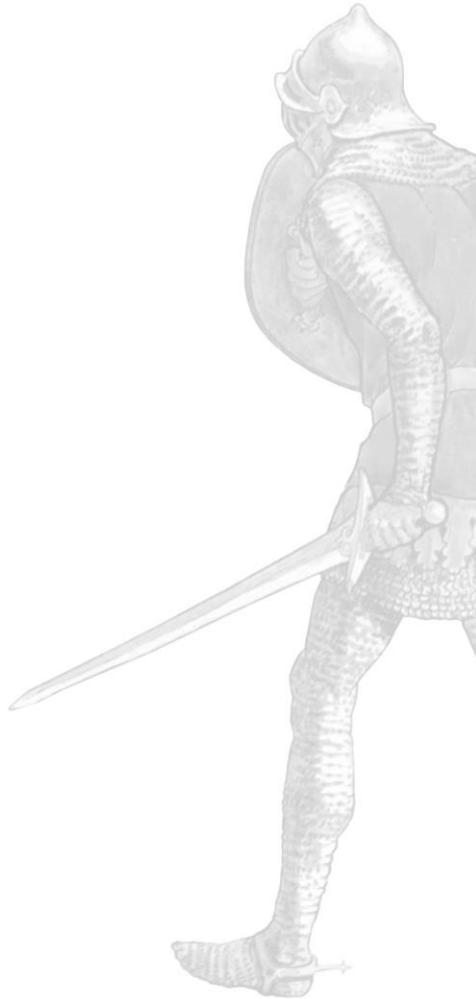
You have heard the comments – “A chip off the old block” or “the apple never falls far from the tree.” While these may have been reassuring to you as a boy or young man, for many they have been condemning or convicting. The implications are that if your dad was a great athlete, you would be a great athlete. Or if your dad was a good businessman in the community, you would most likely follow in his footsteps. While these comments are typically intended to be encouraging, often they can be burdensome as well. The unspoken side of these comments may be – “His dad was an alcoholic so he’ll be an alcoholic” or “his dad was a womanizer so he’ll be a womanizer.”

As men we tend to have characteristics similar to what our dad had whether we knew him or not. This results in exhibiting a lot of the same tendencies willingly or unwillingly. In my case I was very intentional to turn from the alcoholism that had generational roots in our family and established myself as an “over-comer dad”. This resulted simply in transferring the “-ism”. I moved it from an addiction to alcohol to an addiction to work.

That is what we tend to do – stay in line with Dad and his tendencies, or intentionally turn and go in the opposite direction to negate his influence. The lesson I want to share with you through this workshop is that neither is necessarily healthy. Our Heavenly Father blessed each of us with an earthly father that gave it his best shot based on the circumstances and influences that shaped his life.

How we choose to respond to that determines the course we will follow and the impact we will have as men, husbands and fathers.

The Armor equips us with history our Heavenly Father offers for us to reference. It helps us stand firm on three key battlefronts – our heritage, heart and home.



Tips for this study:

Ideal for weekly or monthly small group meetings, there are four primary sessions – Heritage, Heart, Home and Armor. Each session is designed to be 45 – 60 minutes in length. Then there are four supplementary “R U ...” sessions – Family, Real in Relationship, Praying and Accountable.

In general, after an opening prayer each of the primary sessions has a time for reading, discussing, wrapping up and committing to action. Even if everyone has read the session ahead of time, it is a good idea to read it again aloud. It is common to read a bit and discuss a bit. Then read and discuss a bit more as the session progresses. The point is that there will naturally be some dialogue before the actual small group discussion questions are presented. The dynamic should be unique for each group with sensitivity to how the Lord may be working among the men. The facilitator will need to ensure discussion stays on track and keep an eye on the time.

At the appropriate time, move on with the “Wrap up” segment. This segment should be read aloud by the leader as an encouragement with a challenge for specific action. Each man is to commit to some action that will be initiated prior to the next session. The Armor session wraps up with each man developing and drafting a Battle Plan.

The supplementary sessions follow the same flow – reading, discussing, praying and committing to action. Utilize the “Prayer guide” segment in place of the “Wrap up” segment for these sessions.

I. Heritage of a Father

“You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.” (Exodus 20:4-6)

- Sins – 3rd & 4th generation – *convicted?*
- Love – 1000 generations! – *encouraged?*

Devotion for Dads – read & discuss
FATHER: *Heavenly Father’s representative in the home.*

Prayerfully reflect on a time during your childhood when your dad lowered the boom on you. What was your perspective on your dad’s actions at the time? What is your perspective as an adult looking back on the role your dad played in the home?

Times like these: Looking back at the past generation, dads kept the job description simple – financial provider and disciplinarian of last resort. Looking at television today, dads are portrayed as disengaged at best and bumbling idiots at worst. Looking at the family today, kids need dads that are committed to their mom in marriage and engaged in their lives physically, emotionally and spiritually. Do you prioritize the role of a husband and father over your other roles today?

Father per Webster's New World Dictionary – a man who has engendered a child; a man as he is related to his child; a stepfather; a person regarded as a male parent; protector. What does 'father' bring to mind for you? What does 'father' mean to your wife?

Rate the following for your dad or father-figure on a scale of 1-10: with 1 being "low" and 10 being "high" on his effort as a father to:

- Encourage you in interests and activities; _____
- Affirm you in growth and accomplishments; _____
- Convey his commitment to your mom in marriage; _____
- Build on his relationship with his father; and _____
- Reflect his relationship with Jesus the Christ in the home, church and community. _____

Rate the above again for you today. How do the numbers compare?

The Word on *father* is:

Scripture – John 20:17 *Jesus said, "Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet returned to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'"*

Reflecting on scripture:

- While many men have been blessed with an earthly father that set a great example, many have not. Most fall somewhere between. But all men have an opportunity to call on the Heavenly Father to fill any gap that exists through the brotherhood Jesus the Christ granted us upon His resurrection. Paul adds, *"For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by Him we cry, 'Abba, Father.' The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Now if we are children then we are heirs – heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, ..."* (Romans 8:15-17)

Prayer guide: Lord, thank You for the many gifts and blessings in my life. I praise You for my wife and mother of our children, and for the children You have blessed me with. Guide me in my efforts to be the husband and father my family needs. Strengthen my relationship with You, that it will be a growing relationship reflected in my marriage daily. Help me be intentional in my efforts to be present physically, engaged emotionally and lead spiritually as Your representative in my family. Amen.

I am encouraged to be more intentional in:

Other small group discussion questions:

(groups of four/10 minutes)

- State one word that describes your father, and explain why you picked that word.

- Give one characteristic/quality you inherited from your father – good or bad.

(note – This is not to be “father bashing”. This is about acknowledging the influence your father had on you with no judgment. My dad and your dad did the best he could with the situations and circumstances that shaped his life. The Lord has you right where He wants you and is ready to meet you there.)

Wrap up:

Must first be a son

- Healing – Claim and embrace the Father’s blessings as brothers in Christ:

“As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, ‘This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.’” (Matthew 3:16-17, again in 17:5)

This is an empowering step in the walk as a man. Embracing sonship can fill any voids in relationship that exist with our earthly father with the right stuff – a growing relationship with our Heavenly Father. The Father’s blessing is a key step forward on the journey to become the man, husband and father He calls each dad to be.

As the Father reconciles us, the challenge is issued to reconcile with our earthly father:

Components of reconciliation (*or affirmation*)

- **Honest exchange** of thoughts and ideas
- **Real expression** of feelings about the past
- A time of **confession** (and restitution)
- A time of **forgiveness**
- A **commitment** to a new relationship

“He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers; or else I will come and strike the land with a curse.” (Malachi 4:6)

NOTES & ACTION:



II. Heart of a Father

What responsibilities weigh on your heart as a man today? Financial security for my family weighed heavily on my heart because I was determined to live above the poverty line I had grown up below. That was a driving factor in my efforts for years. It manifested into a workaholism that kept me very focused in the world. I was convicted that while I had steered clear of the alcoholism that has had a generational impact on our family, an “-ism” is an “-ism” whatever it is.

The world is performance-based. What is meant by that? The drivers for a man in the world typically involve self-improvement, self-motivation and self-promotion in status, career or influence. Is that all bad? Not necessarily. But in many cases the priorities get all discombobulated with a focus on self, and that is all bad.

The Lord made this very clear to one man when he returned home from an extended business trip on a Saturday mid-morning. After giving his wife a kiss, he headed back to the room that served as an office to wrap up paperwork from the trip and prepare for Monday morning. He happened to glance out the window and asked, “Who is that playing in the back yard with our daughter?” She said, “That is our son. You’re traveling too much.” The Holy Spirit wasn’t quite as gentle as she was. The conviction was, “Man, you are taking the blessings of marriage and family for granted! Furthermore, I am losing a generation because of men like you!” That wake-up call marked the beginning of a new journey establishing right priorities in relationship with the Lord.

The journey involved moving from the performance-based worldview to a relationally-based Biblical view in the world. On the journey it became clear why and how Christians are called not to be “of the world” but influences for Christ “in the world.”

Such **heart-turning begins** with a commitment to a growing relationship with Jesus. This requires daily commitment to time in prayer, scripture, worship and study of the word of God. It also involves regular corporate worship with other believers as well as small group fellowship and accountability.

If married, step one is learning to live your maturing relationship with Christ in your marriage. Husbands are to “*love your wives just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her,*” (Eph.5:25). This suggests that the closest we will come to experiencing a relationship with Christ in the flesh is the relationship with our wives in marriage.

- Marriage is a foundation for the Lord’s plans – “*For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.*” (Gen.2:24) And, “*Has not the Lord made the one? In flesh and spirit they are His. And why one? Because He was seeking godly offspring.*” (Mal.2:15)
- Reflecting the love and faithfulness in marriage and family is paramount – “*Let love and faithfulness never leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart.*” (Pr.3:3)

Step two is to be intentional in your efforts to lead and teach in the home – “*The commandments I give to you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on 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. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads.” (Deut.6:6-8) And, “Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.” (Eph.6:4)

Finally, yes, we are to provide for our family. In fact, *“If anyone does not provide for his relatives and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.”* (1Tim.5:8) Man is not to feel guilty about working, but it is not to consume him either.

Devotion for Dads – read & discuss

RESPONSIBILITY: Following the second Adam

Prayerfully reflect on a time when you were young and given some responsibility - maybe it was in the form of chores, keeping the yard mowed or getting a job to help provide some income for the family. How did Mom and Dad help you understand your responsibilities?

Times like these: Parents can be quick to point fingers at deficiencies in the education system but not as quick to accept responsibility for providing the basic daily discipline and education in the home. Sexual promiscuity is essentially encouraged among young people today while abstinence is scoffed at. Teachings that promote individual responsibility for sexual purity until marriage receive little respect outside the church. Do you encourage and equip your family with various levels of responsibility in the home? What is your reference for accepting responsibility as a Christian man today?

Responsibility per Webster's New World Dictionary – *expected or obliged to account for something, or to someone; able to distinguish between right and wrong and to think and act rationally; readily assuming obligations, duties.*

What does 'responsibility' bring to mind for you?

Rate the following for your dad or father-figure on a scale of 1-10: with 1 being "low" and 10 being "high" on the level to which he embraced responsibilities in the area of:

- Financial provision for the family; _____
- Discipline - establishing rules for the home, and consequences for breaking those rules; _____
- Education in school and in the Way; _____
- Faithfulness in the marriage relationship; being a good role model; and, _____
- Spiritual leadership in the home, church and community. _____

Rate the above again for you today. How do the numbers compare?

The Word on *responsibility* is:

Scripture – Genesis 2:15-17 *"The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. And the Lord God commanded the man, 'You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.'"*

Reflecting on scripture:

- Adam was given a work to do, a will to obey, and eventually a woman to love in the Garden of Eden. Read Genesis 3:6 to see how passively Adam responded to the responsibilities given him. Where was Adam as the serpent began talking to his wife?

Prayer Guide: Lord, the first Adam failed to step up to the responsibilities You gave him. Thank You for the second Adam, Jesus the Christ (1Cor.15:45), who did step up to his work of taking on the sins of the world; to his will to obey all the way to the cross; and, to his love for the woman You gave him, the church. I understand what I inherited from the first Adam. Help me step up daily as a man, husband and father in the strength of the second Adam, Jesus the Christ. Amen.

I am encouraged to be more responsible in:

Breakout/small group discussion:

(small groups of four/12 minutes)

- Describe relationship with your kids today as it pertains to:
 - School & education

 - Outside activities

 - Spiritual growth

- Share what action you will take to grow in relationship with your kids.

Wrap up:

B-U-S-Y-ness

Busy stands for '**Being Under Satan's Yoke**'.

The responsibilities facing men as husbands and fathers are many and the tendency is to be BUSY in an effort to balance it all. But this life as a Christian isn't about balance, it's about right priorities. The priorities are:

1. A growing relationship with Jesus the Christ;
2. Learning to live that relationship in marriage;
3. Reflecting that relationship in family and beyond;
- 4, 5, 6, ... Everything else.

John 15:1-8

"... Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. ..."

- Abide in the Vine and be fruitful

A man's calendar reflects his priorities. Do you have the following visible on your calendar?

1. Time committed to prayer & scripture daily? Y/N
2. Bible study or small group meeting weekly? Y/N
3. Date night with your wife at least monthly? Y/N
4. Children's school events and other activities? Y/N
5. One-on-one time with child at least monthly? Y/N

A man is to provide for his family. Failure to do so is to be "worse than an unbeliever" per 1Tim.5:8.

Don't feel guilty about working and know that you are not going to make every event. But by setting right priorities, you may surprise yourself.

NOTES & ACTION:



III. House of a Father

What is your thought or standard for staying clean? No, this is not a discussion about hygiene. As individuals the standard for thoughts entertained, language used or habits established can vary greatly. Man must strive to be clean. The author of Ephesians provides the standard in chapter 5:3-5, *“But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God’s holy people. Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving. For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person – such a man is an idolater – has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.”* The individual standard is high.

The standard is high on the relational front as well. As we relate to others in the world, the choice is to be an influence for the Kingdom, or be influenced by the world. Solomon had a lot to say about this in Proverbs. One example is chapter 5:1-10, *“My son, pay attention to my wisdom, listen well to my words of insight, that you may maintain discretion and your lips may preserve knowledge. For the lips of an adulteress drip honey, and her speech is smoother than oil; but in the end she is bitter as gall, sharp as a double-edged sword. Her feet go down to death; her steps lead straight to the grave. ... Keep to a path far from her, do not go near the door of her house, lest you give your best strength to others and your years to the one who is cruel, lest strangers feast on your wealth and your toil enrich another man’s house.”* Man must be aware of worldly influences and stand up to the

temptations they pose. Embracing sin has consequences that can be generational.

King Ahab provides an example of this in 1Kings 20 – The Lord delivers Ben-Hadad and the Arameans into his hands because they were a poly-theistic people. King Ahab responded not only by letting Ben-Hadad live, he embraced him as a brother! The consequence - In 1Kings 20:42, the prophet told King Ahab, *“This is what the Lord says: ‘You have set free a man I had determined should die. Therefore it is your life for his life, your people for his people.’”* (Read 1Kings, chapter 20 for context) In essence, King Ahab had embraced sin and suffered the consequences.

With the individual and relational responsibilities a man must step up to for his home, there is a key spiritual dimension as well. Joshua’s only defeat came at the hands of Achan, a man who compromised himself spiritually by coveting plunder after a battle. (*Joshua 7*) He had buried items inside his tent thinking, hoping, God would not see them. But He did. Man must stand firm for his entire home! That can include the television in the bedroom, the computer screen late at night, magazine subscriptions as well as books and DVDs in the house. We are convicted to do so in Deuteronomy 7:26, *“Do not bring a detestable thing into your house or you, like it, will be set apart for destruction. Utterly abhor and detest it, for it is set apart for destruction.”* Take a stand as King Josiah did in 2Kings 22 & 23. Verse 23:25 sums up his efforts – *“Neither before nor after Josiah was there a king like him who turned to the Lord as he did – with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his strength, in accordance with all the Law of Moses.”* If Josiah could turn the heart of a nation,

imagine what you could do for your home. Take the challenge – be a Josiah for your home and family!

Devotion for Dads – read & discuss

CLEAN HOUSE: *Ever take inventory?*

Prayerfully reflect on a situation growing up where you heard your dad use a cuss word; or, when you stumbled across a pornographic magazine. How did you deal with that? How did those early experiences at home and in life equip you to deal with temptations you face today?

Times like these: Cable and satellite television channels allow virtually anything to flow into homes 24/7. Regular television channels have become more and more suggestive. Even the commercials during regular viewing are often openly salacious. Internet access introduces a whole new medium that can impact the home for good and for bad. Some sports magazines have moved toward soft pornography. And women's apparel magazines show a lot of skin in their marketing efforts. What opened the gate to this barrage of sex, violence, drugs and alcohol that seemingly flows uninhibited into the home? Have you taken inventory lately of what comes into your home and how it gets there?

A clean house is a way to set the standard and guide children through the formative years, to recognize and process right from wrong, to recognize and deal with temptations they will face. What is your reference for a clean house?

Clean House per Webster's New World Dictionary – *designed to produce and maintain an atmosphere almost 100% free of contaminants;*

used in the manufacture and assembly of spacecraft, in hospitals, etc. What does 'clean house' bring to mind for you? How did Dad and Mom *design* the home to minimize the *contaminants* you and your siblings in the home were exposed to?

Rate the following for your dad or father-figure's ability to design a clean house through your formative years on a scale of 1-10: with 1 being "contaminated" and 10 being "a clean atmosphere":

- Anger; _____
- Foul language; _____
- Alcohol; _____
- Pornographic material; and, _____
- The marriage relationship. _____

Rate the above again for you today. How do the numbers compare?

The Word on a *clean house* is:

Scripture – Deuteronomy 7:26 *“Do not bring a detestable thing into your house or you, like it, will be set apart for destruction. Utterly abhor and detest it, for it is set apart for destruction.”*

Reflecting on scripture:

- Moses was referring to foreign gods. Are you bringing any foreign gods *into your house*? A tolerant society tends to encourage us not to *utterly abhor and detest* anything. That's the world's influence. Inventory what enters your house and set a standard that honors your wife, protects your children and glorifies the Father.

Prayer guide: Lord, other gods knock on my door constantly. Help me stay clean as a man by turning from the influences of the world by the power of the Holy Spirit. Enable me as a

husband and father to establish a standard in the home that will glorify You. Amen.

I am encouraged to take inventory of influences in the home and clean house personally in the area of:

Breakout/small group discussion:

(same groups of four/15 minutes)

- Discuss temptations or influences you wrestle with.

- Review "CLEAN HOUSE – *Ever take inventory?*"
 - discuss your reference for a clean house

- Discuss worldly influences in your home.
 - have you taken inventory of what comes into your home and how it gets there?

Wrap up:

What we know is that the world will continue to be the world. Society with an aggressive media will continue the effort to influence utilizing relative truths and relative morality. Temptations will persist.

The encouragement here is to be **intentional** with efforts to offset world-encounters with God-encounters. God-encounters are not just mountain-top experiences at camps, retreats or worship time. Dinner together as a family, family movie night, prayer time and devotion time are God-encounter activities in the home that will help offset some world-encounters experienced across the day.

NOTES & ACTION:



A Dad's Armor

Ephesians 6:11-17:

“Put on the full Armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes” – the devil knows your buttons, your playbook. Find a battle buddy to hold you accountable and take your stand!

“... Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist” – truth is an absolute, the word of God. It often shows up as a ‘gut feel’, not to be swayed by the relative truth in the world.

“With the breastplate of righteousness in place,” - righteousness is a heart-level connection with Jesus the Christ in relationship with the Father.

“and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes with the gospel of peace.” – just as Jesus rebuked the devil with scripture, you are instructed to rebuke worldly news with the good news that is the gospel of our Lord.

“Take up the shield of faith with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one” – believe that what you believe is real and your faith will keep the devil's attacks in check.

“Take the helmet of salvation” – the knowledge of Jesus the Christ, that He died for our sins and rose from the dead. Confess and repent.

“and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.” – Jesus came to testify to the truth, the word of God. We are to do the same. Absolute truth cuts through the relative truth prevalent in the world.

As you contemplate this armor, reflect back on your high school football days. Specifically, think about a night when it was raining and the field was muddy. When you ran by the cheerleaders at halftime, what was one thing you did not want to have? I did not want to have a clean jersey! It was important for me to make sure everyone knew I had been in the game.

I think the same is true of the armor we are to put on. I do not think the Lord wants a man to show up on judgment day with shiny armor. He wants to see evidence that he stepped onto that battlefield for the sake of his family with the armor tarnished and dented from the battles he has faced. Maybe even some blood and dings where he took some body blows but got back up. So keep the belt buckled, the breastplate in place with feet readied and shield lifted high, with your helmet on be confident of your salvation and wield the sword wisely in a confused world. And step onto the battlefield for the sake of family.

Following are guidelines for developing and drafting your personal “Battle Plan”. Continue discussion in the small group as you reflect on strengths and weaknesses that exist and draft a rough first pass. Then across the next week, prayerfully review the previous sessions and modify the draft “Battle Plan” appropriately. The signing off on the final version of your “Battle Plan” should be witnessed by the battle buddies during the next session.

BATTLE PLAN

Development: In reflection, I realize

My strengths are:

My weaknesses are:

I am particularly vulnerable in the area of:

I need help with:

I commit to:



BATTLE PLAN

Draft: Becoming a faithful father

HERITAGE: I will claim the heritage of my Heavenly Father through Jesus Christ to fill the gap between Him and my earthly father. I commit to grow in relationship with Him by spending time daily in prayer and scripture.

HEART: I will prioritize my **physical** presence with family by:

(Ex.- putting key events on my calendar; cutting back on time spent on my hobbies; establishing consistency, etc..)

- I will work to be **emotionally** engaged by:
(Ex.- dating my wife monthly; spending one-on-one time w/kids; asking open-ended questions and listening; etc..)

HOME: I will step up in the area of **spiritual** leadership by:

(Ex. - establishing 'open door' policy; leading family devotion time; praying for my family daily; etc..)

I will establish accountability through weekly fellowship and study with a group of battle buddies initially using the devotions in the back of this booklet.

With who – _____

At what location – _____

On what day and time - _____

BATTLE PLAN

Becoming a faithful father:

HERITAGE: I will claim the heritage of my Heavenly Father through Jesus Christ to fill the gap between Him and my earthly father. I commit to grow in relationship with Him by spending time daily in prayer and scripture.

HEART: I will prioritize my **physical** presence with family by:

I will work to be **emotionally** engaged by:

HOME: I will step up in the area of **spiritual** leadership by:

I will establish accountability through weekly fellowship and study

With – _____

At – _____

On – _____

Signature: _____

Witnesses: _____

Congratulations!

You have completed the **Dad's Armor** study!
Embrace this blessing:

*“The Lord bless you and keep you;
The Lord make His face shine upon you and be
gracious to you;
The Lord turn His face toward you and give you
peace.”* (Numbers 6:24-26)

Know that “peace” is the translation of the Hebrew “shalom”, which in its most expressive fullness does not mean the absence of war, but a positive state of rightness and wellbeing in the face of war. Wars will continue and battles ensue. Stand firm in who you are and Whose you are with eyes focused on Jesus, the author and founder of our faith.

Please know that prayers are with you on your journey to become the dad God calls you to be – to be a **faithful father**, a dad that *prioritizes his physical presence, is engaged emotionally and leads spiritually by example.*

We praise the Lord for the intentionality shown to complete this study and encourage you to continue on utilizing the “R U the dad ...” series on the following pages.

Your feedback, thoughts and comments on the study would be a blessing. Please contact FFIT through www.faithfulfathering.org or email directly to admin@faithfulfathering.org.

R U the dad GOD calls U 2 B?

Big question! Tough question!

It probably won't be answered until you meet the Savior face to face.

The more pertinent question may be:

R U intentional in efforts to become the dad God calls U 2 B?

Still a big question and a tough question!

It requires a serious look inside and being REAL in your response.

Following are four *R U ...?* devotions to help you take that serious look inside and be REAL with at least one other dad. FFIT's hope is that you will be intentional in the effort to continue the small group synergy that has been initiated through the '*Dad's Armor*' study.

Should you decide to accept the assignment to press on with a group of dads and keep us posted on insights gained through the process, you will be well on your way to becoming a *faithful father*, the dad God calls *U 2 B*.

Week 1 – R U ... FAMILY?

Prayerfully reflect on your family and/or extended family. Did friends enjoy time in your home; or did you prefer going to your friends' homes?

Family per Webster's New World Dictionary – *all the people living in the same house; a social unit consisting of parents and the children they rear.* What does "family" bring to mind for you? Discuss some of your memorable family experiences.

Rate the following for your dad or father-figure's legacy of family that you are building upon on a scale of 1-10, with one being a "weak legacy" and 10 being a "strong legacy":

- A solid marriage relationship; _____
- A home of encouragement & support; _____
- A good balance of appropriate affection and effective discipline; _____
- A self-discipline grounded in a growing relationship with Jesus the Christ; and, _____
- A church home. _____

Rate the above again for your home today. How do the numbers compare? Discuss comparisons.

In a generation past, shows like 'Father Knows Best' and 'Leave It to Beaver' were popular and reflected solid American families. And there is the relatively recent 'Bill Cosby Show'. Each of these shows consistently reflected two things in every episode: a rock-solid marriage relationship and the family eating dinner together. Today, we have 'The Simpsons'. Enough said. Is a strong marriage foundational for relationships in the family? Does family time or lack thereof have an influence on other relationships in our lives? Discuss.

The Word on *family* is: Scripture – Gen. 6:14-18
“Make for yourself an ark of cypress wood; you shall make the ark with rooms, and shall cover it inside and out with pitch.... the length of the ark three hundred cubits, its breadth fifty cubits, and its height thirty cubits. ... I will establish My covenant with you; and you shall enter the ark – you and your sons and your wife, and your sons’ wives with you.”

Family analogies with the ark in scripture:

- Significant structure to survive the flood waters – Marriage & family staying strong through the storm;
- Pitch on the outside – Discipline in Christ to keep worldly influences in check;
- Pitch on the inside – Integrity of family, grounded in faith, reinforcing discipline;
- With rooms – Provision for the next generation;
- We are called to build up a family that will have a Christian influence in the world.

Discuss analogies.

Prayer guide: Lord, thank You for the blessing that is family. Help me understand and step up to the physical, social and spiritual responsibilities as the husband and father You call me to be. I know that in Your strength I can build a family that will stand firm against the storms of life, a legacy to continue for generations. Help me lead my family to be an ark on top of the flood waters of worldly influence, by Your grace and for Your glory. Amen.

This week I am encouraged to stand firm against the flood waters of worldly influence by:

Week 2 – R U ... *Real in RELATIONSHIP?*

Prayerfully reflect on the relationship between your mother and father. How did your folks' relationship influence you? Identify specifics – Was there trust in the relationship; was there respect in, and a mutual commitment to the relationship?

Relationship per Webster's New World Dictionary – *connection or association, as by origin or kind; connection by kinship or marriage; or the same family.* What does "relationship" bring to mind for you? Discuss your perspective on relationship.

Rate the following for your dad or father-figure's relationships on a scale of 1-10, with one being a "weak relationship" and 10 being a "strong relationship":

- With friends, other men; _____
- With extended family; _____
- Within the family; _____
- In marriage with your mom; and, _____
- With Jesus the Christ. _____

Rate the above again for you today. How do the numbers compare? Discuss comparisons.

Less than half of all households in the USA are occupied by married couples – a record low. Relationships in 50%+ of families are impacted by divorce. Relationships among peers are sometimes superficial. Even relationships with friends often stay on the surface or are guarded. Are real relationships possible today? What is a 'real' relationship? Discuss.

The Word on *relationship* is: Scripture – 1Peter 3:7 “...live with your wives in an understanding way, ...and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered.”

Reflecting on scripture: (*for discussion*)

- What does *in an understanding way* mean to you?
- Does your marriage reflect *the grace of life* God has planned for you? How?
- In what way is the relationship with your wife an extension of your relationship with Jesus the Christ?
- How is the family designed to impact the next generation's understanding of relationship?

Prayer guide: Lord, my kids get a lesson in relationships every day. It is in the home that children get their first exposure to relationships between adults; between a man and a woman; between a husband and a wife; and, between a dad and a mom. And it is in the home that they gain perspective on a healthy relationship between an adult and a child. The day to day experiences in the home are foundational for the next generation's perspective on relationship. Lord, help me embrace that responsibility. May the relationships in the home reflect my growing relationship with You. Guide me in living with my wife “in an understanding way”, that we may pass on the “grace of life” to the next generation by Your grace and for Your glory. Amen.

This week I am encouraged to be more real in my relationships by:

Week 3 – R U ... PRAYING?

Prayerfully reflect on a situation during your younger years when you prayed fervently for something – a Christmas gift, a position on the team, a relationship. Was your prayer answered?

Prayer per Webster’s New World Dictionary – *an earnest request; supplication; an utterance to God in praise, thanksgiving, confession, etc.; any spiritual communion with God.* What does “prayer” bring to mind for you?

Rate the following for your dad or father-figure’s prayer life on a scale of 1-10: with 1 being “never” and 10 being “very often” that you saw him:

- In prayer; _____
- Lead the family in prayer; _____
- Lift up prayer concerns; _____
- Spend time in prayer and scripture daily; and, _____
- Volunteer as a prayer partner with someone or as a member of a prayer team. _____

Rate the above again for you today. How do the numbers compare? Discuss the comparisons.

As long as there are tests in school there will be prayer in school, but woe to those that pray out loud. A “moment of silence” is the politically acceptable term. Meet You at the Pole, and the National Day of Prayer are initiatives to keep prayer at the forefront, yet it seems there are forces actively working to push prayer to the background. Is prayer a part of your day from the start, at the end, at mealtime, before a road trip? Discuss your perspective on when and how to pray.

The Word on prayer is: Scripture – Mark 11:24, Jesus said, *“Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.”*

Reflecting on scripture: *(for discussion)*

- What is the difference between something you ask for and something *you ask for in prayer*?
- *It will be yours* is Jesus’ promise to Peter and it is a promise to us. In prayer we enter communion with God by the power of the Holy Spirit and gain greater understanding of His will.

Prayer guide: Lord, You are an awesome God. Thank You for being Who You are and doing what You do. I praise You for the many gifts and blessings in my life, may I never take them for granted. I ask that You bless me physically with good health and well being, help me honor the temple You have given me. Guide me emotionally through the distractions and frustrations I face keeping me grounded in Your word and in Your love with the discipline that is You in my life. Bless my time with You in prayer and scripture, draw me closer to You and deeper in relationship with You. Strengthen my personal relationship with You and teach me to live that relationship in marriage, reflect it in family and beyond. Amen.

This week I am encouraged to begin spending time in prayer daily. Specifically I will:

(Note: Couples that pray together stay together 99% of the time versus a national average of 50%! POWER OF PRAYER!)

Week 4 – R U ... ACCOUNTABLE?

Prayerfully reflect on a time in life when it became clear that you were being held accountable for your actions. Do you remember embracing accountability, or was there a tendency to put the blame elsewhere?

Accountable per Webster's New World Dictionary – *to give satisfactory reasons or an explanation; to make satisfactory amends.* What does "accountable" bring to mind for you?

Rate the following for your dad or father-figure on a scale of 1-10: with 1 being "low" and 10 being "high" on the intentional effort made to be accountable to:

- Himself; _____
- The company or individual he worked for; _____
- A group of friends; _____
- His wife and family; and, _____
- The Body of Christ, the church. _____

Rate the above again for you today. How do the numbers compare? Discuss the comparisons.

On the national level we see politicians and pastors fall from grace, and wonder if they were accountable to anyone. At the local level churches struggle to establish effective men's or fathering ministry to help improve individual accountability in the Christian walk. What about in your life – Do you have a battle buddy who holds you accountable? What about in your home – are you willing to say, "I was wrong. I am sorry. Will you forgive me?" What is your reference for being accountable as a Christian man today? Discuss.

The Word on accountability is: Scripture – Matthew 18:15-17 *“If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that ‘every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.’ If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or tax collector.”*

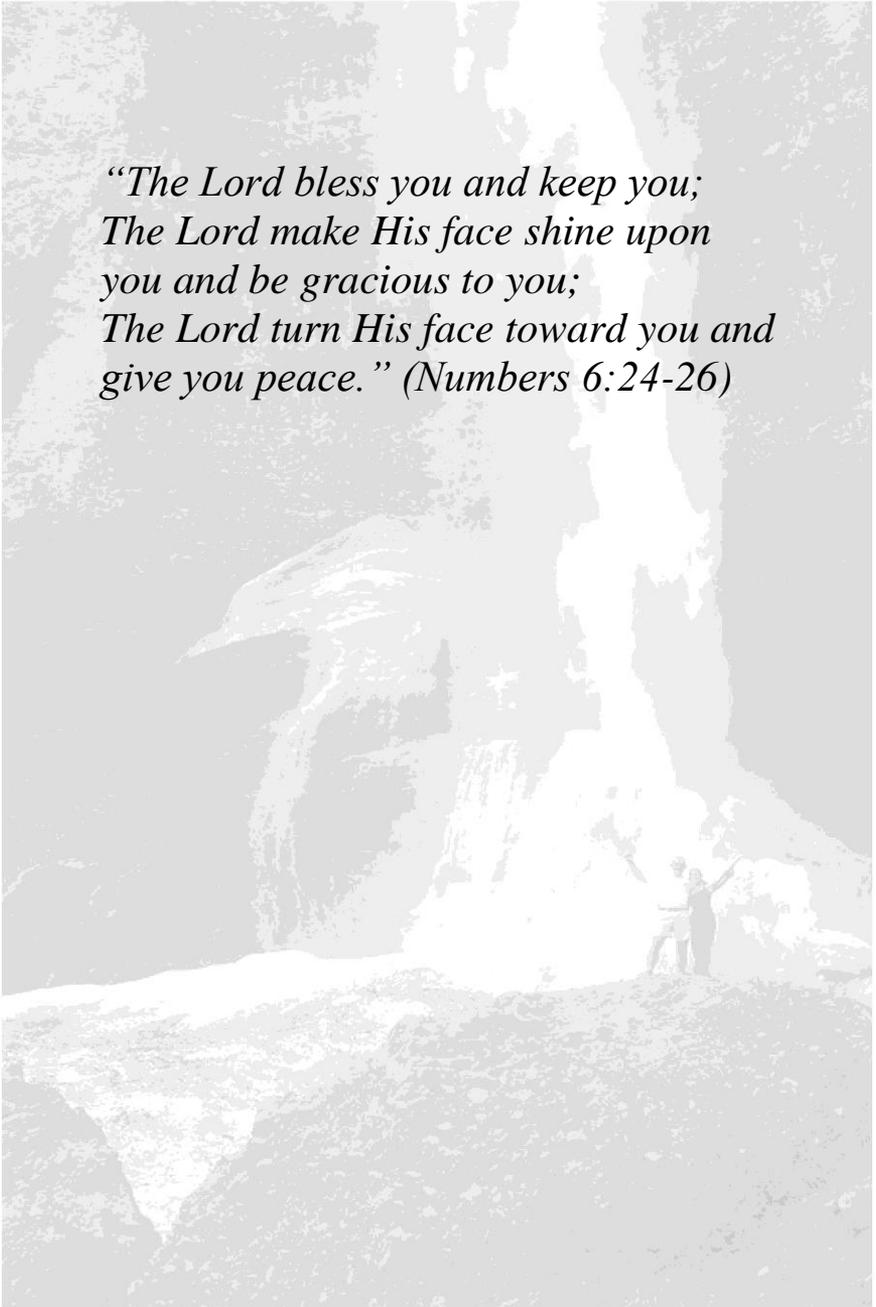
Reflecting on scripture: *(for discussion)*

- One-on-one or small group accountability is foundational for understanding and staying in Truth;
- A group of battle buddies is not easily swayed by the relative truth of the world;
- The Lord will take care of judgment in His time. In the interim, brothers in Jesus the Christ are to be accountable to each other in order to navigate faithfully through distractions in the world.

Prayer guide: Lord, I am an easy target in the world as a lone ranger Christian. I praise You and thank You for the godly men you have brought into my life. Help me be real in those relationships to facilitate a high level of accountability in Truth, that I may be an influence for You in my family, church and community. Amen.

This week I am encouraged to:

*“The Lord bless you and keep you;
The Lord make His face shine upon
you and be gracious to you;
The Lord turn His face toward you and
give you peace.” (Numbers 6:24-26)*



Resources for Dads

Books

Bible

Heart of a Father

- Dr. Ken Canfield

Seven Secrets of Effective Fathers

- Dr. Ken Canfield

Devotions for Dads

- Rick Wertz

Revolutionary Parenting

- George Barna

Internet Filters

Bsecure Online

- www.bsecure.com
- Endorsed by Focus on the Family and others

Covenant Eyes

- www.covenanteyes.com
- Endorsed by many men's groups

Net Nanny

- www.netnanny.com
- Endorsed by parents and tech groups

Parental Guides to Technology

Teen Texting Translator

- www.lgdtxttr.com

This site defines the latest teen abbreviations, acronyms and code words used in texting.



YES! I commit to becoming a **faithful father** – a dad that prioritizes his physical presence, is engaged emotionally and leads spiritually by example.

I also want to be a blessing to other fathers and families through Faithful Fathering. I will support the Initiative through my:

- Prayer
- Time / Volunteer to introduce the Initiative in my church
- Talent, please contact me
- Network / Connections
- Treasure / Donation*

* - Amount \$ _____

- One-time Gift
- Monthly Gift
- Check is enclosed

Please bill my: AmExp, Visa, Mastercard

Name on card: _____

Card # _____

CVV# _____ Exp. Date _____

Signature: _____

On-line giving is available via the website:

www.faithfulfathering.org

Please complete BOTH SIDES, detach and mail to:
Faithful Fathering; P.O.Box 1702, Sugar Land, TX 77487

Please take a few moments to provide information on how you utilized this booklet and any other comments you have on the content or how the study impacted you personally:

- I worked through this study on my own
- I did this study with a group of men at work
- I participated in this study with a group of men at church
- I got this book as part of a workshop at my church
- I found the additional 'R U the dad ...' sessions helpful

Other comments and/or reflections on this study:

You can also email any additional thoughts/comments to:
admin@faithfulfathering.org

Personal information:

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Phone: hm/ce: _____

Email: _____

- I'd like to receive FF's weekly email communication to dads

Home church: _____

A Dad's Armor encourages and equips dads to have the impact a father needs to have on his children, an impact that continues through generations as his legacy. In this study a dad is encouraged to put on the full armor of God and to stand firm in his commitment to raise a godly generation as a lasting legacy. Through scriptural teachings, practical applications and small group discussions, every dad will:

1. Understand the influence & impact of a father;
2. Be alerted to distractions that can turn his heart from his family; and,
3. Be equipped in enabling a Christ-centered heart and home.

Our prayer is that the Lord will encourage you through this study and equip you well through the resultant discussions to grow as a *faithful father* – a dad that prioritizes his physical presence, is engaged emotionally and leads spiritually by example.

“The Faithful Fathering Initiative in Texas consistently encourages and challenges our men to go to the next level of fathering – always with great integrity. FFIT not only changes men’s lives, but also the lives of families and beyond. We are proud of our longtime association with Rick Wertz and his team.”

Brett Hurst

Minister to Relationships

Memorial Drive Presbyterian Church, Houston, Texas

“**A Dad's Armor** is an insightful, easy to follow study that equips men to stand firm in battles we face. It includes good practical application of God’s word with tips and encouragement on how to be a faithful father. The study booklet also includes devotions to facilitate continued small group discussion or father/child devotion time. I have worked through a number of devotions utilizing another of FFIT’s publications, **Devotions for Dads** with my teenage son and use them regularly in mentoring relationships with other young boys and men. Many thanks to the Faithful Fathering Initiative in Texas for making such studies and devotions available for dads that are fun, real and meaningful.”

Andy Crawford - dad

Baytown, Texas