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What Is It Like Being a Dad?

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What Is It Like Being a Dad?

Abstract

"One size parenting does not fit all children."

Posting about one father's experience raising kids 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/what-is-it-like-being-a-dad/>

Keywords

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Comments

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

What Is It Like Being a Dad?

Mark
Christians

June 17, 2015

Being a dad is the most revered and humbling title I have held in my lifetime. The parenting path begins with watching the amazing birth of your child and caring for an infant who is utterly helpless and totally dependent on your care to survive. The nights are long (but not as long as for Mom); the days go by so quickly; and before you know it you are taking a picture with them before the first day of kindergarten. Being a dad requires your attention 24-7. Unlike other jobs we have, we can't take any time off. Being a dad means holding and consoling your child when they have an ear infection. Being a dad means playing catch or Barbie dolls on demand. Being a dad means directing them to a knowledge of God and showing them how your love for God is not unlike the love you have for your children. My children don't really belong to me (or us); they belong to God and we get the joy of raising them and getting them started toward a life of service to Him.

What have you learned so far?

I have learned that even though our children come directly from our genetic contributions, siblings can be as different as strangers in terms of their personality, their attitude, and their passions. Dad (and Mom) have to parent each child with an equal measure of love, but also with an eye for the uniqueness of each child. One size parenting does not fit all children.

One size parenting does not fit all children.

What would you do different?

Before we had our first child, I imagined what type of parent (or father) I would be. I had visions of being firm and strict as my child learned the boundaries of life. My vision was not only incorrect, it wasn't even close to reality. I, unfortunately, floated to the other end of the spectrum and took on the role of the "Fun Dad". The reason for this was that in the first two years of our first child's life, I was gone several nights each week with work responsibilities, while my wife endured these nights with grace and perseverance with an infant who would cry from 8 to 10 pm every night. I overcompensated for being the absent dad by trying to add joy and pleasure to my children's lives. I certainly would not recommend this strategy as a "best parenting practice".

Joys? Regrets?

When I think about the joys of being a Dad, I easily recall events with my children that remind me of the important things in life. Like learning how to be a friend to not only your best buddies, but also befriending the lonely classmate who has nobody to sit with them during lunch in second grade. Like watching them show proper respect to their peers and adults, especially their grandparents and teachers. Like watching them beam when a friend invited them to their home for a "sleepover" – knowing full well that sleeping was not likely to happen and that they would likely have a meltdown when they returned home the next day. Like watching them transform into an adolescent who believes with their whole heart that their Dad (and Mom) are the two dumbest people on the planet and are incapable of understanding the unique life events they are experiencing. Like watching them begin a friendship which blossoms into a dating relationship and then ultimately into a Christian marriage relationship. Nothing brings more joy into the heart of this Dad.

Nothing brings more joy into the heart of this Dad.

Any parent will likely have many regrets as they reflect on being a parent. For me, the biggest regret was falling into the trap of doing everything in my power to limit adversity and disappointment from my children's lives. My hunch is

that most parents have this regret and it tends to happen more with first-born children who get 100% of our energy and focus to be perfect parents – which is a mythical status that cannot be attained. By standing in between our child and adversity, the child only learns that mom and dad will be there to rescue me, rather than learning the lesson that life can be filled with frequent disappointments and failures and that mom and dad will love me and walk alongside me to help me cope with these circumstances, but not throw me the magical life-preserver every time.

Advice?

My advice for parents is: feed on God's Word daily; be Christ's body daily: His eyes, ears, legs, arms, and mind; admit to your children when you're wrong – apologize – and make it right; work on fixing your own family, not everyone else's – as the saying goes, "that's not your boat to row" — row your own boat and help somebody else only after they ask for help; learn to say "NO" on occasion because saying "YES" too often only leads to entitled children; be Teflon with the small things – pick your battles; don't let the sun go down on your anger with your child or your spouse; don't do for your child what they can do for themselves; enjoy God's creation and what he has given me with a positive attitude – try to live more like Tigger and less like Eeyore; make it a practice to listen more than you speak since God gave us two ears and one mouth for a reason; and finally, laugh until you cry – daily if possible.