

now I realise that if I listen to them when they are small, and to their little problems, then when they are big, and have big problems, they will still come and talk with me." James says, *"My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be **quick to listen**, slow to speak and slow to become angry"* (James 1:19).

We are too quick to give our advice and our opinion as though it is the only important one. Even if our children are grown, let us be careful to listen to the feelings, hurts, anxieties, and longings behind the words that they speak. The pressures of life are great and we must show genuine love and care.

5. Pray More Passionately: "Fifth, I would start praying more for myself, because a father's prayers so often sound something like this, 'God, make my son and daughter good people. Help them to succeed in school. Help them to find the right person to marry. Take care of them and protect them.' We're always praying for them, it seems. But I would start praying more for myself, that I might be the right kind of father, realising that when I become the right kind of father, my children will probably be the right kind of children." I would read and practice Psalm 86.

6. Focus on the Small Things: "Sixth, I would pay more attention to little things. I would begin to appreciate the touch of love and the word of encouragement. So many times we fathers are quick to criticise their failures, and so slow to praise and encourage them when they do something right."

In Luke 21:1-4, we see how Jesus noticed small things. He watched a poor widow give two very small copper coins to help others in need.

It's the little things that make up the big things in life. So often we focus on the finished product and despise the small day to day efforts. We are happy that our children can read or write or speak or sing or do some remarkable thing, but we soon forget the steps they took to achieve what they can now do. It is true that "inch by inch" life is a cinch. It takes time for things to take place.

7. Be More Accepting: "Seventh, I would create an environment of belonging. I would want my children to know that they belong, and that they are important family members, because I realise that there are going to be people saying to them, 'Join this and join that.' But if they have a solid identity in the home and in the family they will not easily be led astray." Romans 14:1 says, *"Accept one another, without passing judgment."* And again in Romans 15:1 *"Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God."*

Encouragement is a rare commodity today. We live in an instant society. We expect our children to be what we want them to be. We do not take the time to think of all the effort, labour or time required for them to succeed. We criticise, judge, demand success and keep up those high expectations that cripple them, kill communication and destroy love. Everyone today needs a strong support base that assures them of acceptance, assistance, love and encouragement.

8. Introduce Them To God: "Last, but certainly not least, I would make God an intimate friend of my family. I would use His name freely. I would communicate to them that He is involved in all our family decisions. I would want them to see me pray and read God's Word and search for His direction and leadership." (cp. Psalm 78:1-4)

If I had my life to live over again, I think I would try very seriously to improve in those 8 areas, too.

In our text 1Timothy 5:8, we are challenged to provide for our family and John Dresser has given us 8 important areas to work on as Fathers.

If we place our faith in God and trust in Jesus Christ, we will be better Fathers. His Holy Spirit will strengthen us for the task of being all that we can be to our children and grandchildren. We will become "A Loving Father".

A Loving Father



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Rev. Andrew Hollier B.Th.

P.O. Box 411, Kingswood, NSW, 2747

Phone: (02) 4721 7562

Email: andyhollier@gmail.com

A Loving Father

1 Timothy 5:8 *"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."*

Some years ago I read an interesting story titled, "The Day That God Created Fathers." It goes like this:

On the day that God created fathers an angel of the Lord stood in the background and watched. "Lord," the angel asked, "are you sure you know what you are doing? If children are so close to the ground, why are you making fathers so high up? After all, they will have to kneel down if they ever shoot marbles with their children. They'll have to lean way over to tuck them into bed at night, and they'll have to bend so far down to kiss them."

The Heavenly Father said, "Don't worry; I know exactly what I'm doing. If I didn't make fathers so high, what would children have to look up to?" Then the Lord made the hands of a father. They were big and sinewy and awkward. The angel asked, "Have you really thought this through? Those fingers are so big and clumsy. How will they be able to handle the pins of a diaper or unbutton a little button? They will never be able to take a rubber band off of a ponytail, or remove a splinter from a finger."

God replied, "Relax. They'll be just fine. They're big enough to hold all the things that a young boy takes out of his pocket at the end of the day, and they're large enough to cup the face of a child."

God continued on and He made the legs of a father - long and bony and hairy and not very attractive. And then He made broad shoulders. The angel asked, "Lord, do you realise what you have done? You have just made a father without a lap. How is he ever going to be able to hold a child close to him without that child slipping through his legs?"

God answered, "Mothers need laps, fathers need broad shoulders so that they can lift their children and pull heavy weights and balance a bicycle in the summertime." Then, just as God was in the middle of creating two of the biggest feet that you have ever seen, the angel was shocked. The angel said, "It's not fair. Do you really believe that those two big feet are going to get up in the middle of the night and respond to a crying child?"

God answered, "They'll work, you will see. They are big enough to support a father who is pretending to be a horse for his child or who is riding an imaginary motorbike. They're big enough to wear two shoes that will be a challenge for any child to fill."

Then God gave the father a voice, strong and authoritative. He gave him eyes that could see everything and yet remain calm and in control.

Last of all, God gave the father tears. Then He turned to the angel and asked, "Do you still doubt?" And the angel said no more.

God made man to be many things, one of which is a father who loves and cares for his children. He made man to be a strong leader and a tender father.

John Dresser wrote a book titled **"If I Could Do It All Again."** In it he shares **8** things that he would do differently if he could go through his years of being a father all over again. I would like to develop these **8** thoughts. I believe we can always be better fathers and grandfathers.

Here is some of what Dresser wrote:

1. Love My Wife More: "First of all, if I could do it all over again, I would love my wife more, because by loving my children's mother more, I would create an environment of security in our home. Our love would be something they could see - something they would never have to worry about." This is what God tells us in Ephesians 5:25-28 - *"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church .*

2. Laugh More: "Second, I would laugh more. I would relax and enjoy my children and laugh at their antics. I would spend more time with them and enjoy being a father." In Psalm 126:2-3, we read, *"Our mouths were filled with laughter, our tongues with songs of joy. Then it was said among the nations, 'The LORD has done great things for them.'"*

Solomon said, *"A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones"* (Proverbs 17:22). Joy and laughter is contagious. If we see the humorous side of life and can laugh at ourselves, we make for better company. Our kids or grandkids should see us enjoying life. Not being angry, uptight, complaining, critical, tense, and grumpy people.

3. Be A Real Model: "Third, I would present a more realistic model for them to follow. I would be honest with them about myself. I would let them know that I had problems in school, too, that I stumbled, and made mistakes, and failed. I would let them know that I understand, and that they can come to me when they fail, because I have been there as well."

Ephesians 6: 4 *"Fathers, do not exasperate your children; Colossians 3:21 – "21 Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged."* It is so easy for us who are Fathers to be somebody we are not and to be overly perfectionistic. We try to be 'macho men', like the old football slogan, "Balmain boys don't cry'. Even now after all these years, we can be more honest with ourselves, our feelings and model what it is to be a man, 'warts and all'. We can show our kids and grandkids that like them, we too have struggles and do not always have it all together.

4. Listen More Carefully: "Fourth, I would listen to what they say. I would listen to their pains and problems and worries and concerns. I would listen when they wanted to talk to me, because