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Thoughtful Reflections on Fatherhood

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On Friday's edition of [The Albert Mohler Program](#), Russ Moore and I discussed the state of fatherhood in our times. We seem to be living at a moment when fatherhood, having been sidelined, marginalized, and depreciated for at least three decades, is back as a calling among many younger Christian men. That's the good news. The bad news is that so much ground has already been lost. Here are a few interesting links for your consideration:

1. John Tierney, [The Doofus Dad](#), [The New York Times](#), Saturday, June 18, 2005. Tierney argues that the "omniscient father" of media fascination in the 1950s has given way to the "doofus dad" of contemporary sit-coms and entertainment. "Where did we fathers go wrong? We spend twice as much time with our kids as we did two decades ago, but on television we're oblivious ('Jimmy Neutron'), troubled ('The Sopranos'), deranged ('Malcolm in the Middle') and generally incompetent ('Everybody Loves Raymond'). Even if Dad has a good job, like the star of 'Home Improvement,' at home he's forever making messes that must be straightened out by Mom."

2. Steven E. Rhoads, [What Fathers Do Best](#), [The Weekly Standard](#), June 20, 2005. Rhoads, author of *Taking Sex Differences Seriously*, argues that moms and dads have different functions, responsibilities, and skill sets. In today's world, that's a controversial assertion. In the real world, his point is obvious. Consider this: "What do most real-world dads do? When the kids get old enough, they teach them how to build and fix things and how to play sports. They are better than moms at teaching children how to deal with novelty and frustration, perhaps because they are more likely than mothers to encourage children to work out problems and address challenges themselves—from putting on their shoes to operating a new toy. When the kids become older still, Dad is usually better than Mom at controlling unruly boys. Jennifer Roback Morse notes that all the surveys of who does what around the house never mention one of her husband's most important functions—he is responsible for glaring. When their son acts up, his glares just seem to have more effect than hers do." This is a skill I learned from watching dear old dad.

3. Michael Cromartie, [Soft Patriarchs: A Conversation with Brad Wilcox](#), [Ethics and Public Policy Center](#), September 10, 2004. Wilcox, who teaches sociology at the University of Virginia, is author of *Soft Patriarchs, New Men: How Christianity Shapes Fathers and Husbands* (University of Chicago Press, 2004). The book is truly ground-breaking, and deserves a wide influence. Here's a sample from his interview with Michael Cromartie: Speaking of the influence of conservative Christian belief on evangelical men, Wilcox said this: "It domesticates men by making them more attentive to the ideals and aspirations of their wives and children, and it does this by providing men with a clear message of familial responsibility, a clear sense of their own status in the family, and equally important, a male ethos where they can encounter other men who are committed to family life. Let's face it—the church is one of the few institutions in the United States where men encounter other men who are interested in talking about fatherhood and marriage—and interested also in practicing what they hear preached. You don't often find it at work; you don't find it in the sports stadium; you don't find it in the local tavern. But in church what you will find is a message and ethos that is family-focused and gives men the motivation to attend to their families. When you look at measures of paternal involvement—things like reading to your children, volunteering for a Boy Scouts group, coaching sports, and so on—active conservative Protestant or evangelical fathers are the most involved fathers of any major religious group in the United States."

