

“Better Parents; Better Family”

The Humbling Journey from a Dignified Life to Fatherhood

Jonathan Last, a writer for the *Weekly Standard*, claims, that he was once reasonably dignified. "I dressed like a gentleman and luxuriated in the cultural heritage of Western civilization," Last writes. "My three places of residence—my home, my office, and my mind—were free of clutter and arranged so as to allow me to make the most of my days ..." But then something happened to disrupt his reasonable dignified life. Last writes, "I became a father."

In his essay titled "A Dad's Life," he writes:

One afternoon, I was changing my infant son's diaper when he began [peeing]. Not in a feeble stream, but in a great, turbo-charged geyser ... So I reached over, cupped my hand above his manhood, and waited in quiet satisfaction as he peed on me. I was pleased ... that my reflexes had prevented him from spraying the wall and nearby bookshelf. The dismantling of my dignity took three weeks, more or less.

This is about when I started to realize that the primary effect of children is to take things from you. It begins with sleep, time, and dignity and then expands over the years to include serenity, sanity, and a great deal of money. I am making an observation here, not complaining. It's just what they do ...

I'm not going to lie to you. In fatherhood there is much—so much—to be lost. But there is much to be gained, too. For example, while it may seem diametrically opposed to the indignities of the job, fatherhood is the wellspring of a quality critically important to our culture: manliness.

Working definition of “Better Family”: A ‘Better Family’ is a family (whatever the makeup) that chooses and strives to be ‘more excellent’ together by following Jesus and applying Kingdom principles to family dynamics

Recap - Line #1: A ‘Better Family’ is a family that follows Jesus
Recap - Line #2: A ‘Better Marriage’ is a marriage that follows Jesus

Recap -Line #3: 'Better Parents' are parents that follows Jesus

TENSION/COMMON GROUND

one of best things in life is being a parent

Worried about being a good parent, even with the 4th

Parenting is challenging...

- Challenging because
- Don't come with instructions
- Don't have prior experience
- Society today (Social Media); society/culture telling them certain things are acceptable, that we their parents don't find acceptable - friction there...
- Kids have a lot of pressure today (school, sports, success, social)
- Information available at fingertips - access to lots of stuff, good and bad

And given ALL that, we're all striving to do the best we can parents

We gotta work on ourselves for our kids sakes - NEED JESUS to get better

Worship Note: Better **Parents** result in better **Families**

'Better Family' Kingdom Principles:

Obedience

- Need to be Obedient to Lord with regards to raising our kids

Ephesians 6:1-4 New International Version (NIV)

6 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.

- **Say that with us..."children, obey your parents"**

2 "Honor your father and mother" [Going to be talking about that in two weeks - can feel like a pretty steep challenge depending on your family dynamics]—**which is the first commandment with a promise—3** "so that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth." [again, that's in two weeks]

- As we worked on the sermon this week realized we could preach a whole year on Christian Parenting, for sure a whole series, there is so much so we had to break it up into two sermons

4 Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up [Gk. Ektrephete is literally “nourish and provide for”] **in the training and instruction of the Lord.**

Exasperate = irritate intensely, *synonyms*: infuriate, incense, anger, annoy, irritate, madden, enrage, antagonize, provoke, irk, vex, get on someone's nerves, ruffle someone's feathers, rub the wrong way, aggravate, rile, bug, needle, get someone's back up, get someone's goat, tee off, tick off

Meme: “I don’t want to brag, but I can make my kids angry just by saying, “Good Morning.”

Ephesians 4:31-32 - “Be Christ to one another”, putting away bitterness, wrath, anger, malice, be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another as God in Christ has forgiven you.

Colossians 3:21 - “Fathers, do not provoke your children, or they may lose heart.” (fathers who enforce discipline must not suppress their children’s personalities)

Don’t “break their spirits...”

Dad Recognizes His Discouraging Words

My ten-year-old son was "helping" me paint the laundry room. I brushed; he rolled. When he disappeared to get a Coke, I re-rolled where he'd painted.

I didn't mind this. But I did mind his repeated efforts to reach higher than he should—standing on tiptoe, his arm straight up, wobbly, trying to control the roller heavy with paint.

"Let Daddy get the high stuff," I said. "I'm afraid you'll drop the roller, or lose your balance and fall in the paint."

I'd delivered this lecture several times when I had to leave the room briefly, returning to find Justin once again stretched—ambitiously but precariously—with a shaky and ineffectual roller in his fingertips. "Justin," I barked, "I told you to stop stretching! I'll get that."

"Okay, Daddy. I won't do it again."

In the silence that followed, I wondered how many times over the years I had given my children that message: "Stop stretching." How often had I said, "You can't do this. It's too hard. Let me do it. Don't be unrealistic. Don't reach so high"? Too often, I'm afraid.

"don't break their spirits!" -Friend that had his spirit broken by step father

Illustrates the tough balance between guiding our kids, and teaching them, and correcting them and Disciplining them...

CONSISTENT DISCIPLINE IS KEY; BOTH PARENTS ALIGNED AND IRON CLAD IN THEIR DISCIPLINE AND IN DETERMINING HOW DISCIPLINE IS TO BE HANDLED

Proverbs 13:24 New International Version (NIV) - Whoever spares the rod hates their children, but the one who loves their children is careful to discipline them...

Ephesians 4:31-32 - "Be Christ to one another", putting away bitterness, wrath, anger, malice, be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another as God in Christ has forgiven you.

LADY YELLING AT KID IN THE CAR...

If not obeying Ephesians 4:31-32, Discipline can turn into abuse [2X4 example?] - it doesn't have to be physical to qualify as abuse...emotional, physical, sexual - by a parent, or maybe believe due to parent not protecting you,

If have been abused by a parent or someone else, God wants to heal you...

If something you've done to a child you've known or just realized may have been abuse, God wants to heal you

Guilt & Shame not from the Lord - should have said last couple weeks - can't go back and fix mistakes, but can strive to go forward as well as we can; is important to go back to child and ask for forgiveness...

Worship Note: Discipline is **good**; breaking your kid is **bad**

pray for our Discipline to be Godly; and for folks whose treatment may have fallen into abuse

Proverbs 22:6 New International Version (NIV)

Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it.

Best thing you can give your child is Jesus..

Culture today has become acceptable for the child to dictate whether or not they are going to church...I don't agree - that's for the parents to determine - and if the kid doesn't like it, too bad - do they like their cell phone?

Sowing and Reaping

- [Galatians 6:7-9]
 - **Galatians 6:7-9 (NIV)**
7 Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. 8 Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. 9 Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.
- My life verse
 - Sow, sow, sow
 - Try to do good and don't seem to 'reap'
 - Hard work
- Get real for a second
 - **Psalm 126:5-6 (NIV)**
**5 Those who sow with tears
will reap with songs of joy.
6 Those who go out weeping,
carrying seed to sow,
will return with songs of joy,
carrying sheaves with them.**
 - Sow in tears
 - Reap in Joy
 - Tears water the seed
 - Loss of Child, difficult relationship
 - Must sacrifice in one season in order to reap in another season
- What are you sowing into your kids, honestly?
 - What sow in, what we reap
 - Love, Anger, mistrust, etc.

Closing

Tell your kids you love them (Challenge)

Tell your kids you're proud of them (seems harder as they get older, but they still need to hear it)