

Part One in a Series on How To Be A Hero To Your Kids

Availability – “Being There” for Our Kids

by Dr. Henry Oursler

It was one of those “*battleground moments*” for me. It was late in the evening and I was still working hard. We were to leave on a six-day trip in forty-eight hours and much remained to be accomplished before we pulled out of the driveway. Linda had collapsed in bed, exhausted after a long day herself. The kids were in the playroom and a minor skirmish erupted that called for my attention. It doesn’t matter whose fault it was (each of them played a part, I am sure). But what I remember is that the situation was one of those ready-made teachable moments, a character-shaping exercise that demanded my time and full attention.

I was tempted to bag it under the guise of “*too busy, too tired, too much to do.*” I’m glad I didn’t. The whole process of resolution, reconciliation and repair took about thirty minutes. But what an investment. It was the right one to make.

Where Are Parents Today?

A while ago, I saw a column in Newsweek entitled “Dear Dads, Save Your Sons,” by Christopher Bacorn, a psychologist living in Boerne, Texas. He told about an anxious mother in her mid-thirties who came to his office with her fifteen-year-old son. His dad had left four years before, and since then the teenager had descended into alcohol, gang membership, and violence. The boy obviously hated being there, but his mother knew nowhere else to go. After attempting for thirty minutes to open the adolescent clam, Dr. Bacorn realized it was futile. In his column he wrote:

I have come to believe that most adolescent boys can’t make use of professional counseling . . . What a boy can use, and all too often doesn’t have, is the fellowship of men – at least one man who pays attention to him, who spends time with him, who admires him. A boy needs a man he can look up to. What he doesn’t need is a shrink As a nation, we are racked by youth violence, overrun by gangs, guns and drugs. The great majority of youthful offenders are male, most without fathers involved in their lives in any useful way. Many have never even met their fathers.

What’s become of the fathers of these boys? Where are they? Well, I can tell you where they’re not. They’re not at PTA meetings or piano recitals. They’re not teaching Sunday school. You won’t find them in the pediatrician’s office, holding a sick child. . . . Where are the fathers? They are in diners and taverns, drinking, conversing, playing pool with other men. They are on golf courses, tennis courts, in bowling alleys, fishing on lakes and rivers. They are working in their jobs, many from early morning to late at night. Some are home watching television, out mowing the lawn or tuning up the car. In short, they are everywhere except in the company of their children.

OUCH! Convicting words. Happily there are exceptions, and maybe you’re one of those dads (or moms) doing a bang-up job. But I have found that each one of us needs the reminders and encouragements that what we are doing is worth it in the lives of those little ones.

A Promise That God Will Be There For You

The Old Testament contains an incredible promise from God. It came late at night after perhaps the greatest celebration in biblical times – the dedication of the temple under King Solomon’s reign. The temple had been built to house the Ark of the Covenant, the symbol of God’s very presence with His people. God Himself woke up Solomon from a deep sleep with these words: “I have chosen and consecrated this temple so that my Name may be there forever. My eyes and my heart will always be there” (2 Chronicles 7:16).

Talk about connecting! And that promise didn’t end when the physical temple was destroyed in A.D. 70. After Jesus came and died on the cross, the bodies of believers became temples of the Holy Spirit. Can you imagine? The very God of the universe has promised that His name, eyes and heart will “be there” for us forever.

In the Old Testament, a person’s name enveloped all he or she was and all he or she could become. When God said His name is with us, it was understood that He meant His very character and essence would be present, involved and committed to us – every moment of our lives. The challenge for us is to do the same for our families.

Our Challenge To “Be There”

Being available to our kids involves more than just living under the same roof with them. A great example of a “be there” father occurred several years ago when the San Antonio Spurs were facing the New York Knicks in the NBA Finals. The Spurs were leading, three games to two going into game six.

All-Star Center David Robinson had promised his youngest son that if they won the game (and the championship) that night, he could sleep in the same bed with his mom and dad. During the fourth quarter, with the Spurs trailing by eight points, his boy began to cry – not because the Spurs might lose – but because he might lose his chance to sleep in bed with his dad.

As you may recall, the Spurs came back to win – and to clinch the championship in that game. While all his teammates were out celebrating their victory, David went home to be with his wife and son – and kept his promise to his little boy.

In a Sports Illustrated article detailing those events, David Robinson said that seeing his son’s joy at getting to sleep in their bed was the greatest part of the championship season.

That’s a dad who’s made a commitment to “be there” for his family no matter what else is going on.

I remember Dottie McDowell, wife of author and speaker Josh McDowell, telling me one time, “If we are there for our children now, they will be there for us when we are old. If we show an interest in them now, they will show an interest in us later.” Wise words.

Is being a parent a major priority for you? Is it reflected in your schedule? To be a hero to your kids – to be a good role model to them – you have to spend quantity time. And out of that quantity time will come the quality time that will communicate acceptance and appreciation to your children.

Mom, Dad, where is your heart? Where are your eyes? Are they there for your family? Don't give up. Don't quit. Before it's too late . . . take time.

You think about that!