

MOM THE ROARING LION BY CHRIS DAVIS

"What happened that I have become a drill sergeant in my own home?" "Why do I seem to be yelling at my kids all the time?" "Why do the children respond to their Dad but not to me?"

Mothers ask me these questions virtually everywhere I speak. More often than not, Mom comes to homeschooling long before Dad. So, when Mom says to Dad, "Honey, I think we should homeschool the children," Dad's response is often, "Sure, honey, go ahead." But, as long as having the children home is only Mom's idea, the outworking of this decision remains her responsibility until Dad comes around. Even then, Dad often does little more than support his wife.

Principle 1 | In the home, God gives authority to Dad, not Mom

There are many evidences of this principle in a family setting. First, children normally respond to their fathers more readily than they do their mothers, and not just because Dad is physically more powerful. Children innately sense that Dad carries an authority that should be respected. Of course, this authority can be undermined either by Mom's attitude toward Dad or by Dad's own behavior, especially illegitimate anger.

Second, Dad has the ability to "legitimize". By this I mean that children soon learn that some things are important to Dad while others are not. It's as if Dad has the power to give or withhold his "seal of approval". If he likes to watch Monday night football, the kids will likely grow up doing the same thing. If Dad is not all that involved or seems disinterested in Mom's educational efforts, the kids will grow up with an increasing tendency to give Mom a difficult time as she tries to teach them.

The quickest way to find out what's going on in a family is to ask Mom, "Do your children obey you simply because you have spoken? Or, will they obey you only when your voice reaches a certain decibel level or because you have said the same thing a certain number of times?" The answer to these questions tells us whether or not Mom exercises "false" authority in her home.

Principle 2 | Without authority, Mom must create a false sense of authority

Mom must convince the children that they may be in danger if they don't do what she says. She does this by creating an atmosphere of fear.

We see this in Scripture. Satan has no authority. Jesus said, "All authority has been given to Me." That leaves no authority to Satan. Without authority, what can Satan do? He can go about like a roaring lion (2 Timothy 4:17). In other words, since he has no real authority, he can try to scare us. And, whenever he succeeds in making us afraid, what he has actually done is make us submit to him in that area where we are fearful. Fear arises from the belief that God will not protect us or deliver us. Instead, we believe that Satan has authority in some area of our lives to do us harm. By becoming fearful, we submit to Satan's way to get out of our perceived trouble.

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deliver us. Humans hate fear.**

Jesus spent a lot of time talking about fear and giving many reasons why fear is inappropriate for anyone who knows the Lord. Human beings hate fear and will do just about anything to remove it from their lives. So Satan goes about, roaring like a lion, scaring us into thinking he can harm us, when he really has no authority to do us any harm at all.

Take this principle into the home. All Mom has to do is make the kids believe that she is able to do them some sort of harm (i.e. take away privileges, spank them, etc.). As long as the kids are afraid of her, she is obeyed. But kids grow up and begin to wonder why they should be afraid of someone who can only threaten and make noise. So, Mom yells louder. She makes stronger threats. This is not real authority. And, when the kids realize Mom can't really hurt them, they begin to ignore or develop a hatred of, their own mother.

Principle 3 | Dad must give his authority to Mom

Let me back up and say that parents have a Scriptural mandate to discipline their children. When the children are very young, discipline should take place quickly before the child forgets what he did that required the discipline. However, as children grow older, discipline can wait for an appropriate time and can be given by the appropriate parent. In my opinion, the appropriate parent should be Dad and not Mom, especially in the case of boys. There comes a time when Mom should stop disciplining the children, especially boys. Boys should not grow up having to be overpowered by a woman, especially the one woman in their young lives whose words they should respect.

Dad has the capacity to set an atmosphere in the home where his presence is felt even though he is not present. He can do this by giving his authority to his wife. Mom should never have to raise her voice or resort to saying something several times or to manipulation before her children respond to her. The very fact that she has spoken to them should be enough for them to respond. Of course, they could always respectfully ask, "May I do such and such first?" Or, "Would it be all right if I did what you are asking later or in a different way?" If done without manipulation, this is acceptable. Mom should never have to become a roaring lion.

So, what's Dad to do? First, realize that you carry an authority in the home that God has given you. It will not be given to anyone else. Second, understand that God is not going to one day visit your wife and give her a final exam as to how the children have turned out. If He is going to visit anyone, it is going to be you. So, don't support your wife's homeschooling efforts. If you do, she will probably burn out. It is not biblical for you to support your wife's homeschooling. Rather, it is biblical for her to support your homeschooling efforts. Does this mean you begin doing the work she has been doing? No. I'm not talking about work. I'm talking about responsibility. You are the one responsible in God's eyes; so be responsible. Wives burn out, not because of the work they do, but because of the responsibility they carry. If your wife is feeling responsible for how her homeschooling efforts turn out, this is not appropriate. You, Dad, have probably made her feel as if she is on probation. Take that feeling off her shoulders. You are in charge whether you like it or not.

Finally, Dads, do what it take for you and your wife to get on the same page about how you intend to raise the children. Then, sit everyone down and explain what a typical day is going to look like. You are legitimizing your wife's workday. You are authorizing your wife's activities. You are giving her your authority to act on your behalf. Make it clear that she is helping you do what both of you have decided to do. This is the critical point. Also make it clear that when Mom speaks, the children should respond. And, if they don't, Mom is not responsible for making them obey. She is only responsible for telling them what Dad and she have agreed upon. If the children won't respond, then Mom is free to take a nap, read a book, take a walk, or whatever else she wants to do. It's up to Dad to make sure the kids respond to Mom

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Whenever I share this material in one of my seminars, someone asks, "What if my husband isn't interested in helping me in the ways you have suggested?" If your husband will read an article, I suggest you ask him to read this one. The only other thing I can say is that God has promised to send the "spirit of Elijah" to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers. It was this very scripture that caused us to name our business "The Elijah Company". Pray for this spirit to fall on your husband. It is God's desire more than it is yours.

The other question I am usually asked is, "I am a single Mom. What do I do about authority?" This is an even more complex problem because I firmly believe that the Church has overlooked its mandated responsibility to act as an extended family for one another, especially for the children. We are all to be brothers and sisters to one another as well as surrogate "parents" (moms and dads, uncles & aunts) to all the children. I pray that the Body of Christ will begin to turn to the many unfathered children and give some level of fatherhood to them. When a child believes that a man cares for him or her, that man has earned the right to say, "Now, son, the way you are treating your mother is not acceptable..." May we begin to turn our attention to helping these single Moms who need our input into the lives of their children.

My Dad died when I was two years old. I know what it is like to be a boy with no father in his life. My uncles and aunts all had young families and were too busy for me. Although that was decades ago I can remember virtually every time a family invited me to join them on an outing or vacation. I needed this desperately. There are a lot of fatherless children out there who need surrogate dads and uncles. If the Church won't help here, who will?

Principle 4 | Dad, the roaring lion

I have seen dads lead their families with anger. I have one thing to say about this: A father's anger is so damaging, there is seldom a time when it could be considered legitimate. Of course we all know that scripture tells us to be angry, but not to sin. However, leading your family with anger is one sure way to lose all the authority God has given you as a man.

Principle 5 | Giving Mom authority may not solve the problem

I cannot end this article without saying that if tension exists between the kids and Mom, giving Mom the authority she needs will not relieve this tension until you both understand why God is bringing children home. In many of our other articles, my wife and I have tried to explain some of the reasons why having our children home during the day is often not as positive an experience as parents had hoped.

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