

Fathers at Work

"For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, encouraging, com/orting, and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory, "(1 Thessalonians 2:11,12).

"UTILITY CREW AT WORK," said the sign at the edge of the highway. And sure enough, a short distance ahead, there they were - men hard at work digging some kind of utility cable lines underground. If a similar sign were placed outside our homes on Father's Day, what would it say? "FATHER HARD AT WORK," perhaps?

Of course, fathers work hard at least those who care do. They can tell us how difficult it is these days to make a living. "Bringing home the bacon" - or we might say, the fish and chicken in our cholesterol-conscious age - has not become any easier. In the corporate world, there are often downsizing of programs, cutbacks in spending, and reductions in staffing, causing many a father to watch warily, wondering whether his position will be the next to go. And in our factories, it's not much different either as foreign competition and a shrinking profit margin reduce jobs and paychecks. Even the little that can be set aside doesn't help as much as before since interest rates have declined.

Hard at work? You bet! Many a modern-day father will agree with that. Besides, doesn't every father want his family to have a bit more than what his father was able to give him? Perhaps even a little or a lot more than what the guy next door is doing for his family? Such desires, often for the wrong reasons, can keep a father scrambling so much that he might actually lose sight of what God wants him to be for his family.

Are we as fathers taking the easy way out these days? Just ask yourself which is easier: To maintain a house or to make that house into a home? To bring home a paycheck or to build into that home adequate family time? To be a good provider or to be a spiritual leader? To see to it that the children are taught in the faith by others or to be a daily example of the faith to them ourselves? Preoccupation with the earthly can eat away at our time and energy so that we end up limping in the all-important calling our heavenly Father has given us as his "stand-in" with his children.

The Apostle Paul never married and never fathered any children of his own, and yet he clearly understood what Christian fathers are to do. Under inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he - in the verses quoted above - even compared that work to his own all-important task as a spiritual leader. Just look at how Paul dealt with God's children at Thessalonica. When they were hesitant in heart, like a father he strongly encouraged them.

God's children need instruction about which road to walk in life, and they also need a frequent push along the way. When they were faint-hearted in fear, like a father Paul tenderly comforted them. God's children often meet opposition on the highway to heaven and receive wounds which require bandaging. When they were slack in walking according to God's will, like a father Paul firmly urged them on.

God's children can be inclined to waver in their walk and often need both careful challenging and charging. And with fatherly care and counsel from God's holy Word, the Apostle Paul met those needs of the believers at Thessalonica. He had the highest goal and good in mind for them. He wanted each of them to live for their Father here on earth and then to live with that Father in heaven.

What more important fathering can there be?! If we have had fathers who pushed up their

sleeves and perspired in such an effort, it's time again to thank God for them. If those fathers are still with us, it's time to turn to them with our thanks. And if God has made us fathers, it's time to rededicate ourselves to being more like them. What our world, the church, and our children really need is "FATHERS HARD AT WORK" - the right way.
Happy Father's Day, Dads!

Blessed by the love of Jesus,