

Bible's Joseph is good model for fatherhood

By Elise L. Moore, C.S.

The Bible has wonderful models for being a good father. The supreme Father, of course, is God. His justice is tempered with mercy. His love is strengthened with law and order. His will for His children is always good. His demands are always right and lead to a blessing.

We can express the Father qualities of God. The qualities of justice, mercy, love, law, order, goodness, righteousness are wonderful qualities for a human father to express to his wife and family. We each have these spiritual qualities. But we must develop them.

For example, to express order at work but be messy at home is not truly reflecting the Godly quality of order. Being kind to strangers and impatient or violent with one's family is not reflecting mercy and love. We need to be alert to treat our family as well as we do strangers.

The Father qualities of God are not limited to men. Women also need to express courage, strength, wisdom, justice. Likewise the Mother qualities of God are not limited to women. Don't love, mercy, patience, gentleness strengthen a man? Defining fatherhood in terms of spiritual qualities helps each of us express more of the Father-nature of God.

One of the finest examples of fatherhood in the Bible is Joseph. In the New Testament, Joseph is engaged to Mary. He discovers she is pregnant. He knows it is not by him. The Bible does not say so, but she probably tried to explain that the angel of God came to her and her child is of God.

Whether she explained or not, it would be nearly impossible for Joseph to believe. But Joseph expressed the Father qualities of God. He did not become angry, jealous, violent, vengeful. The Bible says he was "a just and upright man and not willing to expose her publicly and to shame and

disgrace her, decided to repudiate and dismiss (divorce) her quietly and secretly,” (Matthew 1:19 Amplified Version.)

Joseph was expressing justice and mercy, trying to protect Mary without condoning what was assumed to be immoral behavior. As he prayed, God told him directly that this child was of the Holy Ghost. God told Joseph to take the young child and his mother and go to Egypt, Joseph left that very night. Here is a man who put his own plans, his job, his goals aside to be a good father. No wonder God selected Joseph as husband to Mary! His reliance on God was total. His devotion to his wife and child was uncompromising.

This Father’s Day let’s consciously work to express the spiritual qualities of Father. Let’s strive to be like Joseph in our human parenting and family relations. What a blessing this will bring to our homes.

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