

Faithful Fatherhood: A Christian Dad's Guide

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Are You a New Dad?



"Parenting is hard work; it is not for the faint of heart. And, no amount of blog posts, parenting books, or podcasts can truly prepare you for what you will experience. However, I've learned a few things as a father that I wish someone had impressed upon me, even though I can't be sure I would even have listened and understood."

-Brent Rinehart

Before Becoming a Dad, I Wish Someone Had Told Me...

Your life is no longer your own - and it's amazing.

I haven't picked up my golf clubs in two years, and I've only played a handful of times since I've been a father. Early on, life revolves around naps and feeding schedules. Later, Saturdays are taken up by birthday parties and T-ball games. Your schedule belongs to your family. And that's okay. It's funny how your source of earthly joy evolves over time. The things you used to do in your leisure time don't matter as much. As a parent, seeing your child laughing and having fun is worth every so-called sacrifice.



Every child is different - so you have to adjust.

My first child was a handful. As young parents, we struggled sometimes knowing what to do with her. As a baby, she was colicky. As she developed her personality, she was, let's just say, "spirited" or strong-willed. My son, however, is more compliant. Whereas our daughter questions everything, our son is more apt to be obedient. The point is this: every child is different. They respond differently to instruction and discipline, so your tactics as a parent have to adjust. There's no right way to approach parenting that fits every child. You can't assume because something worked on one child that it will work on another.





Raising children is your biggest and most important responsibility.

We have a lot of responsibilities in life. We have assignments to complete in our jobs, and we have tasks to finish around the house. But, there are no more important responsibilities than the one you are given as a parent: to raise a child – a fellow image-bearer – and help them understand what it means to be a follower of Christ. In his book **Raising Kingdom Kids**, Dr. Tony Evans writes, "The reason Satan continually attacks the family is that the family was specifically created as the channel through which God's kingdom would be reproduced, as kingdom kids were raised to become kingdom parents in their own homes."

You will never be more exhausted - but it's worth it.

I'll never forget after our first child was born, some of our friends from church stopped by to bring us a meal. Later on, my friend told me, "Man, you looked rough. That was scary to see how tired you looked." It's true; each stage of parenting leaves you exhausted, albeit in different ways. I can't imagine how my wife felt, who slept even less than I did. Today, my exhaustion comes more from the mental stress of a busy schedule and pre-teen drama. Yes, it is tiring. Just like a long uphill hike to a mountain view, the payoff, in the end, is worth it.



Dating your wife will be hard, but it's never been more important.

Parenting can either bring you and your spouse closer together, or it can drive you further away. It provides opportunities for tighter marital bonds, or it can cause countless arguments. That's why, as a parent, it's essential to make your marriage a priority. That means scheduling time regularly to check in with each other, leave the busyness of the household, and enjoy a night out. With busy weekly schedules, finding time to date your spouse is hard. But, you can't be an effective father if you aren't first being the best husband you can be.



There's no perfect way to be a father to your kids.

As a young father, I remember stressing out about so many things. Would I know what to do if my kids were hurt? Am I a good example for my kids? What if I fail? Will I be able to provide financially for my family and take care of them? I wish I had cut myself some slack. There are no perfect fathers – here on Earth. Our Heavenly Father loves us perfectly, and He is who we should draw our inspiration from. He will give us everything we need to be the fathers He has called us to be. The most important thing I can do is simply to be present – physically, mentally, and emotionally – for my children.





5 Ways to Be a Better Dad

“Everyone has a father, but not everyone has a dad. This may be somewhat of a semantical preference, but I think there is a difference between the two. In my opinion, you can “father” a child biologically, but you can only be a dad relationally. It's the coupling of intentional time, effort, love, affection, and relationship building.”

-Kile Baker

Be Loved by Your Heavenly Father

The first and foremost way to become a better Dad is to let yourself be loved and instructed by your heavenly Father. Scripture is quite clear that without faith in Christ, we cannot be in the family of God. Instead, we are like illegitimate children, with no inheritance or claim to a Father looking to give everything to His kids. And yet, through Christ, His only begotten Son, we can join God's family.



God the Father has lavished His love upon you. He has loved you so that you can show that love to others — especially to your kids. No person can show love to another unless they are loved. So the best way for you to grow in your love for your kids and discover new depths of how to love them is to be loved by your Heavenly Father. It's to read how Jesus talks about Him, pray to Him, to even picture God as a loving Father rather than just a distant, powerful being. You have a Father, a Dad who is invested in your life and future.

Forgive Your Own Dad



Most people have some "Dad wound," especially men. Some of our wounds come from our Dads because they were angry, apathetic, absent, or antagonistic towards us. We wanted their love, attention, presence, or simply their acknowledgment that they saw us and cared for us. Many of us never got that, so the wound never healed. Instead, it remains open, harming how we raise our own kids until someday we give them a frighteningly similar wound to our own. We've passed down the wound we received, even though we tried everything we could to avoid it. Maybe the best thing you can do as a Dad is to forgive yours. For the times he wasn't there, didn't seem like he cared, or for the way he treated you. If you're a Christian, this is something you're not only called to do but should do because you also have been forgiven: Matthew 6:14 For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.

Your relationship with your Heavenly Father and your earthly father are the two most significant factors on what kind of Dad you will be to your kids. If you forgive your earthly Dad, pray for him, and have a better relationship with him, it will heal the wound you have and make you a better Dad to your kids.

Enjoy Them as Kids, Raise Them Like Adults



The kid stage is fun, tiring, frustrating, rewarding, and memorable. They're cute, cuddly, snotty, eating machines that need constant attention and love. Don't miss out on this stage! When they're in the kids' stage, enjoy them, take videos and pictures to capture the moment, and be present in the moment.

As Dads, we aren't helping raise kids because they're already kids — we're helping raise adults! This is an essential shift in how we think about our relationship with our kids. This means that we can allow ourselves to be kid-like when we play with them. We need to wrestle, pretend, do funny voices, stay up late with them, go on adventures and have food fights (outside!). These kinds of opportunities are priceless. Play and fun are pivotal to their development and help cement fond memories with us. We can also teach them lessons along the way about cleanliness, discipline, teamwork, and responsibility, among other things.



Make Sure to Discipline in Love

Discipline sometimes gets a negative connotation, but it's important to the development of our kids. Discipline is required to master a skill, say no to something bad for us, or be corrected when we've done something wrong.

Our kids need discipline, too, especially from their Dads. For the moment, all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

There are two critical realizations here.

- God the Father disciplines us as Dads. We need it! We need to be corrected and drawn to Him to be better Dads ourselves. We need to love truth and be disciplined in our lives to know what's bad for us, so we don't pass those things on to our kids, and to be continually drawn back to the Father.
- If you think of disciplining your kids in the long term rather than the short term, you'll realize that it is for their benefit and your respect that you're doing it. You know your kids better than anyone else; you know what works with them and what doesn't. The important part is that you discipline them with love in the moment, intending to make them better in the future.

Have the Courage to Tell Them God's Truth

As Dads, we often get all of the "tough talks" and moments with our kids. Moms do this too, of course, but I can tell you from experience that I've heard the phrase "go talk to your son..." more than a few times from my wonderful wife.

One of the most important things that need to come from both parents is telling our kids the truth. I don't mean answering every question when they ask. I mean to reinforce God's truth about them and tell it to them regularly.

In our culture today, just about everything is flexible: truth, identity, gender, sexual preference, emotional importance, whether God exists or not, commitment, and standards of excellence, just to name a few. Our culture has prized the individual over community and personal preference over ultimate truth. As Dads (and as parents in general), we need to speak God's truths into their lives every day.

This is our task as Dads — to constantly draw them closer to God, even as culture and society fight to pull them away. Perhaps the most incredible way to be a Dad to your kids is to continually point them to their Heavenly Father, who loves them far more than even we could.

A Prayer for Fathers

Lord, we pray specifically for fatherhood. Your Word clearly instructs fathers to bring up their children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4). God, we thank You for the men who are leading according to Your statutes and the ones that are laying their lives down for Your purposes. We pray that You will continue to use these men to lead their families and other men. We pray You will strengthen the fathers of our nation and that You will continue to empower churches, organizations, and individuals to invest in fathers and fatherhood for the sake of our children.

A Prayer for Single Dads

We pray for the single fathers out there; whether they are raising their children alone or even if they are doing the best they can with the time they have. We pray for strength, protection, wisdom, and discernment to help them through whatever trials they may be facing. Thank You Lord for these men and please guard their hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, help meet all of their needs, that they may experience Your peace that surpasses all comprehension.

A Prayer for Dads Alienated from Their Children

We pray for the dads out there who are being alienated from their children right now. We pray, oh Lord, that You would shield and shelter them from the pain and possibly the anger that may be rising up in them, for You to strike down the barriers that are hindering these dads from seeing their children. God, do not let this destroy them as men, fathers, or in their relationship with You. They need You in a mighty way and we pray You would show Yourself strong on behalf of anyone that is being alienated from their children and that You would reunite these families together.

A Prayer of Blessing for Dads

Bless every father with the best of your spiritual blessings today. Let him know he is not alone in the tasks you have given him to provide for and support those under his care. Show him how much you delight in his work, and affirm the value of whatever You have given him to do—both as a father and as a child of Yours. Confirm his worth daily so he has no reason to doubt whether he is loved in the eyes of his Heavenly Father. Create in him a deep sense of trust in You, knowing that He can count on You to help him lead and protect those dependent on him.

Notes

Sourced From:

6 Things I Wish Someone Told Me Before I Became a Dad by **Brent Rinehart**

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5 Ways to Be a Better Dad by **Kile Baker**

Kile Baker is a former Atheist who didn't plan on becoming a Christian, let alone a Pastor, who now writes to try and make Christianity simple. Kile recently wrote a study guide to help people "look forward to and long for Heaven." You can get one on Amazon [here](#). He also writes at www.paperbacktheologian.com. Kile is the grateful husband to the incredibly talented [Rachel](#), Dad to the energetic London and feisty Emma and Co-Lead Pastor at [LifePoint Church](#) in Northern Nevada. He single handedly keeps local coffee shops in business.

Father's Day Prayers and Blessings by **Matt Haviland**

Matt Haviland writes at www.afatherswalk.org.