

# 8 Habits of Highly Successful Fathers

*Good Habits To Pick Up Where Good Intentions Fail*

by **Chris Erickson**

Fathers, you are “the first heralds of the faith” for your children, states the Catechism of the Catholic Church (1656, 2225). The “first evangelization” begins in your own heart, and when it takes root it becomes contagious within your family!

Pope John Paul II wrote: “The history of mankind, the history of salvation, passes by way of the family . . . the family is placed at the center of the great struggle between good and evil, between life and death, between love and all that is opposed to love. To the family is entrusted the task of striving, first and foremost, to unleash the forces of good, the source of which is found in Christ the Redeemer of man.”

Fathers, you are called to unleash your children as “forces of good” upon the world. By making the following eight habits your own, you will be well on your way to attaining this goal.

## **1. Educate yourself in the faith**

Read a chapter or a passage or two each day from sacred Scripture and the Catechism. Pope John Paul II encouraged families “to use the Catechism of the Catholic Church to learn about the faith and to answer the questions that come up, especially the moral questions which confront everyone today.” We cannot pass on to our children what we ourselves have never taken the time to learn.

## **2. Put what you learn into practice**

Knowing God’s instructions won’t benefit us or our children if we don’t live them. A father’s primary responsibility is to be a Christian witness to his children. Our homes can be a haven of moral virtue if we foster it through our own example.

## **3. Teach Christ’s truths personally**

Parents are the first and most important educators of their children. Teach your children about God through your own experience. There is a great difference between “knowing about God” and “knowing God.” Share with them simple stories of faith that reveal how you relate to God in your everyday situations. God ought to be as real to them as you are.

## **4. Pray together**

Mass, Confession, celebrating feast days, reading the Bible or a saint book and, above all, daily prayer can all be done as a family. This practice bonds a family in the faith, and every strengthening of family bonds is a victory for society. Even if you only have five minutes of nightly prayer with your children, do not underestimate its value. A child carries into his adult life those memories as “seeds of faith.”

### **5. Spend time with your children**

Don't let the pursuit of success or wealth cause you to miss your child's fundamental need to know you as a father. Yes, you must provide for your family, and part of that is the time you spend with them. The great truths of our faith and how we personally relate to those truths can be taught through ordinary conversation, while fixing cars, collecting bugs, camping, fishing, hiking, gardening, or sports.

### **6. Guard the windows to the soul!**

Keep a careful check over media influences that can lead your family astray. What if dad invited two strangers to come into the home and for an hour they engaged in sexual innuendo by words, dress and conduct? Shocking? Yet we often allow the same sorts of things into our house through the media. Fathers, don't dull your family's sense of sin! With a little diligence you can find wholesome alternatives.

### **7. Be vigilant over your children's friends**

Get to know your children's friends, or at least try to determine whether their influence is good or bad. No kid is going to be perfect, so avoid being overly scrupulous.

### **8. Make your home a place of tranquility and peace - beginning with loving your wife**

"Love your wives as Christ loves the Church" (Ephesians 5:25). That's a tall order, but your sons will relate to women in much the same way you relate to your wife; and your daughters will learn from your example what to desire and expect from men.

St. John Chrysostom said the home should be a "little church," a miniature kingdom of God. Is your home too stern, too demanding on the children? Or, are there few rules and little enforcement?

Is dad too busy and mom often irritable? Does the mood reflect a menacing storm? If so, each will seek their freedom and go their own way. Value honesty and hard work, offer great love, admit mistakes, ask forgiveness, and laugh much.

Adorn your home with constant reminders of your Christian faith: a crucifix, holy pictures or statues bring to mind events in the life of Our Lord.

Now, Fathers, the ball is in your court. Be confident, consistent and courageous. Your children will love you for it!

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