

THE GREENWOOD BULLETIN

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VOLUME 7 NO. 47

February 6, 2011

Disconnected

Dads

By Rusty Miller

Many years ago, there was a blues song called "Motherless Children." But there is cause to wonder, if a similar song were written today, if it might not be called "Fatherless Children."

First, there is the growing trend among successful (as the world counts success) women in their late 30's and early 40's to raise children without fathers. Then there are those who are fathers only biologically, refusing to take responsibility for their sinful lifestyles. And there is the great number of children deprived of fathers by divorce.

However, the most disturbing trend of all is the one which has fathers taking a "hands off" approach to their children. These fathers live in the home, but they refuse to connect with their children.

Some have an old, macho "children are women's work" mentality, but many others are just disconnected from their families. It may be their jobs, their hobbies or their friends, but they allow something to keep them from interacting with their families. The fact that this trend also impacts so many kids in the Lord's church makes it important for us to discuss.

The disconnected father is not the model found in scripture. In fact, the bulk of instruction given on raising children is given to fathers. There is the responsibility of husbands and fathers to provide for their families (**1 Tim. 5:8**), but there is so much more, and frankly, too many men think their responsibilities toward their children end with earning a paycheck.

God urges fathers concerning their children, "bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord" (**Eph. 6:4**). It is easily recognized that mothers generally spend far

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more time with their children than do fathers, but that does not diminish the role God designed for men. God expects the father to be active in the spiritual nourishing of his children. How can we so easily see that neglecting the physical needs of children is condemned, yet we think somehow we can be right in the eyes of God while not providing for them spiritually?

How do fathers "connect" with their children? Time - there is no replacement for spending time with children, if we expect to have any influence in their lives. And while we might be expected to focus on the spiritual, we also recognize the importance of "connecting" on a social level, and that can be time spent at children's ball games or music recitals, or it could be time spent with a child on Dad's favorite hobby or the child's favorite hobby. The point is, make sure your children know you are interested in their lives.

What happens to the children of disconnected fathers? First, when they reach their teen years, when children need more freedom and tend to push things, they are angered by fathers who now seek to set rules, to enact punishment for

rule-breaking or to interact in their lives. They don't understand why this man who has never been involved on a "hands on" basis in their lives, should now be the one to whom they answer as they approach adulthood. God said, "Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger" (**Eph. 6:4**), and "Fathers, do not exasperate your children, that they may not lose heart" (**Col. 3:21**). Isn't this exactly what we do when we live disconnected from our children, only to try and "step in" when we think they need correction?

Another difficult problem for these children is in developing a faith in God which is theirs. They are not interested in the faith which has given them such a father, so they reject it. Unfortunately, if Dad's view of the "instruction of the Lord" is again, one of provider ("I took them to church every Sunday!"), they may reject the salvation of God based on Dad's poor representation of it. **Psalm 127:3** says, "Behold, children are a gift of the Lord." What a dreadful position to be in on the Day of Judgment if God has to point to children who have rejected Him and ask us, "What did you do with My gift?"

It is far better that we should be the kind of fathers who are connected with our children, and who live our spirituality before them and teach them of God's way. That is what Moses instructed for the fathers of his day (see Deut. 6:4-9; Ex. 12:21-28). God never intended for us to live disconnected from our children, because He has entrusted us with their souls.

Baptized In The Name Of . . .

By William J. Stewart

What is correct? Is it baptism in the name of . . .

"the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 28:19); "Jesus Christ" (Acts 2:38); "the Lord Jesus" (Acts 8:16; 19:5; or "the Lord" (Acts 10:48)?

Who is right? Are you willing to say that Jesus was in error? Or are you comfortable in stating that the apostles, who were guided by the Spirit were wrong?

There are various arguments which have been made for one phrase or the other, but I believe such debate has complete missed the point of the command. If there were a special God-ordained phrase or

formula which must be stated verbatim when one is baptized, then surely God would have told us so **The key is to understand what "in the name of" means.**

Though some will tell us that **Matthew 28:19** IS a formulated statement which must be used for baptism to be valid, Jesus did not present it in that fashion. Furthermore, that we see several examples of and references to baptism through the rest of the New Testament, but never again the words of Matthew 28:19, would also indicate that these were not required words for baptism. There is no magic formula to be pronounced at baptism.

The key is to understand what "in the name of" means. Note a few examples of this phrase to understand the usage of it:

"...Paul, greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, 'I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.' And he came out that very hour" (Acts 16:18). "In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together, along with my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ. . . ."

1 Corinthians 5:4).
"And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the

Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him" (Colossians 3:17).

The phrase is used to convey authority. When Paul commanded the evil spirit to come out of the girl, he did so by the authority of (i.e.. in the name of) Christ. Likewise, when he commanded the Corinthians to deal with a discipline issue, it was "in the name of" or by the authority of Christ. When it comes to our language and conduct, we are to do all "in the name of" or by the authority of Christ. The phrase identifies the source of our authority. When it comes to baptism, it is not whether we say "the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit", "Jesus Christ", "the Lord Jesus", or "the Lord", but it is the acknowledgement of the authority of God. Baptism is an act of obedience to the commandment of God. We cannot be baptized appropriately if we do not recognize God's authority.

"If you believe in God, evil is a mystery; if you don't believe in God, goodness is a mystery."

"When we move away from the local church in its simple organization and function, regardless of which route we take we are headed back to Rome."