



Newsletter – February 2010

CFSM Singapore

2 Highland Road, #03-12

Singapore 549102

Website: <http://www.cfsm.org.sg/>

Email: [cfsmsg@gmail.com](mailto:cfsmsg@gmail.com)

## The Father Parent.

Some years ago when I was giving a talk about the responsibilities of parenting I said in passing that if my child goes astray and leaves the religion, the faith I brought him up on, then I would consider myself as having failed in my responsibilities as a Christian parent. Some members of the audience took exception and disagreed that we should be making such impossibly high demands from parents.

I was pleased that I provoked some thinking and discussion on the extent of parental responsibilities.

Recently something set me thinking of this subject again. The father of the “Christmas day bomber” - Abdul Mutalaab claimed that he has done all he could as a father, and have alerted the authorities to his son’s terrorist tendencies. Public opinion seems to agree that he had done his part, and rather admirable too, - “to blow the whistle” on his own son.

What is the job of a father?

A stray dog could father by the dozens. A male frog/guppy could father in the hundreds. Fathering is easy. It is the “parenting” that is the challenge.

Some months ago at a family outing of the CFSM, I noticed that a member’s son, in his early teens was still very much attached to his mother. I suggested to the father that he should now take charge of the boy’s upbringing, adding jokingly that there is a tradition that says “When a boy is seven years old, the father should take over upbringing of the boy from the mother.” The mother heartily endorsed what I said, and the father laughingly agreed to start playing a larger role.

Mother will continue to mother their sons into their adulthood, often doing the simplest things for him, etc. but growing boys will need a father-figure in their lives. Unfortunately, in many Asian societies, the father used to be portrayed in folk literature as a remote disciplinarian, responsible for setting impossibly high expectations for the sons, but doing next to nothing about their upbringing. Regrettably, this continues to serve as an example which many modern men follow, without thinking.



Specifically what is the role of a father in these modern times?

Fathers, do not allow yourselves to be cast in the role of the disciplinarian of the family. You are not the family policeman. You are the pillar of consistency, a reference point of what is right or wrong. When they are young you are their role model. When they grow older they should develop higher self expectations and aspiration, adopting greater people as role models. This does not absolve you to degenerate into a negative-model ( - what they don't want to be). In the eyes of your children (even when they become adults) you should continue to be "a good person" in their eyes, not perfect, but someone with solid values, worthy of respect.

How do we do it? Live the noble role of Father. Change and improve yourself.

Keep communications open with your children. Encourage them to talk to you. Listen to your children. Do not talk down on them. Do not use every opportunity to chastise them to correct them, to give them instructions, and/or to dispense advice.

Most times it is more important just to listen, to put an arm round his shoulders, to give an understanding smile, a pat on his back.

It is most important that fathers regularly spend time with their sons, preferably one-on-one, just father and son(s). Cycling, a hike in the Nature reserves, a quiet meal, watch a game of basketball, attending an exhibition, accompany him to shop for his shoes, clothes. Also important is to take an interest in what he is learning in school, as distinct from his school/home work. Discuss what he has learnt in school, discuss current affairs, his/your religion/faith.

You will find it a very enriching experience in this mutual educational exchange. You will discover that you have become a father to your son.

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## **Reminder.**

**The CFSM wishes to remind members to pay up their annual subscriptions.**

**The last day for the collection of subscriptions for the year 2101 is on 28<sup>th</sup> February at our CFSM AGM. After which we will not raise this subject again. Between now and then, you can send in your 'subs and contributions' check with an advice note, to our Movement's Office at the address above.**

**The Movement wishes to thank our contributors for the contributions they have made over the years towards our Movement's running expenses. Although all our office bearers and helpers are unpaid volunteers the Movement still has to pay for the rental of meeting rooms, lecture halls, refreshments, etc. for the members' formation sessions, to partially sponsor our members' travelling expenses to to represent CFSM (Singapore) to attend regional and international meetings/conferences by other Int'l Movements dedicated to our causes of "family" and "work".**

**We thank the 30+ members who had so far, in addition to their 2010 subscriptions, made a contribution to our finances. We ask the rest of the members who have not yet paid up, to do so soonest, and to be equally supportive of our work by make an extra financial contribution.**

**We thank you for your support of "the family" and our work.....Thankyou .**

**The CFSM Ex-Co**