

Faculty Work Comprehensive List

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Parenting in the Moment

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Parenting in the Moment

Abstract

"Family time is important to both of us, but a predictable schedule of when it will occur is simply not always possible."

Posting about making adjustments in family life from *In All Things* - an online hub committed to the claim that the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ has implications for the entire world.

<http://inallthings.org/parenting-in-the-moment/>

Keywords

In All Things, parenting, work, adaptability, family

Disciplines

Family, Life Course, and Society

Comments

In All Things is a publication of the [Andreas Center for Reformed Scholarship and Service at Dordt College](#).

Parenting in the Moment

 allthings.org/parenting-in-the-moment/

October 7,
2016

Jordan and Luralyn Helming

Understanding our family should, perhaps, start with our wedding day. While I engaged in the traditional bridal preparations of getting my hair done et cetera, Jordan took the police physical fitness and written exams as part of his application to the local police department. Many people were surprised that we were both okay with this, but it was simply what needed to be done. It was the only day the tests were being offered and I knew the job was important to him.

We have experienced several different work and life experiences that have impacted how we engage in life, including life as a law enforcement family (since he did get the job at the local police department). Since our wedding day, Jordan worked in law enforcement as a patrol officer for four years. This meant a rotation every three months between shifts, weekly changes in days off, and a lack of predictability in vacation scheduling. He has served in the National Guard for five years, which included twelve weeks at Basic Training, ten weeks at individual training, as well as the usual one weekend a month and two weeks a year. He worked briefly as a cook, working shift work, but only days or evenings. Then back into law enforcement as a jailer, and the full three shifts again. Today he is in graduate school, commuting to school three days a week and occasionally working in the jail.

Since our wedding I completed my coursework, wrote my dissertation, all while teaching at least one class at the university. Then I started teaching full-time at Dordt College. And, in addition to Jordan's schedule and my coursework, dissertation writing and teaching load, we have grown our family by two children.

As we have moved through these transitions we have learned flexibility in how we spend our time together and how we accomplish things in life. Family time is important to both of us, but a predictable schedule of when it will occur is simply not always possible. We are flexible in our busy schedules so that we can make it a priority. As a law enforcement family we take whatever family time we can get. We eat meals together, whichever they happen to be and wherever they happen to be. There were times when as a police officer, we ate dinner at a fast food restaurant while Jordan was on duty. It was the only time we could spend together.

The day before we were supposed to move into our house, Jordan received the 24-hour warning that he could be called up for emergency response for the National Guard. We figured out how to move that day with the help of our church, though it was a relief when he was not called up. I am currently preparing to take our children with me to a conference, with the help of family, because he has commitments that cannot be missed and cannot include children. Previously, Jordan has watched our son alone for several days while I have been at other conferences.

As a part of this flexibility, we parent however it needs to happen. When our son was born, Jordan was a patrol officer and I was writing my dissertation and teaching a night class once a week. I did most of the child care because I was the most free. Today our child care responsibility is more evenly divided because Jordan's schedule is quite open on days he does not have class and my non-teaching hours are somewhat flexible. Jordan does preschool drop off three days out of four, while I do pick up two of the days and we have carpool for one.

Jordan always makes dinner on the days he doesn't have school. I used to do almost all the cooking, because I knew how. Jordan's original training in the army was as a cook. If you are invited for dinner at our house, you are much more likely to be fed a meal made by him. Some of this is because he is very adventurous in the kitchen and some of it is because if I am cooking our son is much more insistent about being in the kitchen. Though we both have parenting and household responsibilities we would prefer to have or to let the other have, we are both prepared to shoulder all of them if necessary.

We are always learning how to better support each other in our roles. Giving up the kitchen for Jordan's cooking allows him to engage in a task he enjoys while I keep the children out of the way. We take turns on disliked tasks, such as changing dirty diapers. The important one right now is supporting each other in discipline. As our son grows up, discipline becomes more important and we have learned that he simply acknowledges our discipline differently. Though we each take responsibility for disciplining him when he is in our charge, he simply does not take my discipline as seriously, regardless of comparative severity. We have been working on ways for Jordan to communicate that he is supporting me without him taking over the disciplining. It has not had huge effect yet.

We do not find our parenting to be significantly breaking stereotypes, as stereotypes in parenting are being broken all over these days by stay at home dads, two working parent families, single parent families, and so on. We are simply doing our best in all the roles to which we are called. We do this by being flexible, parenting in the moment, and supporting each other in all of our roles.