

8. Co-Parenting

The issue of “co-parenting” or “shared parenting” is a difficult topic to discuss, but it is a very important one because it is an issue faced by many parents today. It should not surprise us that this is difficult because it comes into play when a family is not operating according to God’s ideal design. Back in lesson 6 of Fathering in 15™ we looked at that ideal design so you might want to go back and review that lesson now.



As we learned in lesson 6 God’s ideal is for a man and a woman to be united in marriage, and to work together for the good of the family. We see that played out in how God created the first man (Adam) and first woman (Eve) and put them in the Garden of Eden. But then what happened? Adam and Eve decided that they had a better plan, disobeyed God’s plan, and instead chose to go a different way. One of the consequences of their choice was that they were driven out of the Garden of Eden and were barred from ever returning there. You can read about this in the first three chapters of the book of Genesis.

Today, we are often doing the same thing, choosing our “plan” over God’s plan. Many times that results in consequences that fall far short of what could have been if we had followed God’s plan. Then, just like Adam and Eve, we may not be able to go back and undo the mistake. Instead, we now have to work with the consequences of the choices we made. In most cases those ideas explain exactly what has created a co-parenting situation. We should then choose to do what we can to try to get back to God’s ideal. Depending on your particular circumstances this could open up many different possibilities. Let’s look at some of them.

One possibility you should seriously consider is whether you and the mother of your children can be reunited in a loving, marital relationship. This might not be easy to do, but many times the difficult choices are the best choices. But we know that God’s way will always be the best way.

If being reunited with Mom is not possible, we can adopt a mindset that recognizes that she and you both, out of love for the children, desire what is best for them. When you have that kind of mindset then the two of you will view yourselves as a team, for the good of the children. In the book of Ecclesiastes in the Bible, in chapter 4, it says:

Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor: If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up. . . . A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.

(Hint: that “cord of three stands” consists of you, the Mom, and the Lord who is always there to help you.)

But what if there continues to be tension and disagreements between you and the Mom? In those situations remember, you may not be able to change her choices and actions, but you can always change yours! What you choose to do, and how you choose to react to what she does, is always under your control. Start by respecting and honoring her as your child’s Mom and as another one of God’s much-loved children. The Bible speaks about these ideas as well. In the 7th chapter of the book of Romans, verses 17-18, we read:

Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.

Finally, as the father you have some God-given responsibilities toward your children that you need to live up to. One of the most important of those responsibilities is to provide spiritual leadership and guidance. That starts with getting your spiritual life in order - then you will be better equipped to lead your children, and to be a godly model to their Mom. You can start this process by seeking other men that can help you to be that spiritual leader.

My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires.

James 1:19-20

Questions for thought and discussion:

- a. Your personal situation may not look like God's ideal plan but that doesn't mean that God doesn't have a good plan for your situation as well. How can you find out what that plan looks like?
- b. As was said in the lesson, you might not be able to change the Mom's attitudes or actions, but you can change yours. What positive changes can you make to improve your situation?
- c. As your children's father you have the God-given responsibility to be the spiritual leader for them. What steps can you take to move forward with this responsibility?
- d. Do you find the ideas presented in this lesson to be challenging? Who can you turn to for help in these areas?