

Be A Home Run Dad

Parenthood- Part 7

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If you have your Bibles with you today, let's open them up to Mark chapter 10. Welcome to week number seven of the series called Parenthood. Today, we are going to look at three ways every dad in the room can hit a home run. However, these are really unchanging principles for parenting. And, broader than that, these principles will help you make an impact in any relationship- with kids, with a spouse, or with a friend. We are going to look at three principles that never change in all of our relationships, especially parenting.

Today, we are going to look at an encounter that Jesus had with some children, and in it, we see the three unchanging principles of all relationships. Let's look at scripture. Mark 10:13 and following, here's what the Bible says.

Mark 10:13-16

¹³ People were bringing little children to Jesus for him to place his hands on them, but the disciples rebuked them. ¹⁴ When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. ¹⁵ Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." ¹⁶ And he took the children in his arms, placed his hands on them and blessed them.

People were bringing little children to Jesus to have Him do what? Would you say it out loud? ...So Jesus could *place his hands on them*.... People were come to Jesus so that He could just touch their children. But, the disciples rebuked them. When Jesus saw this, He was indignant. He said, 'Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.' Verse 16, "And he took the children in his arms. He put his hands on them and he blessed them."

In that one little story showing Jesus encountering little children, we see the **three unchanging principles of great relationships**.

The first one, so important. If you are taking notes, number one Use loving touch.

Loving and appropriate touch communicates rich sense of unconditional love and acceptance. In Verse 13, people were bringing their little children to Jesus to have Him touch them. Why did people go to the effort? Why was Jesus so upset with His disciples when they blocked the people from getting to Him? Because there is power in loving, appropriate touch. Jesus wanted to communicate this power and the people wanted to get this power. Appropriate- loving- touch is powerful.

There is great meaning in the Greek word that is translated here as “touch”. It is the word haptomai [hap'-tom-ahee], and it means very literally *to attach oneself*. It means to embrace, or it means to touch. So when Jesus touched the little children, it was very likely He was kicked back, maybe sitting on a rock, and he said, “Hey, kiddo’s, bring it on.” And they came running up to Him and He would embrace them. He would attach Himself very affectionately in an appropriate way to them. He would hold them, maybe snuggle with them and speak just awesome words of encouragement to them. It was very, very relational.

Now, why is this so important? Here’s a story that I read this week that helps to illustrate the power of touch. In the Thirteenth Century, there was this unusual king named King Frederick, II, that tried this just off-the-wall experiment. He wanted to know what language a child would speak if that child was never, ever spoken to from the time he or she was born? So, he had fifty babies brought into his laboratory and he had some ladies agree to take care of these fifty little infants, but the only agreement was, they were not allowed to ever speak to these babies. They were also not allowed to show affection or emotion. They could just feed the baby, change the diapers ... no googagaga. No oollaala. Nothing affectionate toward the babies.

Well, the experiment failed. Why? Because all fifty babies died within a year. Why did they die? Not because they were lacking physical nourishment, but most would argue because they were lacking emotional and relational nourishment. They didn’t have the touch that was so important to them.

I am curious. *How many of you would say that you are kind of naturally expressive with the touch?* You like to hug and kiss, all of that kind of stuff. How many of you would say, *“I’m a little bit more reserved. I’m just not real huggy, touchy, feely?”* Those of you that are really not touchy feely, you didn’t even raise—you’re like, *“I’m not playing this stupid game.”* ☺

It’s funny- a lot of men would say “I’m not a touchy kind of guy.” For most guys- when it comes to touching other guys-- a good firm handshake, a look in the eye, that’s a holy moment! Anything else is questionable....and when we do hug--a good solid hug is a hug, three pats, break the hug, and walk away. Anything else is questionable... It’s just that simple--unless you are playing sports, and then all the touch rules change. Because, if you are playing sports, you can do all these touches that would otherwise be inappropriate. You can pat a guy on the butt in sports, and that is fine. Imagine in the work place, a guy does a good presentation. Hey, good presentation, pat, pat, pat, pat. It’s only in sports, right?

If athletes can learn the importance of touch- we all can. Even if we’re not naturally touchy feely- we can learn this. It is an important discipline. We all need to be touched in appropriate ways and the people all around us need our appropriate touches.

I did a quick word study on the word touched in the New International Version through Bible Gateway.com. You can do this too. It is easy. Search “Jesus touched”. It is amazing. Jesus’ habit was this—every time He healed... He touched. He didn’t just say to people’s ears and eyes and legs- be healed. He touched them. He touched people’s eyes...He touched their ears. He touched a man’s tongue when He was healing a speech problem. There’s power in loving and appropriate touch.

Dads- if you have girls- we’ve got to get this right. Research shows that girls’ need for loving and appropriate touch increases during their pre-teen years. Remember dads, it’s the most important thing you can do to deter sexual sin in your young girls. **When they learn to be touched appropriately by a loving and Godly person, they’ll learn to say no to inappropriate touch from an ungodly person.**

I also discovered from my research that little girls are often touched in a loving and appropriate way five times as often as boys, and yet the boys’ needs are equal. So a lot of times, you know, when a boy is two, whatever, they’ll be all huggy, lovey with their mom or so. When the boy turns seven or eight, their needs don’t change, but they say, “Urgh, that’s not cool. That’s not cool,” **and what we have to do as parents is, we have to be creative and make sure we are still engaged.** For instance, eight- to ten-year-old boys, rather than a lot of hugs and kisses and Eskimo kisses and things like that that’s not cool to a ten-year-old boy, what is cool? Secret handshakes, pats on the back, high fives. Say, “Hey, I’m going to throw you down hard,” and wrestling with them, being engaged in that kind of touch.

Touch is so important...

- Always touch after discipline.
- Always touch after conflict resolution.
- In fact- touch is an effective way to resolve conflict. I will never forget a marriage conference Trish and I went to one time. They taught us this technique- that made a huge impression on me. They said when you and your spouse were arguing... sit down in chairs, turn towards each other, and touch knees. You say- that’s weird... but think about it. It is hard to argue when you are what-touching each other. It’s hard to play the blame game. It’s hard to say—*well you always or you did this* or to name call... **Touch brings you together.**
- Touch communicates unconditional love.
- Find ways to touch the people you love in your life as often as possible.
- Moms and dad- this is important! Your kids need to see you modeling this... could be fun too! You need touch and they need to see you touching in appropriate ways. My kids love to see Trish and I hugging. We always end up doing what we call “sandwich hugs”. They see us hugging and they want to come jump in and get in on the action.

Number one, loving touch.

Thought number two, Ways Dads Can Hit A Home Run/3 Principles To Impact Any Person is SPEND ABUNDANT TIME, lots and lots and lots of time and then more time.

You've heard it said, "*How do kids spell love?*" "**Kids spell love t-i-m-e.**" Abundant time. Look at what Jesus does, verse 13. People are bringing little children to Jesus to have Him touch them, but the disciples rebuke them. In other words, "*He is too busy. He is too important. He's got dead people to cause to live again. He's got blind eyes to open up, don't bother Him with children.*" But Jesus was not happy about that. Verse 14, "When Jesus saw this, he was indignant."

Now, the Greek word that is translated indignant, it could be translated as "ticked off"! Indignant is a soft translation for what the Greek word really means. He was not happy. He said to them, "*No, no, no. Let them come on. Bring them on. Let the little children come to Me. Don't forbid them!*"

How many of you are Nascar racing fans? Raise your hands up. *We're going to pray for you right now.* I mean, you can be healed. I'm just joking. You know, I'm sure it's a sport. They tell me it is and everything. I've been training for it, actually. I think I'm going to go into Nascar. I've been practicing. Watch this. Drive straight, turn left. Drive straight. Turn left.

I'll tell you, though, what is fascinating to me is the pit crew. I mean, you've got to admit that. Seven people in this little place and a car comes zoom, zoom, zoom. And a good pit stop will last twelve to fifteen seconds. They like, change the tires, put gas in, do an oil change, check the car, clean off the windshields, eat a Happy Meal, all this stuff in like fifteen seconds. Zoop, zoom, they're out again

Here's the point—not to bash Nascar—I would argue today that many parents are doing what we could call "pit stop parenting." It's parenting in twelve to fifteen second spurts. Kid comes in. "How was your day?" "Great." "Did you do your homework?" "Great." "Did you wear clean underwear?" "Great." "Don't eat yellow snow and don't have sex until you are married. Good night. I love you." Zoomp.

I mean, right? It's pit stop parenting. "Okay, get in the back of the minivan. We gotta go." "What are we having for dinner, mom?" "I don't know. Find a French Fry under the seat. We gotta go." Driving by, "There's dad. Wave at him." "Da-a-d!" Who-o-m and you're gone.

Now, obviously, I am exaggerating for a point because the truth is, we as parents spend much more than twelve to fifteen seconds engaged with our children. *According to one article that I read, dads are much more generous. According to this article, the average dad spends thirty-seven seconds a day engaged in meaningful conversation with his children.* Thirty-seven seconds a day.

Billy Graham, one of the all-time greats, a reporter asked him, *"If you had your life to do all over again, what would you do differently?"* It's a great question. Here's what he didn't say. He didn't say, *"I would have done ten more crusades and led tens of thousands of more people to Christ."* He didn't say that. He didn't say, *"I would have opened up another institute for pastors and Christian leaders and built more leaders to change the rest of the world."* He didn't say that, either. He didn't say, *"I would have written another best selling book that would have sold millions of copies and impacted millions of people's lives."* He didn't say that. What he did say when asked, *"What would do differently if you had your life to do over again?"* He said, ***"I would have spent more time with my kids."*** Abundant time.

Here's a question to ask when you are trying to decide how to spend you time: *Am I spending my time on something that is temporal or eternal?* Things that exist only on earth- laundry, cleaning, yard work, leisure activities, e-mail, Internet, reading, TV, chores, finances, etc. are all temporal. Relationships...people are eternal.

Obviously, there is a balance here. We have to work to provide for our families. The question is how much work is right for our family? *How much work can I do and still connect vitally with my wife and kids?* Does the house really need cleaned again? Are we going to die if the laundry is not folded until tomorrow or even next week?

More often than not- we need to choose the eternal (relationships/investing in people) over the temporal.

You have time for what you choose to have time for. How long does your life last? James tell us. James 4:14, ¹⁴ *How do you know what your life will be like tomorrow? Your life is like the morning fog—it's here a little while, then it's gone.*

We've got to learn the discipline of spending the limited time that we have in the most important ways!

Transition:

Thought number one is that we will express love with loving touch. Number two with abundant time, and **number three, we want to SPEAK WORDS OF BLESSING.**

Look at how Jesus interacted with these kiddo's in verse 16: *And he took the children in his arms, placed his hands on them...and he did what? and blessed them.* Say it out loud, "And he blessed them." I love that.

I wonder what He said. Whatever He said, it was a blessing. He encouraged them. He lifted them up with His words. *One of the most important things that we can do for our children is to speak words of life, rather than the words of death.* We have to watch the words that we speak.

The parent who blesses with words has learned the skill of working to catch their kids doing something right...rather than constantly catching them doing something wrong. *"Well done. Man, I'm so proud of you. We must decide in our heart to be characterized by encouraging words.*

Here's something that I thought was profound. I never realized this before this week. In all of scripture, there is only one place that the audible voice of God is recorded in scripture speaking to Jesus. I want you to see what the Heavenly Father said to His child. Matthew 3:17, God spoke encouraging words.

Jesus had just been baptized and a voice from Heaven said (would you help me out?): *And a voice from heaven said, "This is my dearly loved Son, who brings me great joy." Think about this. The one time it is recorded of God speaking, "I am so proud of my Son, Heaven is breaking open for Me to brag on Him. You are on the right track, Son. You are knocking it out. You have exceeded my greatest expectations. I want everyone to know, this He's mine. I love you so-o-o much I can't even put it into words. I am so proud of you. You bring me such joy!"*

This advice is timeless. I'm going to turn 40 this year and it still means a lot to me when my parents tell me or write in a card: *I'm proud of you.* Words of blessing never get old. Words of blessing stick in our memories and build a sense of value in our hearts. We're made to long for the appropriate physical touch of others and we're made to long for meaningful encouragement from others as well.

Here's some things to think about with encouraging words:

- **Commend character over achievement.** Godliness, kindness, righteousness, truth, gentleness, joy, grace, mercy, love...shown or embodied in our kids is so much more important than their report cards or their sports achievements. Or...when commending performance... look for character qualities to build up... *Son...great job on your report card- you worked so hard...you overcame adversity...you hung in there...* We need our kids to understand that we love them for who they are more than what they do.
- **Look for how God has made them to shine.** One of the things I pray for almost every night with my kids is that God would help their mom and me help them discover the unique plans God has just for them to do for Him. Ephesians 2:10 says: *For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.* I refer to this verse so often in messages because I want you to know that you are made in God's image, saved by Jesus and made new- God's masterpiece, and that God has planned in advance special tasks for you to do for Him. That is true of you...but if your kids know Jesus **that is also true of them.** It is our task to help them discover how God has wired them, how God has gifted them, and begin to help them dream of what God's plans might be for them today... and when they are all grown up.

Same principle: Jeremiah 29:11: *For I know the plans I have for you,” says the LORD. “They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.*

- Seed dreams for future impact. *I see you impacting the world by...*
- Go for two with one: *Son... one thing I love about you is that I see your mom’s (bless both with one compliment).*
- Compliment/Emphasize good behavior as much or more as you correct/rebuke bad behavior.
- Always speak in accordance to Ephesians 4:29: *Don’t use foul or abusive language. Let everything you say be good and helpful, so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them.*
- Always control words when you are angry. Ephesians 4:26-27: *And “don’t sin by letting anger control you.”^[d] Don’t let the sun go down while you are still angry, ²⁷ for anger gives a foothold to the devil.*
- Never miss an opportunity to compliment. Pick the right time to confront.

Parents, we’ve got one shot at raising our kids. Touch them...spend time with them...bless them with your words. The thing I hear from more seasoned people all the time is *“Enjoy them while they are young.”* I get so tired of hearing it... I feel guilty a lot ...because parenting young children is tough. You get tired. You think it will get better and you look forward to when they grow up. But every older person I see says: *“Enjoy it while them while they are young...time goes so fast...they’ll be gone before you know it.”*

You know, maybe you get wiser as you approach 40- I don’t know. But, I’m starting so see it... Time goes faster and faster. Life seems shorter and shorter. 60 seems younger and younger... and my kids are growing up faster and faster. I’ve got to get these points right as a dad...Time, talk, and touch ...

For those of you that would say, *“Yea, yea, whatever. I’ve still got a lot going on.”* Let me just tell you this. Next time you have a baby, take that little baby and hold him or her in your arms, and what I want you to do, I want you to take a mental picture of that little child, and as soon as you do, I want you to blink. And when you open up your eyes, that little baby will be walking across your living room floor, and I want you to take a look at that little child, and take a mental picture of your baby taking their first steps, and I want you to blink again, because when you open up your eyes, you will be releasing your child to ride a bicycle without training wheels off down the driveway for the very first time. And I want you to take a mental picture of that, and then blink, because when you open up your eyes, that child will no longer be riding off in a bike but driving off in an automobile and you will learn to pray like you have never prayed in your whole life. And then I want you to blink, and when you open up your eyes, that child will be driving off to college, or to get married, or to start a life on his or her own. We’ve got to get it right: Time, talk, and touch ... **These will impact any relationship.**