**Being the Example**

***A Biblical approach for single fathers on modeling Christ to our children and other believers***

*Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity.* -1Tim 4:12 (NKJV)

Paul admonishes Timothy with these words, entrusting him with leadership over the churches of Thessalonica, Corinth, and Macedonia. As Christian fathers, we have the same charge put on us to model Jesus to our children first, and then to other believers. Make no mistake, every one of these areas is challenged daily, but we should never allow falling short to hinder us from pressing forward. I did not grow up in a Christian home or with strong role models in my parents. They were not necessarily bad parents, but I was never provided the foundation that I would need to help me weather the onslaught of worldly temptations I would encounter later in life. Every one of the examples Paul lists should be a priority for we dads to ensure a strong walk with the Lord ourselves, and to prepare our kids and other believers for the same.

**In word**

I really do not have to go into a lengthy debate over how society has completely decayed in the way we speak to one another. Music, TV shows, and social media have enough filth in them to make you want to try to scrub yourself clean for weeks. Toxic influences such as racism, swearing, and degradation of women flood the invisible airwaves- infecting every ear and mind within their reach. It is for this very reason that we must discipline ourselves to go against the grain and speak words of life instead. Ephesians 4:29 says, *“Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but only what is good for the grace and edification of others.”* Words are extremely powerful, so let’s choose them wisely.

**In conduct**

In my book *A Father’s Walk: A Christian-Based Resource for Single Fathers*, I mention several times of how our children are always watching us and that they will imitate what they see, good or bad. If we desire to raise godly sons and daughters, then it begins with our behavior matching up with God’s Word. Paul tells us in 1Corinthians 11:1 to *“Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ”*. Plus, we all know that many nonbelievers are always looking for ways to slam Christians. Let’s not give them a reason to do so. In fact, I bet we will draw others closer to Jesus if we truly act as He did- because Jesus is irresistible like that. Take inventory of the behavior you display daily. Does it match up with the Word? If so, great! If not, there is no time like the present to begin the reformation process.

**In love**

This one should go without saying for followers of Christ. As single dads, I believe our love for our children is magnified even greater simply because we are not able to have them all of the time. Now, I am not saying that you married parents or full-custodial dads do not love your kids. I am simply speaking from the aspect of someone who is not able to see his daughter whenever he wants; and my heart aches when she is away from me. Once we tap into that unconditional love God has for us and we really grab the magnitude of the price that was paid to buy us back, His love naturally carries over into other areas of our lives. Jesus confirms this in John 15:12-13 and John does the same in his letter 1John 3:16.

**In Spirit**

At the time of this writing, we are studying the book of Acts in our single dad small group. What better way is there to learn how to tap into the power of the Holy Spirit and model it to the world than Acts? This past week I was discussing with the dads topics such as preparing our children for the world ahead of them, our pre-appointed time in life, and spiritual warfare. The world is rapidly falling apart when it comes to family structure, values, and overall morals. I believe God has put each one of us at this point in history for a certain reason, that we each possess a spiritual gift to influence the world for Christ and pass on to the next generation. Could it be that our children possess even greater gifts than we do for the challenges they will be facing? Our job as fathers is to help them unlock those gifts and equip them for adulthood. *“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you…”* (Acts 1:8) When we tap into the true power of the Holy Spirit, we equip ourselves and anyone else around us to become not only overcomers in the world, but weapons for the Kingdom of God too!

**In Faith**

Single parenthood will definitely stretch you when it comes to times of trusting God. Perhaps the financial ends are not meeting and only a blessing from above can help you get through the week? Or maybe times are really tough overall right now and you find yourself more desperate for God than ever- clinging to the word faith in every sense. Whatever the case may be, faith is what sustains us when all else fails. It is in these times, though, that God can often do His best work in us- if we are willing to be teachable. How do you model your complete trust in the Lord to your children? Hebrews 11:6 tells us that without faith it is impossible to please God, but then the verse reminds us that God sustains those who DILLEGENTLY seek Him- not just when our backs are up against the wall. I encourage you to begin letting go of any fear or anxiety (big or small) that you are still holding on to. Trust God to fill in the gaps where we cannot.

**In Purity**

I have a daughter who is about to turn seven. Words like “purity” are beginning to take on a whole new meaning nowadays. She has even asked me several times lately, “*How can you be my dad if you and mom were never married?”* Sigh…every father’s dream, huh? Actually, I am not too worried about that upcoming discussion because it is another opportunity for me to show humility to my daughter and to teach her from my mistakes so that she does not repeat the same. Generational sin is very real- but so is the favor and blessing God pours upon those who love Him and keep His commandments (Deut 7:9). I cannot go back on what I did; but I can correct myself in the eyes of my daughter and model a life now that exemplifies purity in all areas of my life. Going back to my beginning points on modeling godly words and behavior to our children- the world is not doing us any favors when it comes to being stewards of our bodies, minds, and tongues for God’s purposes. Be careful how you live. That does not mean sneak around and not let your kids find out what you’re doing. No. Live a life that strives for daily crucifixion of the flesh and help invest the same in your kids as well. Trust me; it will only save them from pain and heartache years down the line if you do.

Men, the role of a single father is not easy; and being a Christian single father only seems to add to the weight sometimes. It may seem unobtainable- handling the everyday pressures of single parenthood and not resorting back to our flesh when we want to; but our strength and faith comes from a supernatural power that is unstoppable and incorruptible. God has given you all you need to fight these battles, but we must continue to sharpen ourselves as well. Know that you CAN be the example your children and the world need to see for the cause of Christ, because we are already sold out to the One who is the ultimate example!

*Matt Haviland is the founder of “*A Father’s Walk*” single dad ministry and the author of the book, “*A Father’s Walk: A Christian-Based Resources for Single Fathers*”. He currently lives in his hometown of Grand Rapids, MI and is a single dad to a beautiful little girl himself. For more information on the ministry, please visit* [www.afatherswalk.org](http://www.afatherswalk.org).