

## How To Be a M.O.D.E.L. Dad (or Mom) – 06.21.09

**Intro** - Father's Day is both a reason to celebrate as well as a reason to mourn. Why mourn? 43% of all children live without their dad (U.S. Census). The results are devastating: Fatherless boys and girls:

- twice as likely to drop out of High School
- twice as likely to end up in jail
- four times more likely to need help for emotional or behavioral problems. (U.S. Dept. Health and Human Services)

Why celebrate? Because the opportunity to be MODEL Dads AND Moms has never been greater. We've lived through a generation of broken homes and are MUCH MORE AWARE of the need for good parenting than 20 years ago. This may be one area - more than most - where young Moms and Dads turn to the church to find out what God's Word has to say.

"What does God want from us? What is the goal of parenting?" Here's the conclusion that I've come to -- things are **caught not taught**. Children pay far more attention to our behavior than what we say.

**Gilda Radner** book **[It's Always Something](#)** about pregnant dog, lawn mower, lost legs, puppies, two steps - flipping backside. Why? Because babies are great imitators of their parents. Things are caught not taught. Children have never been very good at listening to their parents but they have never failed to imitate them.

**"God-loyal people, living honest lives, make it much easier for their children."  
Proverbs 20:7 The Message**

It's saying if we walk in our integrity as parents, as moms and dads, our children who follow along will be blessed. Why? They will catch our integrity. Things are caught not taught. If our kids truly catch what we do then what should we be modeling for them? Today I want to look at five areas. I put it in an acrostic called MODEL

### **M** **ANAGE MY TIME WISELY**

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If you are a parent you will remember a day when your time was your own, when you had a great deal more flexibility to do things. Let's just admit that when we have children in our lives, our time is no longer our own. We must work to *manage our time more wisely!* When I was writing this sermon I first thought of the "M" as Make time for your children. But that would be the wrong idea. There is no such thing as being "on" as a Mom or Dad and then being "off." All of our time is parent time, even when we are working - we never cease to be parents.

At least, when I was a young dad, it was possible to be fully away from work when I was home. But this is not true anymore! While technology is wonderful, and makes it possible for us to do more work at home, it also has the negative side of never getting away from work. We live in a world today where it is possible to be completely surrounded by work. Cell phones, lap top computers. It's all around us. We can be accessed 24/7. I've heard it said that there was a time when no one had a watch but everybody had time. Today everybody has a watch but nobody has time.

**“Be careful then how you live, not as unwise people but as wise, making the most of the time, because the days are evil.” Ephesians 5:15-16 NRSV**

Comes down to values. When your values are clear, your decisions are easy.” If I was to take a survey today saying, Where does family fall in your priorities? #1! But does our time really go to that?

I have been so impressed by both Jennifer and Jonathan - both young parents now of young preschool children. There have been times when I have called them on their cell phone and they don't pick up. Why? Because they have learned to turn off their connection to the world so that they might be fully devoted to their children. They've learned that if they don't do that, they're time will be robbed away from them and kids!

**“Fathers, don't exasperate your children by coming down hard on them. Take them by the hand and lead them in the way of the master.” Eph. 6:4 NLT**

There have been times I've taken my kids by the hand and dragged them. Sometimes you just have to do that. But this verse says, *lead them in the way of the Master.* To do that you MUST spend a lot of time with your children, doing a wide variety of activities.

Sometimes people think this means playing with the kids all the time, doing what they want want to do. Children, though, need to be led. They don't really know what they want to do. One thing is certain - they want time with you! They want to do the things that you do! You may need to redirect them. Manage our time. Make them the priority. **As you go...**

## **BSERVE TEACHABLE MOMENTS CONSTANTLY**

If you spend lots of time with your children, you will get used to this question: “Why?” You may get tired of it, but resist the temptation to get away from the question. In fact, make sure they are asking the right “why” questions. Did you know that you should be asking them, “Why?”

**“You must love Him with all your heart, soul, and might. And you must think constantly about these commandments I am giving you today. You must teach them to your children and talk about them when you are at home or out for a walk; at bedtime and the first thing in the morning.” Deut. 6:5-7 LB**

Two kinds of teaching: (a) Specific teaching and (b) Spontaneous

- **Teach Them About Spiritual Things**

Maybe it's how to read God's word, going to church, how to serve, how to love others, talking about who Jesus is. All of those things are specific teachings – spiritual things – that we should teach our kids. Let them see you be involved in serving others. **Story of My Mom and Dad serving in Church - S.S. / bulletin.**

- **Teach Them About Selecting the Right Friends**

If we could get our children to the point that they could see through a new set of glasses and be able to pick out which friends would have positive peer pressure on them we would be far ahead of the game!

**“Bad company corrupts good character.” 1 Corinthians 15:33 NIV**

We want to be able to get our kids in junior high and high school around these positive peer pressure elements so our kids make the right choices with their friends.

- **Teach Them About Self-Control**

This is definitely one of those things that is more caught than taught. Let them see you doing the things that you would rather not do. Your chores. Paying bills. Budgeting. Verbalize what you're doing and why you're doing it.

While we are on the topic - sometimes we as parents lose our own self-control, our own composure. We might become angry with one another or with our children, raising our voices, acting badly. There's no hiding this behavior from your kids. We would prefer to ignore this and not say anything afterwards. Foolish. Like the elephant in the room. Best thing - admit it as wrong AND apologize for it. YES, you should be willing to exhibit humility before your children. Hard to do, but worth it in the end.

These teaching moments are both specific (intentioned) and spontaneous. Children will tend to remember MORE those spontaneous teachings than anything you ever intended to teach them!

## **D O FUN STUFF REGULARLY**

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I love doing fun stuff with my family. Some ideas:

- Play games - cheap and fun! (Rook when I was a kid.)
- Go camping together! (children in yard / canoeing just south of here!)
- Birthdays, special occasions - include children in the planning!
- One on one times (your interests, their interests, Dads- date daughter!)
- Read to them, tell them stories, involve extended family!

**“So I recommend having fun, because there is nothing better for people to do in this world than to eat, drink, and enjoy life. That way they will experience some happiness along with all the hard work God gives them.” Ecclesiastes 8:15 NLT**

Kind of a sub point to that – Date Your Mate. You may say, “I thought that was kind of over once you got married.” You stopped dating and kind of went on with life. Had kids and that kind of thing. No, never stop dating your wife.

**“Enjoy the wife you married as a young man! Lovely as an angel, beautiful as a rose ...” Proverbs 5:18-19 The Message**

The best thing that you can do for your children is to get away together. The best Dad and Mom need to be a great Husband and Wife together first. When you get together as husband and wife you do become better parents. Date night talk? Kids. But that's ok. We are away. We may catch a movie, have dinner. It's time to refocus. It's time to regroup. Then we come back. a little bit more patient, more focused.

## **E NCOURAGE MY CHILDREN VERBALLY**

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The definition of encouragement is to bring hope, courage, or confidence to somebody. Breathing life into them. Breathing courage into them. Breathing confidence. Breathing hope into their life.

**“Think of ways to encourage one another to outbursts of love and good deeds.”  
Hebrews 10:24 NLT**

How do we encourage our kids? Many ways. A hug. Maybe a high five. Maybe an hooray, a thumbs up. Breathing life into them. When I have found it's been difficult to encourage my kids is when they are discouraging with their behavior. That's exactly when it's most important!

They need to hear things like: “Great job! I'm glad you're my son! I'm glad you're my daughter! Thank you for cleaning your room. Thank you for *trying* to clean your room. That's a great drawing. You're God's gift to me. I trust you. You're a great helper. That was an awesome performance. You made the right choice. I'm proud of you. I'm happy for you. I love you.” This is **HARDEST** for parents who didn't hear it themselves when they were children. BREAK THE CHAIN!

## **EARN FROM DIFFICULT EXPERIENCES HUMBLY**

Difficult experiences happen in your family. What makes a family a family is that we cannot control life. Life happens. Bad things happen. And we respond to it in all kinds of ways. Did you know that it is exactly when difficulties come to you that this is exactly when you will have the opportunity to grow closest to your heavenly Father? It's true. It's also when your children will experience the opportunity to bond the closest to you! Let them know when you grieve and when you're troubled.

***“Dear brothers and sisters, whenever trouble comes your way, let it be an opportunity for joy. For when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be strong in character and ready for anything.” James 1:2-4 NLT***

**STORY OF DAD'S FINAL YEARS AT FIRESTONE** - The handwriting was on the wall for the Tire Industry in Akron, Ohio long before the plants began closing. Just like now with GM Plant. Plant closed in 1980, but Dad began talking to me about it in 1973! He opened up to me more than ever and taught me about the connection between “problems” and “opportunities.” It was when Dad and I forged our great relationship!

What difficult experiences are you going through? Don't be afraid to share your struggles with your children. (Be wise and age appropriate.) Don't feel like they can't know. You are missing one of THE BEST TEACHABLE MOMENTS! They will catch so much from you at this time than you could ever intend! “Humbly” means you can admit you don't always know the right answer. Let them see you struggle to do the right!

**CONCLUSION: What one thing do I want my kids to catch from me today?**

Maybe it's one of the five things. Maybe it's managing my time a little better, observing some teachable moments I need to give my kids. Maybe it's just encouraging them. Today I'm going to breathe life into them verbally. Give them a hug or a high five. Maybe it's dating your family. Maybe it's giving them the gift of understanding what it means to learn through difficulty.

**PRAY.**