

Fathers, do your children need protection from you?

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I'm sure most fathers out there realize it's their job to protect their children. But I wonder how many of us think of our children needing protection from us.

Let me explain with an illustration. One morning while I was up early eating breakfast I noticed a wasp crawling on the windowsill. My family was still in bed. No one else knew it was there. I really didn't feel like killing it. I would have to track down the flyswatter. I just wanted to enjoy my breakfast in peace. I could have ignored it and went to work. Surely my wife would take care of it.

But the thought crossed my mind, "If I don't kill that thing, it might sting one of my children." My youngest was an infant at the time. I thought of this precious little one having to endure the pain of a wasp sting because of my negligence. This made a tremendous impression on me. I found the flyswatter and killed the wasp.

It also made me think about a father's struggle with sin. How often do we find ourselves alone with our sinful thoughts? These are things we know we should be putting to death. But our tendency is to ignore them. No one else is there. No one else can see. No one will know. We just want to relax. Maybe someone else will take care of it.

If only we could learn to look at our sin the way God does. He sees it much the same way I saw the wasp. He knows its nature is to sting. James made this clear: "But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death" (James 1:14-15).

Every sin has the sting of death in it. It always has the same goal. As fathers, we should picture in our minds what our sins would do to our loved ones if they had their way.

Many fathers realize that it's their responsibility to protect their family from sin. But they fail to understand that their sin is among the most dangerous. Their sin makes the greatest impressions on that little boy watching. Their sin can bring consequences on that little girl like no one else's can.

David found this out the hard way. While looking at Bathsheba, he chose not to kill the lust crawling on the windowsill of his mind. He committed adultery, fathered a child, and tried to cover it up by murdering the husband (II Sam. 11).

Yes, David's sin was forgiven (II Sam. 12:13), but not without bringing severe consequences on his family. God said to him, "Now therefore, the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised Me" (v.10). And the death of the child was a direct consequence of his sin (v.14). He brought more misery on his family than all his enemies put together. This sin really stung!

It's the same for us as fathers. It's almost impossible to measure the long-range effect our sins will have on our children. For example, the effects of a family broken up by adultery are immeasurable. It's not just sin out there in the world that our children need to be protected from. It's primarily the sin in our own hearts. It's the sin we model and the consequences we incur.

And it's not just the sins we actively commit. The sin of a father who neglects to restrain and nurture his children has far worse implications than any sin in the world. Likewise, the father who takes his duty seriously will automatically protect his children from the negative influences of the world.

The real enemy is within us. So let's stop complaining about all the corruption "out there" and start sweeping the dirt off our own doorsteps. Remember, all that "corruption" you talk about comes from grownup human hearts that were once little children in homes like yours.

The question you must ask is, are you protecting your children from your sins?

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