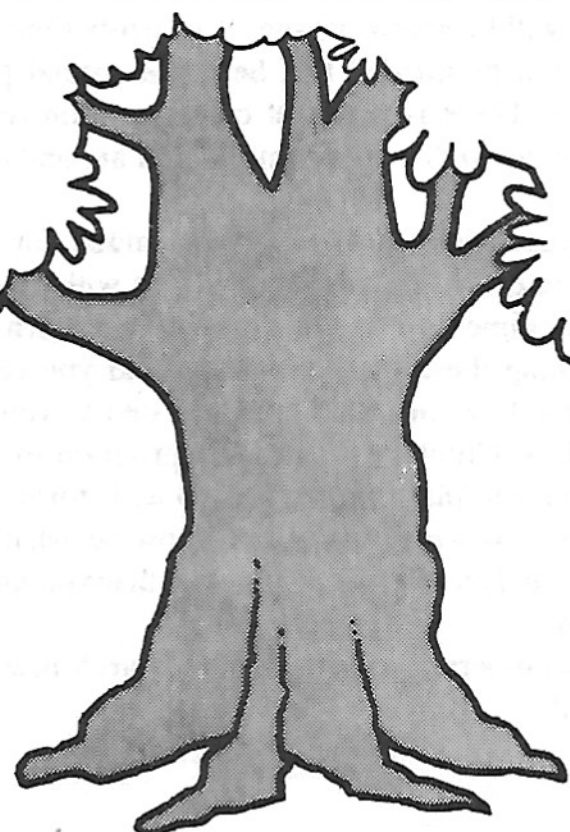


GO CLIMB A TREE



DAD, HERE'S WHY YOU SHOULD JOIN TREE CLIMBERS

You remember the day when your son was born? You recall those emotions that came over you—exhilaration and pride mixed with fear and apprehension? Maybe you even imagined what you would like to do with your son as he grew up—all those things you enjoyed doing when you were a boy.

Now he's in school. He seems to be growing so fast. He has a busy life, too, and days can go by when you and he hardly talk at all. If you're like many dads, you're not happy about the amount of time you spend with your son, but what can you do?

To help you answer that question, here are some things to think about:

1. Boys in grades 1 and 2 need their fathers very much.

What's so special about this age? Boys, ages 6 and 7, are encountering the world in some critical ways. They are becoming aware of their own maleness—in contrast to being female—and they are anxious to be and do what is masculine. A father provides their first image of manhood.

The impressions a father makes at this age will be deep and lasting. That's why a man who deserts his children at this age inflicts such damage to them psychologically. A boy hungers to emulate and respect his father. He needs to spend time with his father for this growth to occur.

Also, a boy at this age is forming his image of God. He is trying to understand God as a Person to whom he can relate. Interestingly, he uses his own father as a model for conceiving of God as his heavenly Father. If his own father is loving and firm—and available—he will discover that God is the same, but perfect in every way.

Your son needs you for another reason. He is discovering the world outside his home. Often he feels insecure and uncertain as he meets new people, especially as he starts going to school. A father can be a source of security and courage because he has “made it” in the bigger world. A boy looks to his father for clues for how he should act and what he should think.

2. Fathers need to spend more time with their children.

Perhaps you have heard some of those statistics. The average father in North America spends less than a minute per day in personal conversation with his children. Even if you do far better than that, you probably could do even more.

Many fathers have grown up in homes where men had little to do with raising children. That task was left to the mothers. It's hard for these men to change that pattern now that they are fathers.

But children need fathers as much as they need mothers. Both parents are necessary for a child's psychological health and personal maturity. And in God's plan for the human family, fathers must be active leaders in their homes, taking special interest in the spiritual growth of their children.

In many North American homes, fathers are no longer the only “breadwinners.” Wives are working outside the home in greater numbers than ever, usually for economic reasons. This puts more pressure on men to take a greater share of the parenting responsibilities. That can be good for men and their children.

3. Christian men must extend their fathering to boys without dads.

Almost every church has single-parent families, usually led by mothers. In society at large, the number of children who grow up without both parents is staggering. As Christians, we have a responsibility to these children and to the single parents who carry the burden of parenthood alone.

Boys who live without their fathers need to find other men to be role models. In the church, Christian men need to pay attention to those fatherless boys as well. They need to make their fathering available to these boys. A boys' program allows for this Christian role modeling to occur.

4. God expects you to be an active father.

The Bible is rather direct about the father's role in the family. In Deuteronomy 6:4-9, God gives men the task of teaching and training their children in the way of the Lord. The Old Testament shows how God uses parents, especially fathers, to transmit the values and truths of His Word to the following generation (Psalm 78:1-8, Isaiah 38:19). In the New Testament, the father is given responsibility for the spiritual nurture of his family (Ephesians 6:4).

Fatherhood is a high calling. On our own, we will certainly fail. But God gives wives to support and help fathers. And God gives Himself through the Holy Spirit to enable a father to be an effective parent.

As in all other areas of life, a man must be faithful and obedient to God's Word. Being a father is an important part of your Christian life.

5. Fathers need to help and encourage each other.

Face it. Being a parent is hard work. Parenthood is a long-term investment in children. The rewards are not immediately obvious. And it gets lonely when your contact with other parents is limited.

In addition to the help and encouragement of their wives, fathers need each other. They need to observe how other men relate to their sons. They need to know that other men have the same trials and difficulties that they do. They need the support of a group of dads who together will do things with their sons that they might not do alone.

Fathers who join together to reach their sons (and other boys) receive personal support and mutual encouragement. A wise father will put himself in this kind of fellowship.

These reasons do not imply that you *must* participate in Tree Climbers. You may already be involved with your son in other groups, or you may have a regular family night. You may even do some special things with him throughout the year.

What these reasons do suggest is that you cannot afford to let these years in your son's life slip away without your involvement in his life. *This is prime time for you and your son.* Don't lose this opportunity and regret it in the years to come!

What does Tree Climbers offer? First, it's a simple, easy way to do something with your son. If you have a hectic schedule, at least you know that once a week for 90 minutes, you will be with your son. It's quality time and it's regular. He will be thrilled that he has a special place in your schedule. There is not a lot of preparation required, nor any particular skills. Just come as you are and do your part.

Second, Tree Climbers is especially suited for fathers who are unsure of themselves. You will be with other dads who are in the same boat as you are. You can learn a great deal by watching these men in action. And you can pray together for the boys that God has entrusted to you.

Third, in Tree Climbers you have a program to follow. There are games to play, projects to do and stories to tell. You don't have to worry about not knowing what to do. The activities in Tree Climbers are ones that you and your son will enjoy.

The Tree Climbers program in your church needs your son—and you!

