

## FATHER: THE MEASURE OF A MAN

### INTRODUCTION:

“Not often in the story of mankind does a man arrive on earth who is both steel and velvet, who is as hard as a rock and as soft as drifting fog, who holds in his heart and mind the paradox of terrible storm and peace unspeakable and perfect.”

“In the time of the April lilacs, in the year 1865, on his death, the casket with his body was carried north and west a thousand miles; and the American people wept as never before; bells sobbed; cities wore crepe; people stood in tears with hats off as the railroad burial car paused in the leading cities of seven states.”

Such is the greatness of a man who has the strength of steel and the gentleness of velvet.

(Carl Sandberg on Lincoln)

### **I. A LACK OF MANLINESS IN AMERICAN SOCIETY HAS CREATED CHAOS.**

- A. The “Weak-Kneed Father” creates the “Dominate Mother.”
- B. Children of a “Recessive Father” feel insecure.
  - 1. Where the father does not command obedience for his word - the children learn disobedience.
- C. A “Weak Father” causes both wife and children to lose respect.
- D. Some homosexuals had a “Weak-kneed Father” - or no father.

### **II. THE CRUCIAL NEEDS FOR THIS DECADE REQUIRE:**

“Men of strong minds, kind hearts, and willing hands, men who find joy in labor, men of courage, honor and strong convictions, clear minds, and high goals ... men who are not afraid of great responsibility, men who can become dedicated to a task and will surrender their own selfish desires and pursuits to a life of service, men whose word is as good as their bond.”

“But along with this fiber of steel, there must be a gentle nature. We need men who can appreciate a

sunrise or a sunset, men who love their families with passion and honor, men who adore womanhood, yet dislike weakness or coarseness. We need men with compassion, sensitive to the needs of the less fortunate, men who are tender to their wives and children, men who have developed an ability to love.”

Aubrey Andelin, *Men of Steel and Velvet*

### III. SOME FATHERS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT HAD PROBLEMS WITH THEIR CHILDREN.

- A. JACOB: Genesis 37:1-4: “Now Jacob dwelt in the land where his father was a stranger, in the land of Canaan. This is the genealogy of Jacob, Joseph, being seventeen years old, was feeding the flock with his brothers. And the lad was with the sons of Bilhah and the sons of Zilpah, his father’s wives; and Joseph brought a bad report of them to his father. Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age. Also he made him a tunic of many colors. But when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him and could not speak peaceably to him.”

Note: We cannot show partiality. We must try to love each child the same.

- B. ISAAC: Genesis 27:22-24: “So Jacob went near to Isaac his father, and he felt him and said, ‘The voice is Jacob’s voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau.’ And he did not recognize him, because his hands were hairy like his brother Esau’s hands; so he blessed him. Then he said, ‘Are you really my son Esau?’ And he said, ‘I am.’”

1. Rebecca and Jacob deceived Isaac.
2. Jacob lied to his father Isaac.
3. Jacob stole his brother’s birthright.

Note: Later, Jacob’s own sons lied and deceived him.

### C. ELI, THE HIGH PRIEST

1. 1 Sam. 2:22-25: “Now Eli was very old; and he heard everything his sons did to all Israel, and how they lay with the women who assembled at the door of the tabernacle of meeting. So he said to them, ‘Why do you do such things?’

For I hear of your evil dealings from all the people. No, my sons! For it is not a good report that I hear. You make the Lord's people transgress. If one man sins against another, God will judge him. But if a man sins against the Lord, who will intercede for him?' Nevertheless they did not heed the voice of their father, because the Lord desired to kill them."

D. SAMUEL - THE JUDGE

1. 1 Sam. 8:1-5: "Now it came to pass when Samuel was old that he made his sons judges over Israel. The name of his firstborn was Joel, and the name of his second, Abijah; they were judges in Beersheba. But his sons did not walk in his ways; they turned aside after dishonest gain, took bribes, and perverted justice." Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah, and said to him, 'Look, you are old, and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now make for us a king to judge us like all the nations.'"

Note: How could such a good man have vile sons?

Brought shame on him in his old age.

E. DAVID - A MAN AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART.

1. His son Amnon raped his half-sister - Tamar.
2. His son Absalom drove his father out of Jerusalem and raped his wives openly on the rooftops of Jerusalem.
3. His child by Bathsheba died.
  - (a) 2 Sam. 12:1-23: " Then the Lord sent Nathan to David. And he came to him, and said to him: 'There were two men in one city, one rich and the other poor. . . . Then on the seventh day it came to pass that the child died. And the servants of David were afraid to tell him that the child was dead. For they said, 'Indeed, while the child was alive, we spoke to him, and he would not heed our voice. How can we tell him that the child is dead? He may do some harm! . . . But now he is dead; why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.'"
4. David had to pay for his sins:

- a. 2 Sam. 12:10-12: “Now, therefore, the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised Me, and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife. Thus says the Lord: ‘Behold I will raise up adversity against you from your own house; and I will take your wives before your eyes and give them to your neighbor, and he shall lie with your wives in the sight of this sun. For you did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel, before the sun.’”
5. David still loved Absalom very dearly in spite of betrayal.
- a. 2 Sam. 18:32-33: “And the king said to the Cushite, ‘Is the young man Absalom safe?’ And the Cushite answered, ‘May the enemies of my lord the king, and all who rise against you to do you harm, be as that young man is!’ Then the king was deeply moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept. And as he went, he said thus: ‘O my son Absalom--my son, my son Absalom--if only I had died in your place! O Absalom my son, my son!’”
6. On his deathbed, David gave a magnificent charge to Solomon.
- a. 1 Kings 2:1-4: “Then the days of David drew near that he should die, and he charged Solomon his son, saying: ‘I go the way of all the earth; be strong, therefore, and prove yourself a man. And keep the charge of the Lord your God: to walk in His ways, to keep His statutes, His commandments, His judgments, and His testimonies, as it is written in the Law of Moses, that you may prosper in all that you do and wherever your turn; that the Lord may fulfill His word which He spoke concerning me, saying, ‘If your sons take heed to their way, to walk before Me in truth with all their heart and with all their soul,’ He said, ‘you shall not lack a man on the throne of Israel.’”

#### IV. THERE ARE SOME BASIC QUALITIES FOR FATHERS:

1. He must be a man of Integrity.

- Responsibility. (Doesn’t run away)  
(Daughters know Dad is still there)

Builds his family on

- the rock.           - Resolution.
- Loyalty. (He is the responsible head)
- Sensitivity.

2. He must stay on the course. (Convictions must be held, and there is no room for compromise.)

John Milton wrote: "He who rules within himself and rules his passions, desires and fears is more than a king."

The Psalms sum it up very well:

"Who may ascend into the hill of the Lord? Or who may stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who has not lifted up his soul to an idol, nor sworn deceitfully." (Psalms 24:3-4).

V. ABOVE ALL, A GODLY FATHER MUST BE A MAN OF MORAL COURAGE.

- A. We Need Some Men of Moral Steel for This Age of Crisis.

J. G. Holland has said it well:

"God give us men. The time demands  
Strong minds, great hearts, true faith and ready hands;  
Men whom the lust of office does not kill;  
Men whom the spoils of office cannot buy;  
Men who possess opinions and a will;  
Men who have honor, men who will not lie;  
Men who can stand before a demagogue  
And damn his treacherous flatteries without winking;

Tall men, sun-crowned, who live above the fog  
In public duty and in private thinking.  
For while they rabble with their thumb-worn creeds,  
Their large professions and their little deeds,  
Mingle in selfish strife; lo! Freedom weeps.  
Wrong rules the land and waiting Justice sleeps."

- B. This Old World Needs Some Men of Velvet Also.

1. A man of Gentle Character.
2. A man of Tenderness and Affection to his children.

3. A man of Gentleness to both wife, mother, mother-in-law, grandchildren.

Spencer M. Tree expresses our needs well:

“Tis the human touch in this world that counts,  
The touch of your hand and mine.  
Which means far more to the fainting heart,  
Than shelter and bread and wine;  
For shelter is gone when the night is o’er  
And bread lasts only a day,  
But the touch of the hand  
And the sound of the voice  
Sing on in the soul always.”

## WHERE WAS DAD WHEN I NEEDED HIM?

Many of you may recall the popular song, "Cat's in the Cradle" sung by Harry Chapin. The words always bring a tear to my eye because I am a father, and over the years I have had to travel so much. The song unfolds as follows:

My child arrived just the other day;  
He came to the world in the usual way,  
But there were planes to catch, and bills to pay,  
He learned to walk while I was away.  
And he was talkin' 'fore I knew it and as he grew,  
He'd say, "I'm gonna be like you, Dad.  
You know I'm gonna be like you."

And the cat's in the cradle and the silver spoon,  
Little Boy Blue and the man in the moon.  
"When you comin' home, Dad?"  
"I don't know when, but we'll get together then;  
You know we'll have a good time then."

My son turned ten just the other day.  
He said, "Thanks for the ball, Dad, come on, let's play.  
Can you teach me to throw?"  
I said, "No, not today;  
I got a lot to do."  
He said, "That's okay."  
And he walked away but his smile never dimmed.  
It said, "I'm gonna be like him, yeah,  
You know I'm gonna be like him . . ."

And he came from college just the other day;  
So much like a man I just had to say;  
"Son, I'm proud of you, can you sit for a while?"  
He shook his head and he said with a smile,  
"What I'd really like, Dad, is to borrow the car keys.  
See you later, can I have them please?"

I've long since retired, my son's moved away.  
I called him up just the other day,  
I said, "I'd like to see you, if you don't mind."  
He said, "I'd love to, Dad, if I can find the time.  
You see, my new job's a hassle, and the kids have the flu,  
But it's sure nice talkin' to you, Dad,  
It's been nice talkin' to you."

And as I hung up the pone  
It occurred to me,  
He'd grown up just like me,  
My boy was just like me.

And the cat's in the cradle and the silver spoon,  
Little Boy Blue and the man in the moon,  
"When you comin' home, Son?"  
"I don't know when, but we'll get together then, Dad.  
We're gonna have a good time then."

The melodrama of this song was played out in Chapin's own life almost like a self-fulfilling prophecy. I have been told that his wife, who wrote the words of the song, asked him one day when he was going to slow down the torrid pace of his life and give some time to their children. His answer was, "At the end of this busy summer, I'll take some time to be with them." That summer, ironically and tragically, Harry Chapin was killed in a car accident.