

BUILDING A PREPARER



PROJECT MEETING

5

BUILDING GREAT
DADS

THE FATHERHOOD PROJECT



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SOME ASSEMBLY REQUIRED



Welcome to *The Fatherhood Project-Building Great Dads*. In this project meeting we will address the critically important topic of **Building a Preparer**. *Be prepared...*not only does this hold true for a good Boy Scout, it is also a fundamental lesson for any successful construction project. Long before a shovel is put in the ground, the preparation process of drawing architectural plans, evaluating the building site, and preparing the budgets must be completed. There is also significant involvement of the local community to approve or reject what can be built. It is a dynamic process and one that takes a true measure of skill and perseverance.

This preparation process for construction is much like what it takes to prepare our children for life. One major difference is that the construction is focused on completion. Our work as fathers is never finished—it is for a lifetime.

By participating in *The Fatherhood Project – Building Great Dads*, you will begin to explore what the Bible has to say about this God-given role that is central to any family. You will see that, as a father, God has called you to be a leader in your home, and that He has uniquely prepared you to live out this vital role.

A BLUEPRINT FOR FATHERS

A number of years ago I walked onto the site of a major hotel and conference center that was under construction. As I entered the construction trailer, it was clear that the construction superintendent was frustrated. He quickly pointed out to me that, although construction was significantly well underway, the plans had not yet been completed. He was building blind!



As fathers, we can often face our parental role feeling the same way—building blindly without a plan. But this isn't true. We have the perfect blueprint for being a dad – the Bible.



By participating in *The Fatherhood Project – Building Great Dads*, you will learn what the Scriptures teach about fatherhood, and will then construct a plan for how you can best serve in your role as a dad. The plan won't address every issue you face with your family, but it will help you to become more deliberate and intentional in your parenting. It will also lead you to grow even deeper in your reliance on your Heavenly Father, who *really* understands what it means to be a father.

A DAD'S WORKSHOP

The Fatherhood Project – Building Great Dads is presented in a series of highly interactive workshop-style environments called, **Project Meetings**. During a Project Meeting, you will be briefed on the plans, or blueprint, for the project you are undertaking. Following each Project Meeting section in the manual there are two additional sections. The first includes material for you to use as part of your participation in a **Two-by-Four**. A Two-by-Four is a group of four men who meet two times between each Project Meeting. The Two-by-Four will provide you with a great opportunity to meet with other men to discuss the challenges and successes you experience as a dad. The third section, called, **HomebuildingProjects**, provides materials that you can do on your own. These Homebuilding Projects are where you get down to work, where much of the real building takes place.



In broad terms, we experience God the Father working through us as earthly fathers as exhibited in four roles: **Provider, Protector, Partner, and Preparer**. Each of these roles is explored during the six project meetings in *The Fatherhood Project – Building Great Dads* by using key passages from the Bible, with a focus on developing a faith-based perspective on how fathers can fulfill these roles.

Provider – it's more than just *bringin' home the bacon*. God the Father wants us to trust Him for all of our needs and to demonstrate to our family our reliance on Him.

Protector – Your family's first line of defense is...*you*! It is also good to know that you do not stand alone. God the Father has provided us with the means, the weapons and yes...an entire army, that does not know defeat. Not a bad combination when it comes to battling for your family!

Partner– This partnership is an all-in, 100% no-excuse deal that lasts a lifetime. It is a family-partnership that is held together through the *superglue* of submitting ourselves to one another and to respect the roles God has called us to serve in.

Preparer – So what on earth are we preparing our children for and how do we do it? Well, a better question is, what in "heaven" are we preparing them for and how do we accomplish that task? As a preparer, we are called to help prepare our children to live out the purposes God has created them to live out in the here and now, as well as prepare them for eternity.

THE FEW FOUNDATIONAL TRUTHS

Like any good construction project, the message of *The Fatherhood Project* is built on a foundation of a few key truths that impact how we view being a dad:



- **You are called**--God has called each of us to be fathers, and because God is the one who calls us, He also provides us with the means to fulfill this call. *The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it.* 1 Thessalonians 5:24
- **You are *the* example**--God uses our role as fathers to be an expression of *His* role as God the Father in our children's lives. *If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!* Matthew 7:11
- **You are responsible**--God uses us to bring our children into a close relationship with God the Father through his Son Jesus, and to see themselves as God sees them – as *His sons and daughters*. *"I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty."* 2 Corinthians 6:18
- **You are influential**--It is important to know that as dads, God has placed us to be the primary influence in our children's lives. Our children look especially to their fathers for direction and feedback on how they are doing. This is a natural part of the father-child relationship and one that God wants to use as a loving support to our children. *Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.* Ephesians 6:4
- **You are to be intentional**--In order to be more effective as fathers, it is important that we become more *intentional* about how we approach our service to our families. *"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."* Jeremiah 29:11

So with these foundational truths supporting us... ***Let's Start Building!***

PROJECT MEETING FIVE: BUILDING A PREPARER



The preparation that goes into any successful construction involves a complex set of activities and interactions. Long before a shovel is put in the ground, the preparation process of drawing architectural plans, evaluating the building site, and preparing the budgets must be completed. There is also significant involvement of the local community to approve or reject what can be built. It is a dynamic process and one that takes a true measure of skill and perseverance.

This preparation process for construction is much like what it takes to prepare our children for life. One major difference is that the construction is focused on completion. Our work as fathers is never finished—it is for a lifetime.

In this Project Meeting we will look at the final role of *The Fatherhood Project – Building Great Dads*, being a *Preparer*. Up to this point we have looked at the unique call placed on us to be Christian fathers. God the Father is equipping us for this call as we seek His direction through the Bible, the work of the Holy Spirit, and the support of the Christian community. Similarly, it is these three elements—the Bible, the work of the Holy Spirit, and the support of the Church—that will also guide our children as they seek God’s unique purposes for their lives.

Helping our children understand God’s unique purpose for their lives can be a daunting and sometimes frustrating challenge. What should our children do when it comes to education, career choices, and that heart-stopping question...what about marriage! It can all seem mind-boggling.

The Bible teaches us a lot about understanding our purpose and especially what He has planned for our children. In Jeremiah 1:5 we read: **“Before I (God) formed you in the womb I knew you...”** Later in Jeremiah 29: 11 God announces, **“For I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the LORD, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.’”**



So will your child be a doctor or lawyer, a carpenter or preacher, or some other noble profession? Will your child find the perfect mate or decide to live single for the Lord? We don’t know. But God does know, and as I Thessalonians 5:24 promises, **“The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it.”**

With these foundational promises attached to our tool belt, *Let’s Start Building!*

BE PREPARED

Before we even hear the first sounds of our newborn, we have already begun to make plans for them. Our ideas may be as grandiose as an astronaut or a pro ball player, or as down-to-earth as a school teacher or a doctor. As our children grow, these hopes and dreams give way to our children's own desires, abilities and circumstances.



The notion of preparing means that we are getting ready for something. So what are we preparing our children for?

Project Team Discussion: Be Prepared

As fathers, what are we preparing our children for?

How do we prepare them for this?

TO TELL THE TRUTH

We live in a world where there is significant confusion over what is true. Further, we are by nature creatures that are driven by the search for truth. The Bible is filled with the search for truth. We see in the scriptures the distinction between truth that is revealed through an intellectual process and truth that is revealed by God Himself through the Holy Spirit. In order for our children to grow in faith that is founded on truth, both intellectual and spiritual illumination is needed.



During Jesus' trial before Pilate, we see Pilate seeking truth intellectually, and Jesus exposing the truth through God's revelation.

Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place." "You are a king, then!" said Pilate. Jesus answered, "You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me." "What is truth?" Pilate asked. With this he went out again to the Jews and said, "I find no basis for a charge against him. John 18: 36-38

Jesus also challenges his disciples to seek the truth through the revelation that can only come through His Father.

"...You know the way to the place where I am going." Thomas said to him, "Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?" Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him." John 14:4-8

Project Team Discussion: Nothing But the Truth

How does the ability to discern the truth impact you child's faith walk?

What can you do as a father to help your child discern truth?

THE PERFECT PLAN

We all hold high hopes and dreams for our children. We want to see them do well, be successful, and enjoy life. But our plans may not always line up with what God has planned for them. This truth is reflected in the Old Testament prophet who says in Isaiah 55:8-9, **“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,” declares the LORD. ‘As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.’”**

God’s plans for our children will far exceed any plan that we may have for them. His plan for each of us as fathers also exceeds any plan that we may have for ourselves. God declares this in Jeremiah 29:11 **“For I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the LORD, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.’”**

Jesus gets more specific about His plan for us. He promises that we will not only have eternal life, but we will also have a life that is full or abundant as stated in John 10:7-10. **“Therefore Jesus said again, ‘I tell you the truth, I am the gate for the sheep. All who ever came before me were thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full (abundant).’”**



We certainly can look forward to a full and abundant life in heaven for our children. But this promise extends to life here on earth. It is a promise that can inspire each of us as fathers to dream even bigger dreams for our children. So let’s consider what the abundant life can mean for our daughters and sons.

Project Team Discussion: The Perfect Plan

What are a few of the things that would characterize an abundant life in Christ for our children?

CALLING THE RIGHT PLAY

From the passages we read in John 10: 7-10 we see that in order for our children to have a truly abundant and joyous life, our children must enter through the only true gate, Jesus Christ. The greatest plan that we can have for our children is for them to have a deep, personal, and authentic relationship with Christ. In short, we want to have our children with us in heaven. We also want them to experience in the here and now the true joy of the Christian life. But how can this happen? We look to God's revelation of the truth about how our children can enter into the life that God the Father has for them:

And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.
Ephesians 2:6-10

God demonstrates His immense love for us in that He provides the greatest of all gifts—eternal life with Him—and this gift is not one that we have to earn or work for, but it is a gift that is freely given to us. So as we think about this gift of eternal life that is freely given to our children, does this mean we should simply stand on the sidelines and wait for God to work in our child's life, or is there something that we can do? At times, waiting on the sidelines is the right thing to do; we need to wait on God to work in our children's lives. However, in many cases, our children are looking to the sidelines for their dad to signal what play they should make. This is especially true as our children become teenagers. They may not need or desire the firm hand of guidance that young children need, but they do need guidance that is less directed and more supportive, that moves them in the direction of making increasingly independent decisions.



Project Team Discussion: Calling the Right Play

What things can we do as a father that can help our children desire to have a life that is centered on Christ?

CHARACTER BUILDING

An essential aspect of a child's development is the formation of good Christian character. Although it is clearly a project that takes an entire lifetime to complete, the rapid growth that takes place during the first two decades of life is dramatic, and forms much of our character strengths (and weaknesses) for the rest of our lives. It is during this time of character formation that fathers can make the greatest impact on their children.

One way to organize or define the elements that make up good Christian character is what *The Fatherhood Project* calls *the Five C's of Christian Character*. *The Five C's*, which are based upon Ephesians 5: 1-20 and Colossians 3: 12-15, are: Charity, Chastity, Confidence, Caring, and Courage.



Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Colossians 3:12-15

Project Team Discussion: Character Building

Which of the Five C's of Christian Character is the most difficult to develop in our children...

- ✓ **Charity?**
- ✓ **Chastity?**
- ✓ **Confidence?**
- ✓ **Caring for others?**
- ✓ **Being Courageous?**

Why did you pick this one as being the most difficult?

A GOOD BLUE PRINT

As Christian fathers, we are uniquely called to encourage and support our children to know Christ in their hearts and to live in a way that reflects this life-giving relationship. This call to fathers is guided by the promise found in Proverbs 22: 6 **“Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.”** This promise extends beyond the future promise of life with God in heaven; it is a promise that plays out in the here and now.



Project Team Discussion: A Good Blue Print

How does this apply as we help and guide our children in thinking about their career?

How does this apply as they think about marriage and family?

POWERFUL WORDS

Do words really matter? We all say that “actions speak louder than words.” This is often true, but words do matter, and the Scriptures show us a number of examples of how a father’s words can have a dramatic impact.

We observed earlier that there are very few examples of great fathers in the Bible. However, we do see a number of biblical dads who may have lacked integrity at times, but whose words held true when it came to blessing their children. For example, in **Genesis 49** we find Jacob providing a blessing over each of his sons just before he dies. Each of these blessings describes the character and nature of that individual. Jacob’s words of observation provide significant impact and direction for his sons’ futures.



In a similar way our words can carry real power in our children’s lives. This is especially true for fathers. A good friend of mine dreamed for years of being an artist. His dad was a highly successful artist and when my friend was a young boy, he expressed to his father that he too wanted to be an artist. Upon hearing this, his dad quickly dismissed this dream and stated that his son didn’t have the talent to become a commercial artist. My friend ended up pursuing a career in management consulting but later in life began to return to his childhood dream of being an artist. At one point, he inquired of his father about why he dissuaded him from being an artist. His father barely remembered the interaction, but did recall that it was more of a reaction and that if he had taken the time to really consider my friend’s young desires, that he would have been more encouraging. This story points to the influence that we carry as fathers and the impact our words can have on our children.

It is interesting to note that there have been scientific studies done on the tone of a man’s voice versus a woman’s. It has been shown that a man’s voice carries a “more authoritative” tone than that of the woman’s voice. So for our children, the very tone of our voice as a dad can often be much more impactful than what we may believe or observe. It is not uncommon for adult children to express that what may have been a simple critical comment from their father carried a lifetime of feeling inadequate or incompetent in carrying out a task or accomplishing a goal. In the same way, a word of praise for one of our children can be all that is needed to move them from a mere dream of greatness to truly accomplishing great things in their lives.

Project Team Discussion: Powerful Words

Discuss examples of how our words and actions serve as a blessing that sets great expectations for the future?

BUILDING A PREPARER

The job of being a preparer can be a real challenge for us as fathers. It is important to spend time with other men as you consider how you can be most effective as a preparer. Discuss the following as you prepare yourself to prepare others.



Project Team Discussion: Building a Preparer

When your child asks for advice, how do you typically respond?

Ephesians 4:15 says, ...speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. How do we speak the truth to our children "in love?"

UNDER CONSTRUCTION

5.0 BUILDING A PREPARER



We all know this person: every detail has been thought through, from what materials will be needed to a contingency plan for every possible mishap, all documented and ready to be rolled out. We also know the person who approaches everything as *live and let live*, it will all sort itself out. Each approach has its place. But how much preparation are we to do when it comes to our families, and especially, our children?

BIRDS AND TOWERS

When it comes to how much we are supposed to prepare, the Bible can be a bit confusing. On one hand, we have Jesus teaching us in Matthew 6: 25-27, **“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life... Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?”**

On the other hand, we find a builder trying to build a tower in Luke 14: 28- 30, **“Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it? For if he lays the foundation and is not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule him, saying, ‘This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.’”**



Some may conclude that in Jesus’ world, it is better to be a bird than a builder! Another way to look at these two parables is that we are to plan, but we are not to be anxious. But the real message behind the *bird story* and the *tower story* has to do with preparing-preparing the heart.

In the *bird story*, Jesus is teaching those who are following him that we don’t need to worry about the basic needs of life because our Heavenly Father will take care of those needs. What we are to concern ourselves with is where we place our trust—do we place it in “treasures” or in God? In Matthew 6:19-21 Jesus instructs us, **“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”**

In the tower story, Jesus shows us that we are to count the cost—that we must give no less than everything in order to follow Him. **“In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple.”** Luke 14: 33.

So whether it is birds or towers, Jesus gives us clear direction as far as what he desires of us as well as our children...to fully trust in God and to live single-hearted lives-totally sold out for Him! With this clear set of instructions...*Let’s Start Building.*

5.0 BUILDING A PARTNER TWO-BY-FOUR MEETINGS



TWO BY FOUR MEETING ONE: PREPARED FOR LIFE

Welcome back to your fifth set of *Two-by-Fours* (meaning: *four men who meet twice between Project Meetings.*) Your Two-by-Four group is a perfect place to grow as a preparer. You can share ideas on how you want to guide your children. You can learn from others as far as what worked for them and what might not have turned out so well. In short, it can be a great place to gain wisdom from others as Proverbs 11:14 confirms, **Where there is no guidance the people fall, But in abundance of counselors there is victory.** So together, *let's start building!*

PREPARED FOR LIFE

**What are you currently focused on with your children as far as preparing them for the future?
What actions are you taking to support them in this preparation for the future?**

If you could give your children one word of advice, what would it be?

TWO BY FOUR MEETING TWO: PREPARED TO LEAD

The truth that you are called to be the spiritual leader of your family, is a familiar theme throughout *The Fatherhood Project-Building Great Dads*. God has placed you in this position and He will be faithful in providing you with the means necessary to fulfill this vital role. As the leader of your family, so much of how we prepare our children is done by example. In this we will certainly fall short; however, God is faithful to make up for our failures and will provide us with the strength, grace and wisdom—given through the Holy Spirit—to serve as an example of solid Christian character.

Hold Your Position

What are a few things that you do to prepare your children to become adults?

As you consider that God has called you as a father to be a preparer of your family, how would you like to be viewed as a preparer?

Identify and commit to one action you can take to improve how you prepare your family:

5.0 BUILDING A PARTNER HOMEBUILDING PROJECTS



HOMEBUILDING PROJECT 5.1 REVIEW – BEING A PREPARER

In this Project Meeting we covered the last of the four fatherhood roles—being a Preparer. It seems that we are frequently helping our children to prepare for something. Whether it’s the early *adventures* of toilet training, learning to tie their shoes, or preparing for marriage—it’s always something! The two questions that we may ask are, “Will it ever end?” and, “Will it be the end of me?!” As we look back, we do see that they *do* learn good toileting skills, their shoes are generally well secured, and the spouse they choose—that too is a blessing! As far as how we fared through all this preparing, we somehow come through it all the better and ready to take on the next challenge.

So with our training manual in one hand, and a bottle of Tylenol in the other, let’s go back to the material that we covered during the Project Meeting and complete the questions below:

Project Review: Being a Preparer

Review the material and select 3 things that made the greatest impact on you from this Project Meeting.

1.

2.

3.

As you return to your family, what do you want to do differently to support your wife and children as a preparer?

HOMEBUILDING PROJECT 5.2 START WITH PRAYER

In the opening of the Lord's Prayer, also termed *The Our Father*, Jesus guides us to seek first the coming of His kingdom, and for His will or purpose to be done in our lives. We pray from Matthew 6:10, "**Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.**"

Start with Prayer

Pray... *for God's will to be done, on earth as it is being done in heaven.*

Focus... on God's purposes to be carried out in your family and that your family will grow to reflect more of Jesus' work in their lives.

Intercede... for your family that they will experience the growth of the Fruit of the Spirit in their lives. Write out your intercessions below:

Rejoice... that God has called each family member to serve in a role that has been uniquely crafted by Him. *Write out what you are specifically thankful for as a father and how He is working in your family:*

Reflect... on what God is showing you during this time of prayer as a father:

HOMEBUILDING PROJECT 5.3 A BRIGHT FUTURE

Astronaut, pro ballplayer, teacher, doctor—what are our children dreaming of being some day? What are we getting them ready for as they look to the future? An essential role we play as parents is preparing our children for life. At a very basic level, we guide our children in their mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual development.

A Bright Future

As you think about each of your children, answer the following for each of them:

Son or Daughter's Name _____ Age: _____

1. What are some things that make you truly proud of your son or daughter?

2. What are some of the hopes and dreams you have for your child?

3. How do you see God working in your child's life?

4. What word of blessing do you have for your son or daughter?

HOMEBUILDING PROJECT 5.4 UNINTENDED INTENTIONS

As we consider all that it takes to prepare our children for adulthood and *real life*, it is important to take a long view and realize that so much of our real influence in how our child develops physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually occurs through the *unplanned* interactions of everyday life. The truth is that often these unintended interactions can have the biggest impact on our children. So what can we do to help these unintended actions have the most positive effect in our child's life?

Unintended Intentions

- 1. What times during the day or week do you interact most with your children? What is the interaction that you are thinking of (meal time, driving them to school, on the phone)?**
- 2. During these interactions, what positive things does your child experience through your words?**
- 3. During these interactions, what positive things does your child experience through your actions?**
- 4. During these interactions, what positive word or action do you want to convey to your child?**
- 5. As you consider the numerous interactions that you have with your children, what one thing do you want to do differently as you interact with them?**

HOMEBUILDING PROJECT 5.5 PARTNER-PREPARER

In our last *Project Meeting-Building a Partner*, we focused on the value of having others around you to support the vital work you have undertaken as a father. This is especially true as you support your children to prepare for life and grow as a Christian. Let's consider how you can partner with others to help prepare your children. Your most likely partner will be your wife, if you are married. If you are not married, consider others who can support you.

Partner-Preparer

Who are a few of the individuals in your life (wife, relative, friend, pastor) that can support you as you prepare your children to prepare for life?

What are some ways you can reach out to these partners to help you prepare your children? Commit to an action to engage one of these partners to support you in preparing your children.

If you are married, describe what works well as you and your wife work as a team to prepare your children for life?

Describe what does not work so well as you and your wife work to prepare your children for life?

What are one or two things you can do as a husband to improve how you work with your wife to support your children in their preparation for the future? Commit to these actions.

HOMEBUILDING PROJECT 5.6 A TRUE IMITATION

We know that it is God’s plan for us not only to experience His saving grace, but also to grow in faith and exhibit the fruit of God’s work in our lives. As fathers, we also understand the reality that our children often see in us a reflection of how God the Father loves and cares for His children. In Ephesians 5:1-18 we are directed to imitate God and reflect sacrificial love toward our children and all whom God places in our lives.

Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

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. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God’s wrath comes on those who are disobedient. Therefore do not be partners with them.



For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) and find out what pleases the Lord. Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. For it is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. But everything exposed by the light becomes visible, for it is light that makes everything visible. This is why it is said: “Wake up, O sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.”

Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord’s will is. Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit. Ephesians 5:1-18

Our children have an uncanny ability to see the real you. We may try to hide certain things, but the things we do, both good and bad, often rub off on our children and reflect back to us. When we live a life that is full of *light*, they experience in us *light*. When we live a life that is full of *darkness*, they experience in us *darkness*. When we find ourselves living at times in the light and other times in the darkness, our children begin to see this inconsistency and may experience confusion and insecurity about their own walk with Christ.

These are sobering words, but we are called to “wake up” so that “Christ will shine on us.” It is this reflection of Christ, fueled by the Holy Spirit, which allows us to reflect to our families the authentic and abundant life that is found in Christ.

So as we live as *children of light*, so too will our families be *families of light!*

HOMEBUILDING PROJECT 5.6 A TRUE IMITATION (continued)

A True Imitation

1. What guidance or commands from the Ephesians 5: 1-18 text speak to your life today?
2. What areas do you see as needing more of God's grace and attention (or more of His light?)
3. How do these areas impact your relationship with your family?
4. Jesus did not come to condemn us, but to bring to us forgiveness and His strength so that we can be a light to our families. Prayerfully and sincerely ask Jesus to forgive you for those things that do not reflect God's intentions for you as a father, and ask the Holy Spirit to empower you to demonstrate an authentic reflection of God's light to your family. Write out your prayer below and *reflect* on this prayer over the next several days.

HOMEBUILDING PROJECT 5.7 BUILT TO LAST

The desire for our children to have a deep, personal, and intimate relationship with Christ is the chief hope and concern of any Christian parent. In short, we want our children to be well prepared for Heaven. We also want them to experience the true joy of the Christian life. But how can this happen? In Ephesians 2: 6-10 we see God's revelation of the truth about how our children can be "saved" and live with Christ:

And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, ⁷ in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. ⁸ For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— ⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast. ¹⁰ For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. Ephesians 2:6-10



We are reminded in this passage that the merciful work of God, through His grace, is required for our children to be *saved* and to have a future secured for them in Heaven. We do, however, as parents, have the responsibility and duty to do all we can to create fertile soil for the seeds of salvation to be planted in the hearts of our children. Here are a few fundamentals which can help our children to know Christ:

- **Provide a loving environment**
- **Pray regularly for them to know and love God**
- **Show them what a personal relationship with Christ looks like-start with how you show love to your wife and children**
- **Have them baptized and encourage them to participate in all of the sacraments and/or rites and activities your church makes available to them**
- **Provide solid Biblical instruction supported by the church and its teachings**
- **Seek unity in your home—this is an essential witness of God's love for us**
- **Remember that it is God, through His Spirit, that allows us to know Him-so give Him room to work**

We also know that there are influences in our child's life that can turn them away from Christ. We discussed some of these influences in the *Project Meeting: Being a Protector*, where we identified the world, the flesh and the devil as the root influences of evil whose purpose is to draw our children away from God. Do all you can to defend your family against these harmful influences.

As a father, it is important that we seek God's help and guidance in how best to support our children to follow Christ. We need His wisdom about when to encourage our children in their faith and when,

at times, we need to create enough distance so that God can work out His plan in our child's life. We will, at times, make mistakes about how best to create an environment for our children to grow in Christ. However, God is sufficient, and He makes up for our failings because of His faithfulness and the great love He has for each of our children—a love that is even greater than the love we have for our children.

So with these ideas, and equipped with the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, complete the following Construction Project: Built to Last.

Built to Last

What actions can you take toward helping your children know Christ or grow in their relationship with Christ?

State how you experience the following factors contributing to or distracting from your child's faith walk:

- **Prayer**
- **Bible Study**
- **Church**
- **Friends**
- **School or work**
- **Media: Television, Music, Movies, etc.**

What one action is God leading you to take that will help you support your child's walk with Christ as you consider these influences?

HOMEBUILDING PROJECT 5.8 BUILT WITH A GOOD PLAN

Every successful project begins with a good set of architectural plans. Although our children should not be viewed as “projects,” as Christian fathers, we are uniquely called to have a plan that will encourage and support our children to live a life that reflects this life-giving relationship. This call to fathers is guided by the promise found in Proverbs 22:6, **“Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.”**

This training may include the development of certain behaviors, skills, knowledge, and habits. At its most basic root, it can best be described as building strong Christian character that is a true reflection of Christ in our child’s life. The Bible describes this Christ-like character as having the *Fruit of the Spirit* as found in Galatians 5: 22-23, **“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.”**

We may desire that our child has the best grades in school, or an incredible jump shot, or the perfect singing voice; however, it is God’s desire that our children simply reflect His Son and demonstrate the fruit of living a life that is full of the Holy Spirit. This is the essence of living the abundant life! And the key is that this fruit can only be harvested if it is planted and nurtured by and through the Holy Spirit. As fathers, we can encourage each of these Christ-like characteristics by providing an environment that is fertile for its growth.

In the next two Homebuilding Projects we will look first (*Homebuilding Project 5.8 Good Fruit*) at how the Fruit of the Spirit is expressed in our lives as fathers. This can be a truly inspirational exercise as we see the amazing ways God is working to reflect His very nature in our lives. It can also be a challenging exercise as we see the areas where our *fruit basket* may be in need of filling. As you discover this need, go to the one who gives us Godly fruit, the Holy Spirit, and ask Him to work in your life to produce the fruit that reflects Godly character. He is faithful and He will do it!

In *Homebuilding Project 5.9 Building Character*, we will build a plan for how we can support our children to develop solid Christian character as expressed through the growth of the Fruit of the Spirit in their lives. We will organize the plan based on *the Five C’s of Christian Character*. *The Five C’s*, which are based upon Ephesians 5: 1-20, are: Charity, Chastity, Confidence, Caring, and Courage.

As your children grow in Christian character, they will be well prepared to face the many choices and decisions that will face them as adults. This includes decisions that concern career choices, how to approach marriage and family, and most importantly, how they will serve God. These decisions take on greater clarity and purpose as our children grow in Christian character and learn to look to their Heavenly Father for His will for their lives.

As parents, we do want to do all we can to prepare our children for adulthood through providing them with opportunities to gain the skills, knowledge, and experiences needed to be successful. However, the greatest form of preparation we can give our children is the encouragement to grow in Christian character. *That is our mission...that is our purpose!*

HOMEBUILDING PROJECT 5.8 GOOD FRUIT

Good Fruit

Pick one of the following Fruits of the Spirit and then prayerfully consider how this particular character trait would be expressed.

<input type="checkbox"/> Love	<input type="checkbox"/> Patience	<input type="checkbox"/> Faithfulness
<input type="checkbox"/> Joy	<input type="checkbox"/> Kindness	<input type="checkbox"/> Gentleness
<input type="checkbox"/> Peace	<input type="checkbox"/> Goodness	<input type="checkbox"/> Self-Control

How does this Fruit of the Spirit apply to how you approach...

Your Spouse

Your Children

Your Time

Your Financial Resources/Career

Your Relationship with God

HOMEBUILDING PROJECT 5.9 BUILDING CHARACTER

An essential part of our children’s development is the formation of good Christian character. Although it is clearly a project that takes an entire lifetime to complete, the rapid growth that takes place during the first two decades of life is dramatic and forms much of children’s character strengths (and weaknesses) that will stick with them for the rest of their lives. It is during this time of character formation that fathers can make their greatest impact on their children.

So, armed with the Five C’s of Christian Character, let’s build a plan for how you will place a focus on your child’s spiritual growth and the formation of Christian character.

Building Character

For each of your children, consider what you can do to support them as they grow in each of the *Five C’s of Christian Character*.

Child’s Name: _____

- 1. Demonstrating Charity/Compassion toward others**

- 2. Exhibiting a lifestyle of Chastity or being Chaste/sexual pure**

- 3. Being Confident/Trusting God in all circumstances**

- 4. Caring for Others/Doing acts of mercy**

- 5. Being Courageous**

HOMEBUILDING PROJECT 5.10 PREPARE WITH A PURPOSE

The focus of this session on *Building a Preparer* calls us to provide an environment for our family to grow in a loving, intimate and authentic relationship with God and to grow in solid character that exemplifies the Fruit of the Spirit. This is a critical and challenging mission, but God gives us the grace to do it. Write out below what God is showing you about how you are to support each member of your family. You can get help identifying what they may want you to do by (1) praying for inspiration; (2) observing what they need; (3) asking them for insights. As you lay out your plan of action, make sure to discuss it with your wife or your Project Partner.

Prepare with a Purpose

I will love and support my family in their relationship with God by taking the following actions this week:

I will support my children and *bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord* by taking the following actions this week:

Child _____

Child _____

Child _____

HOMEBUILDING PROJECT 5.11 PREPARE BY PLANNING

A well-built home begins with a good plan and solid preparation. In a similar way, a strong family is often the result of good preparation. As you return to your family, consider the following activities.

Prepare by Planning

1. Discuss with a trusted friend and with your wife where you think your children are in their relationship with Christ and their growth in Christian character. Based upon your discussion, develop a plan for how to support your child's growth in Christ. What is that plan?

2. As you interact with your children, ask the Holy Spirit to inspire teaching moments for them to see how God loves them.

3. Consider the *Five C's of Christian Character* (Charity, Chastity, Confidence, Caring, and Courage) and assign one to each day of the week. On each of those days, pray for your child to grow in that area of character formation. Ask the Holy Spirit to inspire your prayer as well as inspire you as to how you can best support your child's growth in that area.

HOMEBUILDING PROJECT 5.12 START BUILDING!

As a father, you are a teacher, counselor, disciplinarian, encourager, and coach to your family. You have the responsibility to do all you can to prepare and support your family to live out the purposes and plans God has for them. Review the plans you have developed in the previous sections and write out the specific actions that you will take. Try to identify an action for each family member that is specific and easy to identify. Record the results of your actions.

Start Building!		
Family Member	Action	Result of the Action
Dad (that's you!)		
Other actions to consider		

HOMEBUILDING PROJECT 5.13 REVIEW— BUILDING A PREPARER

As we reflect on the growth of children and all those who have contributed to our children’s development, it is certainly overwhelming that so many individuals have made an impression on their formation. Teachers, coaches, pastors, and relatives all have been an influence in your children’s lives. But along with their mother, the one person who has certainly had the biggest impact on their formation is you! As you finish the Under Construction – Building a Preparer, summarize your thoughts and actions below:

Project Review: Building a Preparer	
1. Review the material from this Project Meeting. What 3 things meant the most to you as you review the material?	
(1)	
(2)	
(3)	
2. Meet (in person or by phone) with a trusted friend and review the material from this Project Meeting. Discuss the three things that meant the most to you from the session. Make sure you have your Project Partner pray for you, your family and your growth in the role of being a <i>great dad</i>.	
3. Review the material from this Project Meeting with your spouse. Discuss specific actions you can take to best express your support for your family and to set appropriate expectations for yourself and the family. Take time to pray for each of your children and ask for inspiration and guidance as to how best to support each of them as a child of God.	

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PROJECT TEAM

As we discussed in *Building a Partner*, it is no surprise that it takes a great project team in order for any project to be successful. The development of *The Fatherhood Project – Building Great Dads* is no exception. The following individuals were key project team members who contributed greatly to *The Fatherhood Project – Building Great Dads*:

My Family: My wife Kristin, our son Michael and his wife Jana as well as our sons David and John; our parents Warren and Doris Dolsen (both deceased) and Rita Lundberg as well as all of our siblings, their spouses and children.

Spiritual leaders who have provided special guidance: Rev. Dan Flynn, Rev. Scott Giger, Byron Porisch

The Original Workshop Pilot Group: Phil Armbruster, Scott Bones, Ross Martin, Chas Moeller, Tim Patton, James Piazza

Editors: Sara Bielby and Joan Storey

Graphic Design: Moeller Design Group (Karen and Chas Moeller), Bart and Karen Hawley

Webmaster: Jennifer Cain

Others who have contributed greatly to *The Fatherhood Project – Building Great Dads*: Bob Adgate, Jim Berlucchi, Marty Bodnar, Tom Burbeck, Mike and Nancy Deeb, Dr. Ben Freudenberg, Dave Hewett, Bill Lundberg, James and Julie Piazza, Doug Stout, Nick Synko, Karen and Bart Hawley.

PROGRAM DEVELOPER

The Fatherhood Project-Building Great Dads was developed by Dan Dolsen. Dan has been married to Kristin for 31 years and they have three sons, Michael who is married to Jana and lives in California, David who serves in campus ministry with University Christian Outreach and John who is a student at the University of Michigan. Dan and Kristin reside in Saline, Michigan.

Dan works for CBRE, a national commercial real estate company where he serves as a Senior Managing Director focused on real estate strategy. He is a graduate of The University of Michigan and Eastern Michigan University.

Dan is active in his church, University Lutheran Chapel in Ann Arbor. He has served in a variety of roles including as a teacher for both children and adult Bible classes. Dan comes from a diverse, ecumenical background including Catholic missions, publishing and television, as well as serving as an elder in both the Lutheran and Presbyterian churches.



The Fatherhood Project's mission is to *build great dads* by equipping them with the tools to lead their families in the roles of *provider, protector, partner* and *preparer*. **The Fatherhood Project** is a Christian ministry and a 501 (c) (3) non-profit corporation.

BUILDING GREAT DADS

THE FATHERHOOD PROJECT



buildinggreatdads.org

Dan Dolsen, creator of a new series for Christian fathers, Building Great Dads–The Fatherhood Project, explores what it means to be a *Provider, Protector, Partner, and Preparer* for our families. Dan and his wife Kristin live in Saline, Michigan, parents of three sons and one daughter-in-law! Dan is a corporate real estate executive for CBRE, advising hospitals on real estate matters.

Contact Dan at dan@buildinggreatdads.org

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“As a pastor, I have had numerous conversations with dads about being a dad. It is no easy task to be a father. I am excited to use this material in my own congregation.”

—Rev. Dan Flynn, father of two daughters

“I loved the combination of biblical principles and practical tools. The biblical principles helped me to realize that I have a compass for fathering my children. The practical tools gave me endless ideas of how to put those principles into practice.”

—Ross Martin, father of one son and three daughters

“In this demanding world, men can become very easily distracted from the essential role of being a father. The Fatherhood Project helps men to slow down long enough to realize that time well spent as a ‘father’ first is their God-given missionary work.”

—Diane Leoni, mother of four children

*“As a youth pastor, I have been privileged to watch Dan and his boys grow and mature in excellence. **The Fatherhood Project** can help equip dads to become all God has called them to be.”*

—Byron Porisch, father of two daughters

*“Dan understands both the joys and challenges of being a father. And I’m thrilled he has launched **The Fatherhood Project**. If you make only one investment of time in a workshop or conference this year, make it this one.”*

—Chas Moeller, father of two sons

“The brilliant program content plus Dan’s masterful delivery style will impact your heart!”

— James Piazza, father of three teenage sons



Left to Right: Jana, Michael, Dan, Kristin, David, and John