

Parenting



Good, Better, Best

by Don Schmidt

We were quickly approaching Mother's Day, and I took the opportunity to help our three preschoolers express appreciation to their mom. We each selected cards, personalized them with little notes, picked out presents, and took Darlene to the restaurant of her choice! It was a day we honored Darlene for the many ways in which she invests her life in each of our lives.

One of my daughters asked me to write in her card "You're the greatest mom in the whole world!" These are words that can become trite as we see them on everything from t-shirts and greeting cards to coffee cups; yet when said with depth and sincerity, these are words that convey warmth and closeness.

Being somewhat reflective, my daughter's words caused me to think about what it means to really earn the title of World's Greatest Mom or Dad. Implied in these words is the idea that we are actively investing our very best in the lives of our spouse and children.

Giving Our Best

Giving my best to my family is something very different from

providing for them the best material things the world has to offer. God allows us the comforts of this world for our enjoyment, but we must never lose the perspective that what matters most in life is not the breadth of our possessions but the depth of our relationships. Giving my best to my family is also something more than my imparting to them information about God and this world. Certainly that is included in my role as a parent, but what my children will cherish most is not what they may have learned from me but rather what they will have come to know of me.

Giving my best to my family may be described as my investing in my family the very best of what God is growing me to be, something which they can obtain nowhere else.

Giving Our B.E.S.T.

In a book on rebuilding broken marriages entitled *Rekindled*, Pat Williams suggests that a husband gives his "best" to his wife when he blesses her, edifies her, shares with her, and touches her. These are great suggestions for a couple in their marriage, and it also

makes for good model as parents seek to give the “best” of themselves to their children. Think for a moment about what this might look like in your family.

“Blessing” the members of your family will involve speaking and acting in ways that bring them deep joy, both now and in the future. It may be as simple as performing a specific act of service or other kindness, or it may involve speaking a word that builds character and substance in your child's life.

“Edifying” your family means that you are involved in ways that draw them deeper in their walk with the Lord. It is so easy for us to try to motivate others in their walk with the Lord by “pushing” them toward the mark Christ has set before us. How much more effective it is when others can sense, out of our personal involvement in their lives, something about us that heightens their own passion to know God more deeply.

“Sharing” with your family will require that you open the door to yourself in ways that give them more than just an occasional glimpse of who you

really are. Many of us have grown up with relational distance as our only model. We have been hurt, and when we have looked to others for understanding, we have often come away feeling even more empty and alone. Then out of our commitment to not hurt, we have closed the windows to our soul, often shutting out the ones who love us most.

But even more significantly, in our self-protection we have limited our ability to show love to those in our family. Giving my best to my family always involves my taking the risk of lowering my self-protective walls in order to give to my family those parts of my heart that will bring them the greatest joy, comfort, and nurture.

And finally, “touching” expresses to your family the love and tenderness you have for them. While God created each of us to give and receive physical touch, our children live in a world where it is often displayed in ways that are illegitimate and without the context of proper relationship. Our children need to know that their needs for physical touch are legitimate and that they can be met in appropriate ways.

In many ways, the suggestions in this article are not new to most of us. And my desire in writing this is not to share some new insight. Rather, my hope is that this description of giving your “best” to your family will cause you to pause and reflect on your own relationship with your spouse and your children.

At Your Home

I would suggest sitting down with your family and inviting them to share they ways in which various family members are doing this well. You might also ask them which of these areas they would like you to focus on in the coming week. What's most important in the discussion that will ensue is not the list of suggestions that might be compiled. Rather it be the dialogue, the interaction, the process of the various family members each investing their lives in the other.

This is a process which requires a teachable spirit--an opening up of our hearts to what God wants to do, first in us and then through us as we minister to our families. Being “The World's Greatest Mom or Dad” isn't an easy

assignment, but it is an investment in something eternal. It is an investment in the lives of our children

*Pat Williams states that his thoughts are drawn from another book, *Love Life for Every Married Couple*, by Dr. Ed Wheat.*

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