

THE YEAR OF THE DAD

A Practical Guide to Fun and Faithful
Fatherhood Daily
“Dad”votionals

Michael D. Young

AUTHOR'S NOTE

When I started this idea as a blog, the original idea was to create a full year of posts for dads by dads. That was many years ago, and I had a lot of fun doing it. This book is a revision and expansion of that original concept.

I was richly blessed to have an excellent role model in my own father. I'm the oldest of eight children and I can honestly say that my father is the most selfless, hardworking, and admirable man I know. The vast majority of what I know came from watching him.

I now have three children of my own—two boys and a girl. I've had all sorts of parenting ups and downs, but even on the hardest days, I wouldn't give it up for the world. Being a father has helped me improve as a person and has taught me lessons I would not have learned in any other way. Plus, most of the time, it's just fun!

I come at this topic as a person of a faith. My Christian faith informs the advice that I give and is the lens through which I see the world. Some of the days are more spiritually focused, while others are more practically-minded. I hope that even if you don't share my faith, that you can find things that resonate with you.

Much of my advice centers on those who are first-time fathers. If you are already a seasoned father, I invite you to consider how you are going to pass these skills down to your children. Who doesn't want

their grandkids to be raised right?

No matter where you are on your fatherhood journey, I hope you can be uplifted and be inspired to be the best dad you can be.

Because your kids are worth it.

-Michael D. Young, 2023

DAY 1: THE MOST IMPORTANT WORK

“Children are not a distraction from more important work. They are the most important work.”

-C.S. Lewis¹

This is the first thing that all dads, new dads, and old dads need to know. I take part in many pursuits: my career, my musical endeavors, my writing, and others. I find myself consistently frustrated by the lack of time to make progress in these things, and it is easy to lose focus on what is truly important.

My career and my hobbies are not forever. Careers come and go, as do hobbies. Families are forever. The kind of people my children grow up to be impacts others for generations to come. It is my responsibility to pass on the wholesome traditions of my family to them and to help break destructive cycles. Someday, they will have families of their own, which will curse or bless me for how I raised my children.

Of course, parenting is not the only factor in how children turn out, but even if they do stray, won't it be better to be able to look back and say that you did everything you could? Raising them right is truly the most important thing you can do with your time.

Questions

What are the things that I do to make my kids a priority?

What is one step I can take today to devote more time to my children?

Lewis, C.S. (1955). "The Home: That Divine Abyss." In *Fern-Seed and Elephants and Other Essays on Christianity*. Edited by Walter Hooper. HarperOne.

DAY 2: FHE

Every Monday night growing up was Family Home Evening,
a.k.a FHE.

The concept is simple: every Monday night, week in and week out is blocked out for the family. It isn't so important what is done on FHE, just that it is done together. Not every FHE looked the same, and it wasn't always easy to get everyone together consistently, especially as some of us got older. But the results were worth it!

Often, we came up with a little program for FHE, that consisted of a song, a family prayer, a lesson, an activity, and a treat. We created a chart and switched off responsibilities from week to week. Other weeks, we used the time for a family activity outside the house, like enjoying a movie, going bowling, or having a picnic.

Every family is a bit different, so what FHE looks like for my family might not be exactly what your family needs. You can be creative in figuring out how you can spend meaningful time together.

The great thing about FHE is that it worked with my family. I have seven siblings, and I'm still close to all them, and have a great relationship with my

parents.

FHE is something that I'm continuing with my family.

Questions

Could my family benefit from having a weekly FHE? What would that look like for my family?

DAY 3: NOTHING PREPARES YOU

“Much of life, fatherhood included, is the story of knowledge acquired too late: if only I’d known then what I know now, how much smarter, abler, stronger I would have been. But nothing really prepares you for kids, for the swells of emotion that roll through your chest like the rumble of boulders tumbling downhill, nor for the all-enveloping labor of it, the sheer mulish endurance you need for the six or seven hundred discrete tasks that have to be done each and every day. Such a small person! Not much bigger than a loaf of bread at first, yet it takes so much to keep the whole enterprise going. Logistics, skills, materiel; the only way we really learn is by figuring it out as we go along, and even then it changes on us every day, so we’re always improvising, which is a fancy way of saying that we’re doing things we technically don’t know how to do.”

-Ben Fountain¹

Fountain, Ben. "The Lion's Mouth." The Guardian, 7 July 2012,

www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2012/jul/07/ben-fountain-short-story-fatherhood.

I remember keeping my mother on speed dial the first year of our firstborn's life. There were so many things I had seen her do with my younger siblings that I had simply taken for granted. Sure, I had picked up some skills along the way, but there were things I had never been asked to do.

I remember when it came time to bathe our son. The thought struck me with terror. Probably something to do with the fact that my younger brother almost drowned in the bath on his first birthday, all while I, not much older than he, watched on, oblivious. "Tyler's blowing bubbles" I am quoted as having said.

Imagine my relief when I realized that you can sponge bathe a newborn, or that yes, there's a bath for that. Fatherhood is something you have to learn many things on the job. Fortunately, many of us have parents, grandparents, and friends to rely on to help us get our bearings.

You'd be surprised how much accomplishment you feel when the little guy burps for you after a feeding. It's like an audible badge of honor.

Questions

What skills do I want to develop as a father?

Whom can I rely on in my life to help me acquire these skills?

DAY 4: TIPS FOR WASHING DISHES

Just like laundry and yard work, washing dishes is a constant task that faces parents. It is one of those things that can easily be put off, but the first rule of dishwashing is: don't. The longer you wait, the more the food is going to dry onto the dishes and the harder it will be to clean them. As such, getting into the habit of rinsing dishes directly after a meal and putting them directly in the sink or the dishwasher, is a great habit to get into and a routine to create with your children.

Teach them what goes in the garbage, what goes in the sink, and what might go back in the fridge. If circumstances permit, make washing the dishes a family affair, as the division of labor will help you make quick work. One person can wash, while a second one dries, and a third one puts the dishes back where they go.

Speaking of prevention, those preparing the

meals can have a significant impact on how much cleanup needs to be done afterward. Adopting a “clean as you go” strategy as you are preparing the food, helps create less mess for later. This means that once you use an ingredient or dish, put it away, or put it in the sink.

If you approach washing dishes with clear expectations and planning, it can go from being a daunting mountain to climb, to something that barely makes a dent in your day.

Question

How can I establish expectations for dishes in my house?

DAY 5: ADAM, THE FIRST FATHER

When talking about famous fathers, it makes sense to start with the first father: Adam. He followed the example of His Father, our Heavenly Father, who let Adam discover the consequences of choosing between right from wrong.

Adam didn't shy away from the results of his actions when he disobeyed his father. For being cast out of paradise, Adam could have turned against God and taught his family to do the same. Instead, he took his wife and forged a new life outside of the Garden of Eden. They tilled the ground by the sweat of their faces, working for their own food and their support. They raised a large family, and had to bind together to face terrible challenges in their lives.

His Fall and his subsequent trials were part of what allowed the rest of the human race to exist and flourish. The Book of Mormon tells us "Adam fell that

men might be; and men are, that they might have joy." (2 Nephi 2:25)

Even those who have wonderful parents sometimes stray. Adam and Eve had to deal with the fact that their son Cain murdered their son Abel in a fit of jealous rage. Adam, however, did not give up on fatherhood, but kept up his efforts to raise a righteous family.

We can pattern our lives after Adam, working hard to support our family, raising our children the best we can, and owning up to the consequences when we do something wrong.

Question

What can I do to pattern my life after Adam's good example?

Resources

The Holy Bible, The Book of Genesis

<http://christianity.about.com/od/oldtestamentpeople/p/adamprofile.htm>

YOU'VE STARTED THE YEAR

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Continue The Year of the Dad

The full book offers a daily fatherhood prompt for an entire year, moving between reflection, family activities, practical household and parenting skills, examples of fathers, scripture, and questions you can put into practice right away.



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