

## A Father's Lasting Impression, 6/21/20

I too am in Dad Joke recovery, but I just can't help it- here are three of my favorite.

-What do you call it when Batman skips church? Christian Bale.

-Did you know that milk is the fastest liquid on earth? It's pasteurized before you even see it.

-This last one you can blame our own deacon, Dennis Cannon, for: Did you know that ants are the only creature that's immune to the coronavirus? The reason is because they have tiny antibodies.

Dad jokes are fun and cringy, and we need a little levity because being a dad can be sobering. It is a wonderful privilege, but also a responsibility and a calling given by God to many men. We live in a culture that has steadily eroded the significance of this high calling in many ways and for various reasons that we won't get into today. Instead, what I want to do today is give you 6 actions you can take to leave a lasting impression on your children.

Disclaimers:

- Not everything I say will be immediately applicable to you, not all parents. Some are, some will be, some were. Some will never be. However, we all know parents, some of us are uncles, godparents, we are the body of Christ and because of that truth we all have a responsibility to help our families know, grow and go with Christ. So you can use these principles in your relationships.
- Not an exhaustive list, lots of other things could be said, not best list, just simply a personal list of what I have learned and what has been passed down to me from my father, principles from God's Word, as well as the men who have modeled and taught me over the years.
- I am not a master of anything I'm going to tell you today, I'm not even saying I do all these well. In fact, I have learned through failure.
- This is not a formula or a promise. I have met many parents and dads who have done these things and much better than I do or my parents and yet their children walked away from Christ, or stumbled into addiction, failure, etc. On the other hand- I have seen horrible parents who have done virtually everything wrong...and somehow by the grace of God, children have turned out to be amazingly productive, godly, and good citizens. Everything is by the grace of God.
- Each starts with the word "use." **James 1:22 Be doers of word, not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.** Warning, each of these are clunky and convoluted because I want each one to be loaded with application. And these are not meant to beat you dads over the head, but rather to inspire us through the Spirit to apply somethings...maybe one thing that makes sense for your family.

### **#1 Use expressive words and physical affection with obnoxious frequency to communicate love.**

Talk with your kids and hug your kids all the time and let there be no doubt how you feel and what you think about them. Take for example the relationship between God the Father and God the Son- publicly expressed his pleasure. **Matthew 3:17- This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased.** God does with us all throughout Scripture. Not just tells, demonstrates.

Romans 5:8 But God demonstrates his love for us, that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

[Slide] Many people say: I know my father loved me, but they never told me. You will hear excuses like, "I'm old school, we aren't expressive in our family, we are quiet." Let me say, that kind of thinking is wrong and hurtful and sinful and destructive when it comes to withholding love from children. Some of us had very little model of this modeled in our lives. That's OK, go to the Word of God to see how God has modeled this. Ask the Holy Spirit to change you, to break you of your quietness, coldness and austerity.

Obnoxious Frequency- everyday, multiple times a day. I tell my boys that I love them multiple time a day. That I am proud of them, that they are such great brothers to each other, I will hug them and kiss them and bear hug them with rapid fire kissed on the cheek until they almost wet their pants. Now, this is embarrassing when a teenager, but it's OK. Let them be embarrassed. You must communicate unconditional love and in doing so you set up your children to understand that the level of unconditional love and affection you have for them is just a fraction of what God has for them in Christ Jesus.

## #2 Use traditions and enthusiastic spontaneity to create memories.

This doesn't seem to be terribly spiritual... but point is to have fun with your kids. Ecclesiastes 3:3-4 *There is a time to laugh and time to dance.* That time should certainly be in the home and with the family. I believe our homes should foreshadow and model our heavenly home. And if heaven is going to be filled with joy, Psalm 16:11 *At your right hand are pleasures forevermore.* Shouldn't we model that joy? If we emphasize only negativity and discipline, or prohibition of everything... if your entire methodology for raising children is defensive- avoid this and avoid that and they can't do this, let me tell you, it doesn't work. You should have certain prohibitions and rules absolutely. That's not the only strategy. The overarching strategy should be "I am excited about this family, and this is a great place to be, a great place to bring your friends and a great place to belong."

[Slide] Create memories through tradition. Every Summer we go to the shore with my family, 6 adults...7 kids, 6 boys and 1 girl, 5 years between oldest and youngest. Now this time is becoming more and more fun...but let me tell you there were some years, especially with babies up to 5 years old, crammed into a little house (all we could afford) up all night, naps, feeding, everyone's different parenting styles... the crying...the adults not the kids... We were ready to throw in the towel many times, we needed a vacation from the vacation. But we stuck in there and these have been some of the best memories and bonding moments for our family and our children. You want to create- "Hey remember when..." moments in your family that make everyone laugh and cry.

But sometimes the best times are unplanned, spontaneous. Stop and smell the roses. You set the pace, Dad. Delight in controlled craziness- One time when kids were little and we got a new TV we took giant cardboard box and made it into a slide, Styrofoam helmets and use packing peanuts as padding... and we set up an epic slide down our steps. Dance parties, backyard

wrestling, walking in the woods, video game tournaments, sports, spontaneous trips... A death sentence to a family is allowing the normal and regular pattern of your family is everyone going to their own 4 corners of the house on their own electronic devices, where they don't come together. You will produce godliness if the emphasis is on joy in your household.

### **#3 Use fervent prayer with tenacious persistency to convey humility and thanksgiving.**

Humble people pray, proud people don't. If you want humble children, you must be a humble prayer. Pray together when you wake up, before you leave for work, before meals, during family devotions, before bed- Every night I pray the Aaronic blessing over my children, before you travel, before a game or recital or event, when there is trouble, sick, when you need wisdom, and always give God the credit when things are good. **1 Thessalonians 5:16-18**

***<sup>16</sup> Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.***

**[Slide]** It's not just a matter of demonstrating humility, they get to participate in God's ordained way he moves powerfully in our lives. Our children have seen God's hand move powerfully through answered prayer like God's financial provision for our lives, in God calling us here to BVBC, God's healing of both their grandfathers. And they have also seen how we trust God through persistent prayer even when God says no or not now, that he is still at work. Romans 8:28 All things work together for good for those who love God and are called according to his purpose. Not a bumper stick. You can teach your children you believe in the good providence of God.

So you can model this through prayer, especially at bedtime. I know, it's late...you are tired, you just want to turn on the TV or chillax, and the mental and spiritual energy it takes to take the time to pray with them in a meaningful way is difficult. But you won't regret it. And these are some of the most precious times you will get with them.

### **#4 Use precious time with strategic urgency in order to minimize regrets.**

The time you get with your children is so short, and the time you influence them is even shorter.

#### **Fiddler on the Roof:**

Is this the little girl I carried, Is this the little boy at play? I don't remember growing older, When did they? When did she get to be a beauty, When did he grow to be so tall? Wasn't it yesterday when they were small? Sunrise, sunset, Swiftly flow the days.

**Psalm 90:12 Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.**

Every night since they were babies, my wife Shannan, after we say our prayers, scratches their backs and sings Jesus love me. There will be a time that they don't ask for that anymore, and we will say, where did the time go? Don't waste it. Misuse of time is a hard thing to shake off. **Ephesians 5:15-16 Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.**

[Slide] Kids spell love TIME. How have you used the quarantine to make the most of your time with your family? What memories have you created? What unhurried time and unplanned teachable moments have you had? Don't wallow in missed opportunities, create them now! Take off a few days. We had a spur of the moment opportunity a couple weeks ago to get away for 4 days to the beach. I didn't have time for it, I had lots of important things to do, meetings, we were about to open our first live service. But God put it in front of us and we seized the opportunity and I trusted the awesome team of leaders we have. No one missed me. We went out in an ocean kayak and we saw dolphins up close.

### #5 Use discipline with faithful consistency in order to train godliness.

Proverbs 22:6 *Train up a child in the way he should go, even when he is old he will not depart from it.* One of the primary ways to train is through discipline. There is discipline that teaches them what to do. Like the discipline of bedtime, eating healthy, doing chores...but also corrective discipline.

Proverbs 22:15 *Folly is bound up in child's heart but the rod of discipline will drive it far away.*  
Proverbs 29:15 *A rod and a reprimand impart wisdom, but a child left undisciplined disgraces its mother.*

Now I grew up with spankings, we used spanking as a form of discipline with our children when they were younger. I realize this may feel archaic and barbaric to some of my Gen-X and millennial parents. But I believe it's a biblical model, although not the only biblical model. There are many excesses and abuses...I realize this should probably have its own sermon. Spankings are not to abuse or humiliate. Should always be done in controlled way, never with your hand, never with anger, and if you can't do it like that don't spank. Not every child responds well to spankings and not every family is this the best method of discipline. The key is find a discipline method that works for each child and then do it with consistency. You might see negative results if you discipline inconsistently, because you teach them to play Russian Roulette.

Discipline when you make a request and the child resists or declines or ignores. Don't beg, don't plead, get all angry and frustrated, don't bargain, don't threaten... James 1:20 *The wrath of man doesn't produce righteousness of God.* You discipline. After, kiss them, hug them, let them know why you had to discipline them and reconcile...which are some of the most tender moments you will have with your children.

Your children may not always like you in the moment. They may feel like you are mean or restrict or lame or you don't get it... but must take the long view. Mark Twain: "When I was a boy of 14, my father was so ignorant I could barely stand to have the old man around. But when I got to be 21 I was astonished at how much the old man had learned in 7yrs." More than humorous quote. Wise parents do not perform to gain the applause of their immature children. [Slide] They do what they know to be true and right, believing that their children will one day come to the same conclusion. I say often- My goal is not to make them comfortable, my goal is to prepare them to life. Some parents don't want to upset their children or make them feel bad. They want to be their kid's best friends. My heart is grieved when I see children that have

not had parents who discipline. Foolishness is bound in a child and the exit door is through correction. Foolishness will go beyond childhood, it will carry into their adult lives. Won't listen to teacher, employer, civil authorities, or God! Remember, Hebrews 12, God disciplines those he loves and who are his children. Now, this is general counsel- I understand that some children have a diagnosis with behavior disabilities or difficulties so apply this with prayer, counsel and wisdom.

#### **#6 Use the practical Gospel with personal applications in order to teach Christ.**

Show them what sin is, what grace is, what forgiveness and mercy looks like in everyday life. It's not self-learned because we live in a meritocracy. You must teach it. Teach them your personal need for the gospel. *Ephesians 4:31-32 Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.*

*Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.* When you sin, and you will, tell them that you too need a savior. I asked God to forgive me and he already has. I have sinned against you, will you forgive me? I need God's grace, just like you. Teach them grace, sometimes when they deserve a discipline, take on their discipline for them or forgive their discipline.

[Slide] This is the most important of the actions you can take and the reason is because you and I are going to mess up #1-#5. We will have good intentions and then it all falls apart or we get lazy and stop. We will get discouraged because we have high hopes, we romanticize something, and our kids don't respond like we hoped. That's the grace of the Gospel. Because of Jesus paid for all our sins on the cross, God doesn't treat us as our sin deserves. He forgives us, repeatedly.

Some of us have had poor fathers, some of us have been poor fathers, or we live with the regrets. I want to encourage you, there is grace and redemption and healing for those wounds in Jesus. God is a father to the fatherless and he is close to the broken-hearted. He can even restore years the locust have eaten. And while you may have regrets in this life, know that no one will live with regret in eternity. He wipes away every tear.

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