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**Like Father,  
Like Sons**

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# Like Father, Like Sons

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BY  
Jim Essian

LUCIDBOOKS



*To my father*

*Thank you for leading me to the Father.*

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## INTRODUCTION

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# GOD IS YOUR FATHER

*“Whoever has seen me has seen the Father” — Jesus*

**M**Y FATHER was an angry kid growing up. He told me that once. It is funny how you remember seemingly random comments from your dad as you recollect your childhood. Perhaps it stayed with me because the man I knew growing up did not seem angry, but was tender (tough as well, but in the good way), loving, and present. Anger accompanied him, but it was a “being sanctified” version of it. What changed?

Early into his adult life, my dad began searching. He probably didn’t know what he was searching for at the time, but he knew he needed something. Entering adulthood in the ‘70s as a professional baseball



player afforded him an abundance of opportunities, avenues, and religions to search out; he had a sort of Solomonic exploration before him—a tour of life under the sun.

I don't know everything. Perhaps, like Solomon, hedonism didn't work out. Maybe next he tried work and success; it is difficult to get more successful than being a 24-year-old Major League baseball player. At some point, his search for God began. It initially led him to Eastern religions like Transcendental Meditation—kind of like yoga without the mat and class fee. Eventually, a teammate of his started telling him about Jesus. Wayne Gross probably had no idea the spiritual legacy he was leaving with my dad; the Oakland A's third baseman was merely being a faithful servant of our Lord Jesus. Once the Spirit opened up my parents' eyes to the reality of the grace of the Father given in the Son, the Gospel collided with their souls and they were changed.

It was upon *seeing the Father* that my father ended his search. Solomon prosed, "All is vanity and a striving after wind, there is nothing to be gained under the sun." But my father experienced Fatherhood beyond the sun—and it changed him. The father I knew reflected a vague image of a past anger, sinfulness that was in the process of being put to death by the

Spirit, and a shadow of the young man that searched out fulfillment in pleasure or self-glory. Now, changed by the Son, he imaged and reflected the Father well to me, his son.

### **SLO-POKES, SLURPEES, & MELLOW MUSHROOM**

Every Thursday night my dad would take me and my sister to 7-11 for a Slurpee and a Slo-Poke. Do you remember Slo-Pokes? Carmel on a stick; a brilliant invention. There were two reasons why Thursday nights were such a big deal: One, we were not allowed to have sweets at home but on Thursday nights we got candy; two, *we were with our daddy*.

We would get into his 1979 silver Mercedes station wagon with the seats down in the back and look out at the car behind us, enjoying the feeling of being chauffeured by our dad to our dining place of choice. He could have given us a Slo-Poke and a Coke at home, but it was a big deal to walk into the store and have him pay at the counter. He would talk to us on the car ride and we had daddy's sole attention. Subconsciously, I was taking notes: "*Fathers want to be with their children.*"



We eat a lot of Mellow Mushroom in my house. It is the best pizza ever. Literally, it would change your life. I usually take my oldest, Harper (2) with me to pick up the pizza. It is a big deal for her to go on a car ride with daddy, and it gives mama a break from at least one of the girls (we also have Hollis, 6 months). After the first few times that we went together, I noticed that Harper would say “sit” on our way out of the restaurant to go home and eat. I would say, “No, we have to go home so we can eat.” I finally realized that she wanted us to sit, not because she was hungry and did not care if mama got any, but because that made it a “date daddy.”

I try to take Harper on a date every week, she calls it “date daddy.” Sometimes our dates are something small, like a stroller ride to the park or walking to the doughnut shop (“doughNUTS, daddy!”), or I will make it a bigger deal, like going to the museum or to Central Market to go on the slide and get something to eat. Therefore, for her, going to Mellow Mushroom looks like a date, and it is a big deal if we sit down and eat. Now, sometimes we will sit and share a slice and then go home to eat with the rest of the family. Harper doesn’t care about Mellow Mushroom, it could be any pizza. She just wants to spend time with daddy. *“Children want to be with their daddies.”*



I was unprepared for the revelations the Father would open my eyes to as a father to my girls. When I rock my girls, why does the Spirit of God whisper truths about God the Father to me?

“I care for you like this.”

“I have loved you infinitely more than this for infinitely more time than you can fathom.”

“You give me joy like she gives you joy.”

What great grace! I am amazed at the joy my girls give me. But what is hard to believe is that I might bring the Father joy. Yet, the Scriptures insist that His children do:

“The LORD your God is in your midst,  
a mighty one who will save;  
*he will rejoice over you with gladness;*  
he will quiet you by his love;  
*he will exult over you with loud singing.*”  
(Zephaniah 3:17)

I love hearing my wife sing over our babies; what a sweet sound! Though I sound like a goat and a chicken

arguing, I sing over them as well. I like to make up songs and try to rhyme—straight free-stylin’ for my girls. What joy they bring! Laughter from your child is a healing balm to anything you endured that day. So, if our children bring us such joy, is it so hard to believe that we—God’s adopted sons—bring the Father joy?

But this is only seeing the perspective of a father to a son; what does the *son* see when looking at the father?

## SEEING THE FATHER

I can vividly recall a common scene from my childhood: My dad on his bed, propped up by a few pillows, the smell of Skoal Wintergreen (he was a baseball player, you know?), bible commentaries and dictionaries surrounding him, and a legal pad and bible on his lap as he studied Hebrews for the weekly bible study in our home. People were saved in our home. Prayer was normal. Worship was commonplace. A dad being led by *the* Dad is a special thing.

But what you see when you hear the word “father” and what I see could be like two trains passing each other going in opposite directions. They look the same, and are doing some of the same things, but what is the purpose of a train if not to get somewhere? The

destinations are different. Your father may not have been the train leading you to *the* Father.

We want to get to our Heavenly Dad. We want to be like Him; we want to know Him, but we might have been put on the wrong train. How do we see the Father to get to Him if we are going the wrong way? It is not easy to see the Father, it is not so black and white. We don't just see black (our imperfect, maybe really bad father) and white (the perfect Heavenly Father). We see the Father *through* our earthly father. We are all given lenses at some point in our childhood, and we still wear them, even as we begin to father our own children. The lenses gray our understanding of the Father. Who is He? What does He think of me? Does He accept me? Is He proud of me? What does He want from me?



In Ephesians 3:14-15 Paul prays, “For this reason I bow my knees before the Father [*patēr*], from whom every family [*patria*] in heaven and on earth is named.” Tony Reinke points out that in the Greek it is easy to pick up on Paul’s *patēr/patria* play on words.<sup>1</sup> John Stott chose to translate this phrase as “the Father from whom all fatherhood is named.” God’s fatherhood is the archetype of human fatherhood.

What do we do, then, with the glasses we have been given? An archetype is nice, but we live in reality, and the prototype was our father, Adam—and we all know how that went. If our father was a disciplinarian type, we tend to default to thinking God is that way. Or, if our dad was distant and not very present, we may think God is “out there” and not immanent. “Perhaps He doesn’t care too much about me,” we think. How do we take the glasses off to see? Furthermore, even if we could see with untrammelled sight, do we even know what the Father is *for*? Or, what *fathers* are for? Moms give birth, nourish, comfort, caress, and nurture, but what do fathers do?

## WHAT ARE FATHERS FOR?

Before we can know what *fathers* are for, we need to know what the *Father* is for. Douglas Wilson asks the same question:

“For through him [Jesus] we both have access in one Spirit to the Father” (Eph. 2:18). Think of it this way. The Son is the road. The Father is the city we are driving to, and the Spirit is the car. We are going to the Father, the Son is the way we are to go, and the Spirit enables us to go ... [yet], among Christians who believe the Bible,

there are movements that emphasize a personal relationship with Jesus—the evangelicals, for example. There are movements that emphasize the Holy Spirit—the charismatic movement. *But among conservative believers, what movement emphasizes the Father?*”<sup>2</sup>

The reason there is not a particular movement that emphasizes the Father, as Wilson will later point out, is that we don’t understand what the Father is for. Because we don’t understand what the Father is for, we don’t understand fully what fathers are for. So, what is God the Father for? Answer: He is for His glory, and His glory is in His Son. Don’t believe me?

“ . . . the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” (2 Corinthians 4:6)

“And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.” (John 17:5)

“He [Jesus] is the radiance of the glory of God . . .” (Hebrews 1:3)

“The infinite happiness of the Father consists in His enjoyment of the Son.” — Jonathan Edwards



First, and most obviously, what this means for us is that we should be all about the Son, just as the Father is, and we should be pointing our children to the glory of God in the face of Christ over and over and over—that is godly parenting in a nutshell; show your sons the Son. Secondly, if the Father is for His glory and His glory is His Son, then shouldn't we be *for* our children? Shouldn't the way we are for them be determined by how the perfect Father is for the perfect Son? Furthermore, is the perfect Father any different towards us, his *imperfect* sons? We also are the glory of God: "For a man ought not to cover his head, since *he is the image and glory of God . . .*" (1 Cor. 11:7).

## WHAT IS THE FATHER LIKE?

The Father is *for* His glory and His glory is in the Son. This helps us to know what the purpose of fathers are so we can best image the Father. But what is the Father *like*? This determines everything: It shapes our identity, facilitates our parenting, informs everything we do, determines how we respond, and rules over our thoughts and motives. How the Father is toward us means everything! In fact, the Father's love toward us is so strong that it will change us and conform us to the perfections of His perfect Son.

“For those whom he foreknew he also *predestined to be conformed to the image* of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers” (Rom. 8:29). Your conformity to Christ is a divine certainty, it will happen!

We need to see the Father clearly, sans the glasses. We cannot let the lenses of our fathers distort the image of the True Father. However, at the same time, we need to see our sonship *through the lens* of the Son’s work on the cross, for this is how the Father sees us. He is for His glory, His glory is in His Son, and His glory is most evidenced in the Son’s saving of many sons. This is the beauty of the Gospel: In Christ our lenses are removed so we can clearly see the Father, *and*, in Christ, the Father *puts on* lenses and sees us through His perfect Son!

This means that in the Gospel we can see what the Father is like. If we can see the Father, we can image Him to our children.

So the question that this book will answer is, “What is our Father like?” If how He is toward us conforms us to the perfect image of His Son, then it will shape how we father our children. Let’s take the glasses off.



## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What are some big memories of your dad? Why are they so important to you?
2. How was your father (passive, gentle, distant, sacrificial, abusive, rigid, not present)? In what ways do you project that image upon God the Father?

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# **PART ONE**

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# YOUR FATHER IS GENEROUS

*“Fathers are not looking for excuses to say no.  
Their default mode is not no.”*

— Douglas Wilson

**Y**OUR HEAVENLY Father gives. He gives life and breath. He has given us creation at which to marvel. Food to eat. Drink to drink. Shelter. Clothes (if the lilies of the field are clothed in splendor, how much more will He clothe us?). God gives. He gives His Son (John 3:16, 18:11), He gives His Spirit (John 14:16-17), and He gives Himself (John 14:22-24). Our Father is generous:

“Or which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? If you then, who

are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!” (Matthew 7:9-11)

We bear a semblance of the image of God and so give good things to our children—innately we desire to. However, because that image of our Father is distorted from sin (“you who are evil”), we only give so much. Our generosity is truncated by our selfishness and hoarding, rendering our generosity a cheaper imitation, and our children pay for it.

How can this play out? We desire to give of our time until it becomes a sacrifice; we are tired, stressed, and need some “alone time”; so, if we do capitulate to their needy demands for “daddy time,” it is done begrudgingly or not at all. Vacations and the memories that they breed take a back seat to our desire for a new car, lots of golf, big toys, or whatever we want that costs money—and it “costs” our children a family vacation. Our Father is not so stingy. His default is yes, and ours should be also.

“What are fathers called to? Fathers give. Fathers protect. Fathers bestow. Fathers yearn and long for the good of their children. Fathers

## YOUR FATHER IS GENEROUS

delight. Fathers sacrifice. Fathers are jovial and open handed. Fathers create abundance, and if lean times come, they take the leanest portion themselves and create a sense of gratitude and abundance for the rest. Fathers love birthdays and Christmas because it provides them with yet another excuse to give more to the kids. When fathers say no, as good fathers do from time to time, it is only because they are giving a more subtle gift, one that is a bit more complicated than a cookie. They must also include among their gifts things like self-control, discipline, and a work ethic, but they are giving these things, not taking something else away just for the sake of taking. Fathers are not looking for excuses to say no. Their default mode is not no.”<sup>3</sup>





## CHAPTER ONE

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# BE GENEROUS WITH YOUR TIME

*“In the fear of the Lord one has strong confidence, and  
his children will have a refuge.”*

— Proverbs 14:26

**W**HEN I walk through the black front door of our cottage-style home, I am certain of what the next few moments will look like. As soon as my oldest daughter sees me (and, yes, sometimes I stall at the door or make a loud noise to get her attention), she comes running toward me, giggling and smiling, curly-hair curls bouncing, ready for daddy to scoop her up. It is a homecoming to trump all homecomings.

I have tried to set a precedent of kissing mama first, but it is impossible when your daughter sprints (waddles fast) to you in so much joy—joy of what? Daddy’s presence.

There is no other explanation. I don’t ever come home with candy; I bear no gifts; it hasn’t been a long absence; I am just there.

### **THERE-NESS**

I am convinced that one of a father’s greatest gifts to his children is his “there-ness.” Your quantifiable there-ness is your canon as a father—a measuring rod—the ruler that determines the exactness of your fathering. You may know nothing about parenting, but if you are present you have run ahead of the curve, and good stuff can happen.

Consider the times you have felt closest to your Heavenly Father, those times the Holy Spirit graciously opened up your mind and heart to the reality of the Father’s presence. Perhaps it was through fervent prayer in difficult times; maybe it was through corporate worship; maybe it was through the preaching of the Word. How was it? Did you feel safe? Secure? Approved of in Christ? Affirmed by the Father of fathers?

## BE GENEROUS WITH YOUR TIME

Did God give you anything in those times? Was He blessing you with something in creation or answering a prayer? No, *He was just there*. The Father's there-ness made everything else fade out, out of focus, inconsequential. Like being unaware of the stresses of work as you stand on a shore overlooking the vastness of the glory of the ocean; or the terrifying combination of awe and fear as you stand before the Grand Canyon, all else a mere blip on a screen as an orchestra of peace floods you from all sides. It is His there-ness that we desire.

The message of the Gospel is that we get God. Reconciliation with the Father is one of the facets of the crown jewel the cross provides us. Moses wanted nothing to do with the Promised Land if God was not going to be there (Ex. 33:15-16)—God is the Promised Land. Heaven is not heaven without God—it is hell.

### **WANTING THE FATHER'S PRESENCE**

Your deepest desire is the Father's presence. How else do you explain your sacrifice or the pouring out of your time, energy, and money? We bleed out for *shadows of the Father's presence*, when what we really desire is Him. Let me explain.

Your pursuit of beauty transfigures to lust with your sinful heart. But that deep desire for beauty is a godly desire—permit me to even use a feminine term—a *yearning* for true beauty. What you want is to be in the presence of true beauty and perfection. For what is beauty but the eye’s search for perfection? (And what is pornography but the sinful heart’s search for the perfect woman—this one’s eyes, that one’s hair, the other’s figure.) Created beauty flows from the Creator’s perfection; you ultimately desire the beauty of His presence.

Your pursuit of affirmation, fame, acceptance and all their cousins is a deep desire to be in the presence of the Father. It is a deep longing in your heart to even be allowed in the presence of your Father, to approach boldly the throne of grace, and to be received as a son of God. Isn’t it? Why else do you pursue success? For your glory, that is certain, but you also do it for acknowledgment, applause, and that sense of approval—“I’m proud of you” would bring many men to tears. These pursuits terminate on the Father. As C.S. Lewis says:

“The books or the music in which we thought the beauty was located will betray us if we trust to them; it was not in them, it only came through

them, and what came through them was longing. These things—the beauty, the memory of our own past—are good images of what we really desire; but if they are mistaken for the thing itself they turn into dumb idols, breaking the hearts of their worshippers. For they are not the thing itself; they are only the scent of a flower we have not found, the echo of a tune we have not heard, news from a country we have never yet visited.”<sup>4</sup>

Ecclesiastes 3:11 says that God put eternity into the heart of man. We search and search; we lust and lust; we are pursuing affirmation, fame, and acceptance. We run hard after the shadows, our feet stomping loud enough to deafen the echoes of a heart that is still unfulfilled, a soul not satisfied with shadows, but only with Substance. Chasms pervade the souls of men echoing their heart’s demand for the Eternal to fill it—for the Omni Present to abide. And abide He does; for that is His gift to us—Himself. The presence of all that we desire is ultimately found in Him.

So how do we image the Father to our children? We image Him with our there-ness. What security, what protection, what joy our children find in our presence! As our joy is complete when we abide in Him (John 15:1-11), so do they sense the Father’s love

in us—perfected more and more in their joy with every hug-filled, playful, pile-driving minute.

## **BASEBALL AND BOB ROSS**

I attended three schools a year for a while. My dad was managing in professional baseball and decided early on that the family being together was worth the sacrifice, struggle, and difficulty of constantly having to travel and change schools, and the security of a “normal” home life.

Of course, I loved it. It was normal for me. Home was the clubhouse and the smell of pine tar, or the luggage rack on the bus where I would sleep as the team went from town to town. Home was watching my dad play cards on a cooler set in the aisle, covered with a towel to keep the cards from sliding off, holding a beer can in his lap. His there-ness far exceeded any inconvenience. How could anything else be an option?

After watching Bob Ross paint a “happy squirrel” and my sister and I trying to paint along—a kind of “paint by Ross” version of paint by numbers—I would take a quick afternoon nap and then head to the park with dad in time for batting practice. The nap was necessary because I would be at the park until about 11 o’clock at night.

I would hang out in his office, shag fly balls during batting practice, be the batboy for the game; occasionally I would see him get thrown out of a game for arguing with the umpire, or light up one of his players for some particular reason (usually disrespect of some kind, “This is a monologue, not a dialogue!”).

Child psychologists would probably sniff their noses at my childhood, like dogs smelling meat, ready to pounce: “Children need stability!” Yes, they do, and the father is to be the anchor.

## **SECURE AS SOJOURNERS**

The Father’s children aren’t at home either (1 Pet. 2:11). Furthermore, our well-being doesn’t necessitate wealth, possessions, the best schools, or people who approve of us. What anchors us, why we are secure, why we are commanded countless times, “Do not fear!” is that the Father is with us.

See, it is easy to excuse your lack of there-ness with your desire to “give your children a better life” or “make sure they can get the best education.” Those are well-meaning desires, and a father should work hard to leave a good legacy to his children. We should plan well, save well, and block for our family like a bull-headed fullback paves the way for the tailback to



get up field. That approach only works, however, if you are playing the same game, and if the goal is the end zone of our children knowing the Father—for that to happen, you have to be there.

I have never met someone who hated their father because he didn't buy them a nice car; I have, however, met plenty of people with jacked up lives and relationships—with a degree from a reputable university hanging on the wall—because their dad was not ever home.

Paul Tripp tells a similar story:

*“When I speak in churches, I often single out the men and challenge, ‘Some of you are so busy in your careers that you’re seldom home, and when you are, you are so physically exhausted that you have nothing to offer your children. You don’t even know your own kids. I offer a radical challenge to you. Go to your boss and ask for a demotion. Take less pay. Move out of that dream house and into a smaller one. Sell your brand new car and drive an older one. Be willing to do what God has called you to do in the life of your children.’*

*In a culture with two-income families, increasingly that challenge must also be made to women who also sacrifice family for career.*

## BE GENEROUS WITH YOUR TIME

*I made that appeal at one home-school conference and it angered a man in the crowd, although I didn't know it at the time. Two years later he came over to me during a conference break. As he got closer, he began to weep. He said, 'Two years ago I heard you give the challenge you just gave tonight and I got angry. I thought, What right do you have to say that? But I was haunted by your words. I thought, He's speaking about me. My whole life is away from the home and I don't know my own kids. I finally went to my boss one morning and said, 'I want to talk to you about my position.' My boss said, 'Look, we've advanced you as much and as fast as we can.' And I said, 'No, no, just hear me, I want a demotion.' The boss looked startled. He asked, 'What are you talking about?' I said, 'The most important thing in my life is not this job. The most important thing is that God has given me five children. I'm His instrument in forming their souls. But right now, I don't even know my own kids.'*

*The boss said, 'I've never heard this kind of conversation before and I'll probably never hear it again. I'm very moved. We'll find you a position where you can work forty hours a week. You can punch in and punch out and have less responsibility. But I'm not going to be able to pay you enough.' I said, 'That's fine.'*

*We sold the house of our dreams, got rid of two luxury cars and bought a mini-van. It's been two years now, and not one of my kids has come to me and said 'Dad, I wish we lived in a big house,' or 'Dad, I wish we had new cars.' But over and over again they have come and said, 'Dad, we've been having so much fun with you. It's great to have you around.' Now, for the first time, I can say I know exactly where my children are. I know their hearts. I know what I need to be doing in their lives. I'm actually being a father."*<sup>5</sup>



The Gospel is not a call to comfort. It is news that the Father wants to be with us and will sacrifice even His Son to do so. However, it is also a call to join the Father in what He is doing—saving sinners for His glory. He is not so concerned with our comfort, or our safety; He is not always concerned we are at the perfect church (His “school” for us); He is not losing sleep over how much He *could* provide us (for some, He gives great wealth, for others, just what they need to get by). He does, however, promise His presence is with us. Look at the shear tonnage

of verses explicitly stating God's there-ness and the context of the promise:

“Be strong and courageous. Do not fear or be in dread of them, for it is the LORD your God who goes with you. *He will not leave you or forsake you.*” (Deuteronomy 31:6)

“No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I was with Moses, so *I will be with you.* I will not leave you or forsake you . . . do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, *for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.*” (Joshua 1:5,9)

“Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land. *For I will not leave you* until I have done what I have promised you.” (Genesis 28:15)

“Then David said to Solomon his son, ‘Be strong and courageous and do it. Do not be afraid and do not be dismayed, *for the LORD God, even my God, is with you.* He will not leave you or forsake you, until all the work for the service of the house of the LORD is finished.’” (1 Chronicles 28:20)

“Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, ‘*I will never leave you nor forsake you.*’” (Hebrews 13:5)

“And Jesus came and said to them, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, *I am with you always, to the end of the age.*’” (Matthew 28:18-20)

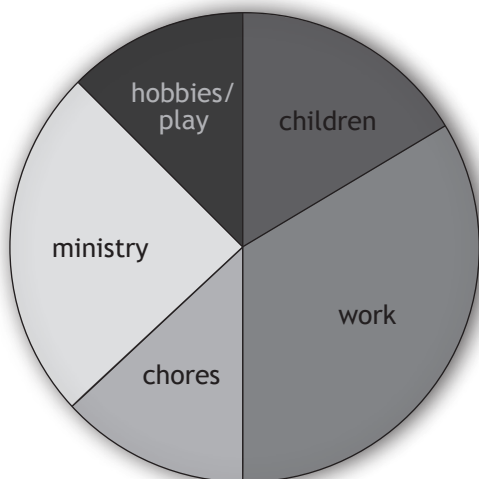
The call is never to comfort. In fact, quite the opposite. The demands are great: Leading people into the Promised Land, building a great temple that foreshadows Christ, obeying a radical call to contentment with money, and making disciples of all nations. The anchor in these great calls of sacrifice, discomfort, and lack of security is the presence of God. We could have all the money in the world, the best education, the safest (and nicest) cars, and still drift out to sea, the weight of all that “stuff” drowning us—we need the Anchor.

## **QUANTITY TIME WITH OUR CHILDREN**

Quality time is a myth; your children need quantity time. You are their anchor. Your there-ness makes them

## BE GENEROUS WITH YOUR TIME

feel safe, loved, and cared for. Furthermore, your calling is to disciple them. This means they are to go with you as you do life. Your children are not some slice of a pie that can be compartmentalized from the other pieces.



Your children should help you around the house and go with you to do chores, and you should let them watch you in life—how else will they learn? Certainly there are times of sitting down and reading with them or playing with them, but it cannot just be that. Whenever you can, bring them along. This is how we are instructed to teach them all that God has commanded us:

“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.” (Deuteronomy 6:4-9)

This is the foundational text for discipleship in parenting. The Christian life is not compartmentalized from “everyday” life; it saturates and permeates *all* of life—and your parenting does as well. How can we be faithful to this if we aren’t there?

The Father sacrificed much for you to be in His presence. As fathers imaging *the* Father, we must sacrifice time with the guys, hunting trips, late hours at work, and time at the golf course so that our children would be anchored—not adrift at sea, being “tossed to and fro by every wave of doctrine” (Eph. 4:14) or every swell the ideas and philosophies of this world ask them to surf in. It is our time, our there-ness, that they need.



## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What about God’s presence stirs your heart to worship and joy?
2. How are you fulfilling the role as anchor for your kids? Have you abdicated your role and the anchor has become money, school, or amenities?
3. What is God calling you to sacrifice to be present with your family?
4. What activities or errands should you take your children with you on?





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Paradox family, I love you and truly believe you are the easiest church to pastor.

Harper and Hollis, I don’t love you this much, no, not this much . . . but THIS MUCH!

And, finally, I love you mom and dad.



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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**J**IM ESIAN planted The Paradox Church in 2011 and serves as Lead Pastor. The Paradox is an Acts 29 Network church in Downtown Fort Worth, TX. Jim played eight years of professional baseball in the Kansas City Royals, Los Angeles Dodgers, and Detroit Tigers organizations, prior to planting a church. Jim and his wife, Heather, have two girls, Harper and Hollis.

## **Was Your Father Generous, Gentle, and Gracious?**

Your Heavenly Father is. The problem is that we see the Father through our earthly father. We are all given lenses at some point in our childhood, and we still wear them even as we begin to parent our own children. The lenses gray our understanding of the Father. Who is He? What does He think of me? Does He accept me? Is He proud of me? What does He want from me?

Herein lies the beauty of the gospel: In Christ, our lenses are removed so we can clearly see the Father, and, in Christ, the Father puts on lenses and sees us through His perfect Son!

This means that in the Gospel we can see what the Father is like. God the Father not only exemplifies fatherhood, but He empowers us in the Gospel to father like Him. If we can see the Father, we can image the father to our children.

So what is the Father like? Let's remove the lenses and see.