

CRIBB<S>NOTE – June 15, 2008 – Father’s Day

Impregnating someone may make a man a ‘daddy’ but not necessarily a ‘father’. There is a qualitative difference based on responsibility and relationship. There are a lot of ‘daddies’ out there: men who have children but share in their lives only occasionally and casually. Of course, this limited definition should not be confused with the familiar expression of calling a father “Daddy.” That is all together different. Also, “Daddy” is not to be taken as a pejorative.

I love to hear my children call me ‘Daddy’. It has a playful ring to it and conveys their confidence in our relationship that allows them to snuggle up and talk comfortably about things that matter to them. But, ‘daddy’ can also mean a lesser involvement in a child’s life. Thus, the critical term “Dead Beat Dad” is used to describe the absentee parent or one who shirks financial support of his children.

In the animated movie, “*Happy Feet*,” there was a turn of the phrase ‘Dead Beat Dad’ to insinuate the lost of rhythm or ‘soul’ as in musical tempo. Having lost the ability to appreciate the natural sway of a good song, the ‘Dead Beat Dad’ was no longer a helpful advocate for his child or family. It was a cute play on words. But, there is nothing cute about men who turn their backs on their children. America is littered with families without fathers.

When Jesus referred to God as “his Father,” he had a very clear image of the ways in which the Divine Parent treated human beings as ‘Children of God’. First, God loves all people and extends love, mercy and compassion without qualification or condition. Aware of our every need and desire, God provides our essentials and opens doors for our pleasures. Unconditional love is given generously and freely. Jesus understands his relationship with God as so closely intertwined it could not be denied.

Second, Jesus models how to talk with God. It is respectful, reverent, and prayerful. Such intimate conversations with the Creator honors God with the highest esteem yet indulges a comfortable assurance that our every word is received, listened to, and given full consideration as only a loving Father can give. There is discipline associated with the loving Parent, but it is for the purpose of strengthening our human potential so we can live up to our full human capacity. Jesus wants us to know the endless affection reserved for every person: how precious we are in God’s sight. God loves us just as we are without exception.

There is redemption for every ‘dead-beat dad’ who has lost his way. ‘Daddies’ can become ‘fathers’. Fathers can transfer the weight of parental responsibility to a light-hearted, fun-filled, playful role as ‘daddy’. This is the joy of parenthood. It really is a shame to have so many ‘dads’ missing the sacred, short moments of fleeting childhood and losing out on the opportunities to be ‘fathers’. Maybe they just need encouragement from a child, mother, or friend to find their way back home into the hearts and lives of the children who inherited their genes and traits. That would give a powerful new meaning to “Father’s Day.”