



THE

By Wade Mumm

TOUGH



HIGHEST DAD

It's sad how many dads will battle for everything but their families — they battle for their jobs, their buddies, their hunting trips, but they fail to fight for the family that looks up to them with expectant eyes.

Across the United States there are families crying out for someone to look out for them, to show them they are more important than any job, hunting trip or bass boat. A tough dad will meet all these needs and stand up for his family regardless of the personal price he must pay.

In a recent documentary, young bull elephants in a game reserve in Africa were going on rampages killing other wildlife within the park. Particularly troubling for park rangers was that the elephants were killing endangered rhinos and no one seemed to know why.

A numbers game:

Fathers are invaluable

George Lucas, the creator and director of *Star Wars*, summarized in a recent interview the theme of his two space trilogies: "The first trilogy is really the children's story, and the new one is about the father. So it's about fathers and children, and how one generation has to clean up after the other."

The same could be said for the United States of America, where many fathers have abandoned their roles as leaders of their homes. According to reports from the U.S. Department of Justice, the National Principals Association and the Centers for Disease Control, fatherless homes are taking a toll on our nation's children.

- **63 percent** of youth who commit suicide come from a fatherless home.
- **90 percent** of all homeless and runaway children come from a fatherless home.
- **85 percent** of all children who exhibit behavior disorders come from a fatherless home.
- **80 percent** of rapists motivated with displaced anger come from a fatherless home.
- **71 percent** of all high school dropouts come from a fatherless home.
- **75 percent** of all adolescent patients in chemical abuse centers come from a fatherless home.
- **70 percent** of juveniles in state-operated institutions come from a fatherless home.
- **85 percent** of all youths in prison grew up in a fatherless home.

So what can be done to stifle such statistics?

Fathers have to do what God wants them to do, which is to "train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it" (Proverbs 22:6, NIV).

To do that, a father should:

- *Provide and care for his family.*
- *Protect his family's physical, emotional, mental, spiritual and financial well-being.*
- *Be committed to times of praise and prayer each day.*
- *Pursue purity and strive to be an example of Christ.*
- *Love his family as Christ loves the Church.*

Doing so makes it more likely that children will achieve higher grades and be involved in extracurricular activities. As disturbing as the above list of statistics is, research also indicates that children who are reared in a home with an active and involved father are more likely to finish high school, be economically self-sufficient, and have a healthier lifestyle. ■

— **Andrew D. Templeton**

Editor of HonorBound magazine, the Assemblies of God magazine for men.

As a result of the killings, several of the young bull elephants had to be put down. But each time an offending elephant was killed, another rose to take his place.

Finally, someone made the observation that there were no older adult bull elephants in any of the herds. In addition, the young bulls were mating with females far earlier than they should. The traditional social structure of the herds had broken down.

Based on this observation, park officials introduced a number of older adult bull elephants to see if they could reign in the young rogues. Sure enough, within days, the larger, older, wiser males fought brilliantly and asserted themselves as leaders within the herd.

The young bulls once again took their rightful position under the adult males. The useless killings ended.

Male and female youngsters of our society also need the leadership of an older and wiser male — a dad — to ensure that the "herd" known as family continues to exist and operate properly.

Like the older elephants, dads must be warriors who are willing to battle for what is right no matter what. For decades the world has told dads they need to be less assertive, that they should dialogue about everything. But there are times when such a notion must be swept clear and a dad must stand up and fight, if not literally, certainly figuratively.

When the world around the home is pushing for compromise, a tough dad will stand tall and straight and say, "No, this is my family. These are my children. This is my wife. I'm willing to die for them."

A tough dad will make a stand — even if it appears to be a losing one. A tough dad will fight for family time. He will battle for the attention of his wife. He will show his daughter that she is loved and deserving of respect. He will demonstrate to his son what it means to be a good and honest man.

Such a dad understands that family priorities are not for sale to the corporate world. Any kind of lustful relationship outside of his marriage is not even considered. This dad will fight for the underdog and the less fortunate. He will battle evil in whatever form it chooses to manifest itself.

Will you stand for what is right? Are you willing to be a knight in shining armor who continually sweeps your princess off her feet? Are you willing to lay down your life for your family and your family's values? Will you fight the good fight? Will you lead?

If so, you're the toughest dad your family will ever need. ■

Wade B. Mumm, Ph.D., is senior pastor at GreeneWay Church (AG) in Orlando, Fla., and also chair of the Language and Communication Arts Department at Southeastern University in Lakeland, Fla. He is the author of A Dad's Many Hats.

E-mail your comments to pe@ag.org.