

Could'a

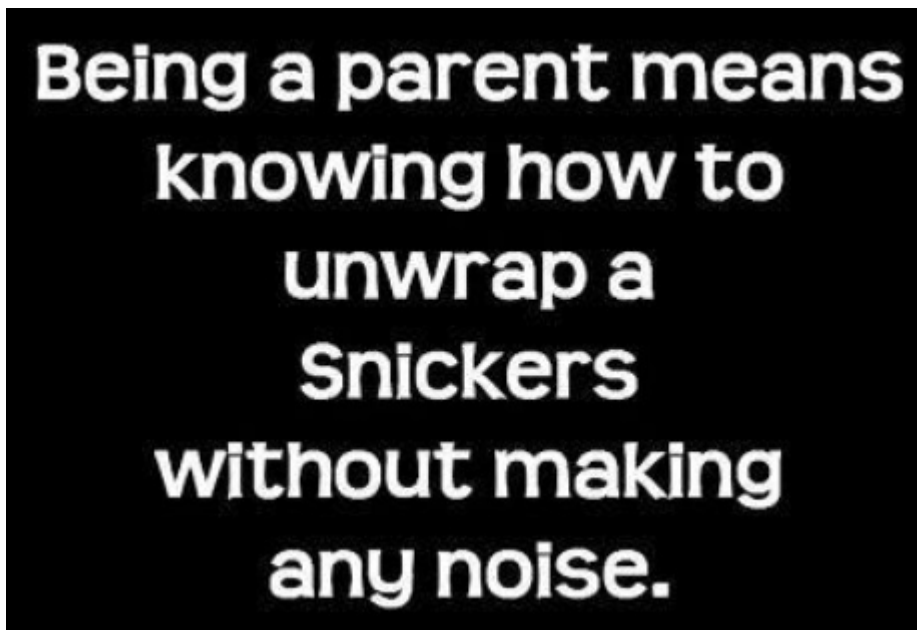


Being a Dad – Starting Out

(because we all have to start sometime)

aka: Fatherhood – In the Beginning

By **Old Man River** (plus*)



I'm not sure why the above is shown (maybe for a chuckle), but know this:
If you want a different type of book on being a Dad – this is it
(insights to consider and challenges to pursue).

Coulda: Being a Dad – Starting Out
aka **Fatherhood – In the Beginning**

is
Cabinright 2023 by **Old Man River**
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4-year-old boy dials 911 and saves himself and six other children who are trapped in a hot car

This book is dedicated to my wife, Sheri.

*It was her actions as a mother for our kids that inspired
me to try and be the best Dad that I could be.*

Thank you Sweetie – I love you!

And just remember . . .

First, thanks to the various others = * for their comics, quotes & images used.

Second, be prepared for a chuckle or two and some challenges.

Third, remember the following . . .

**PARENTING IS A LOT LIKE
THE BAR SCENE:
EVERYONE'S YELLING,
EVERYTHING'S STICKY,
IT'S THE SAME MUSIC
OVER AND OVER AGAIN
AND OCCASIONALLY
SOMEONE THROWS UP**

And FYI . . . Parents can survive by reacting as best they can.

But, to be a successful, first - you need to think, second - change
methods when needed and third - know that perseverance gets it done.

So, if you want to have some fun – keep reading
(yes it is different and it may help you a lot).

And if you you'd rather stay dumb – don't read the following
(because our kids don't need false fathers, they need dynamic dads).

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"No, Daddy . . . that's
a Parasaurolophus.
not a Pachycephalosaurus."

- says the kid with his
underwear on backwards
and inside out



Introduction:

I assume you are either looking at this book and wondering – '**What?**' Or you received this book from someone and you're wondering, '**Why am I getting this?**' The how and why you are reading these few words so far . . . just comes down to - '**Is this worth reading?**'

Let me start with this level set. Challenges on young fathers today continue to evolve. What made sense for us Dads twenty or so years ago is drastically different today. Everything I now see points to the reality that first time dads have work/life balance concerns, primary income challenges and the realization that the roles of Dads and Moms can vary greatly. It is basically: *what is best for your situation, for you, your wife and your young kids to thrive in?* So then . . .

First, as you ponder this, I ask you, 'what do you do for the following?' As you prepare for a Driver's test (to get your license), to graduate from high school or college, to advance at work, to build a garage? For most people, you read and study the materials available, you learn from others as best you can and then apply that knowledge as needed. Why then for one of the most important actions we will ever do, that most just do what they think best and that is in regards to raising kids. Now we know there are some who read books and take classes on parenting and many will ask their parents for advice now and then. That is good – thank you.

Unfortunately, too many don't, and they just figure they will do well enough (and this is a sad mistake). If that is you – please keep reading.

Second, know that questions are good and 'wondering' is always a great step in the pursuit of knowledge. Now I am not going to guarantee that if you read this book, you will be a better dad. What I will guarantee is if you do read it, you will at least have a greater insight as to the types of things you should consider as you pursue your years ahead as a dad.

You will have to decide; do you want to pursue the long and hard way or the short and easier way (as far as being a dad and one who your wife, your kids and yourself will be glad that you did)? By this, I mean:

The **long and hard way**. . . This is actually easier to do and your results will be mixed at best. Just plug along, do the best you can, deal with the hard times as they happen and if you are lucky, things may turn out pretty good. But that also means, various things may not go well. Along with this – you will also have regrets.

. . . or . . .

The **shorter and easier way**. . . This is actually just a possibility that depends on your actions. If you pursue this book and the two follow up books that compliment this one, you are going to take the insights and lessons learned by others and to leverage them for yourself (aka 'fast tracking' toward wisdom).

It sums up like this: a majority of dads have good intentions and try to do well but too often end up making mistakes that years down the road they wished they would have done things differently. Some dads realize that insights from others help them to add to their knowledge sooner rather than later and they skip most of the pit falls that they normally would fall into.

For me; I was a long and hard way learner. Not that I wanted that but because I didn't realize there was a shorter and easier way. I was born into a family that ended up with six boys in it and during those growing up years, there were a lot of difficulties.

Oversimplified I lived through a horrible divorce between my parents, relationships with my brothers that were impacted greatly by a tragedy that we did not expect.



That tragedy was fueled by the events leading up to and through that divorce – as well events that unfolded long after. Despite that, my wife and I got married and I became a dad with a ton of good intentions.

With that background and now with 60* years of 'knowledge' under my belt, consider this: how do dads give the 'keys to success' to their kids? Unfortunately for my kids, I was learning as we went but as they aged, I was learning too. I believe it starts with a foundation on knowing . . . when to talk (share information, have a conversation), when to write (sometimes a letter or an email is the right thing to send), and when to listen (hear what they have to say and when needed, just listen and have them let you know when to respond – and yes, this is the hardest to do).

One way is via the 3 Cs of 'Can Do' (aka '**conversation, consideration and commitment**'). This means we talk with, not just talk to; that all subjects should be considered (it is a changing world). It starts when they are young, continues through the years and is pursued with a long view of time (what some would call a multiple generation impact).

Now I'll have some additional words on the above via Books 2 and 3 being pursued but for now, know **the following is a framework for you to pick and choose from** (leverage what you think will help you).

And please understand that our country doesn't need a few good men or women, it needs thousands of them for the challenges unfolding. You need to decide if you are going to be an effective part of raising the next generation that will contribute or will consume. Also - if you are interested in reading further, you are going to see shared a set of ideas that are quick reads that you get to ponder and then decide if there are actions that you want to leverage, or they help you to try somethings.

With that mindset and since there is so much to consider, it is laid out over three '**Being a Dad**' books. The summary of those are as follows:

This book, **Coulda** is for those dads about to have a child or has kids under the age 7. Coming soon, the second book, **Woulda** is for those dads with kids in the age 7 to age 12 time frame and on the way, the third book, **Shoulda** is for those dads with kids who are becoming teens.

Thank you for considering all that is shared. I'll now close with these words. The first is a summary of the above and for the rest of this book, that we (parents) need to teach our kids as best we can – manors, to be willing to try new things, it is okay to fail, etc. etc. We are helping them to be ready for all the ups and downs that adulthood unfolds. And then second, as you ponder all of this, consider these words from Dr. David Jeremiah that I thought are very powerful to keep in mind . . .

“As children grow into adulthood, their decision-making power increases. Although it starts as early as two years old when a child realizes what they want and screams to demand it. But when a child is two, the parents have both the physical and mental upper hand and can begin the process of training their child to ask politely and take ‘no’ as an acceptable answer. When it comes to grown-ups, not just to family, we can often feel that our hands are tied, especially when a loved one is making poor decisions. Even when the decisions are not devastating or far-reaching, it is difficult to swallow when a person chooses either a path we disagree with or one that is unsound. To counter the weight of worry that would settle over us are prayers that remind us that God cares deeply and is at work, even behind the scenes. Our prayers can refocus our attention and help us release the person to God. Praying Scripture over our loved ones when we cannot find the words and remembering God’s power can sustain and carry us when our resources are exhausted and we are unsure of the future.”

And don't forget:

*“In the fear of the LORD there is strong confidence,
and His children will have a place of refuge.” Proverbs 14:26*

Oops, and please note: After I had drafted this Book 1, it sat for a while so I could see if anything else would come to my mind as to *'What am I not sharing that I should?'*

That became these three things. First, the what. Second, the why. And third, the when. To address these, I'll cover the what and the why. As for the when, I went to our second son Alex (who with his wife, our daughter-in-law Anni) have their two kids (Atlas & Atom) who are of the age that this book is focused on (they are wrapping up their preschool years).

So **first** – I asked myself – based on **what** I have experienced as a Dad, **'What should children learn by age 6?'** I wondered this because when I read through all that this book has, it touches on a lot of good food for thought type aspects that each Dad may want to consider as they pursue their years of “Dadhood” in the preschool time frame of their kids. But it doesn't really answer specifically this question. So, I'm going to give you these words that I jotted down as an example. And my goal is that you would take a few minutes, to then jot down what you think before you go on and read the rest of this book.

[Before age 6 they should learn] **They should know they are loved, and they understand what it means to be respectful, kind and honest. They know their colors, their numbers, the alphabet and can start to read. And they are beginning to develop their self-confidence (they know they can ask for what they want, but may not get it; they speak up or take action when they see wrong, and they are not afraid to speak in front of other kids or adults). Basically, they have a great starting framework for taking on the next set of their kid years to come.**

And it is that 'starting framework' where the second point and the pages that follow come into play (which you can pick and choose from).

Then **second** – I wondered how do I best share this framework notion that I think is critical – based on **why** consider this? It was in thinking about this, that I created these three Dad books that are focused on the three ages that our kids grow through.

Book One <i>For when our kids are between the ages of 0-6.</i>	Book Two <i>For when our kids are between 7-12.</i>	Book Three <i>For when our kids are between 13-18.</i>
Our Faith (introduced)	The Bible (explored)	Their Life (pursued)
Lessons (yours shared)	Lessons (others shared)	Lessons (theirs learned)
Imagination (fueled)	Intelligence (pursued)	Integrity (taught)
Patience (required)	Perception (experienced)	Perspectives (appreciated)
Challenge (is beneficial)	Coaching (is critical)	Cheering (is memorable)
Laugh (does a body good)	Live (as best can)	Love (carefully)
Look (why)	Listen (when)	Learn (how)

Now, the above framework is one that is not the perfect – just do this set of words. It is – if you don't have a plan of your own, consider this to see what helps you or helps to trigger a better plan for you.

And **third** – I asked myself – **when** should any Dad consider this? That is why Alex's words are good example. I've added those at the end of this book. That way you have an older Dad & a younger Dad giving you some things to consider as bookends to the following.

*Which has allowed me to update this **Book One** to this final version (so, thanks for starting to think and starting to do the type of things that you'll be glad you pursued for your kids).*

Chapter 1: Faith (introduced)

You may not realize this or you may not appreciate it as much as you should, but **you get to decide the what, when, where, who, why and how** for every critical thing that you want your kids to experience, to learn and to appreciate. The one critical subject that I recommend you not take lightly is on **faith and what it is**. What I will touch on in this first chapter is a framework for you to consider and to adapt as desired.

You have to **first** look at yourself – what does faith mean to you? If you do not have a faith or are not active in faith anymore – you will have to decide at some time if this (non faith) is something that you want to explain to your child at some time. If you are pursuing your faith, are there things about your faith that you want your child to know, to embrace and if yes, what and when?

The **second** consideration is your wife – what are her thoughts on faith and on what each of you would like your child to know?

The **third** consideration is the how – as in what do we want our child to know and how will we pursue that? At a minimum, there could be actions that you want to pursue, and actions that your wife wants to pursue and then there are actions or events that the world will have unfold all around you that will challenge your efforts to convey faith pursuits as you want. The how is critical to the success of the what and when.

So, with the above to get you starting to think – just know that at some time you will need to determine the game plan (the what, the who, the when, the why and the how aspects of your faith that you will engage your child in). For this book, I'm going to assume that you do have a Christian faith and want to look at some examples that you could use or at least consider for your preschool age child (or children).



Now I will use this picture and Bible verse to the left as an initial example.

You have to start with some aspects of faith and what you can share or begin to teach about your faith.

Often you will see families using the Christmas and Easter holidays as good start points – but there also is the first challenge. Will Santa and the Easter Bunny be your family's focus or will it be on Christ's birth, death and resurrection, or some combination of all of these?

My recommendation, start with the simple and then add to it as time unfolds. The key, if your children see and hear your wife and you, saying prayers, saying grace, going to church, etc. they will then see faith is a part of their life as well. Now my wife and I tried to do this.

If you teach (share information, answer questions, etc) your faith as best you can, you will find that your children will ask you questions. They will also surprise you from time to time based on what they may say or do as they learn and grow (and that is all good).

You also need to know that some aspects of faith may seem to make sense to your child and other aspects may just go over their head. The how and when aspects of faith that will sink in for you kids could be different from one of your children to another. For example, my wife and I received a text from our daughter a year or so ago . . . that went like this: ***Tonight Noah was bossing everyone around (like he usually does) and I said 'Who died and made you king?' which Noah was quick to reply 'Jesus.'***

At the time, Noah was a 3 ½ year old who was going to Bible School with his older brother Luke. And although we all got a chuckle from that, it showed that he understood that Jesus did die. Was Noah (what we would say) connecting the dots a bit wrong for the situation that was unfolding that night? Probably but he was thinking and a foundation of faith is starting in him and he will add to that as his years unfold.

Work on your 'faith sharing plan' and go ahead and adjust it as needed as your child's preschool years unfold.

Also know that as your kids learn, they will be doing a lot of “testing” as to what is allowed and what is not.



There will be “I'm sorry . . . “ requests from your kids as they grow and learn. Know what is big and what is not, don't over react, just help them to learn. Because if they know they can be forgiven, they will learn to forgive others too.

Now, what would I have done differently? I am glad that my wife and I tried to share our faith, we did take our kids to church, had them go to Sunday school, etc. What I wish I would have done better – is to have talked more with our young children on aspects of faith . . . to see what they are understanding, to have discussions with them on faith.

Now it comes down to you . . . what do you need to do in regards to faith and your young child or children? Are the seeds of insight being shared, are their discussions that you need to pursue? Please do not underestimate the abilities of your young ones in what they think, say and do. Their thoughts are forming – be a part of the good starting.

Chapter 2: Lessons (yours given)

My hope is that before you read this chapter, you pause and consider all that is happening across this world. Sadly there are growing tensions and too many tragedies unfolding but (if you look for them) there are some examples of others doing good, of helping others when they can.

Knowing this, you need to decide if you are going to raise your child to be naive or to be a ninja (or something else)?

Now I know that you know that there are so many factors that come into play that will impact how you raise your kids, where you raise them and all the why nuances that will unfold over their 'at home years.”

Consider this – what if you wrote a note to yourself and it just contains words like those to the right; and then you taped that to your bathroom mirror so that every morning and every night, you saw those words.

**Prepared yet Prayerful,
Courageous yet
Compassionate,
Honorable yet Humble.**

I hope that you would agree – those are powerful words above.

For when we think of these words (or those words of your choice) and begin to plan for them, we also realize that we must embrace them as we interact with our wife and with others. So why then have I shared these initial words in this chapter on **lessons**? First, consider this . . .

If you can, go listen to Rodney Atkins' song “*Watch'n you*” and from that you'll get a good sense of how our kids watch us and copy us. With that awareness, then think about the type of things that you want your child to learn and how so. For example: If someone asked you (as a new father) . . .

For Values to become embedded within our children, they must first become embedded within ourselves.

'So, what will you be teaching your child?'

It is so critical because **your actions**, whether you realize it or not, are some of the most powerful lessons that your children will see and mostly likely they will embrace them as well. Now back to that question above. You may not even have an answer or you would possibly say “to be a good kid.” But we have to go beyond that. For example I saw a recent Facebook post that showed a cute baby and these words below really got me to thinking . . .

**This is a baby.
Who doesn't judge.
Who doesn't hate anyone.
Who is not racist or prejudiced.
Please don't teach them to be.**



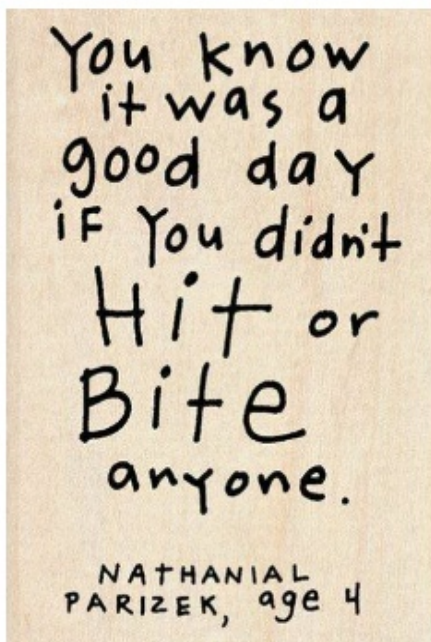
Now, if you are like me – those words make you think, “Yep, that is good, makes sense.”

But now here is the challenge. How do you go about **not teaching** your child something, verses teaching them something? That is good to ponder and while you do that, remember the words I shared about our children watching us and that means if they don't see us judging others, not hating others, not being prejudiced, etc – it will be harder for them to pick those things up and to thinking those are somehow okay.

So where do you start – what would be your list of things that you want your child to learn in their early years? At a minimum, I recommend the following: **First**, get out your note pad, your smart phone, laptop or whatever you use to jot down notes to yourself. Nothing is important until you make it important and if raising your child is important – take notes, make plans, and monitor the progress. **Second**, talk with your wife and get in sync as to what you both believe are the good things to pursue, what she may focus on, what you will, what you both will, etc.

And **third**, please make sure the approach you pursue is age appropriate (what we can teach a one year old is a lot different then what and how we can teach a four year old). Now with that said, let's come back to a list of the types of things we should or could teach our child. Now, no laughing at me or shaking your head – is your list any better?

I would start with the following:



Learning . . . to talk

(any words are a great start),
what 'yes' and 'no' means, 'stop' is good, along with 'please' and 'thank you' (and more after those), and the primary colors, shapes, and even some animals.

Oh yeah, not biting or hitting is good to learn as well. But we both know those are the typical starting points. What about aspects of love & anger, happiness & sadness, being helpful & being difficult, trust of others & stranger danger, etc.?

That is the challenge. Some children can surprisingly learn more than you would think while others (like me), enjoyed a few years of eating sand. You just have to be careful and challenge them appropriately.

Which brings us back to our starting words for this chapter – **Lessons (yours given)**. The pages above are to help get you thinking, to trigger ideas and that is okay but don't overlook your life, your experiences.

Most adults who go on to have kids, leverage aspects from their past. They look at how they were raised, what they liked and what they didn't. They then adjust and pursue the actions that make sense to them.

That is okay but what if thoughts and plans don't quite line up well with the way things are unfolding in your life? Challenges to pay the bills, work struggles, etc. The point I'm making is to be careful. Too often we think we have things figured out and go with what we think is best.

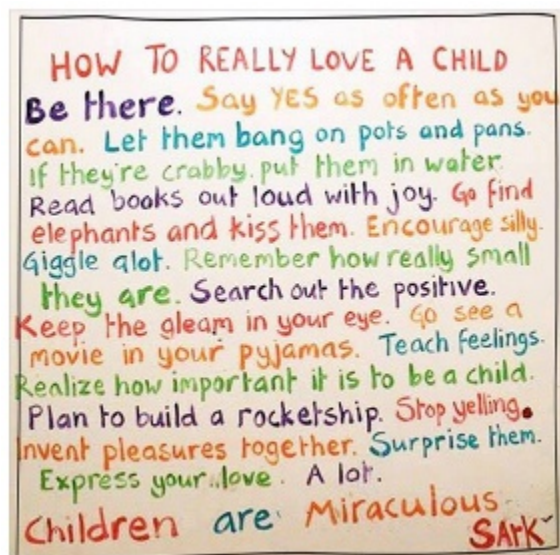
All I'm encouraging is that you work with your wife, make sure you are open to advice (trust you can learn), and think about the long range goals you would like to see achieved as it pertains to your children as they grow to become kids, then teens and then as adults out on their own.

So, **naive or ninja or the 'what' in between for your child – you will greatly influence.** For the good, by being involved; for the bad, by being an absent dad, Also, don't make the mistake that many do – to be their friend – you're not, **you are their Dad and that is different.** A great dad is always better than a friend - be the best dad that you can be. How? Do those things where your child loves you and respects you and if you have that working, they will be then on the path to becoming good adults some day. Consider the following:

There are so many good examples and ideas as what to consider as dads – for how we should act, and for what type of lessons we should give our children.

Being engaged, being loving, being a role model is a great framework to build upon.

Just remember,
**a Child needs a Dad . . .
who can be playful and silly, who shows his love for their mother,
and who shows his love for their child.**



Find ways over their childhood years that challenge them to learn, to build their confidence, and to push themselves in regards to growing their skills, their abilities. And don't be surprised if you have more than one child, that what you try for one, may not work well for the other.

Your child is unique – just like you are. **Don't worry about making mistakes along the way, children are resilient.**

The key is to challenge your children and as you see their skills grow, you can build on that. For example: **we need to teach our kids on how to talk to all kinds of people (they will then build upon that ability).**

- Work with your child so they learn how to tell a good story. It's very important that they watch (see) adults telling good stories in conversational settings. Most kids grow up on the outside of those conversations, they don't get to listen because the parents do not give them the opportunity to listen and to learn.

Also, **encourage them to read.**

- Kids who read will learn things that fire their imaginations, and they'll be able to bring those things into their conversations.

So let me close on this with the following: First, know that there are a lot of different approaches to you teaching your kids lessons, for them to learn on their own and to see how the 'what they learn' comes out in their actions and words. Second, remember that if you do not engage your kids, they will learn from others – and this learning from others will continue through all the years that they are living in your home (so yes you are in competition with these various 'others'). Third, don't expect what worked well for one of your kids, will work well for the others that follow. You may have one that seems like a little rocket scientist and the other just wants to eat dirt. They will be different and that is okay. Just be flexible, patient and encouraging and you will be on track (or at least heading in the right direction).

Now, what would I have done differently? I would have sat down with my wife and would have discussed the . . . what do we want our children to learn over these early years? I would have then jotted them down and began working through that checklist as best I could.

Now it comes down to . . . you have now seen all of the above - are there things for you to discuss, decide and do?

Chapter 3: Imagination (fueled)

This chapter is to encourage you to help your young children in exploring their imagination. **How best to?** Start with these words:



it will not matter what my bank account was, the sort of house I lived in, or the kind of car I drove...
But the world may be different because I was important in the life of a child."

When do you and how will you teach what are 'the little lessons of life'?

*There are so many things that we need to teach our kids.
Whether they be aspects of faith, or the other various critical things they need to know, or of the sad, or of the funny.
What we don't teach them, others will (and are you okay with that?).*

Is your wife, is your child, is your family important to you?

If they are, then they, others and you should be able to see it.

For your children to see it, is to encourage their growth and one way to do so is for your children to explore their imagination. For example . . .

First, ensure they know they are loved – which enables them to relax, which gives them the opportunity to be creative.

Second, for them to be creative, they need the time and the materials to do so. Do they have colors, paper, glue, tape and paint that they can use? Do they have a space where they can draw or do their projects? And the most important aspect – is the time. Yes it is good to have your young kids signed up for various community programs (if they exist) but you also just have to make sure they have

some free time that is available to them. And when they say . . . “I'm bored!” that is when the 'have some fun' materials need to be ready.

Third, you need to remember that the ways of life and the various things available to families is changing. There are some good educational TV programs that can be utilized as well as a variety of actions inside and outside of your home. Consider the following (any of these look good?).



Don't fall into the trap where your TV becomes a babysitter for your little ones. Find some programs that look good and leverage them.

If you need to investigate what programs are age appropriate, do so. As for activities in your home, determine where your children can play, can make a mess, can have fun. For outside the home, that all depends on what your community offers and some may have more than others and that is okay, just determine what looks to be a good and pursue what makes sense (and know that some may be better than others).

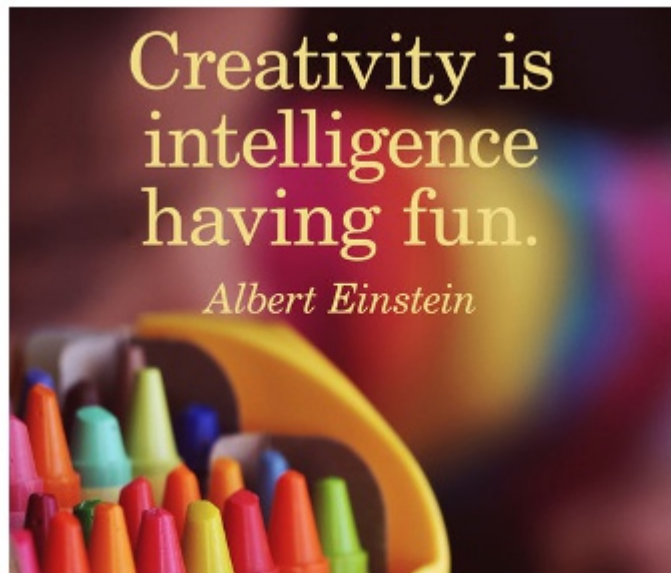
And I'll close on this chapter as follows: Remember, children come in all shapes and sizes, different personalities and a variety of comfort levels. Some may be aggressive, others passive, some extroverted and some introverted. The family environment – and this includes the home, will either help your child to thrive or could limit them significantly.

Know (first) that there are no magical just do these 10 things and you will have great kids.

It is the apathetic and/or dictator type parents that will most likely create 'wounded' children.

Again, the engaged parent is at least on the right track.

Just make sure you are not a 'helicopter' parent, who is engaged too much.



It is in trying to find the right balance . . . is the key. Be careful of too much 'electronics time' and know that drawing or doing some types of craft activities are great. I know our kids have areas in their homes for their kids to draw, paint or whatever. It can be done – do it!

And now to close. Know (second) that you should not take this topic lightly. **Imagination is one of the building blocks of success.**

If your kids do not pursue it, their creativity will be limited. Without creativity, they will be on the path to becoming one of the drones of our adult society . . . one that is lead versus being one that leads.

Now, what would I have done differently? I would have started giving each of my kids a journal book – for them to write down their thoughts, to draw as they wish and to use it as an ongoing connection between their imagination and the challenges I would encourage them to pursue (and yes, more on these 'challenges' as this book continues).

And it comes down to . . . you have to decide if agree to the above and if you do, then decide how you will help your children to tap into their imagination. Remember: drones = not good, doers = real good!

Chapter 4: Patience (required)

This is one of those 'easier said then done' actions . . . not only for dads but for children as well. That is okay, just because it is difficult does not mean that it should not be pursued. Consider the following.



First, know that this (patience) is just the beginning of the 3 'Ps' (perception will be in book 2 and perspective will be in book 3) and that **patience is one of the pillars of happiness.**

Second, we all want our children to be happy but how best to ensure that? And before you answer that, roll those thoughts into this question . . . how would you teach a 2, 4 or 6 year old what patience means?

Not easy but it starts with them learning to have a longer sense of time.

Let me use this humorous example as one way you could begin to teach your little ones and yes I got a chuckle from it and I hope you do poo :)

Okay, here is how I would use this.

First, I will use a 4 year old as my target for this discussion. I would have told that (those words →) to Atom and most likely after a bit of laughing, we would talk. *I would ask him "Atom, do you know how we get ice cubes?"*

And if he did or didn't, we would discuss and I would emphasis that it takes time for water to freeze.

Then we would talk about what happens to an ice cube if it sits out or is used in a glass with water. That means he would understand that it takes a little time but one way of another, it melts and turns back into water again. Then last of all, we would circle back to my words that I started with and we would have fun talking about what we eat and drink, how over time our body uses that stuff and eventually we go to the bathroom. So basically, with those 16 simple words, we could discuss a lot and hopefully, I get him to learn more about the passage of time.

It is then in learning about time, we can talk about learning patience. And what is good, there are so many simple daily type actions that can be pursued and leveraged for teaching moments - like . . . making cookies (it takes time to mix the ingredients together, time for them to back, time for them to cool and then, with patience, you get to eat them), or driving to the store or driving to the park, etc (it takes some time or even a longer time to get to where you want to go). Our children are smart, they pick up things pretty quick and if we help point out those things that they can learn from – they connect the dots pretty well. It all comes down to looking for and leveraging learning opportunities.

A black rectangular box containing white text that reads: "I SWALLOWED AN ICE CUBE YESTERDAY AND I HAVEN'T POOPED IT OUT YET. I'M REALLY SCARED, :)"

Now, what would I have done differently? I would have watched for (those teaching moments) and had tried better to have fun conversations with my young children. I did not realize that I was missing so many fun opportunities because I wasn't really looking or even thinking that I should be looking for them. Like that picture of our grandkids (on the bottom of page 20) . . . if I would have been sitting there watching, we could have talked with Addy about how it takes time to feed a baby, you have to burp them, feed them more, etc. and we do it carefully, because we have the patience we need to do it right (aka . . . nuggets of knowledge planted).



Now it comes down to . . . what will you do to help make patience learned by your little children?

Do nothing or will you look for those teaching times to help begin their lessons learned?

You get to decide.

Chapter 5: Challenge (is beneficial)

Okay, for this topic, lets slow down for a minute and start out with a pop quiz. Which of the following is okay to give to your young child without any instructions?

a) a sharp knife or b) a chainsaw or c) a hammer

Although 8 out of 10 dads answer was 'b' . . . no, the correct answer is not the chainsaw (because little kids would not know how to start it). The correct answer is 'none of them' (which is what 10 of 10 moms responded with . . . and the expression . . . *'are you stupid?'*).



If you have a young child, you know they really don't know anything unless you show or explain to them what they can and can not do.

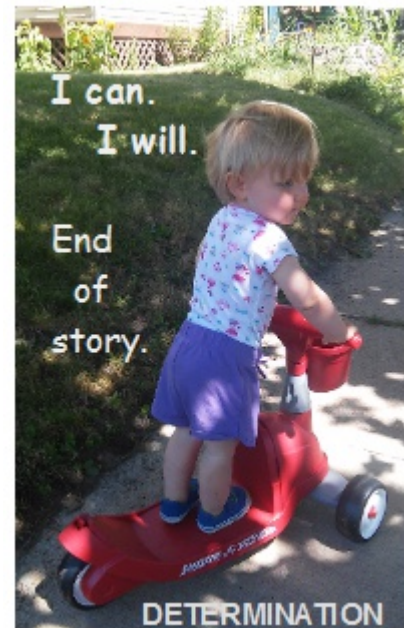
So that then presents the challenge on you (and your wife) . . . have you both talked about the 'how do we want to challenge xyz? (xyz is where you child's name would go)

If you haven't or are not even sure on how best to challenge your young children, then consider these examples.

You will do the basics like encouraging them to roll over, to sit up, to stand and to walk (not much different then training puppies). It is the going beyond the basics that matter so much . . . it is the teaching.

It all builds on the framework of instruction, of encouragement, of praise and of persistence. Our children want to learn, they want to do and sometimes they will fail often until they get it. That I all okay if they have the right framework for them to be challenged and to grow.

So as you think about this, add in the following considerations.





The normal things like teaching them their colors, numbers, ABCs, etc. are a great start for them but there is so much more. These early years are when we teach them words, that then leads to teaching them to talk, how to play games, to build skills, sharing, teamwork, etc.



All of these tie into the pursuit of learning and applying life lessons: when you fall down, you get back up; treat others as you would want to be treated, being honest, helpful, considerate, etc. And as they are then beginning to learn life lessons – they will be getting ready to consider sports. And yes, sometimes parents force their kids into sports and at other times, kids will want to pursue them or other interests they have.

So what does this all mean?

It means that challenge is upon you and them. How you deal with it, teach it or ignore it, is up to you.

Now, what would I have done differently? I would have thought more about it. I would have yelled less and encouraged them more.



Now it comes down to . . . what will you do in regards to challenge and your children? Do you accept the challenge or not?

And a closing note on this chapter. I'd like to thank my grandkids for their great pictures and motivations to help us on this topic of challenge.

Chapter 6: Laugh (when you can)

Okay, for this one you have to admit – laughing should be pretty easy to enable. For example, just visualize a first time dad having to deal with a real stinker of a dirty diaper – yep, you have the smile of 'I'm glad that is not me' on your face. But it is not you, it is your child we care about and wanting them to smile, to laugh, to have fun is the goal.



Consider this first example from Meghan Trainor's song and video . . . “All about that Base”. Not that the song is

funny but that the little kids like the beat of the music and the colors.

The next example is Bruno Mars and Mark Ronson's' song and video. . .



“Uptown Funk”.

And yes, an easy beat with some fun words and dancing.

I share these two songs as examples of what my grandkids liked and we (their parents, my wife and I) got such a chuckle watching them dance to these videos. The key is not so much that we got the chuckle as was that our little ones saw how we enjoyed watching them, all of us having fun.

A fifth grade teacher in a Christian school (a good many years back) asked her class to look at TV commercials and see if they could use them in various ways to communicate ideas about God. Here are some of the results:

***God is like BAYER ASPIRIN,
He works miracles.***

***God is like a FORD,
He's got a better idea.***

***God is like HALLMARK Cards,
He cares enough to send
His very best.***

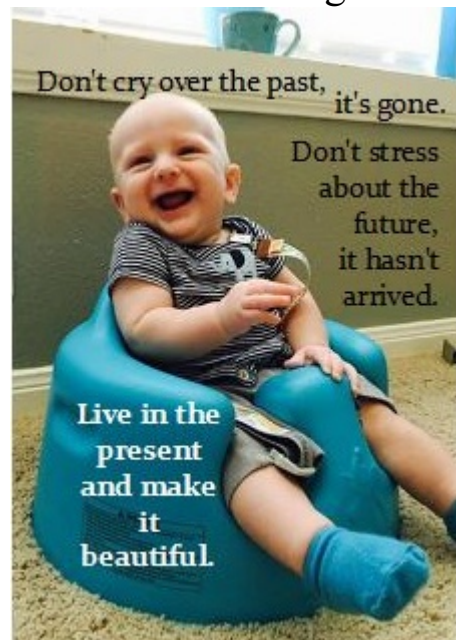
***God is like SCOTCH TAPE,
You can't see Him,
but He's there.***

***God is like ALLSTATE, You're
in good hands with Him.***

***God is like The Energizer
Bunny, He Keeps Going,
and Going, and Going.***

I can't tell you enough, how important it is for our kids to know it is okay to have fun and for them to see their parents and others having fun as well.

So know this – anything you can do to help your child to laugh, has them on the track to happiness. And think of it this way . . . if you like to laugh, why not find a way so your little ones can laugh too.



As you ponder this, remember that a happy home is a healthy home.

I'll now close on this with the following points. First, a thank you to grand-son Jude for his picture (he went through a tough stretch where he was very sick but thanks to the medical staff that helped him to get back on track because his smile is infectious. Second, ponder the following and make sure you do what you can to help your little ones to laugh.

Now, what would I have done differently? This is one I think I did pretty good on with our kids - we goofed off, laughed a lot and had fun as the years unfolded. But there is a chance some of my humor was not quite their type at times but for the most part, everything worked out.

Now it comes down to . . . what will you do for this? The bar can be set low, just don't trip over it (but if you do, laugh it off).

Chapter 7: Look (why? Because other help is out there)

For this book, all the above has hopefully given you some ideas as to what you may or may not want to pursue for your young children. Just remember to keep in mind the following: a) raising young children is a challenge to not take lightly, b) their foundation of understanding right and wrong, of their personality and of their self-confidence is all established at this time, and c) what they gain from their first six years, will be their stepping stones to build upon for their next six years . . . their 'kid years' ahead.



Now, for these two visuals above. Yes, movies can teach lessons.

The first (on the left above) is from the movie '**Pinocchio**' and in that, children see the negatives of lying, of hearing our conscience – as shown by Jiminy Cricket and with all that happens to Pinocchio as he pursues his goal to become a real live boy. The second (on the right above) is from the movie the '**Fox and the Hound**' and in that, the challenges of friendship are shown so well. I know for this one, my wife and I will never forget how our daughter in listening to this story over and over again . . . would always start crying when she heard “*Todd, I'll always be your friend.*” And the reason I shared those two examples is because there are so many children's movies that have come out and more will come. Enjoy them when you take you kids to them but look for the talking points, those opportunities to see what caught their eyes, what they talk about after the movie and don't overlook – what you saw, that you will want to talk with them in follow up. Because if you are like most families, there is a good chance you will take your kids to these movies and will end up buying them to play again and again at home.

My hope at this point is that you agree, we all can gain insights from movies, from TV shows, from books and even the words of others like these from Dr. David Jeremiah . . .

“Little eyes watch: processing and making sense of the world one moment at a time. Parents do their best to direct their children, creatively using everything at their disposal. In the bustle of life it is easy to forget the most impactful tool available: who we are and who we are becoming. Whether we are influencing children, friends, or coworkers, who we are speaks the loudest. I can say something is important to me, but do my actions and life agree?”

Integrity is when a person's words, actions, and values are aligned.”

His words are to encourage us to become a leader (in our homes or out in our communities) who is worth following. For us, our faith can be a great inspiration and for me, those words are a great to ponder and as best I can, to pursue. But where does all of this lead you?



While you ponder this, know that additional resources can be considered to help you to learn those things that you want to improve on as a dad. It is being willing to look for insights that is key.

There are many out and available but the two I will recommend at this time are the following from Andy Andrews.

The first is a brief read titled: “**Discipline vs Correction**” and this is available from Andy's website or mine (both as a free pdf document), <http://decide2be.weebly.com/oh2c>

The second is titled: “**100-Year Parenting Online Course**” and this course is more in depth – for example, containing: *How to give your kids the gifts of Responsibility, Joy, and Wisdom. Regain control of your household. Why responsibility is the most important quality, and why without it, your child won't get far. How to deal with outside influences on your children and create meaningful conversations with your kids. Triple your kids future bank accounts and see how you can help to skyrocket their leadership potential.*



There you go. As grand-son Atlas reminds us, plenty in chapters one through six and then some added ideas in chapter seven in regard to pursuing other resources to work with what you are wanting to do. Thank you for considering all that has been shared in this book and if you would like to continue this journey, join us by pursuing book's two (Woulda) and three (Shoulda) to come.

And with all of the above covered – there you go. **Old Man River's** first book on '**Being a Dad**'. Is it a great book? Nope, but it hopefully has some things in it to help young Dads to begin thinking on the type of things that they may want to consider, that they may want to say, and possibly . . . even on what they may want to do.

So, no pressure but know you have my prayers and best wishes.

Oops, and I almost forgot.

I do have fun writing and within those efforts, I do come up with a story or two. The first of three written many years back is below.

And it is of the mindset . . .

if I could write a story that would help my kids to think and to grow, what would it be for them in their preschool years?

Now, what I wrote all those years back is what it is.

Basically taking things I had heard and or had seen over my years and then having some fun with those thoughts to create what I had drafted.

As for you, who knows – maybe things from the pages above or via the pages below help to get you thinking on things you may say, or do, or write or whatever. That is good.

Just think about your kids and I encourage you to do a better job than I did in my young Dad years.

I tried to pursue what I thought was right but I sure made my mistakes along the way. And that is what prompted me as I moved from active Dad status and into Gramps status . . .

aka what have I learned and what would I pass on to the younger Dads out there?

And remember up on page 10 when I stated I wanted some words of insight from son Alex? Well, his reply is below.

Background: After completing my final draft of this Book 1, I knew I was probably missing some key points so I asked Alex:

"Bud, as a young Dad, I know for young dads, there is a lot to consider but today's world is a lot more complex than when I was a young Dad. My goal is to share insights that help young Dads to consider some things as they take on the years when their child or children are in the preschool age.

Therefore, if you would - what would be any recommendations that you would share for other young Dads - now that you have experienced what you have over these last few years as a young Dad?"

And here is his response (and typical Alex, good & brief):

Do - Talk to them like they are adults as soon as possible.
Do - Watch them at the playground - Don't be on your phone.
Do - Remember that even when they are bad,
they are good at heart.

So, there you go. Insights above to begin pondering as to what makes sense to you to pursue. Also, if you want more, on our

Decide2Be.weebly.com/oh2c

are our 'Other Helps To Consider' – such as:
my digital download titled: **A Dad's Book A: [the] Challenge**
and also on that tab are other downloads, insights, etc.
that you may like to take a look at.

**Which means with those free b's, you are off
to a good start on becoming a great Dad.**

And thank you so much for considering all that I have shared.

Epilogue: [consider] The Tower

Okay, it is bonus time. While you ponder and pursue the actions that make sense to you as a dad of a young child or of young kids, you will find a great opportunity is for you in regards to story telling.

By that I mean . . . whether it is at bed time or on a drive across town, you will have a captive audience that you can either let the radio play or you can talk and tell. I hope you choose the talk and tell.

Sometimes it could be on how things are going and other times, you can either repeat a story you had heard and liked or one you make up.

For example, when you tell stories – like '**The Tower**' story below, if you wish, ensure you keep things in the age appropriate talks. And if you do so, you will see that this is a great way for your kids to learn (and the best part is that you are engaged with them - you are not a disconnected dad). Your options are many, start simple and build from there over time (add more complexity). **Why?** Because if you start early and stay engaged over the years, you will build a foundation with your kids that can be built upon for the years to come that will help ensure the best growing rapport possible with them.

Remember that as little kids, what they grasp could differ significantly from ages 2 to 6. You will see that as they learn to talk, it will be good to see how they respond to the questions you ask them (those below), you will see what they are aware of, what catches their interests, etc.

And don't forget - the **start of these talks** is the key. Have fun with this example if you wish. It is shown below in the finished form – what you would possible share with your 6 – 7 year old after telling it to them previously in a more simplified format. So there you go, the framework is an old classic but with details changed as to thoughts and lessons that I wanted my kids to think on and to pursue as best can.

The Tower



The Back Story: This story was written because of where we lived. This old tower was high up on a hill we often drove by and it was a landmark that my kids knew and always remembered. This story was to be more of a simplistic story of good over evil, right over wrong and with aspects of faith interwoven throughout the story. I had told simple variations of this to my young kids some 10 years prior to writing it (mainly as we would drive by it, the kids would see the tower, point it out and I would tell short versions of the story to them).

What you will find in the following is that this story takes an old familiar one (that you will probably recognize) and inserts the type of aspects that I hoped my younger children would like, could grasp and could use as a foundation for their early years.

The Promise...

A long time ago, there was a family struggling to survive in the wilderness. This was the dark ages and the entire world struggled between right and wrong, life and death. The young father and mother were doing all that they could to feed and take care of their young son and daughter.

Summer had passed quickly and Fall was now beginning. The father knew that they had barely survived the last winter and that he must find a way to feed his family over the coming Winter months. Last year there were only the four of them, this year there would be five. For his wife was nearing the time for the birth of their next child.

His heart ached with the pain of doubt that he would be able to keep his family alive and healthy during the hard Winter months yet ahead. Then during one outing, he was so depressed that he dropped to his knees and prayed for God to help him provide the needed food for his family. He had never really asked for His help in the past but now he was so desperate, he would take any help he could get. Now after his prayer, he walked down the path and came upon an old woman who was standing beside a roaring fire, making a big kettle of stew.

It smelled so good, he had to stop. He thought it was strange that he had been down this path many times before but did not remember this old woman with her equally old thatched hut. He had assumed that maybe he had taken a different turn in the path, one that he had not explored before. As he walked he thought, maybe things were changing and his luck was improving. He talked with the old woman and was surprised how their conversation had focused on the upcoming hardship of Winter, and the difficulties of the people finding enough food for themselves and their families. The man asked the woman how she was able to provide for herself and she answered, *"That's all taken care of, the good witch down the path takes care of me"*. When the man asked her how and why, the old woman would not explain. All she said was that he would have to go see the witch himself. So the man decided that he too would go see the witch.

The old woman gave him all the stew he could eat and then he was off to find the witch. He was frightened, not knowing what to expect. As he rounded a bend in the path, he came upon a large castle that had a sense of eerie silence about it. He then walked on its main path and came to the large iron gate that was open. He was about to beat upon the huge old door when it suddenly opened in front of him.



Here before him stood a woman as if she was expecting him. She welcomed him and invited him in. His thoughts of fright quickly left him but for some strange reason, he could not figure out why this woman looked so familiar. The man introduced himself to the woman and explained the meeting he had with the old woman down the path. He told her of his family and how that they barely survived the previous Winter.



He told her of his greatest fears that with the upcoming birth of his new born child, his ability to provide the required food would not be enough. The woman calmed the man down and she explained that the old woman he had met had a similar problem.

That she was able to trade for her well being. The man did not understand. He asked the woman to explain. She said, *"The woman was alone and starving when I came upon her. She had begged for help, for food, for her life. I told her I could help, all she had to do was to trade something of value and I would provide her with all the food she would ever need until the end of her days"*.

The man in his excitement begged the woman to help him in the same way. She asked, *"What can you trade me for all the food your family will ever need?"* The man thought and thought. What he offered, the woman did not want. When he came to the end of all the things he could think of, he exclaimed, *"All that I have left is my family, what do you want, one of my children?"* The woman just sat there looking back at him and not saying a word. The man was nervous and thinking, why is she not saying anything?

The woman finally stood and said, *"It seems we can not reach an agreement, you must leave"*. The man was very desperate; he fell to his knees and said, *"What of my unborn child? If you allow my wife and me to keep the child for ten years, I'll then give the child to you"*. This brought a smile to the woman's face; she agreed and then explained how their trade would work out. It was easier than he expected. The man would only have to ask out loud for food and it would be provided.

He understood that in return, upon the child's tenth birthday, he would have to turn the child over to her. As long as the man kept his promise, he and his family would have all the food they ever wanted until the end of their days. If he broke the promise, he, his wife and children would all die immediately. The man agreed, thanked her and was on his way. He was excited that he would now be able to provide for his family and they would never be hungry again. The only troubling thought he had was how he would be able to give the child to the woman at the agreed to time?

Soon after the man had left the woman and her castle. He then remembered that he needed to bring home some food for his family. As he walked, he thought... I wish a big deer would walk by so I could easily kill it and take it back to my family. He no more finished his thought, when he spotted a huge deer grazing along side of the path up a head. He quickly set the arrow to his bow and with the greatest of ease, let go of the arrow. It raced at the deer with the greatest amount of speed and accuracy. The deer did not know what had hit it, for it had fallen dead immediately upon the impact of the arrow.

The man was pleased; he prepared the deer for the hike home and was quickly on his way, not knowing of the pending excitement that awaited him at home. It was nightfall when the man arrived home. His two children raced to greet their father. They told him of their mother's condition. She had told the children, *"It is time. Have your father come in as soon as he gets home"*.

The father raced in to see his wife. Her breathing was labored, the look in her eyes expressed relief that her husband was there. Not soon after, the birth of their new daughter had occurred. They had a beautiful little girl and they named her Rapunzel. Yes they were thankful and it was surprising how fast those first years went by. They were blessed because she was a wonderful child and they were thankful for her.

Those early years were plentiful for the family. It seemed that whenever times were hard and food was limited, the father would go hunting and would always come back with a duck, a rabbit, a goose or a deer to keep the family fed. Now the first eight years of Rapunzel's life were filled with love and joy. The ninth year marked a turn in her father's moods. Where in the earlier years, he was joyous and happy; he now became more and more withdrawn and quite. Her mother on the other hand, seemed to become happier and happier with each passing year. The family was healthy, there was always enough food. Their future looked promising. What the children and the man's wife did not know, were that the feelings the father thought were a dream, were actually the truth and it was rolling toward a very sad day.

He had always wanted to black out the memories of the meeting with the woman in the castle, those years ago. Why did he make the promise? Did it actually happen?



He was not sure. All he did know was that Rapunzel would be ten years old next year and that he had promised to give her to the woman at the castle. His desire to forget about the promise was now overcome by the words of the woman that repeated in his mind.

As his days rolled on, he just knew that if he did not live up to his promise. . . he, his wife and children would all die immediately. This dark secret and promise wore heavily upon his heart. Sadly, he knew he must live up to his agreement, but how could he?

The Return...

The day of her tenth Birthday could not have been mixed with more emotions. Her mother was a glow in the love she had for her family. Her oldest boy was becoming a young man, always eager to help his father and respectful of his mother. Her oldest daughter was a joy to have. She never argued with her parents and did all that she could to help around the house. And then there was Rapunzel, with an older brother and sister to help show her the way, she was equally the joy to have around the house. When the older children focused on the serious events of daily living, she rejoiced in the fun of living each day to its fullest. For it was in Rapunzel's joy, that the family realized how fortunate they were and thankful for all that they had.

Except for the father, for now was the day that he had dreaded most. Here was a beautiful family about to be torn apart because of the promise he had made those ten years ago. What the family had not realized was that the father had thought long and hard about how to take Rapunzel away. His plan would work but it was that promise within him that was slowly destroying him. He did not want to keep his promise but had to. So while his family enjoyed their birthday celebration for Rapunzel, he prayed to God.



For in his prayers he privately begged God for help and deliverance from his evil promise, but no solution to his problem seemed evident.

After their evening meal he asked Rapunzel to join him for a walk down the path. Little did anyone know what would happen next. The father and his daughter walked hand and hand down the path. Rapunzel with joy and excitement in her heart, for her father had never asked her to walk with him alone like this in the past. The father, with his broken heart and tears on his cheek, he held his daughter's hand with the most delicate touch. He loved his daughter so much and he wondered, would she ever forgive him? As they walked, it seemed like hours to her but her father knew it had only been a few minutes. They rounded a bend in the path and somehow had come upon the castle, where the father had gone those many years ago. Rapunzel was not frightened but questioned her father; *"Daddy, I do not remember this castle, where did it come from?"* He too was not sure but it was there that her father dropped to his knees in front of his daughter. He broke down and in a sobbing voice, he quickly explained the terrible promise he had made and that she must go with the witch or else the entire family would die.

It was upon his last word that the huge door opens and there stood the woman. Rapunzel turned to her father and said . . . *"Daddy, please don't be sad. I'll be OK and I know someday we'll be together again"*. The father could not stand what he had done. An inner rage built up inside of him and he lunged for the woman thinking if only he could find a way to break that promise. Unfortunately the woman



was prepared. As he jumped at her, a huge wall of iron bars appeared between the man, the woman and Rapunzel who was now standing beside her. And then before his eyes, the woman slowly turned into an ugly old witch.

He was helpless and the witch laughed as she then took Rapunzel and they slowly walked into the castle. Rapunzel cried out to her father but it was too late. Before he could do anything else, he was now falling into a deep, deep sleep.

When he woke up, he shook his head because he had what seemed to be terrible nightmares racing through his mind. The image of the witch taking Rapunzel away from him was the worst image of all. How could he have let his beautiful daughter go, what would he do, how could he go on knowing what had happened, what he had done?

As he sat there in the grass, he remembered his wife and their other children. He had kept his part of the deal. Although Rapunzel was gone, he would never forget her and one day . . . he would find a way to bring her home - and little did her father know, that God had been watching everything as well.



Now came the second hardest part. How to explain Rapunzel's disappearance. His plan was to pretend that they had been attacked and he had been beaten. When he awoke, he had found Rapunzel gone and that he had no idea where she was. For at least the last part was true. She was gone and he knew not where to find her. To make his story believable, he walked to the deep ravine where he had always told the children to stay away from. Once at the ledge, he jumped; for he was sure he would be bruised and bloodied from the fall. Unfortunately the fall had done more harm than the father had expected. By the time he had stopped rolling down the ravine, he was black and blue with blood gushing from a terrible gash in his head. If that was not bad enough, he had twisted his leg so bad; he would later learn that he would never walk the same again. And little did he really know how all of this would hurt more over time.

It had taken all of his strength to drag himself up out of the ravine. When he had reached the top, he had passed out. He did not know that while they were gone, his wife was very worried. She had sent their oldest son out looking for them. Luckily their son had now come across him lying in the road. If he had not found him, his father would have surely died. The son bandaged his father's wounds and took him to their home, not knowing what had happened to his sister. Yes the father was suffering from great pain and would often fall into a deep sleep. The few times he was awake, all the family could get out of him were words of witches and bars and screams for Rapunzel. The family was devastated. Luckily their father was alive but they had no idea as to the fate of Rapunzel. While the family nursed their father back to health, it seemed their mother was becoming more distant.

The Loneliness...

She awoke in the morning. It was hard to believe that she had been gone from her family for so many years. She would often think, how many years had it been? The earliest days of her life now seemed like little memories of fun in the sun, playing with her older brother and sister, helping her mother carry food to the table, and scaring her father from behind the door when he came in. All of those were the happy thoughts of carefree days. But those memories drifted into memories of the more recent long sad days and nights. Days and days of crying for her family with nothing but the scorn of the old witch to remind her that she was not alone but a prisoner. At first, she would not speak to the witch. She thought maybe the witch would tire of her and return her to her family but those thoughts did not last long.

The witch made it clear and simple, that the only way for Rapunzel to ever leave was for her to become a witch as well. So she had soon learned that if she acted interested in what the witch would say, she was given a little more freedom about the castle. This is how Rapunzel began thinking of her plan for escape. She would build up the witch's confidence in her and then one day, she would break for freedom. All she had to do was to prepare for the right moment.

As the years went by, the witch worked and worked to get Rapunzel to learn the witch's ways. She would listen some days and then other days she would pretend to not understand. She asked the witch if there were books that she could read. If she could educate herself, maybe then the ways of witchcraft would be easier to understand so that she could become the type of witch that was expected of her. Little did the witch realize that Rapunzel was not learning to please the witch but learning to improve herself for the day when she would be free. She read everything that she could.

The more that Rapunzel read and learned, the more she desired and prayed for the day she would escape from the witch. This knowledge strengthened her and as each year passed, she was more and more able to defy the witch's demands. Now with each lesson given by the witch, she was able to question the witch's own abilities and reasons. Rapunzel began causing the witch to have doubts of herself and her teachings. This frustrated the witch so much that finally, the witch gave up. And with this victory, she had a bitter sweet reward. Rapunzel had hoped that the witch would give up on her and would let her free but now her fate seemed worse then ever. The witch had moved her from the castle to a high tower, far out in the wilderness. There were no steps to escape down, there were no roads nearby.

But as the years went by, two things happened. Rapunzel had grown from a young girl into beautiful young woman. The other was her hair. For with each passing year it had continued to grow and grow and grow. She was not really sure why she did not cut it. All she knew was that in taking care of her long hair, it gave her something to concentrate on during those endless days, months and years.



How long had it been? Was she sixteen, eighteen, or twenty years old? She was not sure. All that she remembered were the blurry memories of a family she once knew and loved, followed by all the years of struggle against the witch. If it had not been for her prayers, she would have gone crazy. She truly believed that God had a special purpose for her. She was not quite sure what it was but she continued to pray for good things to come. Another thing she found she loved doing, would be to sing the songs her mother had taught her as a young child. Little did she realize that those songs would be her salvation, her bridge to the past that would comfort her all days.

One day after washing her long, long beautiful hair, Rapunzel was leaning out the window. Her hair was hanging down and gently blowing in the breeze to dry. She laughed to herself and thought what a silly sight she must be. She imagined that if someone saw her like this, she would look like a headless man, leaning out a window with only his long beard to show for himself. She did not care though, her hair had to be washed, and it had to be dried. She was surprised at how long her hair had become after all these years. It now seemed that this hair of hers had to be cut but she could not bring herself to do it. So to make herself feel better, she made up a song of a beautiful young girl, with her hair blowing in the breeze, wishing some day that soon she'd be free. And it was on this fateful day that the song Rapunzel sung, had carried in the wind and had been heard by the young prince, who was hunting for deer.

The voice was beautiful; he had to find out who was singing. Slowly and surely, he followed the voice back through the trees. He was surprised how thick the forest seemed to be. The closer he got to the voice, the harder it was to get through the brush. Finally, he worked his way through and had come to the base of this lone tower, deep in the middle of the forest. Up high above, he saw a window and heard the voice that had brought him there. He yelled up, "*Hello there! Can you hear me?*" This caught Rapunzel by surprise, the sound of another person's voice . . . how long had it been?

She stopped singing, maybe she was dreaming. All of a sudden, "Hello up there, can you hear me?" She ran to the window and looked down. There before the prince was the most beautiful young woman that he had ever seen. She cried out in fright, "Is someone really there? Oh please help me!" The prince's heart was pounding, he was there and to him, it was love at first sight. It took a few minutes for Rapunzel to quickly explain her plight. The prince comforted her as best he could. Although they needed a plan, night time was coming and he must leave but he promised Rapunzel that he would return the next day and that they would be together soon.



The next day the prince returned. He had not slept at all that night. He knew that the witch was powerful and dangerous but if he could not somehow free Rapunzel, his life would not be complete. He had a plan and now was the time to take action. At the tower he called up to Rapunzel. She dropped her hair down and wrapped it around the table so the prince could use her hair to climb up and in to the tower. She was excited yet very afraid. If the witch would come back and caught them together, they would both be put to a painful death.

Her fears were quickly laid to rest by the prince. She could tell by the look in his eyes that today they would either soon be free or they would be together in the Lord's heaven. They talked and came up with a plan to set the trap for the wicked witch. Unfortunately for them, the witch came before they were quite ready. . . **"Rapunzel!"** shouted the angry witch, **"Who is with you? I had told you before that if you every came in contact with a stranger . . . that I would put you to a most horrible death!"** But what happened next shocked the witch and it caused her to pause just a moment.

Instead of finding Rapunzel acting in a timid way, Rapunzel yelled back at the witch, "*Help me! A hunter has found me and has attacked me!*" The witch looked away from her and across the tower room. There she saw the boots of a man sticking slightly out from under the bottom of the curtain. She then raced with a cackle in her voice toward the curtain. As she approached the curtain, her broom stick changed into a long sword and she screamed in anger as she plunged it into the curtain with all her might.



The Scream...

They say you could hear the witch's scream across the entire valley. For when the witch had thrust the sword into the curtain, she did not strike the prince. For all her anger, her sword had only pierced the openness of the window behind the curtain. And as she struggled to catch herself, the young prince came up from under the table and pushed her with all his might. The witch fell out through the window, tumbling forward, she had tried to stop her fall but she forgot that her broom was now a sword. She grabbed the sword frantically and cut her hands terribly, only to then let go and fall to her death. It was in that scream of pain that she did not realize that she was falling down upon the boulders at the bottom of the tower.

Death for the witch and freedom for Rapunzel was immediate. Now after all those years, the witch was gone and Rapunzel was free.

The suddenness of this freedom was almost a shock. At first, Rapunzel and the prince just sat there, holding each other in their arms and with tears of joy in their eyes. This was their day and they were soon able to leave the tower for the prince had also brought a pair of scissors.



He helped Rapunzel to cut off her long beautiful hair. To escape, they tied it to the table and climbed down from the tower. Then the prince took Rapunzel to see her family. She did not know that her father was dying from the pain of his broken heart, from his actions from those years long ago. There she was not only reunited with her father but with her brother and sister as well. Although this was a joyous occasion for Rapunzel, it was also a very sad time.

Her father demanded to be carried out into the woods to where Rapunzel's mother lay buried. She had died years ago from a broken heart as well. . . the loss of her youngest daughter was too much for her to stand. It was at this time, that her father looked into her eyes, kissed her cheek and said *"I'm sorry."* He then looked at his wife's grave saying *"Please bury me next to your mother, I have nothing but to ask for God's mercy and your mother's forgiveness".*

It was at that moment, that the sadness of his life had come to an end. He closed his eyes, he died and there he was soon buried by the women he loved. But the sadness of that day led to the latter joy of the Prince's and Rapunzel's wedding where the whole kingdom rejoiced and celebrated. When before they had the presence of the evil witch, now they had peace and a new royal family. The prince had become the King and Rapunzel was now the Queen. In the past when food was scarce, the people suffered. The new King was committed to make sure there was plenty for all.



And as for Rapunzel, the new Queen traveled throughout their kingdom to ensure all was well. Yes she shared her stories about her family, her life with the witch and her rescue by their King. It was at this time that the kingdom began to flourish under the reign of the King and Queen. All were happy and especially on one day in the castle, a year after their marriage, there was a lot going on.

The king was nervous and then he heard the scream - not of terror but the scream of a new born child who was very frightened by his welcome into the new world and now was crying. For you see, a new prince was born that morning and Queen Rapunzel was his beautiful mother. *"Welcome to the new world Arthur"* she whispered into his ear. *"Now it is time for you to go to sleep my dear. I pray that love will protect you, that faith will strengthen you, that hope will guide you, and that the peace of our Lord will bless you. Sweet dreams"*.



Little did anyone know that hard times were soon to happen in their kingdom. But one did know. So often He had set our opportunities in front of us and unfortunately we too often do not see the right path to choose. Many years earlier, He had sent His son into this world and He reconciled the people to His Father but sadly the world struggled as the years unfolded. This boy named Arthur who would help remind many of the teachings of the early Church.

Would the people learn or would they suffer? Yes there were a few that were fighting evil but they could not win the fight alone.

They have their gifts but could they, would they all unite? He knew the answer, and yes, evil would be fought again.

The End.

There you go, this story was altered from the old classic fairy tale but remember it is for the younger kids - originally simplified by me to begin with and then as you see it above, as I completed it - it became more complex. My hope with it is that you may now have some ideas on what you may want to write, read or share in some way with your young kids (and remember, if needed, you could simplify and modify the story above and use as you deem best).

In thinking on this, a story like the above can give you some talking points that can become part of the lessons on life that you want your children to ponder and to pursue. For example, from this story you could ask your kids what they think of in regards to the following types of questions (and these are just a few of the many possible):

_ Why are some prayers not answered?

_ What is love?

_ What is hardship?

_ What is a good promise?

_ What is a bad promise?

_ What is sadness?

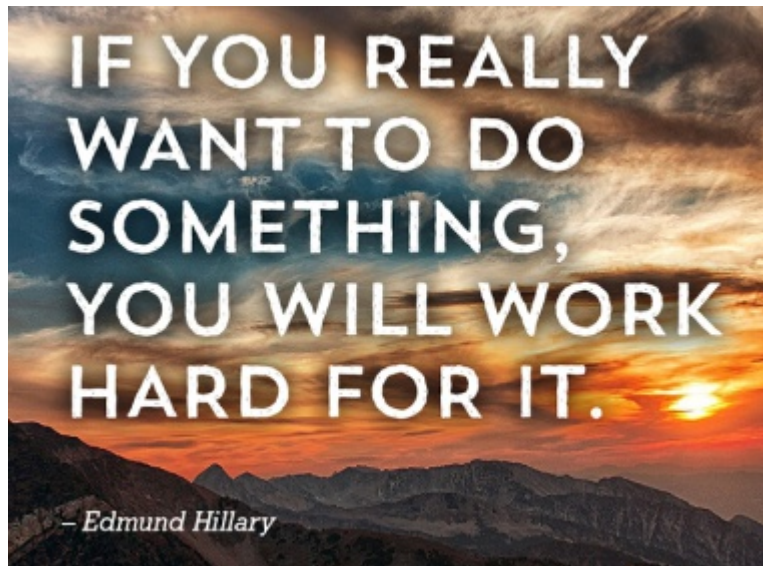
_ What is anger?

_ What is happiness?

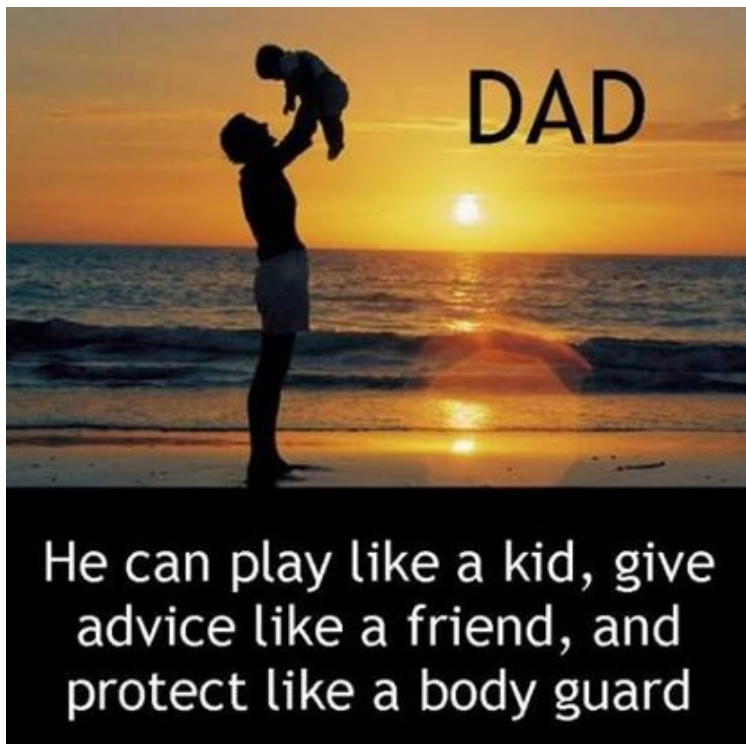
And remember, these types of questions or those that you think best are to help get your kids to think, to talk with you and for you to share your thoughts as they respond.

Also note, because my kids were very young at the time when I first started sharing this story - you see by the closing words in it, that it pointed to a follow up story. Yes Arthur is a big part of the second story - 'The Sword' (and I have it for you at the end of book two).

That is it, thank you and remember:



So work hard at being the best Dad you can be.
And yes the blank space provided is great for your note taking.
(except for this above and below).



And don't forget - if toddlers can read upside down . . .



just think how good of a Dad you can be for reading this book.