

Men's Breakfast: Great Dads make Great Kids

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- [0 : 00] A father is a thing that gets very angry when the first school grades aren't as good as he thinks they should be. He scolds his son, though he knows it's the teacher's fault.
- Fathers are what give daughters away to other men who aren't nearly good enough, so they can have grandchildren who are smarter than anybody's. Fathers make bets with insurance companies about who will live the longest.
- Though they know the odds, they keep on betting and one day they lose. I don't know where fathers go when they die, but I have an idea after a good rest, whatever it is, he won't be happy unless there's work to do.
- He won't just sit on the cloud and wait for the girl he's loved and the children she bore. He'll be busy there repairing the stairs, oiling the gates, improving the streets, and smoothing the way for his children.
- What a great picture of fathering of kids. I've written down some of my favorite father's statements that I've heard over the years. Let me give you a few. I've got lots, but let me give you some.
- [1 : 10] The man on top of the mountain didn't fall there is one father's statement to give to his children. And read the book of Proverbs and see the advice of kings given to their sons.
- I read the Proverbs every day and encourage men's groups to read it. Whatever the date is today, just go to the chapter that corresponds, 31 chapters in the book, and read and meditate on the Proverbs.
- These are some contemporary Proverbs. This is another proverb from a man that I know. Never underestimate the power of human stupidity. Passes that on to his kids.
- Wherever you are in life, first make friends with the cook. My dad, who was a school teacher, says your best friend in the school must always be the custodian.
- Some father says the second time you get kicked in the head by a mule, it's not a learning experience. One of my pieces of advice I give to my kids is marry your best friend.
- [2 : 24] I married my best friend. I don't think anybody else would put up with me. And looking at you, I don't know many who would put up with you either. So it's good to marry somebody who cares about you.
- One of my favorite sayings is, Great dads make great kids. And if you're doing well with your kids, or you're having problems with your kids, a lot of it has to do with you.
- And how you're growing, and how you're differentiating, and how you're maturing, and how your spiritual life is real. And my talk today is fathering. It's a habit of your heart.
- It's not skill. It's your heart to children. So I want to give you ten points. I have fifty, but I picked ten. Because these are meaningful to me.
- I think the first thing that your kids need to see from you, and that you can grant to your children, is to respect your children's mother. You made a great choice.
- [3 : 27] The big thing about parenting for me, is helping our kids make decisions. And if I can help them make godly decisions, righteous decisions, I feel I've been successful as a parent.

Our lives as parents have not been easy. My son was born with hydrocephalus, and is legally blind. That's been a challenge to our lives. My daughter is energetic, and a leadership kind of person.

She's vivacious. She's very beautiful. And she's brought her own particular challenges. One of the challenges, how do you be a younger sister to a brother that everybody in the city knows?

How do I make my own way? How do I do it in a godly way? And so one of the tasks of being a father is to help little girls, when they're six or eight, make good decisions.

I believe if you have children making decisions at three, four, five, and six, they'll be making good decisions at 14, 15, and 16. And so I want our kids to make as many mistakes in their decision-making as they can before they're 10.

[4 : 37] So they're not making in the backseat of cars or deciding about church life. I want them to make faith decisions earlier. And that takes a great load off of my shoulders.

I don't have to be a library with lits. I don't have to answer every question. I have to be the kind of person that allows an unanswered question to go on forever. And so I've learned as a dad when they ask me a deep and provocative question to look a little stupider than they are, to be a little bit slower than they are, and to be a little bit humbler and to say something like, I wonder what that means.

And to think until the child answers the question because I'm training a child to think and to choose and to decide. The first thing I want them to choose and to decide is that you can respect the other six.

I want boys, I want my son, to respect girls. And they see that by how I respect their mom. How do you teach a child respect? Well, you brag.

That's how you teach respect. So I brag about Carol. I brag about her in sessions like this. I brag about my kids. I brag about her to my kids about how when she was 16 and she walked into the school and everybody in the school knew who Carol Morton was.

[6 : 04] And I thought I could never date anybody like her. And they would tell you today, Dad, you married way up. Where did they get that expression from?

For years I've said, I married way up because I respect her, value her, and I communicate that to my kids. Now some of you have gone through a divorce or a separation and things are painful.

It doesn't mean you can't say, she is the smartest person I've ever met. She has more character and integrity. You know, I have not met many people in my work or life history who can't see, who can see the motivations of people like your mom.

Now we didn't do a very good job in our marriage. I want to tell you that. We did a crummy job. And I want to tell you, she's worth listening to. When you do that and when your kids see that you respect that woman that you chose, they understand how to relate to the other sex.

They also understand that choices can be made in your beginning, the road of the good parent. Second thing is to passionately and intentionally love your wife.

[7 : 17] I learned this from a farming family. I love to tell a story. It's a real story. I embellish everything, but this one I haven't had to.

This is great. A part of the job of a father is embellishment. It drives my wife bananas. But I'm a great storyteller with my kids.

And so I would read them the Narnia Tales. You need to read the Narnia Tales to your kids. It doesn't matter if they're 25. Sit them down and read the Narnia Tales. Everybody has to read the last battle to their kids every year.

Otherwise, they won't understand heaven. You need them to understand heaven. Anyway, so I've read the Narnia Tales to my kids for a long time. When they were little, we'd read the Narnia Tales.

And I'd be sobbing through the stories. I just love the stories. And they would say, Daddy, don't cry.

[8 : 17] It's okay. Would you like a cup of tea? I'm just in love with Jesus and in love with them and in love with Carol. And they see this dad blubbering.

And then I'd go downstairs and tuck them into bed. And they had separate bedrooms side by side. And I would pray for them and tuck them into bed. And then I'd go around the corner where they couldn't see me. And I could hear them talking to each other.

Good night, David. Good night, Christine. Sleep tight, David. Sleep tight, Christine. And I would come back as a four-foot mouse named Reepicheep.

Now, it's dark. And I'm not going to tell you what Reepicheep sounds like, but I know exactly what he sounds like. And I would relive the story that we had read about Reepicheep while they're in bed.

Except they were included in the dialogue. And they were included in the story. And a lot of this had to do about the kingdom of God and love and how they were empowered.

[9 : 18] These are stories. The next day, my son, who was a little older than my daughter, would say, Dad, after you tucked us into bed, did you come back downstairs? I'd say, no.

Dad's a lie. Have you ever noticed that? And some weeks later, they knew it was me. But I was Reepicheep for three years at night when I tucked them into bed.

When I hear about parents can't get their kids to bed, I can't figure out why. And my kids would race to bed. They wanted to get into bed. And they wanted to say goodnight because they'd be visited by a four-foot mouse that would tell them about God.

Isn't that great? Part of the stories I would tell, I wasn't only a mouse. I was also a black spider from the Bronx because my daughter went through a stage where she was afraid of spiders.

I can't remember the black spider's name. And in that story, I would tell them about how I was looking for a husband and how I would love that husband as a spider.

[10 : 22] What was I teaching? I was teaching scary things aren't so scary that love can happen. So I advise you to passionately, intentionally love your wives.

There's very few positive images for girls to know what to look for in a man. And young men don't know how to treat a woman. My wife and I are passionate people.

We fight and conflict different points of view. And sometimes they hear it. We don't mind them hearing it. They just have to see the reconciliation too. So Carol and I were arguing about something one night knowing that this would scare my son.

I went downstairs and David was awake and he said, Daddy, are you okay? Is mom okay? I said, yes. Come on upstairs. We want to talk with you. So he got his little bathrobe on and he came upstairs and said, What do you want to say?

I said, I don't want you to say a thing. I want you to see. And I grabbed Carol and hugged her in the kitchen at 11 o'clock at night when the little boy should be in bed. And he crawled in between us and he said, I was worried and scared.

[11 : 28] Passionately and intentionally love your wives. There's very few models of loving. And I would rub Carol's bottom and she would rub mine. Now if we do that today, my daughter says, Dad, get a rum. But when she was little and she would climb into bed between us and Carol and I would hold each other and hold this little person between us.

She knew about what loving was about. My son and I have had a dialogue about women all of our lives and he's wanted to know, you know, Dad, how do I get married?

How do I date? How do I kiss? Where do you move your head? Now I would rather that you taught your sons that than they had others tell them that. Now, this is how I did it with my son.

Now this doesn't have to do with my point. It's just, I mean, I was telling you stuff at this point, but I'll get back to my points eventually. I would go down at night and lie on David's bed and he'd be in the bed and I'd be on top and he'd put his head on my shoulder when he was a little boy and we'd talk and we'd talk about dreams.

And, again, David couldn't see very well. I'd say, David, what's your dream? And he said, I dream that Pavel Bure passes to Linda and passes to me.

[12 : 46] And I wind up and I shoot it and it goes in the three hole and the net goes back, the light goes on, the crowds go wild. And I get down on my knees and I go, yes.

This is a guy who can't skate or see. And he goes to hockey games still and he can see because he can dream. He loves hockey.

You got any extra hockey tickets? I'll take them from you. My son will go. He will not see it but he will feel it. Every noise, every vibration, he knows what's going on.

He intuitively it. Because as a little boy, he put his head on my shoulders and he would dream these dreams of success before he went to sleep. I did a similar thing with my daughter. And so they would go to sleep peaceful and content that life made sense and they could survive.

When he got a little older, he would say, Dad, I wake up in the morning and my penis is big. What does that mean? I said, that means you're going to make me a grandpa one day.

[13 : 52] And you know what? Your kids are going to have to call me what? You're going to have to call me Abba. You want to be called Abba. So when David was about 12, he said, Why do you want kids to call you Abba?

Well, it's like Daddy and that's what Jesus spoke of the Father and I really want to have that kind of relationship with your kids. Kind of father to your kids with you. And then when he got a little bit older, he would say, Dad, a girl leaned over and though I can't see very well, I think I saw too much.

Do I need to confess or something? Does Jesus get mad? He said, I said, No, I'm glad you were able to see it, son. I had to make you feel oh, good.

Oh, really good. And so now he's 23 and he lies in his bed and he's got a beard and I go down and I lie in his bed and he puts his head on my shoulders and he says, Dad, I've been learning a lot about women these days.

He learned it because I loved him. And I've let him store his dream and I've let his hopes be real and he's seen me love Carol in the same tactile, sensitive, listening way.

[15 : 02] You need to do that. You need to create your own stories like this. You've got time. You can start with teens that are having difficulties. Third thing is to understand the mission of your family.

This isn't something that you invent. Stephen Covey tells us it's something we actually discover. So when our kids were about, Christine would be about 14, I think, we had a purpose statement for our family which I can't remember what it was at this point but we had lived this purpose statement and it was to love God and to love each other and to laugh a lot or something like that.

I can't remember what it was but something like that. So I asked with Christine there and my son there and a few of their friends. I said, you know, we haven't revised our mission statement for our family.

I haven't talked about it much. What do you think our mission for our family would be? Now my daughter said right away, Dad, our mission is to make God glad without even thinking about it.

And I said, how do you know that? And she says, because I measure what I do on how I please God. Now she's 21 and she's still saying, if you asked her what her life purpose was, make God glad.

[16:17] Simple. She sees it. She thought it. Now what's your mission as a family? What do you want to do? And I think you ought to have high standards.

I don't mean perfectionistic standards but reachable standards. God loves you as men more while you play than when you work.

He loves to see you playing with your kids. He laughs. At your laughter. He thinks you're funny. It's pretty easy to reach. Super seriousness.

I call it the serious, urgent, and important syndrome. Sui. Kills Christian families. Too serious. Too urgent. Too important. And the gladness of God is when you get on your knees and pray with your kids and pray with your kids.

Enjoy them. What's your mission of your family? I do this seminar called The Non-Purpose Family which is to help couples devise, discover really, their mission statement and organize their time and to plan so that the things that they always wanted to happen begin happening this week.

[17:27] That's what we advertised before. The fourth thing that I want you to know about is to invest time with your children. Children really don't understand a sense of chronology until they're about 10 to 12.

and so if you're not with them a lot they don't think you like them. They don't understand the whole experience of the cats in the cradle phenomenon.

I'll get with you later. It doesn't matter how nice they are or how well they seem to be handling that. It really does mean there's other things that you love more before they're about 12 or 14.

Now that isn't to make you feel guilty that just means to say when you come home and drop your briefcase and take your suit jacket off and kick your shoes off and you sit on the floor and lean your back against a wall and your kids jump all over you it means that they experience that you love them more than anything else.

It also means that when you walk home and they're jumping at you you greet them and then you put them aside and say the most important thing is my wife. And you wrap your arms around your wife and you kiss her like you mean it.

[18:43] And the kids watch this. And for that moment eternity stops. And they see meaning. Now when they see you do that at maybe 15 or 16 and they're practicing their dating skills and she's forever coifing herself and perfuming pushing things up and holding things in and trying to look absolutely ideal.

And she'll remember you and remember what you've done. Eternity stops. So invest a little bit of time. Strategic.

Important time. With our kids we have certain values. As I've told you already I'm really anti-perfectionistic probably because I have too much of it.

And it really hurts me. If it's not 100% it's not good worth doing. Some of you know what that's like. Some of you have no standards at all. I don't have a clue what I'm talking about. Some of you are always grinding against this I've never good enough feeling.

I don't know where I learned this from. I make things up and they seem to work sometimes. I remember taking my son to school and he was about five. No he was about seven or eight.

[20 : 02] And I had a day off that day. Being a pastor you get weird days off so my day off was Wednesday. And so I was taking him to school.

I was walking into school. I'm mixing this right. I'm walking into school. And he had his lunch bucket and we were walking and he was telling how great he was. And I looked at the teacher and I talked to the teacher and I said how's David doing in class?

She said he's doing really well. We're really delighted with him. What have you got on today? And she was telling we had a good relationship with all the teachers. It's a very important thing for dads to know all the teachers by first name basis. I know the superintendent on the first name basis.

I write complimentary letters to our school board as often as I can. They need it. It's good to have dads involved in that way. I'm not a political person but I do want strong influence which is politics.

I want the best to go well for my kids. So we were dialoguing and my son was standing there watching this dialogue going on. And I said to her it doesn't sound like it's too strategic a day.

[21 : 01] She said no it will be a good day. And I looked at her and I said I think my son's too well to go to school today. And she looked at me she was a bit of a weird person too.

And she said I think he probably is. So I said son you're too well to go to school. His eyes opened up. And from 8 o'clock in that morning to 10 o'clock at night we did everything that he wanted to do.

Not such a big thing. It didn't harm his education but it did communicate a few moments of time. A few hours of time with my son was everything. So I brought him home and we did Stanley Park.

We did food. We did movies. We did the thing. I've done a lot of well days. I get them a bit mixed up. I remember my daughter saying to me and she was about 12 or 13. I was driving her to school and I used to always embarrass her.

I'd pull up and wave at all of her friends. Do those very things you're not supposed to do. I'd honk at them and she was humiliated. But anyways we got there and she had been complaining the night before a few days before that we we don't have well days anymore and you don't love me anymore and those kind of pouty things.

[22 : 15] And she got out and she got all her books. You know dad don't do anything to embarrass me and drive up and in the trunk we have everything for the day. She just doesn't know it.

She gets ready and I'm just praying for her. She goes out and she's got her hand on the door. Don't pray long dad. Don't close your eyes. There's people looking. She's got her hand on the handle and I say honey you look too well to go to school today.

Man did she embarrass herself in front of her friends. She screamed. She was so excited. And at 10 o'clock we brought her home and she got ready for bed and I went down to pray for her and kissed her. She wrapped her arms around me and said dad I love you.

What's one day worth? I had a family that came to see me when I was working for family services. The guy was a big executive for Macmillan Bloedel which I think is now warehouse or something.

And this girl at grade 8 I was working for a school board. This girl at grade 8 I mean she was she was a knockout.

[23 : 18] She was a playboy girl at grade 8. And all the teachers would talk about this girl. She wasn't bright but she wasn't capitalizing on intellect. And she wore very seeable clothes.

And she came in to talk with me one day about something. I was the consulting psychologist and I saw her several times. And she told me about how busy her dad was. And she just wished her dad would pay some attention to her.

Now everybody was concerned about the kind of attention she was getting. We didn't know how to interact with this. We didn't know how to interrupt it. We can see it. She's going to be pregnant by the time she's 50. So I said well I'll phone your dad.

Oh he'll never answer the phone. He's got three secretaries. There's no way you'll ever get them. I said watch me. Give me the number. So I phoned and I said let's call her Diane. I don't remember her name.

Could I speak to Mr. Smith? I'm sorry he's very busy in meetings. Well tell Mr. Smith that it's Diane's psychologist calling. It worked. Boy was he mad.

[24 : 23] What do you mean she's seeing a psychologist? Well I described who I was. Well I'm a busy person. I do this. I want to tell you your daughter looks like a hooker. She's going to be pregnant by the time she's 15 and it's your fault.

I mean he used guilt sometimes. I didn't care. He wasn't paying me. I didn't care. So he said well what can I do? I'm busy.

I said you can come down here right away and spend a take her for lunch at one of your plushy hotel rooms you know plushy restaurant things. He said well I'm too busy I've got this meeting.

I said well either you're a dad or you're making a hooker you've got a choice. Just make your choice because she's listening right now while you're here. I said I'll send a cab over.

Well I said oh by the way she says you're a real slob and she wants to buy a suit for you today. Okay. So a taxi pulled up an hour later half an hour later and off she went in this taxi.

[25 : 26] Told the principal don't count her as missing. She's doing a school assignment in my instructions. The father phoned me that night at home and said Patty I want to thank you.

Some tears. He said I had the best day of my life. My daughter. The girl changed. She just changed. I saw her for three years. She just changed because of the love of father.

Invest time with your kids. Don't feel guilty about it. Just do it. It's that easy. Commit yourself to catch your kids doing right. When I was a little boy I remember this.

Our family's deal when I was a little boy was after dinner on Sunday night we would all go downstairs and watch Walt Disney. Some of you who are my age will remember that.

Disney came on at 7 o'clock and we were all sitting downstairs watching Walt Disney as a family. Now I was about 8 and my mom had made chocolate chip cookies in the morning or earlier in that day.

[26 : 31] We weren't a church family. And I remember thinking I need a chocolate chip cookie and an ad was coming because I knew how the programming worked.

So I excused myself to go to the bathroom but in actual fact I was going to find the chocolate chip cookies so I knew where they were on the counter in this cookie jar and I moved a chair over at the counter and the lights were off and I got on the chair and I got on the counter and I was crawling along the counter to the cookie jar really slowly.

You know how when it's quiet and it's dark how every sound is huge? Have you ever tried to take a cookie jar off? Do you guys steal chocolate chips from your wives?

Really quietly take it off and clinked and it just sounded like a thunder and I put it down gently on the counter really quietly. No sound good.

Put my hand in the cookie jar and just then the light goes on. And I look over and being a natural liar I said I found one on the counter and I was putting it back.

[27 : 40] I thought why am I always caught doing stuff wrong? You know it's so easy to catch people doing wrong.

It takes such grace, such spirit to catch people doing right. And I remember when my kids were young I was going to just catch them doing right all the time. I would catch them in doing honest things.

I'd catch them in doing things of integrity. I'd catch them in whatever I could doing things right. Discipline, sixthly, means character development, not venting anger.

I grew up in an alcoholic home and there was a fair amount of pushing and shoving and a bit of hitting in our home. And my dad's idea, God bless his heart, wherever you are today, my dad's died.

But my dad would drive down the street and just swing his arm in the backseat. Now there were three boys. And whoever was dumb got hit, which was usually me.

[28 : 50] I'm the middle son and usually that's Philip the Dumbest. So, I mean, my other brothers would all duck and not me. Whack! Whack! And I never had a clue. I never had a clue what I'd done wrong.

Nobody ever, I mean, when my mom said your dad's going to come home, I just knew I was going to get whacked. And I have no, I mean, I would, I'd feel so guilty. I'm sure I'd done something wrong. I didn't have a clue what I'd done wrong.

So discipline means character development, not venting anger. This is worth the price of admission if you've not seen this before. This is how I discipline my kids. Discipline comes from a root word of discipleship.

And when I discipline my kids, I would say, come into my room, you know, Robert Young, father knows best sort of thing. I used to watch that when I was a kid and that's what I thought a father really was supposed to be.

So I'd go into my room and close the door and sit down and welcome my child in close. And I'd rub my child's back as he's telling me what he's done wrong. But I had two questions and a comment, which is worth writing down if you're wanting to discipline kids.

[29 : 56] This is a very important formula. I'd rub my son's back or my daughter's back. And my son would confess to anything. He would identify as the Antichrist.

Anything. He just feels guilt real easy and he wants to always be true and right with God. Whereas my daughter always knows it's somebody else's fault.

So she's a little harder to discipline. But my son would come in and I would rub him on the back and the first thing that I'd ask him is, what were you doing? Now we usually think of discipline as saying something.

Discipline is actually asking something and getting them to think. If you can get them to think, you're teaching the person how to be a disciple. I want them to think.

So I don't want to answer the question. I want to ask it. And I rub their back. Has God ever beat you over the head with a brick? No, he rubs your back. When I preach a sermon I feel terrible about it. I go home. My wife just says, go into the bedroom, lock the door, get on your knees and tell God how incompetent you are.

[30 : 59] So I do that and it feels like he rubs my back. So I started to do this with my kids. Bring him in close, rub his back and wait until he's ready. You can tell when a child's ready to talk because he can see everything.

And then finally he sees your face. Finally. And then you ask, what were you doing? And the child thinks, I was flushing my sister down the toilet or whatever he was doing.

And then the second question is, what should you be doing? It's moral. I want the child to get in touch with some judgment about his life, some moral life, some character, some source.

I shouldn't have been flushing her down the toilet is not good enough. What should you have been doing? Should have been helping moms at the table? It hardly matters. The third statement is, you can do it, son.

You can do it. I know you can. I'm going to watch you. I'm going to walk behind you. And I'm going to watch you be successful. And I want to tell you, that's not as fast as this.

[32 : 19] But I want to tell you, discipling a child that way, my brother is a principal in a school and has been for many years. He sees a kid walking down the hallway kicking some paper.

He walks up to the child, stands in front of him, he looks down, can't touch the child, smiles at the child with his eyes and says, what are you doing?

The child says, walking down the hallway kicking paper. paper. Good. Keep thinking. What are you supposed to be doing? In my class in arithmetic learning stuff?

What about the paper? And picking up the paper rather than kicking it? Good. You can do that, Tommy. And I'm going to watch you be successful. And he walks back into the class and he watches the teacher and says, this boy is learning what to do.

And he goes and becomes successful. It's called discipline. Discipline means character development, not venting anger. Decide ahead of each developmental stage what you will teach.

[33 : 29] Don't decide while it's happening. Decide ahead what you're going to teach. What do you teach a three-year-old? What do you teach a five-year-old? You need to decide ahead. In the first five years, you teach a child that they can be successful.

Or what psychologists called mastery. So I tell my kids, you're going to be very successful at that. You're going to be good. And my son with hockey, I knew he couldn't see.

I don't want to take that dream away. I say, son, you're going to be successful in whatever you do. I can see it with you. When our kids were little, we would pray with them, their hands upon them, pray for them.

Say, God, show us their gifts, show us their strengths. And as we saw it, we would affirm it and affirm it and affirm it again. So in the first five years, you want to teach mastery, that they're walking in the destiny that God's calling them to.

For five to eight years, perhaps, you want them to be able to think for themselves. So I'll say to them good thinking. Ask them questions that I won't answer until they're 40. I work really hard at not answering their questions.

[34 : 35] I work really hard at helping them answer them themselves. I want them to know that so when they're 15 and they're 18, they not answer questions. And I want them to be able to put their hands up in the university class and say, I disagree with you.

I want that. So those are some of my goals. So the eight to eleven, I want them, this is the most conservative age in the developmental stage for a child, except for the early thirties. Some of you are in that age.

The most conservative two stages, eight to eleven in the early thirties. And I want them to know that they can make moral decisions. And they can be a leader.

Now, when they're 12, 14, 16, they're making a lot of moral decisions, but I want them at eight to eleven to learn that not only do they make them well, they can lead people in it.

At eleven to thirteen, I want them to love themselves. And an eleven-year-old who's growing her hair out, I'll say, your hair is beautiful. And she's getting her breasts and she's starting to menstruate, I'll say, you know, we have to have a party.

[35 : 37] We're at a menstruation party for our daughter. She said, you're going to make me a grandpa, maybe. Dad, I wanted to do something romantic. She wanted to go bowling.

But she was just twelve. But she remembers, do you remember, Dad, when I was twelve and I had my first period and it wasn't embarrassing to you and you hugged me and said that God was making me a woman and how glad you were?

I was preparing her for fifteen and sixteen. Thirteen to seventeen is that they can make covenants, they can make commitments, that they can stand by people when everybody else is giving up on them.

Those are the sort of things I want to teach my kids. Number eight, break bread together as a family. I think our privilege as fathers is when we have a meal together, a lunch or a dinner or juice or whatever we have and we build the ethos of our family.

You get as fathers and as your wives, mothers get to choose the environment that your kids grew up in, the feeling. Pick a feeling, any feeling. You want misery? You can have it. Just decide it.

[36 : 47] Do it objectively. Say around the dinner table, today I've chosen misery and so I want us to gossip and talk about the news and about the new government and how they've disappointed us and about who's been killed recently, his big suicide in West Phantom in the last couple of weeks.

It's upset everybody. Let's talk about that. Or if you want to talk about what the kids want to talk about, then you might pick another tone or you might pick a tone that says there's nobody more special in my life than you.

We call it positively gossiping. I think I started to tell you this story and interrupted myself. A family on the prairies, we learned this from, and they were a family in my private practice and they were talking.

I asked how they raised their children. I said, well, we're a farming family, a Mennonite family, we work the fields. The kids were homeschooled most of the time and went to high school.

I said, but you raised nine kids so well. I said, well, we had an idea. We knew that gossiping was bad, but we always thought that if they could overhear us bragging about them, that would be good.

[38 : 00] So we used to do this around the dinner table. We'd have our dinner and we'd discuss the things and talk about how wonderful they were.

And then we'd tuck them into batter. They'd go up and do their family activities. And around nine o'clock at night, my wife and I would sit around this open stove and we were heated up with coal and there were pipes that went up to the floor above and there were rooms up there.

And the kids would sleep in the bunks and things in this room, boys in one room and girls in one room. They had these big open vents. So everything we said into the stove got transmitted into the other two rooms upstairs.

Actually got it kind of amplified. They had to project into the stove. But they would say things like, boy, I sure liked how Jane drove the tractor today. You know, loud and clear.

And Jane, of course, was hearing every word. And they'd brag about her for a bit. And what a beautiful person she was. And they'd say, little Tommy, he's got such integrity, you know, he did something wrong the other day and he told his teacher about it right away.

[39 : 08] I don't know if I'd have had the courage if I was 11 to do that, but he did. I'm really proud of him. I don't know what he's going to be, but it's going to be great. And they'd go through all the kids, every night they could, bragging about their kids.

Some of the finished their tea and finished their bragging. Some of the kids had gotten back to bed, but others had gone to sleep with their faces on the grate. And they'd come up and pick up the kids and tuck them into bed, knowing that they had been forming a soul.

Break bread together as a family. Create an environment that is delightful. Break, gossip, hyperbolize your family, your love for your kids. I tell my kids, you're the best. My daughter used to say to me, what about David?

Well, he's the best too. What about mom? She's the best too. And they didn't know you couldn't have all bests. My kids really believe that you can be the best. And it isn't a competitive thing.

What about the gossiping? We would sit around the table when they were little, and I would talk to Carol about how great our kids were, and the kids were listening, and they would ask about it, and I said, I'm not talking to you. And then I'd brag about the kids, how great they were, and they'd bring their friends over, and we'd brag about their friends, and they were looking around, what is going on in this house?

[40 : 28] But it became kind of a good place to bring your friends. Hey, the friends like to come. Lastly, give your children lifelong self-worth. When I started the psychology career that I entered into, having any self-esteem was unchristian.

I never believed it, but I was always told it, especially in charismatic circles, you loved God only, and yourself, you were dog food, I don't know.

I just never believed it. I never believed it, because I grew up in a family where I felt like I was dog food, and it doesn't work. And I'd see Christians who were being raised in love, and I'd see they loved God and loved themselves, and loved people I thought I could never get in.

I could never be like you guys. I could never be like your kids. How do you get self-worth? And I realized that the love of a father to a child, Bernie Rundons taught me this, Don, years ago, he's a teacher, he used to say we used to talk about the Imago Dei a lot, he used to teach that, the image of God in people, you discover the image of God in someone, children.

Please talk about on local day, on location God, and that you could be on location God for your children. And I learned through that and through other experiences that they looked to see the Father, the Heavenly Father through me, and through you, on location God.

[42 : 08] What a concept, what an idea. And I know that when I know the Father, I know myself. I know that when I know the Father, I feel better about who I am.

And I know that I can give that to my children, and I want you to, too. I want you to catch your kids doing right, not with their hand in the cookie jar. I want them to practice positive gossiping about you so that they're talking to their friends, my dad's the greatest.

And you might just overhear it one day. I want to hear someday about you, you walking down and lying on the bed of your son or your daughter with their head on your shoulder as you dream about being a ballerina or filling the net with a puck and the red light going on.

Because I know that if that happens, that when they're 23 or 25 or 16 or 50, that you've done your job.

Thanks. Thank you.