

# DISCIPLINE AND ENTITLEMENT

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There were many things I knew about my father, but one well-kept secret came as a total shock. You might imagine my surprise when I recently learned that I have a half sister. Her name is Ann Marie, and she had been unaware that she was my sister. She did not know she was adopted until she was forty years old. Her birth mother, who had never been married, had three children—another girl and a boy. Ann Marie began her search to locate her brother and sister through DNA databases and found me during the process. She had never met her birth father but discovered that he was Robert Evans, the name of my father.

I shared my testimony with Ann Marie and talked to her about the Good Father. I told her that my father did not believe I was his

son and violently abused me, two times almost killing me. The second time, I awoke in a fetal position covered in my own dried vomit and crying out, “Why was I born?” I shared with Ann Marie that God has taken everything that had happened in our lives into account. I explained He could make everything up to us, that our mess could be turned into a message and a miracle. We didn’t have to be defined by our birth circumstances. I told my newfound sister that she was a child of the Most High God, that our heavenly father wanted to affirm us. I related all the times he had affirmed me, and that He is a Friend who will stick closer than a brother.

“Ann Marie,” I said, “our Good Father will give you the approval that you never could have had from your birth father.” I shared with Ann Marie that God appeared to me when I cried, “Why was I born?” He called me son, told me He loved me, and that He had a great plan for my life.

I assured her, “Ann Marie, you are fearfully and wonderfully made.” My father had told me about a young man (her brother) who came to the door while searching for his birth father. When the visitor revealed who he was, our father came through the front door with shotgun in hand, screaming, “Get off my property or I’ll blow your head off. Your old lady’s a whore!”

I shared with her the story of as a youngster finding a jackknife in the snow one day and proudly showing it to my father. He flew into a rage and screamed, “God hates liars.” He then stripped me naked, dragged me down to the basement, and began to beat me with

an extension cord. He shouted, “I will beat you until you tell me the truth,” and then almost beat me to death.

I shared with Ann Marie that I had forgiven my father unconditionally even though I did not trust him or condone his actions. I disclosed that I had not given up on my dreams because God had said I was His child and He loved me.

“Ann Marie,” I reassured her, “the Good Father will break generational curses. He has taken into account everything you have not received and every person who has wronged you. The Good Father is watching over you and has designed a plan for wounded men and women. God will send the right people to make it up to you, just as He has done for me.” I cautioned her not to stop dreaming, not to become bitter, and not to accept the role of a victim.

I explained to Ann Marie that I never had the affirmation I needed from my father, but I’ve had that from my heavenly Father and from my partners. I explained that her Good Father has taken everything into account as a part of His plan to help her reach her destiny. I said that her test will become a great testimony, that God will repay her, as He is a Father to the fatherless.

Our father and grandfather were racists and alcoholics and violently abusive men. My father died on a Friday. He told me just before he died that he had dreamed he held some black stones in his hand. His grandfather had given some to his father and then gave two to him. When he tried to pass them along to me, they became white stones in my hand. He wanted to know what that meant,

and I replied that the Good Father had broken the generational curse. I would never know those curses, nor would my son or his son. The following Friday, my grandson Michael David Evans III was born.

Knowing well my father's habits, it should not have been at all upsetting to learn that he had been unfaithful to my mother. My earthly father had been equally unskilled at being both a husband and father.

Although a faithful churchgoer, Dad was not a particularly astute biblical scholar—at least not in those areas that could have made a vast difference in our home life. He excelled in the “spare the rod, spoil the child” philosophy, and in the “wives, submit” attitude but had little use for “provoke not your children to wrath,”<sup>1</sup> and “husbands, love your wives.”<sup>2</sup> He had also apparently skipped right over Exodus 20:14, “Thou shalt not commit adultery” (KJV). He was not alone, for he was joined by men such as King David, who was not above allowing lust to reign in his palace.

David was Israel's greatest and most beloved king and ruled over the largest land area in that nation's history. His was a prosperous and successful régime; perhaps that is why he was not where he was supposed to be one spring night. We learn in 2 Samuel 11:1 where the king should have been:

It happened in the spring of the year, at the time when kings go out to battle, that David sent Joab and his

servants with him, and all Israel; and they destroyed the people of Ammon and besieged Rabbah. But David remained at Jerusalem. (NKJV)

Having enjoyed an afternoon nap, David awoke, looked over the parapet to the neighbor's rooftop below the palace, and "from the roof he saw a woman bathing, and the woman was very beautiful" (verse 2). Rather than turning away, he gazed upon the unclothed beauty of Bathsheba, Uriah's wife, as she bathed. That she was the wife of a man who was off fighting for Israel, a man loyal to the king, should have been enough to stop David in his tracks. But no, David forged ahead undeterred and had Bathsheba brought to his apartments in the palace, where he "lay with her" (verse 4).

Human nature being what it is, David probably then went about his kingly duties, having forgotten his indiscretion with Bathsheba until a note was delivered to him. Imagine his shock when the king read those life-changing words from Bathsheba: "I am with child." David then set about to conceal his deception by having Uriah sent home from the front lines of the battle for a night with his wife.

Then David said to Uriah, "Go down to your house and wash your feet." And Uriah went out of the king's house, and there followed him a present from the king. But Uriah slept at the door of the king's house with all the servants of his lord, and did not go down to his house. When they told David, "Uriah did not go down to his

house,” David said to Uriah, “Have you not come from a journey? Why did you not go down to your house?” Uriah said to David, “The ark and Israel and Judah dwell in booths, and my lord Joab and the servants of my lord are camping in the open field. Shall I then go to my house, to eat and to drink and to lie with my wife? As you live, and as your soul lives, I will not do this thing.” (2 Samuel 11:8–11 ESV)

Uriah, however, was an honorable man who refused to enjoy what his troops could not—a night at home with family. David’s plan had been foiled by integrity. Upon hearing of Uriah’s choice, the king tried again to manipulate him:

Then David said to Uriah, “Remain here today also, and tomorrow I will send you back.” So Uriah remained in Jerusalem that day and the next. And David invited him, and he ate in his presence and drank, so that he made him drunk. And in the evening he went out to lie on his couch with the servants of his lord, but he did not go down to his house. (Verses 12–13)

It was the Scottish poet Robert Burns who wrote:

The best laid schemes of Mice and Men oft go awry,  
And leave us nothing but grief and pain,  
For promised joy!<sup>3</sup>

Having failed at his machinations to ensnare Uriah and cover his own sin, David conspired to have the man murdered under the cloak of battle. When Joab, the commander of David's forces, delivered the news of Uriah's death as well as a number of men who died alongside him, the king responded callously, "Well, tell Joab not to be discouraged . . . the sword devours this one today and that one tomorrow! Fight harder next time, and conquer the city (v. 25 NLT)." David then called for Bathsheba and took her as his wife.

In 2 Samuel 12, Nathan the prophet pays a very disturbing visit to the palace to confront the king. Employing the parable of a rich man stealing the only lamb owned by a poor man, Nathan, pointing a finger at the king, elicits an angry response. David is then pierced by the prophet's accusatory words, "You are that man." The king had committed murder to cover his sin of adultery. He then told David that (1) The child about to be born of Bathsheba would not survive, and (2) God would raise up evil from within David's own house.

That prophecy was fulfilled when Amnon, one of the crown princes, would later rape Tamar, one of David's daughters. Absalom, Tamar's brother, became distraught because of David's lack of justice regarding Amnon's actions and had his brother murdered. Absalom then devised a plot to wrest the kingdom from their father's hands. Nathan's prophecy would be further fulfilled when Absalom, after having driven David from Jerusalem, would publicly lay with his father's concubines on the rooftop of the palace. I wonder if it could

have taken place on that same rooftop from which David’s downhill slide into sin began.

David’s leadership as a father was both wise and imprudent. His discrepancies were strikingly seen in the manner in which he disciplined his sons, or failed to do so. The aftermath—duplicity, defiance, death, and destruction—proved to be disastrous for both David and the nation of Israel.

The king failed to “train up” his children (see Proverbs 22:6). His example had, at times, been much less than godly. His failure to regularly discipline his children was underscored in 1 Kings 1:6, referring to another son, Adonijah:

Now his father, King David, had never disciplined him at any time, even by asking, “Why are you doing that?” Adonijah had been born next after Absalom, and he was very handsome. (NLT)

Lack of discipline can often create a sense of entitlement, and it certainly seems to describe the actions of King David’s male offspring. He knew of his sons’ evil behavior yet failed to control or take steps to change their exploits. Like Lot before him, David had failed to teach his sons that there were consequences for their choices, as they were not disciplined for their bad behavior. Perhaps Solomon was looking back on the lives of his siblings when he wrote, “Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; the rod of correction will drive it far from him” (Proverbs 22:15 NKJV).



Unlike my own father, who was cruel, abusive, and dictatorial, a good father will not provoke his children to anger (see Ephesians 6:4). Fathers are to train their children in the ways of the Lord, to instill the Word of God in them, and discipline biblically using equal amounts of grace and mercy. Just as the Good Father deals with His children in love, always pointing them toward repentance, so earthly fathers must follow that example. The sin in David's sons was a heart issue, one with which he had not dealt.

When reviewing the life of David, we see greed, immorality, and murder. His children must have seen a hypocrite—a do-as-I-say dad, not a do-as-I-do father. Yet the Bible says he was a man after God's own heart. For all his failure with his older children, David was not without accomplishments. As we see in Proverbs 4, he taught Solomon:

When I was my father's son, tender and the only one in the sight of my mother, he also taught me, and said to me: "Let your heart retain my words; keep my commands, and live. . . . Hear, my son, and receive my sayings, and the years of your life will be many. I have taught you in the way of wisdom; I have led you in right paths." (Proverbs 22:3–4, 10–11 NKJV)

And in 1 Kings 2:2b–3, David charges Solomon:

"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 you turn.” (NKJV)

Despite his failures as a father, in Acts 13:22b, God said of David, “I have found in David the son of Jesse a man after my heart, who will do all my will” (ESV). How is that possible? David had utter and unconditional faith in Jehovah. In Psalm 119, we read of his love for God’s laws and statutes. David penned Psalm 51 after the death of his and Bathsheba’s son. His repentance is palpable as he cries:

Have mercy upon me, O God,  
According to Your lovingkindness;  
According to the multitude of Your tender mercies,  
Blot out my transgressions.  
Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,  
And cleanse me from my sin. (NKJV)

David had a thankful heart. In Psalm 34:1, he vowed, “I will bless the LORD at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth” (ESV).

David may not always have been a good father, but he trusted completely in the one true Good Father.

THE GOOD FATHER



Mike Evans with his half-sister  
Ann Marie Mendrala

# DISCUSSION

1. Read Proverbs 13:24 and Proverbs 23:13. Discuss the following statement:

Discipline should always be done in love, not in anger. To chastise in the heat of frustration may lead to measures bordering on abuse.

2. Read Ephesians 5. Consider Paul's words regarding the relationship between husbands and wives. The directive to the husband is to love, and her greatest responsibility is to obey. When the husband loves the wife as God intends, it is not difficult for the wife to submit.
3. What was David's first mistake as king? Why?
4. Why do you think David was called a "man after God's own heart"?
5. How do you think David should have dealt with the situation between his sons Amnon and Absalom?