

Dad, Please Stay at Home

Women, not men, get pregnant. So, what's the big deal? I believe many fathers are happy because they feel free to do whatever they want to do while the mothers labor at home. Unfortunately, society has cultivated roles based on pregnancy rather than shared responsibility. Traditionally, society expects pregnant women to remain home after pregnancy, at least for a while, provide all the baby needs while performing as maids in the home. Where are the husbands or partners? They are having fun with friends. How could this be? I have actually witnessed mothers with new born babies at home having to call their mothers or mothers-in-law or sisters to come and assist in doing simple tasks that the father should do, but he is "enjoying" extra-curricular activities with his friends. How insulting and inconsiderate! How can a father seek to have fun outside of the home while a mother is at home struggling with baby needs and household chores? Isn't it true that fathers are "pregnant" also? They just did not carry the babies in a womb.

There are some fathers who claim that they cannot change diapers, feed babies, or even bathe them and they refuse to learn. Why is that so? Is it because they were not exposed to that in their homes while growing up? Is it because they were constantly told "that it is a woman's job?" Or is it because men are made with a serious physiological design that prohibits them from touching dirty diapers? We know this is not true.

Here are some interesting facts from an online article I recently read: "According to a survey of 8,000 men and 3,500 women in Brazil, Croatia, Chile, India, Mexico, and Rwanda, statistics on the issue of male participation in household duties from these six developing countries are pretty sobering. It's not only diapers that men shy away from, it's childcare in general. In Rwanda, 61 percent of the men surveyed consider it to be a women's duty. In India, 86 percent of dads say they would never touch a diaper because it's women's work." What about fathers in The Bahamas and the Caribbean? Although I have no statistics, to share I noticed that some fathers in The Bahamas and the Caribbean who do change diapers and bathe the children are thinking in their minds that they are "helping" the mothers out. They are not doing it because it is also their responsibility.

Some men have taboos about changing girls' diapers. I wonder why? Are these fathers uncomfortable changing girls' diapers because they have questions about their own sexuality? Then, should mothers change boys' diapers? You notice it is mostly the fathers that have the taboos. Mothers have been changing both boys' and girls' diapers for thousands of years and we have not seen any negative results. Why do fathers have this hang up? This must stop.

My observation is that very few fathers really make serious adjustments in the work or play schedule when babies are born. They might get one or two days off during the first week but soon resort to their regular activities. Why it is that it is the mother who gets up at night to deal with the crying baby, has to clean the baby's bottles (if the mother is not breastfeeding), and still prepares breakfast for the father before he leaves for work? This is unfair and wrong.

SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

It is my view that the responsibility of parenting newborn infants and children of all ages is

the full responsibility of both father and mother. That's not negotiable. The father is to cease all extra-curricular activities and sometimes normal activities to join the mother in performing every hourly and daily task for the newborn baby. The father's celebration that he is now a man because he has a child should be demonstrated by being at home and working with mom and not by sharing cigars and playing dominoes with friends under the trees at night. Whether he likes in or not he is to "suck in his guts" and muster up the courage to become a "hands-on father" with all of his children. If he does not know what to do, at least he can have a willingness to learn and become good at it. The attitude is important. There are fathers who boast of having been in the delivery room watching the child's birth but their involvement ends right there. It is as though that "herculean" task fulfills his divine responsibility as fathers. What a shame!

A SHINING EXAMPLE

While I am saddened with the fact that far too many fathers are not doing their natural God-given responsibilities as care givers, there are some who are wonderful, caring, and full-time fathers. There are some fathers who are shining examples for parenting. They refuse to let the mothers get up at night to tend to a crying baby. They are naturally involved in every single aspect of caring: feeding, cooking, washing clothes, hugging, changing diapers, putting on clothes, shopping, cleaning house, and cuddling. These fathers cannot wait to get home after working hours to lovingly tend to the needs of the baby and mother. They reduce or stop all unnecessary activities outside of the home to spend the time at home with mom and children. As the child gets older and more independent allowing more leisure time for both parents, they wisely and gradually allow more and more fun times apart or together without sacrificing the emotional or physical well-being of the children. Thank God for these fathers.

Dear fathers, are you spending the time caring for your new-born child? If not, start today.

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