

## Levels of Fathering Identity Development in Christian Dads

Level of Identity Development	What they believe	How they relate with children	Examples of how punishment is conducted	Examples of how rewards is given	Examples of how money management is done	How to encourage them to grow?
Stage 1: Impulsive Fathering Identity	<p><i>"I'm a dad when I feel like it."</i></p> <p>Fathering is primarily guided by immediate reactions and societal norms rather than a deeply considered Christian framework. The focus may be on following basic parenting rules or what was modeled by previous generations without much personal reflection.</p>	<p>Interactions with children are driven by immediate desires and emotions. Parenting decisions might be made to quickly address problems or to gain approval rather than from a thoughtful, principled approach.</p>	<p><i>"Don't irritate me or you are going to get it from me!"</i></p> <p>May punish based on immediate reactions to a perceived slight to self. Punishment may not be proportionate to the severity of misconduct, but more due to personal dissatisfaction with the child's behaviour.</p>	<p><i>"Daddy wants to play football on Saturday. No time for you....why don't you take this \$20 and go watch a movie on your own?"</i></p> <p>May give rewards out of selfish intentions, e.g., to feel good, or to present oneself from feeling guilty.</p>	<p><i>"Daddy - can I have this 20 cents I see on the ground?" "Ok sure".</i></p> <p>May give money when they ask for it, focusing on instant gratification (for self or for child) without any lessons on budgeting or saving. May not see the need for or think too deeply about money management education for his children</p>	<p>The goal is to begin moving from a reactive and surface-level approach to fathering towards a more thoughtful and intentional understanding of Christian principles in parenting.</p>

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Stage 2: Imperial Fathering Identity	<p><i>"I don't want to look bad as a father, but I will still stick to my own ideas of fathering, thank you."</i></p> <p>Fathering starts to incorporate more personal interpretations of Christian teachings. There may be an emphasis on creating a stable environment for children based on a more idiosyncratic understanding of Christian values and expectations.</p>	Relationships with children are influenced by a personal desire to be seen as a good parent and to provide security and structure. The approach to parenting may prioritize personal convenience and satisfaction as well as meeting societal standards of fatherhood.	<p><i>"You know why you are punished - you should know better than to talk back at me in front of others. You made me lose face!"</i></p> <p>May punish to enforce standards that are self-serving, to make one look good in public.</p>	<p><i>"Wah, your classmate got an ang pao for his good results? Let me do that, and also top up with an ipad!"</i></p> <p>May give rewards to look good in front of others.</p>	<p><i>"If you help Daddy to vacuum the floor, I will give you \$20"</i></p> <p>May now see money as a means to an end, and so starts to introduce the idea of money management as a tool to achieve specific goals. Hence, he will set simple systems such as earning money through chores or saving a portion of allowance. The focus is on making sure these rules are followed.</p>	Development involves broadening the understanding of Christian fatherhood beyond personal benefit and working towards a deeper integration of Christian values into daily parenting practices.

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Stage 3: In-community Fathering Identity	<p><i>"I will take reference from what others I respect believe fathering should be."</i></p> <p>Fathering is informed by a well-established Christian community and tradition. Parenting practices align with the values and expectations of the faith community, and the father's role is understood within the context of broader Christian teachings.</p>	Relationships with children are shaped by communal norms and values. There is a strong sense of identity as a Christian father within the community, with an emphasis on adhering to traditional Christian roles and practices.	<p><i>"Why did you join in with the bullying? You are grounded. If I don't punish you, then how will I be accountable to the rest of the parents?"</i></p> <p>May punish based on communal norms, or with due consideration to the expectations of the community..</p>	<p><i>"I know you deserve praise in public, but I did not want to make your project partners look bad by praising you in front of them."</i></p> <p>May give rewards with due consideration of how the community will be affected, or based on what is expected of him as a member of a faith community.</p>	<p><i>"Son, this money is hard to come by. But God wants us to also be generous to others. And remember to tithe as well!"</i></p> <p>May now become more aware of societal norms, expectations and responsibilities to society and start to incorporate this into the way he manages money and will teach likewise to his children, emphasising that money is a resource to be managed responsibly, such as giving to charity, tithing, stewarding and being generous.</p>	The challenge here is to critically engage with communal parenting norms and values, moving towards a more personalized and nuanced approach to fathering that integrates both personal beliefs and community standards.

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Stage 4: Integrated Fathering Identity	<p><i>"I have pondered deeply about what it means to be a godly father."</i></p> <p>He has developed a well-defined personal approach to Christian fatherhood. They critically evaluate and integrate various aspects of Christian teachings into a coherent and individualized parenting philosophy.</p>	Relationships with children are characterized by authenticity and intentionality. There is a balance between adhering to Christian principles and adapting practices to fit personal and family needs, with a strong sense of personal responsibility in parenting.	<p><i>"What you did deserves punishment. The Bible is clear about this. Hence, I hope this punishment serves to remind you of this lesson."</i></p> <p>Draws from various aspects of the Bible in contextualising punishment to the unique demands of the situation.</p>	<p><i>"You know, the effort you put in is commendable, even though you did not win. God loves the fact that you tried to rely on Him. For that, you deserve a reward."</i></p> <p>Draws from various aspects of the Bible in contextualising rewards to the unique demands of the situation.</p>	<p><i>"Son, what does the Bible say about money and wealth? I want you to have your own system of managing money. How you manage money is how you manage your character."</i></p> <p>Having developed his own philosophy towards money that is informed by his faith, he actively encourages his children to do likewise.</p>	The focus is on refining and evolving one's parenting philosophy while engaging thoughtfully with the needs of the family. Fathers aim to model Christian values in a way that is both meaningful and adaptable to changing circumstances.

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Stage 5: Incarnate Fathering Identity	<p><i>"I father my kids as I have been fathered by God the Father."</i></p> <p>He embraces a dynamic and evolving understanding of Christian fatherhood based on his own walk as a child of God. He recognizes that his approach to parenting is part of a broader, interconnected journey as a child of God and is open to continuous growth and transformation.</p>	Relationships with children are marked by a profound sense of interconnectedness and mutual growth. Fathers seek to foster environments where both they and their children can continuously learn and evolve together within the context of Christian faith.	<p><i>"You deserve to be punished. But in this instance, I will also show mercy, because I remembered being shown mercy when I made the same mistake you did."</i></p> <p>Will draw reference from his own experiences being treated by God in the way he metes out punishment.</p>	<p><i>"Well done! I am going to give you a reward! But before I do that, let us remember that God is already pleased with us as His children. Let's remember that we don't need this reward to be reminded of that."</i></p> <p>Will draw reference to one's own evolving identity as a son of God in giving out rewards.</p>	<p><i>"Wah, after so many years, I am still learning about not just money, but wealth and treasures on earth and in heaven. Come son! Tell me what you know so that I can learn from you also."</i></p> <p>Realises that as a dad, he is still learning new things regarding how he views and manages treasures on earth and in heaven. Introduces a new humility and openness towards learning and exploring these ideas with his children.</p>	The focus is on embracing the ongoing process of transformation in fathering. Fathers are committed to adapting and growing in their role, seeing parenting as a dynamic and evolving journey that integrates deeper spiritual insights and relational depth.