

*Five Ways to Become a*

**BETTER**

**DAD**

*& Grow In Your Faith*



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# FIVE WAYS TO BECOME A BETTER DAD AND GROW IN YOUR FAITH

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## Introduction

I want to help you be a better dad and grow in your faith...*this week!* Let me encourage you for reading this--it means that you are seeking to improve in some way. It shows yourself and those around you that you are making an effort to be the best dad and man of God you can be.

All of us can improve and should strive to get better. I've heard it put this way, "Don't compare yourself to others. Compare yourself to the man you were yesterday."

I don't have a wall full of Dad of the Year Awards or a PhD in fathering, but I do think I have some things here that will help you. You may disagree with some things you read. I am not here to debate or present the *one* way to do things. I am simply sharing some things I have learned along my journey to help and encourage you...and sometimes challenge you, too!

Whatever your reasons are for reading this, I'm glad you are checking it out and I truly hope you find something helpful in these pages. So let's get to the list...

## 1. Spend less time advising and criticizing, and more time loving and encouraging

About two months before my son went to college as a freshman, I put a post-it note on my mirror that said: “Reminders: Don’t criticize. Don’t advise. Just love and encourage.”

Now, do I mean we should not give advice or direction or have rules as parents? Of course not. But in this season of life, when my son was getting ready to move out and experience a big transition, what he needed from me was a dad he could talk to anytime without condemnation or judgment. He needed a dad that let him know he respected him and recognized he was becoming his own man. Does that mean I always agreed with what he said or his decisions? Nope. But I *listened*. I supported. I loved. I encouraged. He is still at college and, most importantly to me; he is still talking, open, and honest with me.

It is true there are many times that we parents have to provide important direction and advice to our children. However, many times we may be trying to "fix a problem," when it might be better just to love and encourage. I understand that the amount you can do this is relative to the age of the child and the specific situation. For example, I am not suggesting we “love and encourage” our youngsters out of the middle of a street or away from the sharp knives in the kitchen drawer. But I have found in my own life as a dad that sometimes they just want to be heard, not “fixed.”

## A Surprise for My Son

I will never forget when my son was about 16 and we were having a conversation in his room about something we disagreed about. At one point, he explained his point of view for about ten minutes straight without coming up for air, and then I said something that blew his mind....”*You’re right*”. I will never forget the look on his face! He was speechless, mouth open but not knowing what to say. You see, he was ready for the debate, the anger, the reasons I was right and he wasn’t. In this case, he was right. His point of view and feelings made sense.

As I listened from a purposefully open mindset, I discovered it did not have to be my way all the time. I realized the thoughts and feelings he had and that he expressed were legit. But to me, the key here was that his thoughts were *expressed*. You see, regardless of the specifics, what this really did was keep the lines of communication *open* and *build trust*. It let him know he wasn’t wasting his breath every time we talked, since I listened sincerely.

## Instead of Fixing, Try Listening

This week, I encourage you, when you’re about to fix a situation for your child, or tell them how to do something, go to them instead with a supportive, listening mindset. Ask them to explain to you their point of view, how they're approaching this problem or getting it done----then really listen! Avoid the temptation to interrupt, debate, or ram your point home. Show them that you love them and encourage them.

As the saying goes, people don’t care how much you *know* until they know how much you *care*. Think about it in your own life.

Are you more likely to take advice from someone you know cares about you and acknowledges your thoughts and contributions, or someone that is distant and just barking out orders? Which type of boss do you like?

At a minimum, this type of support may result in a good conversation. It may lead to some good relationship development and trust. Ultimately, it may even lead to an opportunity for advisement, but that is not your goal. Your goal is to let your son or daughter know that you love them and believe in them. Let them know that you support them and care about their thoughts and opinions. In doing so, you will have a greater influence and a deeper relationship with them.

## **2. Spend intentional time this week praying with your child**

Ask your child this question, “What do you need prayer for?” This can be a great conversation starter and relationship builder. More than that, praying together as father and child is a beautiful thing. It shows them that you don't have all the answers. It models humility and surrender to God's way instead of our own. It shows that you respect God. It teaches them to do the same and it brings you together.

### **Modeling Prayer for Your Child**

It doesn't have to be a study of the book of Leviticus, followed by a sermon podcast and thirty minutes of prayer by candlelight, but I'm also not talking about a simple “rub-a-dub-dub, thanks for the grub” prayer before mealtime! I'm talking about a separate and

intentional prayer time. It might only be for five or ten minutes. I also suggest modeling prayer out loud for your child. Perhaps, you can start by acknowledging God's greatness and thanks for specific things in your life (hint, that kid next to you!), rather than just a "laundry list" of petitions and things we need God to fix.

Don't know where to start? Try asking the question, "What do you need prayer for?" Or, you can ask "What should we thank God for today?" Or you can be open with your child about something *you* need prayer for. This shows vulnerability which can be a relationship builder and let them know they aren't the only one that struggles. You could read a scripture verse or Bible story and pray off of that. Regardless of when or how you do it, it will bring you together and show them that you value them and love them by spending that time together. It also teaches them to value and love God by spending time with Him.

### **3. Increase time dedicated to personal faith building**

#### **A Challenge That Will Pay Off**

Here is a suggestion...Take the time you are spending on fantasy football or basketball [insert your "over-the-top hobby" here], cut it in half, and dedicate the half that's left to growing in your faith.

Did you spend two hours on fantasy football this week? Four hours? Eight hours? OK, maybe it's not fantasy football for you, maybe it's other fantasy sports, Facebook, binge-watching your favorite Netflix show for hours, going out to the sports bar with your friends, poker night...you get the idea. But whatever it is, this

week *honestly* look at the time you spend at it. (If you don't know, ask your wife!) Now, take that amount of time, cut it in half, and use the other half to grow your faith this week.

## Faith Building Activities

Here are some ideas for possible faith-building activities (see the Resources section of [changedthroughfaith.com](http://changedthroughfaith.com) for more ideas).

- Download the You Version bible app and start a short reading plan (5 days, 7 days)
- Pray with your wife three times this week; ask what she needs prayer for
- Read the bible and good faith-based books
- Meet one of your friends and talk openly about their faith journey or yours
- Talk to your wife openly about your faith journey and hers
- Sit quietly, pray, and listen to how God may be leading you
- Do a devotional time of a bible reading and prayer as a family—you it lead first, and then assign the kids to each take a night leading it (keep it relatively short!)
- Take a walk outside to enjoy nature, unwind, and connect with God
- Listen to Christian music/radio instead of sports or talk radio
- Spend an hour at church on Sunday attending service or volunteering, or try out a new local church or small group that someone has been inviting you to

## 4. Schedule a date with your child

We're not talking about date in the romantic sense, of course.

One of the greatest days I've ever had was a "date" I had with my daughter a few years ago. She was about 13 at the time. I scheduled it with her in advance and we had the whole day planned together. We went to an art museum, a botanical garden, and some other local attractions and of course had a great lunch out---great food is always a nice bonus! That day changed and solidified our relationship, that ONE day--amazing!

That date also resulted in my favorite picture. At one of our stops my daughter and I took a picture in one of those photo booths. That picture is all grainy and just printed on a regular piece of paper, but it hangs on my fridge and reminds me of how much I love her and what an awesome day we had. It also reminds me to intentionally schedule other dates with her, my son, and my wife.



So, try scheduling a date with your child or each of your children. This will let them know that you truly value them and care about them more than you do your fantasy football, your car, your golf match, or your job.

## 5. Schedule a date with God

I know this sounds a bit crazy but give it a try. Those of us who are Christians should be following Christ. To follow Christ means we actually need to spend time in His presence. Some may call this a retreat, or devotion time, which it can be, but it can also look a little different. It does not have to be an entire day or weekend. It could be time alone at your fire pit or you could be on a nature walk.

The point is, just like scheduling dates with the significant people in your life, you can do the same with God, who loves you unconditionally. For me, scheduling purposeful time alone with God is something I look forward to. Don't get me wrong, I am not compartmentalizing my time with God as separate from other aspects of my day or my life. I pray and walk with God throughout the day, but this is an intentional way to honor Him and get a little more in depth with God.

### A Trip That Changed My Perspective

Here are a few examples. I do not travel much, but a couple years ago I had to travel by plane for a job interview for a three day trip. During the trip, I simply took the approach that I was traveling with Jesus. He was close to me the whole time. I was frequently praying, listening to Him, and looking for opportunities to help others. It was a very joyful and peaceful trip and, quite honestly, changed the way I live my life.

Another thing I have done is scheduled a half-day or full-day to go to a state park and hang out at the lodge and trails. At our state parks, there is wi-fi if you like to journal in cyberspace, or you can go with the real bible and a journal made of paper! It doesn't have

to last all day, but it could. I know these are not earth shattering ideas, but they don't cost anything and they may get the ball rolling. It is more about changing your mindset to get you to think about scheduling intentional time, or dates, with Jesus.

This is a great opportunity to go to Him honestly in prayer; you might be surprised by the results. Jesus wants a relationship with us. He wants us to be open and honest with Him. Show Him you are willing to spend time with Him, giving up time with idols and receiving his love, mercy and grace.

## Wrap-Up and Contacts

To recap, here are *five ways to become a better dad and grow in your faith this week*. Try at least one!

1. Spend less time advising and criticizing, and more time loving and encouraging
2. Spend intentional time this week praying with your child and praying other times for your child
3. Cut your hobby time it in half, and dedicate the half that's left to growing in your faith
4. Schedule a date with your child
5. Schedule a date with Jesus

## Now It's Your Turn...

- Do you have some of your own ideas to help men be better dads and grow in their faith?
- Do you have a story to share about how you were changed through faith?
- Did some of these strategies work for you?
- Are there other things you would like to learn about?
- Did you find this material helpful?

**Please use the links below to reach out:**

**Contact:** [briangoslee32@gmail.com](mailto:briangoslee32@gmail.com)

**Visit our website for more helpful information and resources:** [changedthroughfaith.com](http://changedthroughfaith.com)