



Photo by H. Armstrong Roberts

WHAT A BOY NEEDS FROM HIS DAD

A friend of mine was talking with friends at the close of a church service. I observed his 8-year-old son slip quietly up to his father's side and take hold of his hand. With a cross expression my friend shook the boy's hand loose and growled, "Don't bother me, son; I'm busy."

I cringed as the boy, with a dejected look, walked away. He wanted to identify with his father. Now he felt rejected. His father had violated a cardinal principle of a good father-son relationship.

Such a relationship is no accident. A lion's share of the responsibility for it falls upon the father.

A recent book, *Teenage Rebellion*, by Truman Dollar and Dr. Grace Ketterman, states: "One hundred young people were asked the following question: 'What person in your life has exercised the greatest influence in determining your behavior and beliefs? The influence can be either for good or bad, and the person may or may not be a part of your family.' The quick response the majority gave was, 'My father.'"

In light of the awesome responsibility placed upon a father, what should he endeavor to give his son?

Teenage Rebellion lists seven things: give strength, protection, discipline, values, respect, laughter, and example. To these I would add love, understanding, and good memories.

Strength

Most fathers readily accept the responsibility to be strong. However, many are confused about what is real strength. Some mistake toughness for strength.

My father was a rugged man. He worked as a cowhand on the famous King's Ranch and later went into ranching for himself. Many of his exploits gave him the reputation of being a real "man's man." But one of his mistaken codes was that a real man never cried in public. Even when my 13-year-old sister died, Dad cried in private.

The first time I saw my father cry in public was the night I preached my first sermon. He came down the aisle with tears streaming down his cheeks to make a decision for Christ. I stepped from the platform and

hugged his neck and loved him for crying.

Sometimes gentleness and understanding show greater strength than stubbornness and toughness. The determination to stand by principles, the courage to face problems and make decisions, and the willingness to understand other family members show greater strength than the so-called macho image of strength projected today.

Protection

A boy badly needs the security of knowing that if he needs protection, his father is there to give it.

When I was a boy, my brother and I were caught in a violent storm some distance from home. Racing toward home we were twice blown down by the wind. We saw the roof blown from the barn.

When we reached our house, the family had already sought shelter in the dugout cellar. But not my father. He stood braced against the post waiting for us to arrive.

The image of my father facing into the teeth of that storm made an impression I'll never forget. Even after