

Preparing for Fatherhood

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For me the big news came just outside of our local pharmacy, as my wife and I were pulling into the parking lot. She looked at me and said, “Are you coming in?”

“Yes. Why?”

“Because if you are coming in, then you need to know that I’m buying a pregnancy test. I think I’m pregnant.”

That quickly, my whole life changed.

The moment any man realizes he is about to become a father marks a pivotal shift in his life. What is ahead for a first-time dad is both remarkable and scary. Are you ready for the big change? Are you wondering what it will take to be a good father? And how will you handle the transition into fatherhood?

Changes at the Beginning

As you face the prospect of becoming a father, you might assume that the only person who will change in the next nine months is your baby’s mother. Certainly her physical changes are very noticeable, but she’s not the only one going through changes. You will be sorting through a lot of different thoughts and emotions as well. Here’s a few you will likely face:

Fear and Worry. If you are like most men, when you find out that you are going to be a dad for the first time, you will have plenty of worries and concerns.

Uncertainty and unfamiliarity usually scare people. You may think

Will I be able to do this? I don't know the first thing about kids. I've never changed a diaper before . . .

How can we afford this? What's this going to do to our budget? What if my wife gets sick? What if she can't work anymore?

When I was growing up, my home life was a wreck. I don't want to turn out like my father.

I've heard you don't get much sleep. What if I get impatient, short-tempered, and angry?

Will our baby be healthy? What if the baby is not healthy? What will I do?

Joy and Excitement. Mixed with the worries, there is also a lot of joy. Hopefully when you heard the news, you were excited about becoming a father. And even if the news took you by surprise, you have some time to adjust to your new reality. Maybe you will start to dream about what it will be like to be a dad. Perhaps you are thinking about Little League games, throwing a baseball in the backyard, teaching your child about Star Wars, fishing, or shooting guns. Maybe you'll coach your kids in soccer, join them for tea parties with baby dolls, or get away together for weekend camping trips. Whatever your hopes or dreams, the possibility of having a son or daughter to share life with is thrilling.

Anger, Confusion, or Distress. Maybe you did not plan to become a father, or at least, not this soon. In your mind this was a big mistake. Perhaps you are not married to the mother of your unborn child. Whatever the situation, your initial reaction was nothing like the glee-filled moments you see in Hollywood movies. If this is you, take some time to think through why you responded the way you did. Is there a secret fear lurking beneath your anger? Maybe you're afraid of the cost of having a child, or that you'll become like your own father. Recognize that God doesn't make mistakes when it comes to babies or anything else (Psalm 139:13–16). He placed this child into your life, he is calling you to the responsibility of fatherhood, and he will provide what you need to do the job (2 Peter 1:3).

A Sense of the Surreal. You can't believe this is actually happening to you. Your wife still looks the same. Nothing else in your life has changed just yet, but you know change is coming. Some days, it's still a little hard to believe.

Amid the thoughts and concerns running through your mind, you might wonder, *Will I be a good father?* How will you become the man and father you would like to be? What would it look like from God's perspective to become a father? The one who made you and knows you better than you know yourself will guide you through the ups and downs, joys and challenges of becoming a dad.

Note to Single Dads

Even if you are not married to the mother of your child, this minibook is for you. Of course I don't know the ins and outs of your particular situation, but I do know that your child needs an involved, loving, faithful father. Regardless of your relationship with the mother, never forget how much your child needs you. Most of this minibook can be applied to your situation, even if you aren't currently married.

A Wonderful Gift

Sometimes children are viewed as an inconvenience, but God's perspective is different. He describes children as a reward from him (Psalm 127:3–5). To have many children—“a quiver full of them”—is not an inconvenience, but a blessing.

As with everything else in life, Jesus shows us the way forward by his perspective on the youngest of children.

People were bringing little children to Jesus to have him touch them, but the disciples rebuked them. When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.” And he took

the children in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them. (Mark 10:13–16)

While the disciples tried to keep the children and their parents away from Jesus, he welcomed them. Much like our world today, the culture in first-century Jerusalem didn't value children. Yet Jesus saw children as having immense importance and value. He didn't consider their helplessness a problem, but an example to us all. Children show us how we must be in our relationship with our heavenly Father (v. 15)—forever dependent on him (Acts 17:28). During another conversation, Jesus told his disciples that whoever welcomes children in Jesus's name is actually welcoming God (Mark 9:36–37).

Stop and think about your attitude toward children, and especially your child. Do you see a child as an inconvenience and someone who would get in the way of your plans? Parenting is not a hobby, something you do in your extra time, and children are not a possession, something you “own” like a car or house. Children are image-bearers of God (Genesis 1:26–27) and worshipers. They will spend their life either worshipping God or something else (just like you). Your greatest responsibility as a parent is to point your child to God—the one who loved them and gave his life for them (Romans 5:8).

The picture that emerges from what God says about children is that they are to be treasured, valued,

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