



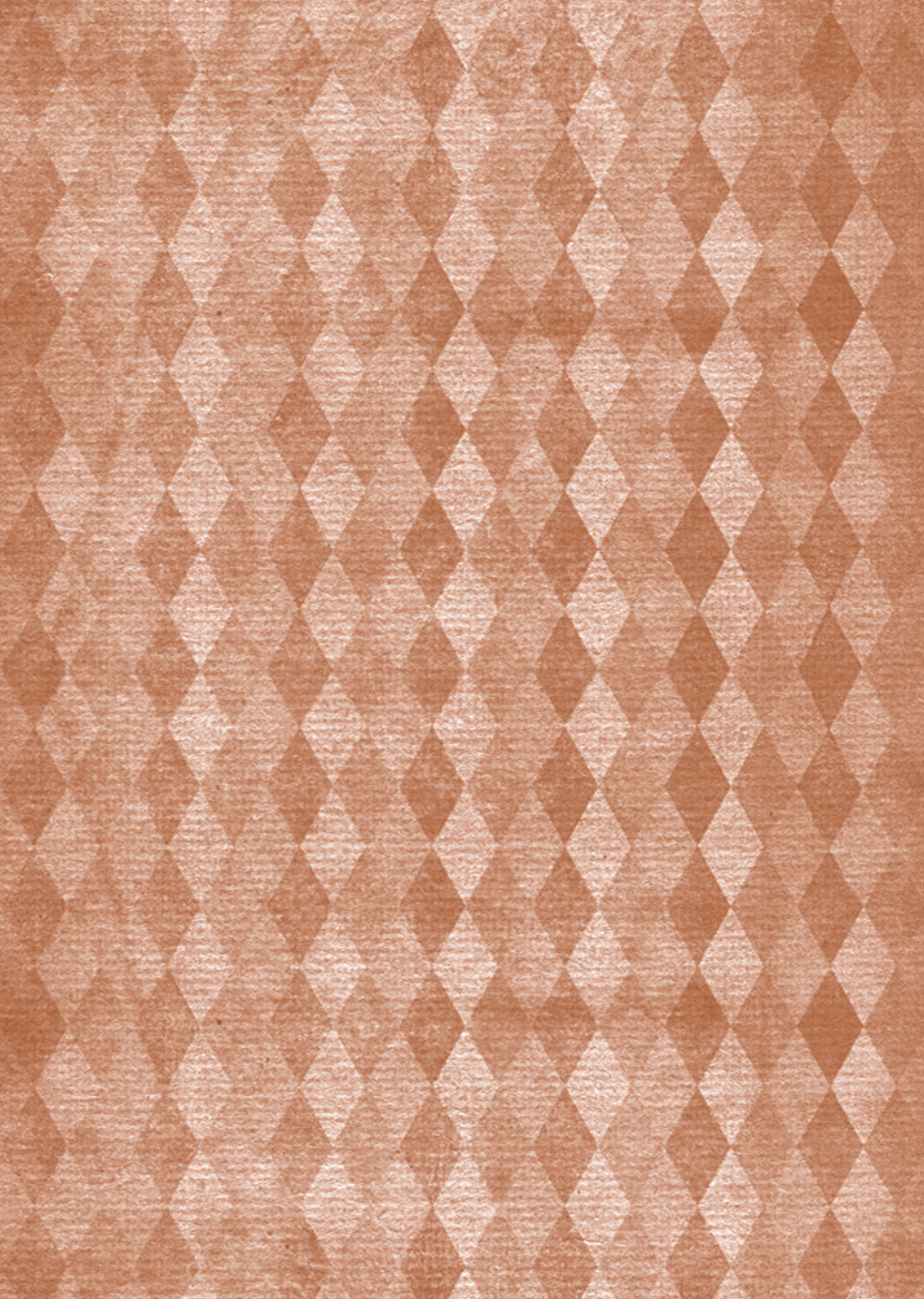
A FATHER, A HERO

EXPERIENCE THE RICH BLESSING
OF FATHERS AND FAMILIES THROUGH
INSPIRATIONAL STORIES

DR. JAMES
DOBSON

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR

A FATHER, A HERO





A FATHER,
A HERO

DR. JAMES
DOBSON

TYNDALE
MOMENTUM™



*The nonfiction imprint of
Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.*

Visit Tyndale online at www.tyndale.com.

Visit Tyndale Momentum online at www.tyndalemomentum.com.

TYNDALE, *Tyndale Momentum*, and Tyndale's quill logo are registered trademarks of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc. The Tyndale Momentum logo is a trademark of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc. Tyndale Momentum is the nonfiction imprint of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois.

A Father, A Hero

Copyright © 2005 by James Dobson, Inc. All rights reserved.

Previously published in 2005 as *A Father, A Hero* by Multnomah Publishers, Inc., under ISBN 1-59052-497-7. *Multnomah* is a trademark of Multnomah Publishers, Inc., and is registered in the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office. First printing by Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., in 2007 under ISBN 978-1-4143-1743-4.

Cover and interior images are the property of their respective copyright holders, and all rights are reserved. Fishing © Daniel Rosenthal/Media Bakery; diamond pattern © Nic Taylor/Media Bakery; paper texture © Lost & Taken; tree © anjich/Adobe Stock; vintage ornaments © Electric_Crayon/iStockphoto.

Designed by Ron C. Kaufmann

Scripture taken from the Holy Bible, *New International Version*,[®] *NIV*.[®] Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by Biblica, Inc.[®] Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., has made every effort to provide proper and accurate source attribution for all selections used in this book. Should any attribution be found to be incorrect, the publisher welcomes written documentation supporting correction for subsequent printings. We gratefully acknowledge the cooperation of other publishers and individuals who have granted permission for use of their material.

For information about special discounts for bulk purchases, please contact Tyndale House Publishers at csresponse@tyndale.com, or call 1-800-323-9400.

ISBN 978-1-4143-9013-0

Printed in China

24	23	22	21	20	19	18
7	6	5	4	3	2	1

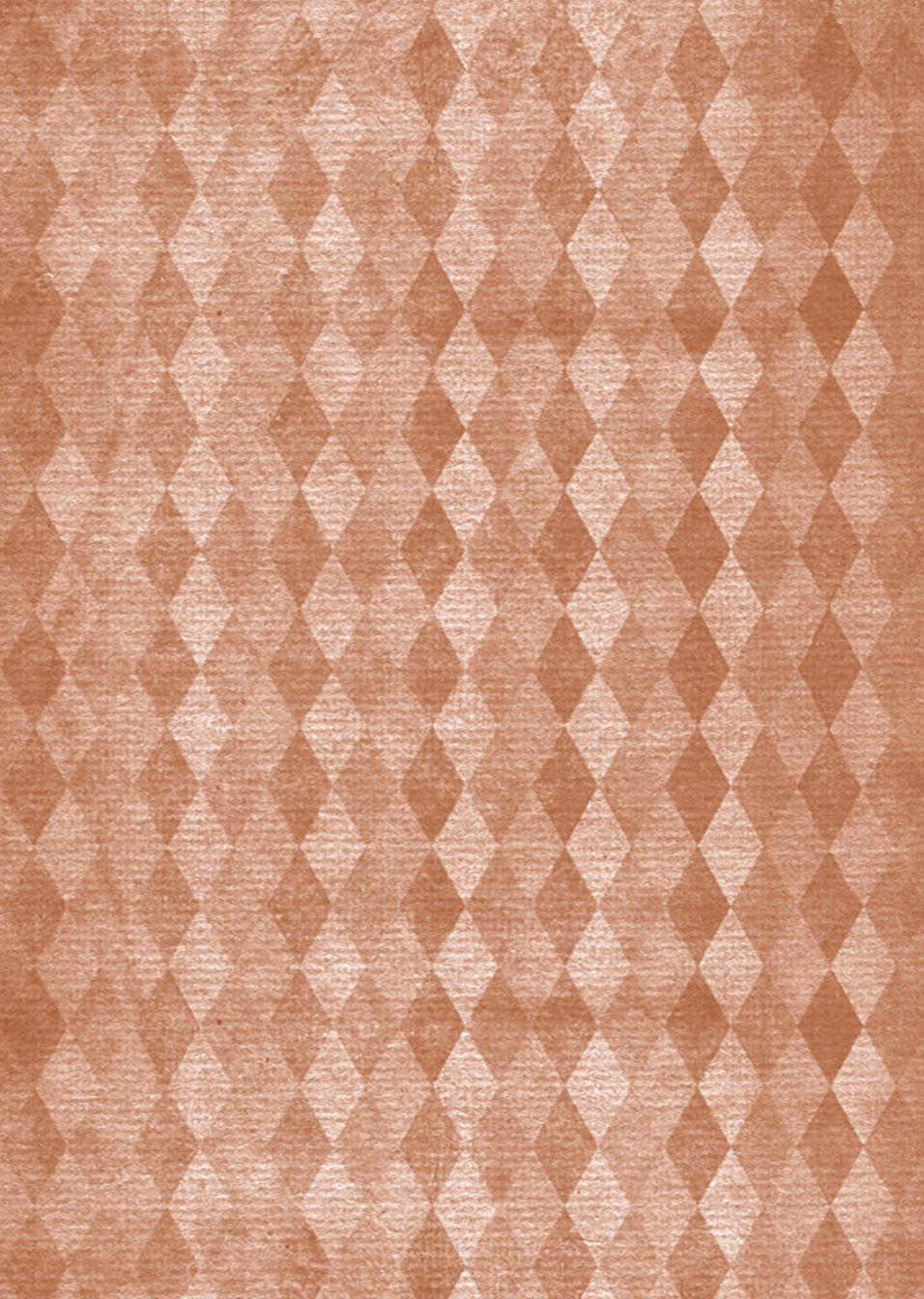




TABLE OF CONTENTS

—◆—
Introduction xi

A FATHER, A LEADER

“Standing Tall” *by Steve Farrar 3*

“Head of the House” *by Thom Hunter 9*

A FATHER, A PROTECTOR

“Just Waitin’ for You” *by Stu Weber 21*

“Of More Value” *by Jerry B. Jenkins 25*

“Manhood at Its Best” *by Dr. James Dobson 29*

A FATHER, A PROVIDER

“A Secret Promise Kept” *by Brian Keefe 43*

“My Father’s Arms” *by H. Michael Brewer 51*

“Simple Wooden Boxes” *by Martha Pendergrass Templeton 55*

A FATHER, A SPIRITUAL ROLE MODEL

“You Cannot Outgive God” *by Dr. James Dobson 65*

“I Was on His Mind” *by Michael J. Massie 71*

Epilogue 79

Acknowledgments 83

About the Author 85



INTRODUCTION

EVERY CHILD needs a hero.

When I was young, it was common practice to study those who had led exemplary lives—courageous men and women who succeeded against all odds. Our heroes were leaders and role models such as Abraham Lincoln, Winston Churchill, and Florence Nightingale. They inspired us to reach for the best within us.

Today, thanks in part to our society's fascination with human failure, that tradition has fallen by the wayside. There is less emphasis on past achievers, while contemporary sports stars, entertainers, and political figures, with all their flaws on display, just don't measure up. From watching the news or reading the papers, one would think that boys and girls living in the twenty-first century would find *no one* worthy of their respect and admiration.

Yet there is one person—one man—that every child longs to look up to, to emulate, to know that he or she can count on when the chips are down. He is the one that all children, in the deep reaches of their hearts, want most as a hero.

Dad.

For thousands of years in nations and cultures around the world, it has been fathers whom families turned to in times of crisis, men who assumed the mantle of leadership when others would not or could not step forward, who have set the moral and spiritual example for their wives and children, and who have quietly served, in so many ways, as the backbone of their societies. Until recently, the phrase “a good family man” was seen as more than a cliché or an idea to be ridiculed by postmodernists and the media. It represented self-sacrifice, honesty, kindness, dedication, and industry. Not every dad achieved this standard of excellence, of course, but it was what we, his family and friends, expected and needed him to be.

There is still a great need for strength and confidence in the midst of the inevitable storms of life, and that role falls more naturally to men. As a huge oak

INTRODUCTION

tree provides shelter and protection for all the living things that nest in its branches, a strong man provides security and comfort for every member of his family. He knows who he is as a child of God and what is best for his wife and children. He would give his life for his family if they were threatened. His sons and daughters, especially, want and need the protection and guidance of just such a man.

A father. A hero.

Despite what may seem like a dearth of heroes in our world today, outstanding men of character still exist in enormous numbers. More than four hundred police officers and firefighters, many of them husbands and fathers, sacrificed their lives trying to rescue office workers from New York's Twin Towers on September 11, 2001. These men, and the women who worked beside them, are heroes.

On that same fateful day, Todd Beamer, a father of two little boys with a daughter on the way, uttered the battle cry "Let's roll!" on Flight 93 and helped prevent a deliberate crash into the White House or the Capitol building. Todd and the others who died with him on that day are heroes.

The title of “hero” is not defined only by bravery and life-giving sacrifice, however. Most fathers give their lives in a more subtle way, through the many choices they make for the benefit of their families. Though these dads are rarely recognized for their dedication and sacrifice, their steady commitment to traditional faith and values is the foundation of every new generation. Every one of them deserves the title “good family man,” and most of them could be considered heroes.

My own father, Rev. James Dobson Sr., was such a man. He exemplified what I believe to be God’s concept of a husband and father. Most of my writings are an expression of his views and teachings. He was a man who deeply loved the Lord and his wife of forty-two years. I have also known, from the earliest moments of awareness, that he loved me.

The happiest days of my life occurred when I was between ten and thirteen years of age. My dad and I would arise very early before the sun came up on a wintry morning. We would put on our hunting clothes and heavy boots, and drive twenty miles from the little town where we lived. After parking the car, we climbed over a fence and entered a wooded area which I called the

INTRODUCTION

“big woods,” because the trees seemed so large to me. We would slip down to the creek bed and follow that winding stream several miles back into the forest.

Then my dad would hide me under a fallen tree that made a little room with its branches. He would find a similar shelter for himself around a bend in the creek. There we would await the arrival of the sun and the awakening of the animal world. Little squirrels and birds and chipmunks would scurry back and forth, not knowing they were being observed. My dad and I watched as the breathtaking panorama of the morning unfolded, which spoke so eloquently of the God who made all things.

But most importantly, there was something dramatic that occurred between my dad and me on those mornings. An intense love and affection was generated that set the tone for a lifetime of fellowship. There was a closeness and a oneness that made me want to be like that man . . . that made me choose his values as my values, his dreams as my dreams, his God as my God.

If any human being that I have known deserved the title of “hero,” it was my dad.

This book is, in part, a call to fathers everywhere to

return to the traditional and biblical values portrayed by men such as Todd Beamer and James Dobson Sr. It is encouragement for men to become the kind of dad their families need:

Fathers who are leaders according to the responsibilities and limits spelled out in Scripture.

Fathers who are protectors, shielding their families from the dangers of the outside world and teaching them how to cope with them successfully.

Fathers who are providers, capable and willing to assume the role of breadwinner in order to assure the financial security of their families.

Fathers who are spiritual role models, offering the direction and example that will guide each of their loved ones to a meaningful and lasting faith.

Some may consider these duties old-fashioned, but there is timeless wisdom to be found here. Men have been defined by these responsibilities for millennia, and for good reason. It is the stuff of heroes.

This book aspires to another, equally important purpose—to celebrate fatherhood and fathers everywhere. The encouraging stories you will find here describe dads from many walks of life—sometimes struggling,

INTRODUCTION

sometimes succeeding, and always doing their best. If you are a man and a father, I hope they will help inspire you to be the best role model and leader you can be.

Such inspiration is needed, because your role as a dad is incredibly challenging. I know—I've been there! There are times when you wonder if you are achieving your goals, and other moments when you feel like throwing in the towel. That is especially true for those in the “sandwich generation,” who are increasingly responsible for their aging parents *and* their rambunctious teens. The financial pressures and the personal demands may seem overwhelming at times. Yet if you stay the course, you will secure not only the best for those you love, but also that of generations to come. Nothing could be more important or, ultimately, more rewarding.

Therefore, Dad, for your unswerving commitment to your family—for making the right choices regardless of personal loss or sacrifice—for leading, protecting, and providing—for encouraging your family to love Jesus Christ and follow the wisdom of Scripture—I say on behalf of sons and daughters everywhere, “Thank you.”

Every child needs a hero.

You are that man!





A FATHER, A LEADER



*He tends his flock like a shepherd . . .
he gently leads those that have young.*

ISAIAH 40:11



STANDING TALL

Steve Farrar

WHEN I WAS a sophomore in high school, we moved to a new town and a new high school. It was the typical scenario of being the new kid who doesn't know anyone. One of the fastest ways to make friends in a situation like that is to go out for a sport. In about two days you know more guys from playing ball than you could meet in three months of going to school.

Normally, I would have gone out for basketball. But I had done something very foolish. I had brought home a D on my last report card. The only reason I had gotten a D was that I had horsed around in the class and

basically exhibited some very irresponsible behavior in turning in papers. My dad had a rule for the three boys in our family: If any of us got anything lower than a

My dad was more interested in developing my character than he was in developing my jump shot.

C in a class, we couldn't play ball. He didn't demand that we get straight A's or make the honor roll. But my dad knew that the only reason any of us would get a D was that we were fooling around instead of being responsible.

As a result, I didn't go out for basketball. Now, my dad was all for me playing ball. He had been all-state in both bas-

ketball and football in high school, went to college on a basketball scholarship, and after World War II was offered a contract to play football for the Pittsburgh Steelers. He wanted me to play. But he was more interested in developing my character than he was in developing my jump shot.

One day in my physical education class we were playing basketball. I didn't know it, but the varsity

coach was in the bleachers watching the pickup game. After we went into the locker room, he came up to me and asked me who I was and why I wasn't out for varsity basketball. I told him that we had just recently moved into town and that I'd come out for basketball next year. He said that he wanted me to come out this year.

I told him that my dad had a rule about getting any grade lower than a C.

The coach said, "But according to the school rules, you're still eligible to play if you have just one D."

"Yes, sir, I realize that," I replied. "But you have to understand that my dad has his own eligibility rules."

"What's your phone number?" the coach asked. "I'm going to call your dad."

"I'll be happy to give you the phone number, but it will be a waste of your time," I said.

This coach was a big, aggressive guy. He was about six feet two inches and 220 pounds, which put him one inch shorter and twenty pounds lighter than my dad. Coach was used to getting his way. But he hadn't met my dad. I knew before the coach ever called what my dad's answer would be.

Was my dad capable of change? Sure he was. Was he

going to change because he got a call from the varsity coach? Of course not. That night after dinner, Dad told me the coach had called. He told me he had told the coach no. He then reminded me of the importance of being responsible in class and that he really wanted me to play basketball. But the ball was in my court (no pun intended). If I wanted to play it was up to me. At that point, I was very motivated to work hard in class so that I could play basketball the next season.

The next morning the coach came up to me in the locker room. “I talked to your dad yesterday afternoon and he wouldn’t budge. I explained the school eligibility rules, but he wouldn’t change his mind. I don’t have very much respect for your father.”

I couldn’t believe my ears. This coach didn’t respect my father. Even I had enough sense to know that my dad was doing the right thing. Sure, I wanted to play ball, but I knew that my dad was a man of his word and he was right in not letting me play. I couldn’t believe this coach would say such a thing.

“Coach,” I said. “I can tell you that I highly respect my dad. And I also want you to know that I will never play basketball for you.”

STANDING TALL

I never did. I got my grades up, but I never went out for varsity basketball. I refused to play for a man who didn't respect my dad for doing what was right. That was the end of my high school basketball career because that man coached basketball for my remaining years in high school.

Come to think of it, the real reason I wouldn't join his team was that I didn't respect him. He was a compromiser, and I suspected that he would do anything to win. My dad was a man of conviction and a man of character. And any coach who couldn't see that was not the kind of man I wanted to associate with. My dad was strict and unwilling to change his conviction even though it hurt him for me not to play ball. My dad was capable of change, but he was unwilling to change because he had a long-term objective for my life that the coach didn't have.

The coach wanted to win games. My dad wanted to build a son.