

Further Conversation About Why

On the homepage we asked four questions:

- Do you have children in the 3-10 age range?
- Have you ever considered that your children may live forever in some realm beyond this life?
- Does it seem reasonable that, as the child's father, you have a great responsibility for what happens to your child in his or her forever life?
- Does a five minute per day investment in your child's forever future seem like a good idea?

Almost never does any parent answer ‘no’ when confronted with these questions. It’s a no brainer. We all want the best for our kids. And yet, we have millions of fathers throughout the world who have walked away from their Biblical obligation to bring up their children by teaching them in the way of the Lord.

Within the church, the job has been farmed out to children’s ministry leaders, Sunday School teachers, maybe to mom, and increasingly to social media. The men, if they are engaged in church, are too often lost to the mechanics of running the church building, operating the sound board, ushering, mowing, and counting men’s coffee time as their mission role. These are all great, but too often, in spite of good intentions, we lose the most important relationship any child has.

The evidence is clear, based on a dozen or more studies between 2018 and 2025. The single most powerful variable in whether a child retains faith into adulthood is the father. Not what the father believes. Not whether he or the family attend church. What matters is whether the father is engaged with his children in a healthy relationship, and his children feel close to him. Here are the conclusions on the profound impact fathers have:

- **Emotional Support:** Children with engaged fathers exhibit better emotional regulation and are less likely to experience depression and anxiety.
- **Academic Success:** Fathers who are actively involved in their children's education often see their children achieve higher grades and perform better in school.
- **Behavioral Impact:** The presence of a father or father figure significantly reduces the likelihood of children engaging in delinquent behavior or substance abuse.
- **Social Development:** Fathers help in developing social skills and self-confidence in their children, which are crucial for forming healthy relationships in the future.
- **Spiritual Formation:** The greatest predictor of faith persistence from childhood into adulthood is the nature of a child's relationship with their father.

The church has a father problem. Father absence and disengagement is one of the most devastating crises of our time. We see its consequences play out in the shattered lives of young men and women across the Western world—from the early sexualization of girls desperately seeking male validation to the rage and delinquency of teen years.

The church can’t fix all the kids. Too many live outside the reach of the church. But as in the story of the starfish stranded on the beach, we can change the lives of the kids we do have, one child and one father at a time.

The Father’s 3-10 Initiative offers one great option for engaging fathers in the spiritual education of their children. It doesn’t require funding, committee meetings, building resources, or congregational votes. It just requires a decision to do it.

Data and perspective for this article come from the numerous articles published by Anthony B. Bradley, PhD., Research Fellow at the Acton Institute and Research Professor at Kuyper College.