



FATHERHOOD: THE FOUNDATION OF LIBERTY

"The foundation of national morality must be laid in private families... In vain are Schools, Academies, and Universities instituted, if loose principles and licentious habits are impressed upon children in their earliest years... The vices and examples of the parents cannot be concealed from the children. How is it possible that children can have any just sense of the Sacred Obligations of Morality or Religion if, from their earliest Infancy, they learn their mothers live in habitual infidelity to their fathers, and their fathers in as constant infidelity to their mothers?" --John Adams 1778

When I think "father," the word first invokes my relationship with the person who irrevocably shaped my own life. My Dad was always there for my siblings and me, and he was always a devoted husband to my Mom. He was and remains a real man, a man's man in every sense of the word.



Yeah, he was also a [type "A" fighter pilot](#) -- and of the most aggressive breed, a Naval Aviator. Being as I inherited that "A" gene, it's remarkable that Dad has survived into his 90th year, given all the head-butting KOs we traded when I was a teenager. Fact is, I left home when I was 14 because our town was not big enough for the two of us -- and he was *not* leaving.

When recalling my early trials with my father, I'm reminded of a great quote attributed to Mark Twain: "When I was a boy of 14, my father was so ignorant I could hardly stand to have the old man around. But when I got to be 21, I was astonished at how much the old man had learned in seven years."

Like Twain, it took me a few years to figure out that my old man was a good father and a good mentor to boot. Today, I'm so grateful for the steadfast example he set, and the love we share for each other.

"Father" next evokes my relationship with my heavenly Father, my Creator. That relationship has also experienced great trials, but He has stood by me through all my trials and tribulations.

Of course, "father" also evokes thoughts about my relationship with our children, and that is precious beyond words -- a greater gift I could not imagine. Thank goodness I haven't repeated some of the mistakes my old man made with me, but I've certainly created some "new and improved" mistakes with my kids. I hope in due time they can summon the grace and grant the forgiveness that I've asked for those errors.

Finally, the word "father" evokes the heritage bequeathed to us by our forefathers and our Founding Fathers.

These four contexts for "father" -- God the Father, my own earthly father, my role as father to my children, and the legacy of our forefathers -- combine to create a rich and abiding sense of what fatherhood means, what it should look and feel like in heart and practice.

But for tens of millions of Americans from broken homes, the consequences of failed fatherhood are the [enormous obstacles](#) their children must endeavor to

overcome in relationships with their Creator, with their own spouses and children, and in their ability to honor their forefathers' legacy.

Understanding the critical role fathers play in the welfare of the family as the fundamental building block of society has been understood throughout the history of man. In 295 B.C., Mencius wrote, "The root of the kingdom is in the state. The root of the state is in the family. The root of the family is in the person of its head."

The Father Factor, the [statistical social and cultural consequences](#) when fathers abandon their natural role, is well documented.

Nowhere are those consequences more evident than when fatherless children, in their relentless pursuit of approval never provided by their own father, become overachievers and ascend to positions of power. The pages of 20th-century history are rife with the terrible misdeeds of those who were raised without fathers, or with abusive or ineffectual fathers: Adolf Hitler, Joseph Stalin, Mao Zedong, Saddam Hussein, Osama bin Laden and many others of lesser infamy.

Among those who have ascended from broken homes to positions of political power in our own nation, there is a distinctive [Pathology of the Left](#) associated with their insatiable quest for approval and power, and their resulting advocacy for a platform of [socialist statism](#) upon which to build their throne. The most notable examples in recent history are Bill Clinton, Al Gore, Ted Kennedy and, of course, Barack Hussein Obama, who is a [textbook case study of narcissism](#). The political, social, cultural and economic damage that these men have done in their warped search for power is considerable.

There isn't much we can do for those whose sense of self has been irrevocably imprinted by the lack of a functional father, but there is plenty we can do to ensure the next generation is burdened with fewer of them.

If Essential Liberty is ever to be restored, then the place to start is within our families, and most particularly with fathers.

Our Founding Fathers understood that the Republic depends upon the proper establishment and conduct of the family. James Wilson wrote, "[T]hat important and respectable, though small and sometimes neglected establishment, which is denominated a family ... it is that seminary, on which the commonwealth ... must ultimately depend. ... It is the duty of parents to maintain their children decently, and according to their circumstances; to protect them according to the dictates of prudence; and to educate them according to the suggestions of a judicious and zealous regard for their usefulness, their respectability and happiness."

That duty begins with fathers.

Effective fathering requires real men, and there are plenty of them out there. But sometimes even the most well-intentioned fathers need some help. For that reason, I want to share with you, our Patriot readers, one of the best resources available for dads.

Tony Dungy, the former professional football player who coached the Indianapolis Colts to their 2007 Super Bowl victory, has devoted much of his post-football years to coaching fathers.



Tony Dungy

"In football," Dungy says, "you win with fundamentals. In fatherhood, it's the same way. An NFL player becomes an All-Pro by relentlessly focusing on the fundamentals and executing them with sheer determination. The same is true to become an All Pro Dad."

Dungy backs the [All Pro Dad](#) fatherhood mentoring organization

headed by Mark Merrill. They produce an outstanding resource, a daily e-mail for Dads called the "[Play of the Day](#)." If you're a father of young children, I highly recommend you [click here](#) for this great resource, and spread the word to other fathers. It's a quick read, and I *guarantee* fathers will find something in every edition that will improve their relationships with their children.

Just today, All Pro Dad offered "[Ten Things You Should Ask From Your Kids For Father's Day](#)."

Patriot fathers, if you want to extend the [Legacy of Liberty](#) to the next generation, start in your own home.

On this Father's Day, let us pay tribute to the irreplaceable and inseparable institutions of marriage and fatherhood -- and the importance of a father's love, discipline, provision and protection for his family. Every day of the year, let those of us who are fathers encourage other fathers to be accountable for their marriages and children. Let us seek to mentor the fatherless by volunteering leadership through our places of worship, youth groups, scouting, coaching,

tutoring, or working through inner-city ministries with high-risk kids, to name just a few.

Above all, the greatest inheritance I hope to leave my children is not material, but spiritual. "I have no greater joy than this, to hear of my children walking in the truth." (3 John 1:4)

In the words of the Father of our Nation, George Washington, "May the father of all mercies scatter light, and not darkness, upon our paths, and make us in all our several vocations useful here, and in His own due time and way everlastingly happy." (1790)

On behalf of your Patriot Staff, I wish you a rewarding and reflective Father's Day.

(For additional resources on fatherhood and parenting, visit [First Things First](#), an outstanding organization under the leadership of my friend Julie Baumgardner. There are other very good national fathering resources at the [National Center for Fathering](#) and the [National Fatherhood Initiative](#). For additional faith and family recourses, visit James Dobson's [great resources](#) and my colleague Jim Lee's [Living Free Ministries](#).)