

Tips for Becoming a Better Dad
by Jim Burns, Ph.D.

In our culture, when it comes to parenting, the role that fathers play is often minimized. Typically, moms are more connected and involved in the parenting process. But, this doesn't mean that dads aren't important (they are!) or that they shouldn't give their best efforts to becoming the kind of father that God desires all dads to become. If you don't know where to begin, here are some practical tips to get you started towards becoming a better dad!

1) Love and respect your wife! Dads, if you are looking for a way to strengthen your family, start by focusing on your wife. A quality marriage is perhaps the optimum factor for raising secure children. It has often been said that the best thing you can do for your children is to love your spouse. Sometimes that means putting your wife's needs before your children's. If you are a single dad, for you kids' sake, it is still necessary to show respect and support for their mother.

2) Commit to pursuing spiritual growth. One of the most important steps to becoming a better father is your commitment to growing in relationship with God. As you grow in faith and become more like Christ, you will become more of the father that God desires you to be. And, if you want your kids to have vital spiritual lives, then they need to see an authentic faith lived out in your own life.

3) Communicate with your kids. Talk to your kids everyday. More importantly, listen to them! Listening is the language of love! Being a good listener takes some work, but is well worth the effort because listening well will keep you more closely in tune with what is going on in your kids' lives.

4) Let affection be the rule, not the exception. Dads, if it is your desire to build a stronger relationship with your kids, affection is a must. Not the affectionate type? Learn to become affectionate. It is that important. Be sure to offer your kids genuine affection through loving words, affirmation, encouragement, small gifts and appropriate touch.

5) Be intentional about role modeling. Your home is your child's primary source for learning about life. That means they are paying close attention to things like how you relax, how you have fun, what language you use, how you treat your wife and on and on. They watch you to learn how life is lived on a daily basis.

6) "Be there" for your kids. Fathers, one of the most valuable contributions you can make today to becoming a better father is to simply "be there;" involved in their lives. Your presence is a powerful affirmation and sign of caring towards your kids. Your presence provides kids with a greater sense of security than almost any other quality a father can offer. Sometimes, this means being willing to make some tough choices; like choosing to be your daughter's volleyball match instead of being at another business meeting. But, the value of being involved in your kids' lives is more valuable than a bigger paycheck.