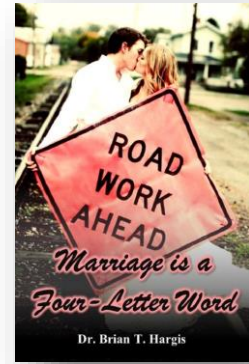


Marriage is a Four-Letter Word

by Dr. Brian Hargis

From CHAPTER 9:

Reasonable Rules for Raising Rug Rats



PLAY WITH THEM OFTEN

A young child's mind thinks in simplistic terms of eating, sleeping and playing. Some adults, especially men, never grow out of that mindset. They know more about playing than they do about working, and so their life becomes unbalanced.

“A false balance is abomination to the LORD: but a just weight is his delight.”

Proverbs 11:1



My grandparents come from an era of hardworking people. Both were raised on farms in the 1920's, and both know what it was like to wake before the sun arose, tend to chores feeding farm animals and milking cows before breakfast...only to walk to school, walk home and tend to more chores, eat supper and go to bed before the sun set. Those were hard days in America.

Grandpa was a WWII veteran of the Omaha Beach invasion, so grandma went to work in a factory, as so many of the women did. They married after the war and moved to Dayton, Ohio where grandpa found work in the production

plant of General Motors. Both were faithful to church, faithful to work, faithful to each other and faithful to their children.

Grandpa's hardworking traits were passed down to my father who continues to work 50-60 hours a week as a machinist. He's faithful to church, faithful to work, faithful to mom and faithful to me, his son, just like grandpa.

Both dad and grandpa were never one for much play. They come from long lines of demanding work to support their families and simply survive, so when grandpa was growing up, there wasn't much time for play because of all the work that needed to be done around the farm. The saying was, idle hands are the devils workshop.

Dad's generation of the late 50's and 60's was much different, yet he still realized the importance of commitment to work to financially provide food and shelter for the family. In my youth of the 70's and 80's, the decline of the working class in society was evident. Both government assistance (welfare) and divorce increased dramatically.

Now, in my children's generation the 20th century, there are more divorces, more cohabitation, more on welfare, more on disability, and more unemployment than in the entire history of our country. In just four generations the evidence of social ruin is obvious. It's hard to imagine where we will be in another 20 years if prophecy is not fulfilled.

I said all that to say this; Grandpa didn't play much. He was a die-hard worker and still fiddles around outside and in the garage in his free time. In his day, if you had idle time to play, you had time to work.

Dad developed the characteristics of Grandpa. He was, and is still a hard worker. Although he made more time than Grandpa, his play time and choice of play was limited. Don't get me wrong, I wasn't deprived and my father loved me very much, yet I cannot count the times that we went to the park, hit a baseball, shot some hoops or went bowling.

I never saw a professional game with dad. We never went ice-skating, rollerblading, roller-skating or swimming together. Dad wasn't the physical type.

I recall going to the car shows, going fishing occasionally, going to the Air Force Museum, wrestling in the house and riding bikes... but much of that was when I was older and dad was more established in his line of work. In fact, we do more now together than we did when I was growing up.

Both grandpa and dad are loves of my life, but I learned a valuable lesson from them – spend quality time with your children.

I've spend time in numerous countries including Egypt, Iceland, Serbia, Austria, Germany, Hungary, Kosovo, Kuwait, Afghanistan, the Philippines and Mexico. I've missed a lot of time with my children. As I write this chapter, I've been separated from my family for four months, with eight more to go. I've missed five Christmas', nine anniversaries and seven of my wife's birthdays.

Through it all, I realize what is important in life...God & Family

It's not the late hours at the office. It's not the money that comes with the paycheck. It's tot the quarter-million-dollar home. It's not the SUV or fishing boat. It's not what you accomplished or how many sermons you preached.

It's "How much closer I am to God and how much time can I spend with my family?"

"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man."

Ecclesiastes 12:13

My foreign travel and zeal for God has changed my life. I can't wait to get home and roll in the grass with my kids. I can't wait to jump on the trampoline and ride ATVs with my three boys. I look forward to fishing with my oldest and playing "hot wheels" with my youngest. What we as parents, need to realize is that our children don't need your money or the things it can buy. They need our time. They want us.

I received a Father's Day card from my 6-year-old son and it said, "What's a dad?" (There's a picture of a dog with a ball in its mouth). Open the card and it reads, "He's a grown-up who never forgot how to play!"

My kids love me because I spend time with them. I play silly, stupid games with them. I discomfort myself to see them happy. I sleep in tents with them. I take baths with them. I inconvenience myself to have fun with them. It's not me making time for them in my life, it IS my life.

When work is done, come home and play hard. When church is over, leave the office and spend time with your family. Turn off the TV, Computer and Xbox and put a puzzle together, color a picture, play a game and wrestle with them. Your "daddy" points will skyrocket in their minds. Next thing you know, they'll be asking for dad to tuck them in bed.

Your life should be full of enjoyment with your children. Life should not be dull, boring and lifeless – like most churches! It should be full of God, joy and fulfillment. Work hard but play hard as well.

For more of Chapter 9: **Reasonable Rules for Raising Rug Rats**

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