

## A LESSON FROM A FEATHERED FATHER

A father said to his son, "When I was your age, I used to be thrilled to just get a piece of dry bread for dinner." The son responded, "Boy, Dad, you're much better off living with us, aren't you?" The truth is everybody is much better off when dad lives with his family. Evidence from social science research continues to reveal a stubborn fact – children develop and perform best when father is in the home, on the job, and involved in his children's lives. American journalist and conservative political commentator Fred Barnes said, "Fatherhood isn't brain surgery. I say this in defiance of the new conventional wisdom that being a father is breathtakingly difficult, that it creates tough dilemmas, and that fathers need a strategy for carrying out their duties. I don't think so. Most men I know have an instinct for fatherhood that was triggered the day their first child was born. They instantly recognized the No. 1 requirement of fatherhood; to be there." God's assignment for every father is summarized beautifully in Ephesians 6:4: "and you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord." This verse is not brain surgery. It reminds fathers they have basic, God-given responsibilities. It also reminds them that in order to carry out those responsibilities, they must be there! "Absent father" is somewhat of an oxymoron. It is difficult if not impossible for a man to accomplish what God wants him to get done as a father if he is never or rarely with his children.

Recently, I received a refresher course on a father's fundamental responsibility from a most unusual source. Twenty feet outside our kitchen window, in the crook of a down-spout at the corner of the house, a pair of robins set up housekeeping. Mr. and Mrs. Robin arrived together (after the honeymoon, I'm sure) in late April. Together, they quickly and efficiently constructed a nest with strands of grass, twigs, etc. Once the nest was built, she laid the eggs and not long afterwards the babies were born. On and off for three weeks I observed them almost daily from that kitchen window. Daylight always found Daddy Robin already on the job. He left the nest regularly, but just as regularly returned with wads of worms dangling from his beak! Without the aid of any training classes or help from parenting experts, these beautiful creatures stayed on the job around the clock as parents until the day their little ones left the next. The chief lesson I learned from that feathered father is that fatherhood truly is not brain surgery. Challenging and constant, yes. Demanding and difficult at times, yes. But even a bird brain knows the No. 1 requirement of fatherhood is to be there and to stay involved with the kids you helped to make.

Dan Gulley  
Smithville Church of Christ  
Smithville, TN