

1 FAT-TIRE FATHERS

- What has got all the gearhead guys gawking and talking?

2 New Beefy Vehicle

- It is design for both the street and the trail.
- Just check out some of the specifications . . .
 - Fat all-terrain tires,
 - Elastometer shock absorbers,
 - Plush suspension for on-road comfort and performance,
 - Looks cool with a sleek design and colors like back or racing yellow.
- It is the kind of ride that makes men stop dead in their tracks and ask, “Are those 14- or 16-inch wheel?” or “How’s it handle off-road.”
- Well the name of the machine is “The Ironman” and it’s no SUV. The truth is that it only seats one. And the occupant has to weigh less than 35 pounds.

3 The IRONMAN Stroller

- That’s because it’s a baby stroller built with gadget-obsessed dads in mind.
- No longer are strollers designed just for pedestrian mothers, but pumped up with new features that have dads standing around talking about them as if they were mountain bikes.
- Stuart Goffman of Baby Universe, Inc., says “All the new strollers have struts and shocks and big wheels.”

4 The Stokke Explorer

- The Ironman, manufactured by BOB Trailers, Inc., is just one of these new entries in the market.
- Others, like the Stokke Explorer, feature a higher than average seat with an adjustable handle bar, giving the baby more eye contact and taller dads a better grip for the big push.
- Stokke even offers “test strolls” at the company’s stores in major cities.

5 Bugaboo Chameleon

- Trading up to the manliest of strollers isn’t cheap, though.
- The Bugaboo Chameleon, for example, comes in at \$750.00 retail — more than twice as much as some of the more popular strollers on the market.
- The big ticket price, however, hasn’t deterred the determined dads and moms who jog through the trendiest neighborhoods pushing baby in style.
- New dad Scott Cohen discovered that his ultra-foldable Zapp stroller, which breaks down Jetson-style to almost nothing, caused lots of passersby to stop him in the street for a look. “We can’t make it more than a block,” he says.

6 Marketing to New Dads

- Beyond the baby buggy, many companies are now pushing a wide range of products geared toward new dads.
- Diaperdude.com sells diaper bags that look like messenger pouches and come in colors like camouflage, or black with dragon or guitar designs. Another company offers wearable “bottle shorts” for dads with pockets that hold baby bottles, pacifiers and other infant gear.
- All this gearing up has made it possible for Dads to hit the street with a lot of cred and maybe, as a result, they’re willing to spend more time moving around in what used to be Mom’s exclusive territory.
- If a trail-rated buggy is what it takes to help dads get out more with their kids, and if a hip diaper bag makes changing said diaper a more manly experience, well, so much the better.
- Bottom line is that it’s cool to be a dad these days.

7 Image is Everything

- In October 2002, Arnold Schwarzenegger returned the Ferrari Spider which he had recently purchased, explaining that it did not fit his new image.
- The flashy car, he told the dealership’s president, might give potential voters the wrong idea: “I feel I need a car that would better telegraph my image as a candidate for California governor — a car that says I’m a man of the people.”
- In March 2003, Schwarzenegger bought ... an Austrian tank (called a Pinskower) modified to render it legal to drive on city streets.

8 The Role of a Good Father

- The apostle Paul understood that dads are vital to the nurture of the children of God and their growing faith.
- For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, . . . (1 Thes. 2:11 NIV)
- For Paul to say, however, that he relates to them “like a father with his children” meant a lot more than a simple push around the block or just bringing home the proverbial bacon.
- Paul’s image of fatherhood involved a lot of “urging and encouraging ... and pleading that you lead a life worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory” (1 Thes. 2:12)

9 The Role of a Good Father

- Clearly, Paul was not just interested in taking this young church for a simple spin around the block and then heading off to his next missions trip.
- Instead, Paul gives us a hint of what it looks like to be a spiritual father and move the youngest among us toward real maturity.

10 Involves Work

- First, real spiritual fathering involves work (2:9).
- As a father works to support the family, so Paul and his companions worked to support themselves as they ministered among the Thessalonians.
 - Surely you remember, brothers, our toil and hardship; we worked night and day in order not to be a burden to anyone while we preached the gospel of God to you. (1 Thessalonians 2:9 NIV)
- That work, however, was not motivated by the “flattery” and “greed” (2:5) but for the good of others.
 - You know we never used flattery, nor did we put on a mask to cover up greed — God is our witness. (1 Thessalonians 2:5 NIV)

11 Involves Work

- Rather, Paul’s work was directed at bringing him closer to his spiritual children. It enabled him to be in a place to share with them not only the gospel, but himself (2:8).
 - We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us. (1 Thes. 2:8 NIV)
- Our primary work as fathers in the faith is not the acquisition of stuff for stuff’s sake, but rather to see:
 - our work,
 - our jobs, and
 - our careers,
- . . . as means to an end and not the end itself.
- Our real work is to invest the bulk of our energy, time, effort and resources into raising others up to have a relationship with Christ—especially our children.

12 Involves our Walk

- Next, spiritual fathering requires that we walk with Christ ourselves while we walk alongside others.
- Paul, unlike many athletes and celebrities, was more than willing to be a role model to these young Christians.
- He reminded the Thessalonians that he had been “pure, upright, and blameless” among them (2:10).
- That might sound a little self-righteous to us, but the reality is that Paul backed up his words with action.

- He had no problem inviting others to imitate him in his walk with Christ and in living by that example.

13 Involves our Walk

- We who are fathers have to realize that, when it comes to our kids, more is caught than taught.
- Our children will watch us closely to learn what it means to be a disciple of Christ.
- Rather than beg off that responsibility or pop in a video of Veggie Tales, we need to be out in front of our children rather than pushing from behind, showing them the joy and peace of following Jesus in our own lives.

14 Involves Words

- But there's also the need for us to use personal words as we lead our families at home and at church.
- Paul's spiritual fathering involved dealing with "each" of the Thessalonians "like a father with his children"(2:11), which implies that he spent individual one-on-one time with people in the fellowship.
- His "encouraging, comforting and urging" were powerful witnesses to each of them as they sought to grow "into a life worthy of God" (2:12).

15 Involves Words

- The best gift we can give our children at home isn't an all-terrain vehicle to protect them from the potholes of the suburban jungle.
- The best gift is time — face time, one-on-one time, time to listen and to encourage, time to just enjoy being with them.
- The same is true for youngsters in the faith.
 - How do we best help others get connected to a vital relationship with Christ?
 - It's not through more gadgets in our worship space and programs that seem to have more style than substance.
 - It happens little by little, one moment at a time, as we intentionally spend quality and quantity time listening and talking.

16 Putting it all Together

- There's a real good chance that babies won't ever remember riding in a Hummer-like stroller, and there's an even greater chance that said stroller will find itself parked in the garage and on its way to Ebay long before it's ever worn out.
- And, it's absolutely certain that at some point in time, one parent or the other will look at the Bugaboo Frog over there in a corner of the garage collecting dust and say, "We paid how much for that?"
- Investing . . .

- our work,
- our walk, and
- our words
- . . . with our children, be that at home, at church or anywhere else is a way better investment.

17 Two Roles

- Except in a single parent home, a mother doesn't have to be anything other than a mother.
- However, this is not true for fathers. They have to be two people—a father and a dad.
 - Traditionally, fathers have acted in a protective, supportive and responsible way toward their children. This includes training, education, and discipline.
 - Dads on the other hand provides nurture, play, and emotional support, which require time and one-on-one interaction.
- Depending on who was their father, this all may be very hard to balance.
- So let us honor our Fathers this weekend and give them the encouragement and support they need because not only do they have an important role, but our own well-being as well.
- Also, let us pray for our Fathers as no one in the family comes under more attack from our society than godly men, who make it their ambition not for pleasure or worldly glory, but to raise godly children. Amen!