



## Running Rabid

Balancing the passion to pursue with the pressure to produce.

# The Pressure from Family to Provide

*A reluctant producer versus a resilient provider*

Dwight L. Moody once stated, “A man ought to live so that everybody knows he is a Christian... and most of all, his family ought to know it.” One of the greatest challenges any of us will have is being a leader at home. Sometimes in the world and in public we can “fake it ‘til we make it”, but not at home. Our wives and children know us better than anyone. Even though we might fool those around us, we’ll never fool our family.

I will admit there are times I am amazed at how the events of the past 20 years have transpired. Tanya and I moved to Houston in 1993 so that I could start my career as an engineering consultant at Stress Engineering. Life was pretty simple in our 650 ft<sup>2</sup> one bedroom apartment. At work I was pretty much in charge of myself and just did what I was told. Even our involvement in church was relatively simple as we were more consumers than contributors. Fast forward the clock – today I manage a group of almost 20 people, travel around the world, deal with large projects involving multi-nation clients, work more hours than I want to admit, and try to be the best follower of Jesus that I can. The scary part for me, and probably you, is that *what I do when I leave the house is not nearly as important as what I do when I am at the house*.

To say I love my family is an understatement. As much as I enjoy work and am prone to love it (which is not all bad...), if I had one day to live I would not head to the office. After my relationship with Jesus, Tanya and our children are the most important parts in my life. I know I am not alone in making that statement as I know many men at Magnolia Bible who love their families. I recently saw a sign at McAlister’s restaurant in Cypress that read, “The most important things in life are *not* things.” No truer words could be spoken when it comes to the family.

Having established the point that our families are important, it seems logical to transition to discussing our role as “provider” of the family. One of my favorite movies is *Cinderella Man*. It was directed by Ron Howard and starred Russell Crowe as James Braddock, the world heavyweight boxing champion from 1935 to 1937.



Fighting under the name James J. Braddock, he was known for his powerful right hand and comeback from a floundering career. He had lost several bouts due to chronic hand injuries and was forced to work on the docks and collect social assistance to feed his family during the Great Depression. In 1935 he fought Max Baer for the Heavyweight title and won. For this unlikely feat he was given the nickname “Cinderella Man” by Damon Runyon. Braddock was managed by Joe Gould, who was played by Paul Giamatti in the movie.

From time to time I watch *Cinderella Man* to remind myself what is important in life. Like many men during the Depression, Braddock was under tremendous pressure to provide for his family. Unemployment reached 27% at the depth of the Depression in 1933; Braddock and his family were severely impacted by these events. What the movie shows, and what compels me to watch it, was that his love for his family and *desire to provide* are what motivated Braddock to fight against all odds and eventually become the Heavyweight champion of the world.

In I Timothy 5:8 (NIV) we read, “Anyone who does not provide for their relatives, and especially for their own household, has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.” I remember reading this when I was a young man and concluding that one of my main responsibilities as a future husband and father was going to provide for my family. It was a decision I made a long time before ever starting my career or getting married. Like my father before me, his father before him, and his grandfather (i.e. my great-grandfather who lived to be 98 years old) I saw modeled the role of provider. They all lived during times when men worked as the primary breadwinners and their wives stayed home to rear the children. I decided before I even considered marriage that I was going to be like them.

My purpose in this write-up is not to debate whether or not wives should work outside the home; this is something to be decided between husbands and wives under the direction of the Lord. Rather, the question for us as men is whether or not we are providing for our families. I do believe the context in I Timothy 5:8 is financial, although one could also argue the important roles of being the physical protector and spiritual leader for our families. Listed below are several points of consideration when considering our role as providers.

**Willingness to work hard** The Bible is filled with ample passages regarding the importance of being a hard worker, certainly the book of Proverbs. Our wives and children need to see that we are hard workers and that we model a strong work ethic. There is a fine line between being a hard worker and being a workaholic; we must careful to not cross this line.

**Living within our means** Although not always the case, I have observed many times when husbands and wives are both required to work because they have over-extended their finances and burdened themselves with massive amount of debt. A significant level of stress is reduced on families when wise decisions are made regarding finances, especially with regards to large purchases such as houses, vehicles, and vacations. Another danger for us when we over-extend ourselves is we are not able to help those in need. Families that live from paycheck to paycheck have limited resources to assist those in need.

**Making good career choices** There are times when the Lord gives us choices and sometimes those choices relate to our careers. If opportunities present themselves for us to move ahead in our careers and we believe that we can be good stewards of the Lord's blessing, I believe it is wise to accept the additional opportunities to success. Although these moves sometimes require additional faith and trust, the benefits can often be significant and allow us with additional opportunities to impact the world for God's Kingdom. Additionally, if we have poor work habits and personality issues that prevent us from career advancements, these can be overcome through the power of the Lord.

**Avoiding the "rat race" trap** Many of us have fallen into the trap of saying to ourselves, "If I work hard enough and am a good provider and am not able to always be there for my family, that's OK because my primary responsibility is to provide financially." While we are responsible for providing for our families, our first priority is to be the spiritual leader of our families. Our wives and children are far more interested in our being *present as the provider* as opposed to our being the *provider of presents*. As discussed in the first point of the consideration discussed above, there is a fine line between being a good provider and a being workaholic.

In wrapping up this week's lesson I would like you to consider the following question: **Am I being a good provider for my family in terms of financial stewardship and leadership, and am also providing emotional stability and spiritual leadership to my wife and children.** As Lee Iacocca was quoted as once saying, "No matter what you've done for yourself or for humanity, if you can't look back on having given love and attention to your own family, what have you really accomplished?"

#### Questions for the Week

1. In what ways have you seen God provide financially in your life?
2. If you were to offer advice to a young couple, especially a young husband, what would you say?
3. In your life do you trend more towards working too hard (i.e. being a workaholic) or not working hard enough (i.e. being overly-content)?
4. **Food for Further Thought** – explore Proverbs 3:5-6, Colossians 3:27, and Proverbs 16:3.
  - a. What do these verses say about work? If appropriate, consider how they might apply to your being a provider.
  - b. Select one of these verses for consideration. As you look back over your life, can you see an area of your career as a provider where you would have been better off if you had applied this Scripture?