

The Christian Man

Children: A Dad Who Really Makes a Difference

Rough Transcript

Patrick Morley

Good morning men. Please turn in your bibles to Proverbs 19:3. So since the last time I spoke with you, I hiked the Grand Canyon, rim to rim, 24 miles. Took me 18 hours and two days. Started on the North rim at 8,400 feet, 8,600 feet, something like that. Hiked down to the Phantom Ranch, 2,400 feet and then back out to the South rim, 6,600 feet. My biggest epiphany of the whole trip was God is a really big thinker. Wow. So on the way out, I stopped at a place called the Three Mile House. Go rest, stop three miles to go to the top and there's a corkscrew that goes up to the top from there and so when I got to the mile and a half house, I took another break and they had this ledge. I had to walk up these steps and into this little house and there was a ledge in an open area where you could look out over the canyon.

So I thought, well, I'm going to stop and take a break here. So I sat down on the ledge and my plan was to throw my legs over the ledge and turn around. So I'd be looking out over this vast expanse of the Grand Canyon. Well, I went to lift my leg up and I couldn't lift my leg up. I literally, after all these hours, I literally had to pick up my leg and turn it over the edge and I get the other one and turn it over the ledge too. So when I came out of the canyon, there were a lot of day people on the South rim, where the day activities go.

How many of you been to the Grand Canyon? Most everybody. So, you know, the South rim has a lot of day things going on there and when I came up out, there were some people standing around and this one guy said, "Oh, you've been hiking?" I said, "Yeah." He said, "Well, where'd you come from?" I turned around, I pointed back over to the North rim. I said, "Over there, 24 miles." I looked down on my clock and said, "18 hours ago." He said, "Wow, it's really great." There's this young woman there, and she said, "Well, how do you feel?" I said, "Well, to tell you the truth, I feel like I just won the Super Bowl but in order to do that, I had to break every bone in my body."

Then I had to catch a shuttle all the way back around to where my car was on the North rim. Well, that turns out it takes four and a half hours to drive all the way back around; what is 24 miles of hiking if you go straight. The guy who drove me over has been working in the Canyon, living in the Grand Canyon since 1984, so he knows everything. He said, "You see those 12 million year old rocks over there? Well, they're on top of some 6 billion year old rocks. Would you like to know how that happened?" And then he told me how it happened. He knows everything. He told me that about the Grand Canyon, people themselves report about 12 canyon deaths a year. He says it's probably more like 14 to 17 and then he volunteers, he's volunteering this. I'm not asking him. He said, "Can you guess who the biggest group of people are who die in the Grand Canyon each year?" I said, "No." He said, "18 to 35 year old athletic men. Isn't that interesting?"

And there is something you know about being a young man and a young father, young dad where you do tend to think you probably know more than you think you know and so what we're going to be doing

today is we're actually going to be talking about fathering and since 18 to 35, this is when a lot of young men are starting families and so forth. So I hope this will be helpful for you today.

Before we get going on that, let's do a couple of shout outs. The first one goes to Eric Blackwell, area director in the area of North of Los Angeles, Pacoima, if any of you know that area and so if anybody online is in the area, Los Angeles, North of Los Angeles, and you would like help to disciple men more effectively in your church, you can contact Eric.

Then we also have a shout out going to Men in Mission, six men, they've been meeting with us for six years. Six years. That's incredible man. Thank you for joining us. They meet at 6:30 on Fridays at Redeemer Lutheran Church in Hooper, Nebraska. Looks to me like maybe 30 miles Northwest of Omaha. Their passion is to serve God in more rural communities and they come together to support each other and grow as disciples of Christ. John Liston is their leader and so I wonder if you would join me in giving a very warm, rousing Man in the Mirror welcome to both Eric Blackwell and to Men in Mission. One, two, three, Hoo rah. Men, we are honored to have you with us. Welcome and thank you Eric for your service as well.

DO YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT IT TAKES TO BE A GREAT DAD?

All right, so the series is the Christian Man. Today, we're going to talk about children, a dad who really makes a difference and the first thing up is do you understand what it takes to be a great dad? You know, every Christian, every, every Christian father wants his children to grow up, to love God, to love people, to lead a successful life within integrity that brings glory to God. Every Christian father wants these things and so my promise to you is that you can be a great Christian dad, whether you have children yet, whether you already have children or whether children are in your rear view mirror, you can be a great dad and I'm going to show you how to do that. So, do you understand what it takes to be a great dad?

So, my dad wanted to be a great dad himself, but he never attended a class like this. He was never in a church where a group of men surrounded him and took him under their wing and disciplined him how to be a father. So, he was left to guess at how to be a father to me and to my three younger brothers. He did the best he could. Maybe that's the situation that you grew up in. Maybe that's a situation you feel like you're in right now. Maybe you do not have kids yet and you want to be a great dad, but maybe, and maybe you had a great dad, so you have some pretty good ideas, but maybe you didn't have a great dad or maybe you didn't even have a dad, and so you're wanting to have kids, but you're not sure exactly how to be a great dad. Or maybe you already have kids and you're in one of the situations, or maybe your kids are already flown the coop and you never got that information.

I'm here to tell you that you can still be a great dad to those kids and I'm going to show you how and I'm going to do it and the span of like a half hour. Right. So we might scratch the surface here, right? Actually though, I am going to give you 10 super practical ideas today that I really think can be game changers for you. So right now, the result of my dad not having a dad himself and not being, so that was error number was. He didn't have a dad and then error number two was that the church he was in, didn't teach him how to be a dad. He had no guys like you that would take him on his way. Nobody ever met him. So he was guessing. He did the best he could.

I ended up an a very angry young man. I guess my dad had got tired of me getting in fist fights. I got taken home by the police. I got arrested once. Well, I got arrested three times, but only put in jail once

for drinking and fighting and so I was really off. I quit high school in the middle of my senior year, just in a rage. I was just... And so, my dad, he did the best he could, but I had this rage.

Let's look at the scripture. Proverbs 19:3, the one I asked you to look up, it says, a person's own folly leads to their ruin, yet their heart rages against the Lord. That was me. That was me. My own folly was ruining my life and yet my heart was raging against the Lord. It's interesting because when we were first married, my wife was observing all this and by that time I knew I had a problem. My wife is observing all this and she said something to me very interesting. She said, "I think your parents gave you too much say, I think your parents gave you too much say." Now did they do that because they didn't care? No, they loved me. They loved my three brothers and me deeply, but they had never been trained. It never been disciplined on some of the things we're going to talk about here today and some of the things that are in the chapter in this book. So, I'm going to be using this book extensively today to talk about these practical ideas and then the coaching guide of course also that goes with it.

So, look at the next verse. Proverbs 22:6. What does it say? It says, start children off in the way they should go and even when they are old, they will not turn from it. So, this is part of the promise. Then the next verse, Proverbs 22:15, folly is bound up in the heart of a child. So, in person's own folly does what? It ruins their life. That's the problem. Well, what's the problem that causes the problem? It's that folly is bound up in the heart of a child. If you were to ask children, do you understand what it takes to be a great dad? What would they say? Well, they have no idea because they're what? Their children. It's up to the adults in the room to understand what it takes to be a great dad.

So Larry Crab, a Christian counselor and an author, my wife, myself, and as it happened, our children, little tiny, tiny children when they were just infants, still diapers, one of them, we went to a parenting conference at what is now the Billy Graham Training Center at the Cove and it was something else before that. But anyway, Larry Crab was teaching and he taught this idea and this is the Big Idea for the day.

He taught this idea that what our children need from us and this honestly, this will solve almost all of the problems that you have and I'm going show you how, he taught that our children need from us to understand, yes, I love you and no, you can't have your own way. **Yes, I love you and no, you can't have your own way.**

So like in our own family, for me at least, I don't know how my brothers would feel about it. They might have had a different experience. Who knows? But yes, I love you. I knew, I knew my mom and dad loved me, although they were not really verbal people; that happened later in life. That's another story for another day. But yes, I love you and and but then this, no, you can't have your own way. Like what did I say my wife said, "I think your parents gave you too much say." There was not enough structure for me. My brothers may have had a different experience. I don't know. But for me, I didn't have enough structure and so I went off the rails. So when I was in the army, the army was actually the best thing that ever happened to me in the area structure. Why? Because in addition to fighting for the freedom of every living American, the army has an incredibly powerful and successful system to knock the chip off the shoulders of angry young men.

I started trying to pull some of the shenanigans I had pulled with my parents and man, bam, bam bam. You slimy grunt. Who do you think you are? 50 pushups right now, on my command.

So after about 2000 pushups, I was thinking, I don't think this chip is doing me any good. So, the army gave me the structure. All right. So I don't know if there's any lesson in there or not, but the Big Idea today is this. **Yes, I love you and no, you can't have your way.**

WHAT DO OUR KIDS REALLY NEED FROM US?

So then secondly, what do our kids really need from us? Now, can you ask a kid, what do you really need from me, your father? No, you can't ask your kids what you really need from them as well.

When I was about eight years old, I was playing little league and my parents had never been to a game and so one day they said, "We're going to come to your game today," and what did I do? Because folly is bound up in the heart of a child. I pleaded with my mother and dad not to come to my little league game and they said, "No, no, no, we're coming," and finally I was crying. I was sobbing, I was hysterical. I said, "No, I don't want you to come. Please don't come to my game." Finally guess what? My peers did. They agreed not to come. Don't ever listen to the folly bound up in the heart of your child. Yes, I love you, but no, you can't have your own way.

What our kids really need from us, they need us to father the heart. They don't need us to father for performance. We're not going to spend a lot of time on that; written whole book on that. But I do want to cover this. The four kinds of dads. If you take this statement; yes, I love you. No, you can't have your own way and you break it down, you could have three errors as well as the right way of saying it.

The Authoritarian Father says, "No, I don't love you and no, you can't have your own way." Time doesn't permit to delve into this but you can see some of the problems with that kind of a dad.

The Permissive Father. Yes, I love you and yet you could do whatever you want. So I think that my parents were a permutation of this. There was no evil intent. I'm not even saying there's evil intent in any of these necessarily because you can't give what you don't have. Give your dad, I had it. I think most people end up having some kind of a narrative, a negative narrative about their mother and or father. But as you get older, you realize, wow, they were doing the best they could with what they had. Give them a break, forgive them. Please forgive them. Even if they don't want to be forgiven, forgive them anyway. It's good for your health.

Then the Disconnected Father, no, I don't love you and yes, you can have your own way. Then the one we're talking about today is the Encouraging Father. Yes, I love you and no, you can't have your own way. So basically on this whole thing is structure. Here it is. On the side of structure, do not prohibit what God allows and do not allow a God prohibits. That'll keep you safe. Got it. Do not prohibit what God allows and do not allow what God prohibits. That'll keep you safe on the structure side. All right. We could talk more about fathering performance maybe another day. The Big Idea today; **Yes, I love you and no, you cannot have your own way.**

10 SUPER PRACTICAL IDEAS TO "FATHER THE HEARTS" OF CHILDREN

Then finally, let's look at 10 super practical ideas that you can use to father the hearts. Basically fathering the heart, fathering performance is trying to get your kids to do the right things because I said so or because you know, whatever. Fathering the heart is trying to understand the why behind the behavior. So when they're misbehaving, instead of just trying to get them to conform, it's trying to understand what's going on in their hearts. Out of the overflow of the heart, out of the overflow of the

heart, out of the overflow of the heart, the mouth what? Speaks. So what ever your children is saying, there's something going on in their heart that causes that, because why? Folly is bound up in the heart of the child. So you try to figure out how to get that out.

So here are these 10 really super practical ideas are right out of the book. You've got the book. It started, I'm starting on page 117 of the book.

The first practical idea is love their mother. Love their mother. My wife and I, Patsy went to a Catholic marriage encounter like three months after we were married and the leader of the conference was this smoking, cussing Catholic priest, which I thought was kind of funny since he's single. It was a marriage encounter, but he had a great piece of advice. He was quoting from the former president of Notre Dame University. He said, "The most important thing a father can do for his children is to love their mother."

So, this is family systems theory 101, which actually has some education in it. The idea is, is that if you take a child out of a family system and help the child, but then reinsert the child back into another wise, still dysfunctional family system, the change is not likely to stick. So, the idea is is that if you get the marriage right, then this is oversimplifying it obviously, but if you get the marriage right, then basically the families becomes a right too. But if the marriage is not right, this the family's really going to be in trouble. So that's like the number one super practical idea. Yes, I love you. No, you don't have your way. Number one practical idea; love their mother well.

Then secondly, this is in the area of discipling your kids. Lead family devotions. Lead family devotions. I was teaching this bible study and I realized that I was giving you guys all the very best I thought in study and everything that I'd spend hours and hours... I spend 10 to 15 hours a week on this. All right? That's a lot of time and I was doing nothing for my own kids. So, I said, I'm going to start, I want to start having devotions with our family.

So long story short so we can keep moving, you can read more about it in the book, but we took five minutes a day, about three days a week during the school year, took summers off, and I would read a bible verse. I'd talk about some sort of something that was going on in the community or something relevant to their world, then talk about a bible verse and then we would discuss it for a minute or two and then we'd have a short prayer. I was running over so my wife bought me an alarm clock so that, so that we would make sure the kids weren't late to school. Develop your own methodology, your own idea, but if you have children, or plan to have children, you cannot delegate the discipleship of your children to a professional pastor. Do you understand what I'm saying?

One of the unintended consequences of youth ministry is that a lot people, and I think people are coming back the other way now, the pendulum is going the other way, but for a long time it seemed though people thought, well, okay, I've covered the spiritual growth of my kids because we have them in youth group. Guess what, doesn't work that way.

Number three. So, number one is what? Love their mother. Number two is what? Read family devotions. Number three, pay your children to do personal devotions. What? Pay your kids to do God's work. That sounds like heresy. Are you unorthodox?

All I can tell you is, I know it sounds like a bribe. All I can tell you is that we paid our kids to do daily devotions and during their high school years and they did daily devotions. None of the friends did and one day our daughter was already in college now and our son was still in high school and we got

together for the annual renewal of the deal to pay them for devotions. They had gotten together beforehand and they said, "Mom and dad, you don't need to pay us to do these devotions anymore. We're going to be doing them anyway." All right. So that's idea number three.

So, love their mother well, lead family devotions, pay your children for personal devotions. You can read more about the details of how we did it in this book. Number four, take your children to church. Many parents wonder should we force our children to go to church? Let me respond to that by asking you another question. Should you force your children to go to school?

Transfer the responsibility, by the way, when your kids get to be teens. This is not a problem till they're about 12 maybe 13 but then their friends become very important. They want to go out a Saturday night and then they're too tired to get up. So transfer, this is my wife's idea, transfer the responsibility for them getting up to go to church from you to them. Instead of, "You have to get up. You have to get up." Just you simply say this, "That's okay. You don't have to go to church and you can sleep in. But if you sleep in, then that means that next Saturday night you're not going to be able to go out." So, guess how many times our children slept in. Once. They wanted to test it to see if we're really going to do it and slept in once and then they never missed church again.

Okay, so love their mother well, lead family devotions, pay your kids to do personal devotions, take your children to church and then number five set some work and family boundaries. Now this will depend on the kind of job you have, obviously. I was self-employed so I was able to do this. I never worked past six. I never took work home. I never worked weekends. That was just an iron law for me. So for me though, I love, I love work. I mean I would really rather work than eat and often do, still.

I love to work so much, but to discipline myself, we had a little creek three minutes from our house so what I would do is, I would allow my mind to run, process all things on the way home but then when I would get to that little creek, I would take figuratively in my mind, I would take all these cares and I put them in a metal briefcase, snap it shut and as I drove over this little bridge, I would throw the briefcase over into the creek. Then that gave me about three minutes to prepare myself to re-enter the family orbit.

So set some boundaries for yourself. Whatever your boundaries are, set some boundaries here. Here's what I've noticed. Men tend to compartmentalize their family when they're at work, but they don't tend to compartmentalize their work when they're with the families. No, no.

All right. So, love their mother well. What? Do family devotions. Pay them to do personal devotions. Take them to church. Set work and family boundaries. Number six, give your kids time how they want to receive it. In other words, don't try to force your kids to do what you want to do. Figure out what they want to do and then do it. So when our kids were young, it was board games. We played board games every night. Just board games. There are some games I never want to see again; Candyland. But later and then when they graduated to team sports and music lessons, their mother and I attended all of their events. So maybe your kids like board games. Maybe they liked to go to movies, maybe like ice cream or gelato. Maybe they like you to have you read the books. Maybe they like to play video games. Whatever it is, give your kids time the way they want to receive it.

So number seven, dating our teens. So, I already mentioned that when things change, when your kids turn about 12, 13 years of age and when ours did, I realized that I was going to have to be intentional if

we wanted to spend a time together. So I started taking, I started dating my kids and what I would do, we had Tuesday was date night and with two children.

So every other week I would take one child out to dinner, some kind of a pizza place, and then we would either go-carts, we'd go to a mall, we would sometimes go to movie, but that would be our time together and we have conversation and then later I was so glad I did it because I look back and I realized that that for those few years, so if you have teens, think about this or if you will, if you have kids or we'll have kids, you're going to have teens some time, think about this. If you would spend that time with your kid, that will be probably the most meaningful and possibly only one on one time you actually ended up having with your kids.

So, I look back and I see, you take out holidays and everything, two kids about 20 times a year for several years, I had these incredible conversations with my kids that I would otherwise have never had. I would never have had those conversations.

So, love their mother well. Do family devotions. Pay your kids to do personal devotions. What? Take them to church. Okay. What? Number five? Work and family boundaries. Okay, number six?

Number eight, eat dinner together. Eat dinner together. A lot could be said. Here's what you need to know. It's studied. It's research. It's proven. This is one of the primary ways family values are transferred. You have to get creative, especially when they're doing games and things like that. Sometimes we had to eat early, sometimes we had to late. Sometimes we had to eat at Burger King, but we made that a priority and you should too.

Number nine, pray for your children. I thought these were going to be practical ideas. Pray for your children. Hey look, probably the most practical thing that you can do is to pray for your children. Think about it. Think about this. You are probably, you and your spouse, are probably you and their mother, if you're not together anymore are probably the only two people in the whole world that actually willing to pray for your children on a regular basis. There's some ideas on how to do that in this book.

Then the final idea is encourage your children with words. So, let's review these ideas.

Number one is, love their mother. Number two, family devotions. Number three, pay your kids to do personal devotion. Number four, take them to church. Number five, set work and family boundaries. Number six, give kids time the way they want it. Number nine, number eight, number seven, date your kids. Date our teens. Number eight, eat dinner together. Number nine, pray for your children. And number 10, encourage your children with words.

Encourage your children with words. I wish I could read my writing. There are two statements that every child wants to hear although none of these children that we have or you will ever have or you've ever had, will be able to tell you this. Maybe later in their life, but no child in your home is ever going to be able to tell you this, but there are two statements that every child longs, yearns to here. Do you know what they are?

I love you and I'm proud of you and there is biblical precedent for this at both the baptism of Jesus and at the transfiguration, the the father's voice said of Jesus, "This is my beloved son. I love him. In who I am well pleased." I'm proud of him. God, the father, the perfect father, the things that he said twice about his son, I love him and I'm proud of him. These are the two statements and even though your

children can't explain it, they'd never be able to put it into words if they could, they would, say, "Dad, this is what I really need from you. This is what I really need from you."

So, our son was playing point guard, high school basketball. Mom and my mom and dad had never seen him play. They came to visit. I love telling this story. So, we were sitting in the stands watching our son and I was commenting how proud we were of our son for all of the great diligence, leadership qualities that we're developing, all of these kinds of things and my mom just kind of wistfully said she's looking out into outer space and said to no one in particular. She said, "You know, when our four boys were growing up, I don't think we told them often enough that we were proud of them." I'm thinking, mom I'm sitting right here. You can say to me. You don't have to say like in the third person here. I'm sitting right here.

Then my mind exploded. It just exploded. I had these two kind of thoughts, wrestling, pulling back and forth, grappling with each other. That's right. You didn't do that. Why did you do that? It would have been so easy for you to do that to tell me that you are proud of me. Why didn't you do that? Then the other thought that was competed with that, also exploding in my mind, it's not too late, mom, you can do it now. I'm right here. You can tell me.

Man, in the name of Jesus, tell your children every day, I love you. I'm proud of you. I'm proud of you. I love you and this is where if you had made some mistakes in the past, you can take a step forward. If you have regrets, call your children today and tell them that you love them, tell them that you're proud of them and if you need to ask them for forgiveness, for not telling them earlier how much you love them and to how proud you are, then do that. But do it today and don't text in love. Don't email and be proud. Don't text. Pick up the phone. Give them a call. Tell them I love you and I'm proud of you.

If you've got a little baby in the womb, if you've got a little baby in the womb, just lean down in whisper, son, daughter, I love you. I don't know you yet, but I'm proud of you too and if you have young kids, every day, every day before you leave the house, or everyday when you get home, whenever it's convenient for you, I love you and I'm proud of you over and over again.

Here's the gravy. Here's the gravy. So, I was preparing this message right. This morning. I was working on it, right? I happened to glance up and I saw this card, this birthday card for my most recent birthday and I have it on my desk in the most prominent space, but all week long is I've been preparing I didn't see it and I just saw this. One of the last things I was doing before I was getting ready to come here.

Happy birthday, Dad. I love you. Excuse me. Happy birthday Dad. I hope you have a wonderful day and feel all the love that you deserve. I am so grateful for you. For the way you raised me and for the relationship we have. I feel incredibly fortunate to be your son. I love you.

Why? Because of the super practical ideas we just talked about, but under this overarching banner, yes, I love it and no, you can't have your own way. Let's pray.

Our dearest Father, first of all, thank you for these scriptures that show us the challenge of being a father is to really address this issue of folly and then the biblical way of doing that. Also, these practical ideas that most of this I actually learned from one of our members is a sidebar to you guys from Lyle and Marge Nelson, who led a parenting class for Patsy, that Patsy and I attended right after we got married and had started having kids. So, I'm grateful to the Nelson's and pray a blessing on them and then I pray

a blessing on each of you too. I prayed that the promise would come true, that you can be a great dad, whether that's past, present, or future. In Jesus name. Amen.