

## **An Open Letter To A New Father**

Today is "Father's Day" and I thought it appropriate to write on the subject. I've been thinking about the recent birth of our Grandson and his father, Jon. Watching Jon hold his son I thought, "you are starting an amazing journey." One can read about having children, observe families and fathers with their children, but having your own is different. You will get out of it what you put into it.

First, it will make you appreciate and think more about our own father. You will understand the wisdom of his decisions and why he did what he did. Often it was because of you. He was willing to make sacrifices, so you would have the necessities of life. Having children is expensive and there are things you learn to do without.

Second, you are finding a new kind of love as you look at your child. I was not surprised at loving our children, but I was amazed at how much I loved them. The greatest motivator in life is love. Love is the reason God sent Jesus to die on the cross, John 3.16, love is the reason Jesus was willing to leave heaven and be crucified, "As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love." (John 15:9) Love will cause you to do as much as possible for your children. At the same time, you will learn what it is liked to be loved by a child. To feel their hugs, to hear the word "daddy" and see them run to hug your legs as you come home, are all ways they show their love to you.

Third, children are consuming creatures. They will consume your time and energy. As you are currently finding out, new parents are tired. For awhile you will have those nights of getting up with the baby but those will eventually end. Then you will have to get them dressed, the diaper bag ready, along with their toys other stuff. You will teach them to tie their shoes, pick up their room and do other stuff. This will all require time and energy. Eventually there will come school trips, ballgames, talks about important things such as "who made the sun." Those topics will be replaced by taking them to see their friends,

teaching them to drive, and getting them ready for college. But it is time and energy well spent.

Four, being a father is a privilege and responsibility. You get to see this new creature that you and Noah made come to life and grow. God tells you to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, Ephesians 6.4. As the spiritual head of the family, Jon, it is your duty to teach them God's word, be a good role model as a husband and a father. I don't doubt for one second your ability and willingness to do so.

Five, enjoy every stage of your children's lives. It may be hard to enjoy a messy diaper, or a child throwing up on your good clean clothes, just remember that stage is short lived. Enjoy being able to hold them in your hands and look into their eyes. Enjoy hearing those first words, seeing those first steps, being able to feed them. Enjoy knowing they are in the bedroom next to yours and they are safe. Enjoy coming into the room and hearing them having a conversation with another child, although both can barely say one word. Don't look back as much as enjoy the present moment.

Six, be ready! Be ready for all those why questions. Why is the sky blue? Why don't they like me? And other such questions. They will be replaced by other questions that will only get harder. Be ready for the unexpected. The unexpected trips to the doctor, visits to the school, bumps and bruises, a wall with crayon marks, and a host of other such things.

Seven, be calm and keep things in perspective. Your children will not get everything they want, and disappointment also holds true for parents as well as children. I remember getting a swing set for our children. We had saved up our pennies, nickels, dimes, and quarters. It took a while, but we eventually had enough to go to Walmart and get a swing set. A short time afterward Regena call me and said our children where watching the children across the street. Their parents had bought their children a "Fort!" Don't compare what you can provide materially to what other parents get their children. Our children enjoyed the Walmart swing set and played on it for years. I use that as an

example for other things you might wish you could do but most of those things don't really matter in the long run.

Eight, laugh and cry with your children. Laughter means you like each other and crying means you care for each other. My relationship changed with my dad when I realized he really had a great sense of humor. I enjoyed hearing his laugh and I enjoyed being silly with our children. "A merry heart does good, like medicine." (Proverbs 17:22a)

Nine, work together with your wife and children. Make sure you and Noah are sending the same message to your children. Work with your children for parenting requires you to be a hands-on father. You must be involved with them if you want to have any influence in their lives.

Ten, communicate with your children. Talk to them when they get up and when they go to bed. Talk to them when they are about to leave the house and when they get back. Listen to what they are saying and how they are saying it. Start talking and listening before they can say words. Too many parents lose their children due to poor communication.

Eleven, remember your wife. Eventually your children will grow up. Your marriage is not your children (that is your family) it is between you and your wife. Don't become strangers. Spend time with each other.

–Dennis Tucker