

Should'a

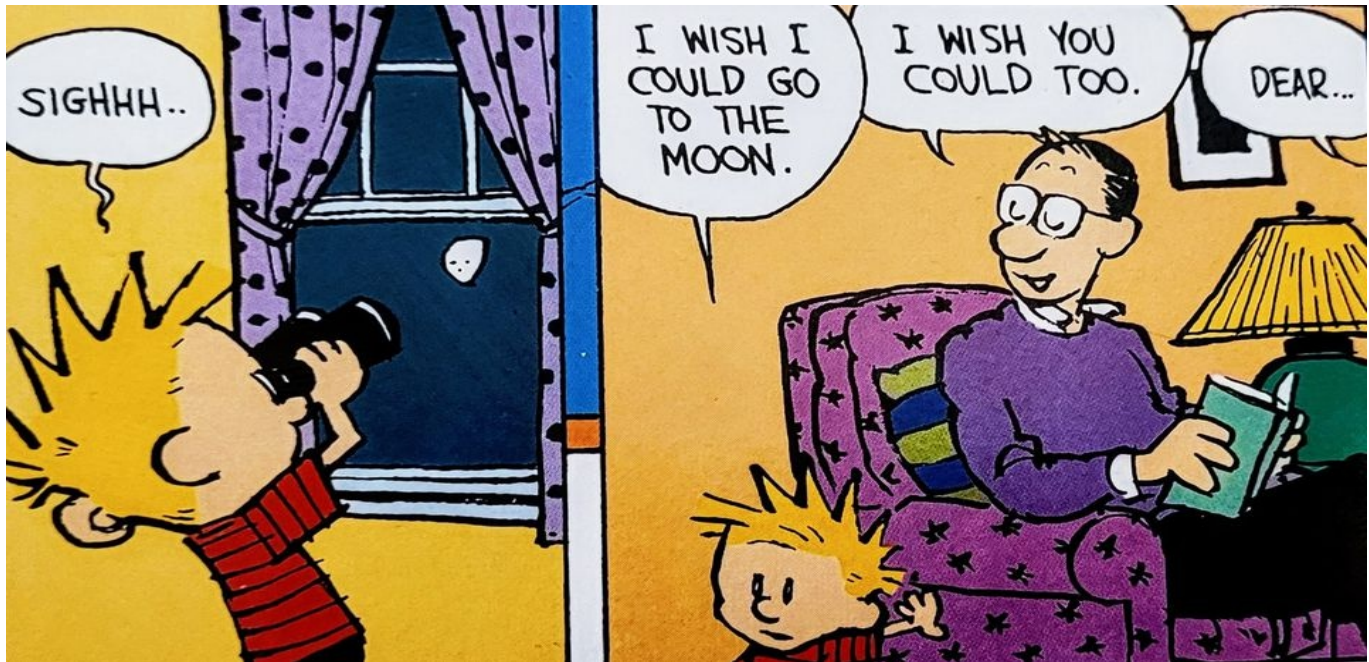


Being a Dad – Staying Engaged

(because your teen may not want you to)

aka: Fatherhood – When Most Difficult
(a Dad's Responsibility for Raising a Great Teen – as best you can)

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



**And yes, before you know it – you'll be wishing your teen was out of the house.
But, before you 'go there' . . . know that your Dad duties require a
long term commitment (until your last breath).
And this book will help you to understand some key aspects.**

**Also note - like Books 1 & 2, if you want a different type of book on being a Dad,
this is the third dose of that
(points to ponder and opportunities to pursue that builds upon the
framework of information shared in those first two books).**

**Shoulda: Being a Dad – Staying Engaged
aka Fatherhood – When Most Difficult**

is
Cabinright 2023 by Old Man River
Outing Mn. 56662

- = FYI: A 'closing out this series' thanks to Bill Watterson and his Calvin & Hobbes comics.

**And also big thanks to Jim Unger and his Herman comics
and all the others that I found and were able to use.**

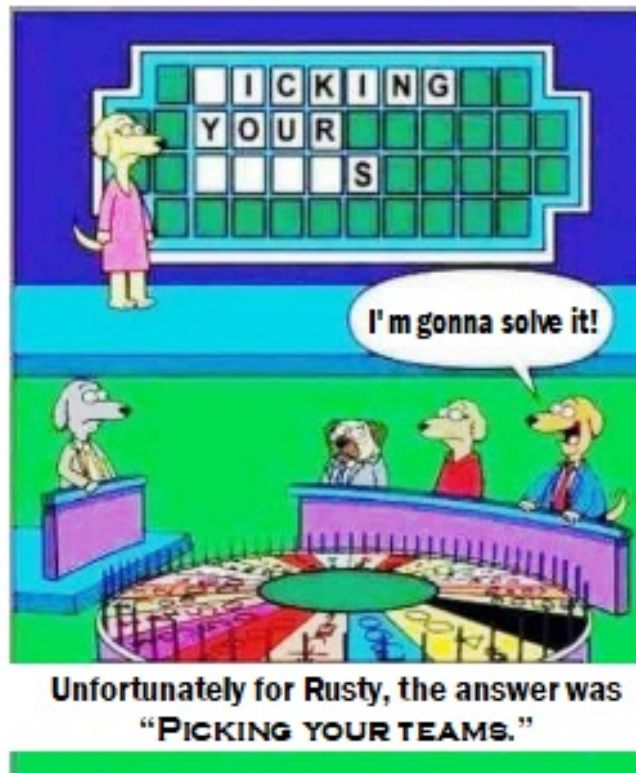
Please note:

This book is dedicated to our grandchildren – Addy, Luke, Noah, Geoffrey, Atlas, Jude & Atom – who my wife & I all love.

It is who they are (our GKs), that challenged me to look with hope 10, 20, 30, and a 100 years down the road.

Thank you – I love you all!

And know this . . .



If you are reading this, you may have already begun to see that your 'one who will be an adult' in their years ahead . . . already thinks they know everything.

And that means, if you are not prepared to change gears and to stay engaged, you're going to have some really tough times.

So, to help you to get ready and to get through the teen years, and yes, to have some fun from time to time (it's okay to do so) . . . keep reading, thinking and deciding what will work best for you.

Also note, this book 3 wraps up the framework where these three Dad books focus on the ages that our kids grow though.

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)



And yes – know that this third book **Shoulda**, is to challenge you to consider those aspects that would help you to be the Dad you need to be, as your teen is growing up.

Which means – the things that did when they were little, is now in the rear-view mirror. Buckle up & move forward carefully.

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The Cross

And please know this. I enjoyed pulling together the different images, quotes, sayings, etc that you have seen in the first two books, and what you will see in this third book as well.

So – just remember that as you read through this, I hope get a chuckle periodically and some insights that are worth considering further. Because

if you do – then for you, this has all been a great use of your time.

Introduction:

There was this father who scratched his head and thought, *'Wow. . . making a baby was easy, raising one had its challenges but now what do I do with this teenager?'*

Okay, that may or may not even come close to your situation and/or perspective on what it takes to have kids move from the child years (ages 1 to 6) and into the kid years (ages 7 to 12). You may have things going pretty well or you could be struggling or at least, a bit nervous as to if you are on the right path to being the dad that you want to be for your kids. Consider these words from Dr. David Jeremiah: **“Every parent knows that children come into the world with a will of their own. The parent’s job is to train children in the way they should go so when they are older they will not depart from it (Proverbs 22:6). Sometimes that training is uncomfortable, even painful.”**

So then, how are your plans going for your kid teen years?



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 having six boys in it and during those growing up years, there was a lot of difficulties. Oversimplified I lived through a horrible divorce between my parents, relationships with my brothers that were impacted greatly because of the events leading up to and through that divorce, and then becoming a Dad with a ton of good intentions.

So, what did I do? Well, books 1 & 2 showed that I looked at what my parents and done and did not do, and I tried to be different – avoiding

what I thought were the 'too many negatives' that my patents did. Now, did I do a great job?

Nope, because I still made a bunch of 'oops' along the way. As to why? Well, my mindset then was that if I avoided the things I didn't like and just did the things I thought were best and needed, all would be great.

But the great (in my opinion) did not unfold. Yes, I think my wife and I did not too bad but now as I kept looking around and gathering more and more insights over the years, I see now that having a lot of information to learn from, to consider, helps to give more options as to what we can do and when. Which is the goal for this and the other two books shared. Just look over, ponder and decide if anything helps you to decide and do what makes sense to you.

And – remember – don't become so distracted which is why I have included the lyrics from this song. Good to read and a great to go & hear.

Cat's In The Cradle (by Harry Chapin)

My child arrived just the other day
He came to the world in the usual way
But there were planes to catch, and bills to pay
He learned to walk while I was away
And he was talking 'fore I knew it, and as he grew
He'd say, "I'm gonna be like you, dad
You know I'm gonna be like you"

And the cat's in the cradle and the silver spoon
Little boy blue and the man in the moon
"When you coming home, dad?" "I don't know when
But we'll get together then
You know we'll have a good time then"

My son turned ten just the other day
He said, "Thanks for the ball, dad, come on let's play
Can you teach me to throw?" I said, "Not today,
I got a lot to do." He said, "That's ok"
And he walked away, but his smile never dimmed
Said, "I'm gonna be like him, yeah
You know I'm gonna be like him"

And the cat's in the cradle and the silver spoon
Little boy blue and the man in the moon
"When you coming home, dad?" "I don't know when
But we'll get together then
You know we'll have a good time then"

Well, he came from college just the other day
So much like a man I just had to say
"Son, I'm proud of you. Can you sit for a while?"
He shook his head, and he said with a smile
"What I'd really like, dad, is to borrow the car keys
See you later. Can I have them please?"

And the cat's in the cradle and the silver spoon
Little boy blue and the man in the moon
"When you coming home, dad?" "I don't know when
But we'll get together then
You know we'll have a good time then"

I've long since retired and my son's moved away
I called him up just the other day
I said, "I'd like to see you if you don't mind"
He said, "I'd love to, dad, if I could find the time
You see, my new job's a hassle, and the kid's got the flu
But it's sure nice talking to you, dad
It's been sure nice talking to you"
And as I hung up the phone, it occurred to me
He'd grown up just like me
My boy was just like me.

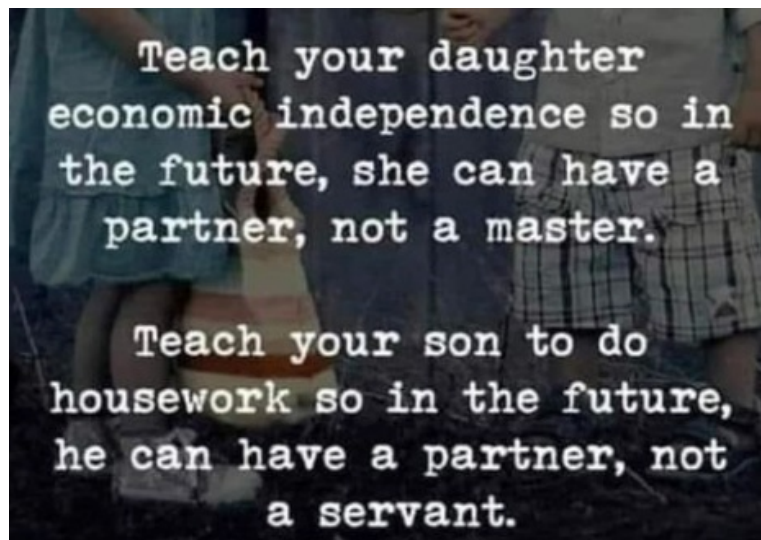
Thanks for thinking about all of this shared so far. And now to close on this intro, I'll offer this. If you were asked what you believe your teen(s) should know, before they move out and on with their life – what would you respond with? For me – I came up with the following:

[Before age 18 . . .] They need to learn accountability (to own their actions), discipline (they know that wrong actions may require a penalty of some sort), and honor (that appreciation, compassion and respect are good to have). They have seen enough in their life so far that they know right from wrong, what diversity and discrimination are, as well as what sadness, loneliness, depression, and suicide are. And they know they are not invincible (that drugs and dangerous actions can lead to terrible outcomes). So basically, in their years so far, they understand the goodness of confidence, the downfall of arrogance, the signs of deceit and the danger of manipulation. They also have a respect for law enforcement, for military service members and for others. Not to give others a 'free pass' but because they know that to receive respect, they must show it.

Now, are the above the perfect 'need to list'? Nope and you know by now it is just **Old Man River** thinking on what would be a great set of experiences, awareness, and goals for teens to pursue in those years before they get out and on their own in early adulthood.

But, what if there are other things to keep in mind or at least to consider?

That presents the opportunity for you to consider the following and to then decide for yourself. And yes, a lot of good things to consider for your teen(s).

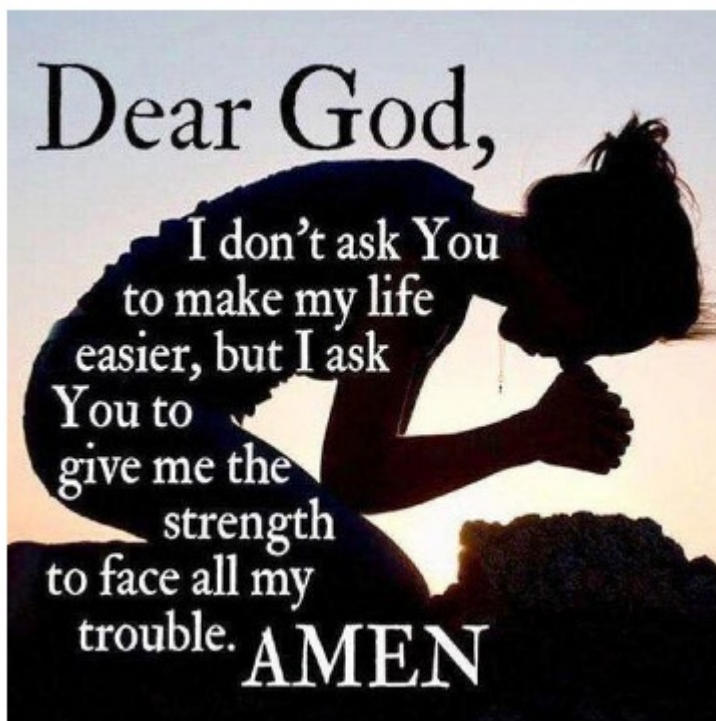


Chapter 1: Their Life (pursued)

This book 3, for this first chapter – shares a few words in regard to the aspect of faith and if there is an embrace of it or not. But, before I get to that, let me back up for a level set lead in with the following.

In **Book One**, we covered ideas on introducing our faith to our young ones (the pre-schoolers). Then in **Book Two**, we looked at the challenge of educating our kids in our faith (aka building from awareness and into the learning desired). And we now look at ways for you to think on what aspects of faith – or not – you will share with your teen(s). Why? Because as teenagers, what they like and do, may not line up with what you would hope they would like and do. So, make the time to reflect on what you have done or have not done over your teen's growing up years, in regard to: do they enjoy their faith and want to continue pursuing it? Or are they for whatever reason – backing away from it?

If you're not sure on how best to determine where your teen(s) are at in their awareness and embrace in faith – why not have a discussion on it? The key – don't make any assumptions. Let them share their perspective



on this and most likely, they will ask you for yours. Now, how that would go, who knows. The key is to just talk and to see where they are at on this. And if you do this, you have to know where you are at and to be prepared to talk about it. For example, if I was asked: "Dad, how would you describe your faith?" I would respond with **I have found our Christian**

faith as a great comfort and motivation for me. And as my years have unfolded, I've tried to embrace our faith, and to use it as a foundation for all that I do. Basically, to live my life that is based on a love for God and for others. I would then go on to say that means our thoughts, words and actions matter, That being . . . **as best I can, to treat everyone with love, like glass and in appreciation.** And I would explain, for if we do, we will be compassionate, courageous, careful, respectful and thankful to others. And in doing so, we have watered the seeds of faith, of integrity and honor that is growing in our character.

Now, with those words for reference – how do we look at your teen's life as they are pursuing it so far? Now that this chapter 1 is to be your reminder to look at how your teen is living. Do you see them staying engaged in your shared faith or is there an obvious pause or turn away?

For if they are staying engaged – that is great – but don't take it for granted. Periodically have good discussions on faith with them. Get their perspectives, concerns or whatever and share your insights. If their faith is not as you would like – then think how best to address that – so as to keep a light burning. Don't create ultimatums or penalties. Our faith should always be a comfort and desired, not despised.

[and to close on this] **Know that that many parents often find themselves praying that their children never experience pain or hardship. We may think the same but if we do, we are loosing sight of God's plans to bring maturity and Christ-likeness to our children through their life experiences – the good, bad and everything in between. We tend to focus our attention on what is happening to our kids today while God knows what He is preparing them to be for their years ahead. So pray for God's guidance and blessings to be upon your children and trust God for His will to be done for them and for you. And never forget – God's plans and timeline may not line up with what we want, but we can always trust that it is good.**

Goal = Help them to see how life with faith is a great way to live.

But be aware: Your teen's friends, peers, and to some degree – society, may be pushing a message, agendas, and a mindset that is basically . . . 'pursue what you want – you deserve it.' And if you don't show why and how your faith is something to embrace, they will look elsewhere for what comforts and motivates them to be who they want to be.

And all of the above, leads to these last words from myself on life, that being: find a way to really help your teen to understand a deep view on values (think), a wide view on life (understand) and a long view in time (persevere). The consider sharing these words from Ray Pritchard. That being: some people go through life as professional victims, always talking about how they have been mistreated. But perpetual victimhood dooms you to a life of self-centered misery because you learn nothing from your trials. Consider then - what a difference it makes to be a student of life and not a victim:

A victim says, "Why did this happen to me?" A student says, "What can I learn from this?" A victim blames other people for his problems. A student asks, "How much of this did I bring on myself?" A victim looks at everyone else and cries out, "Life isn't fair." A student looks at life and says, "What happened to me could have happened to anyone." A victim believes his hard times have come because God is trying to punish him. A student understands that God allows hard times in order to help him grow. A victim would rather complain than find a solution. A student has no time to complain because he is busy making the best of his situation. A victim feels so sorry for himself that he has no time for others. A student focuses on helping others so that he has no time to feel sorry for himself. A victim begs God to remove the problems of life so that he might be happy. A student has learned through the problems of life that God alone is the source of all true happiness.

That's the true Christian position.

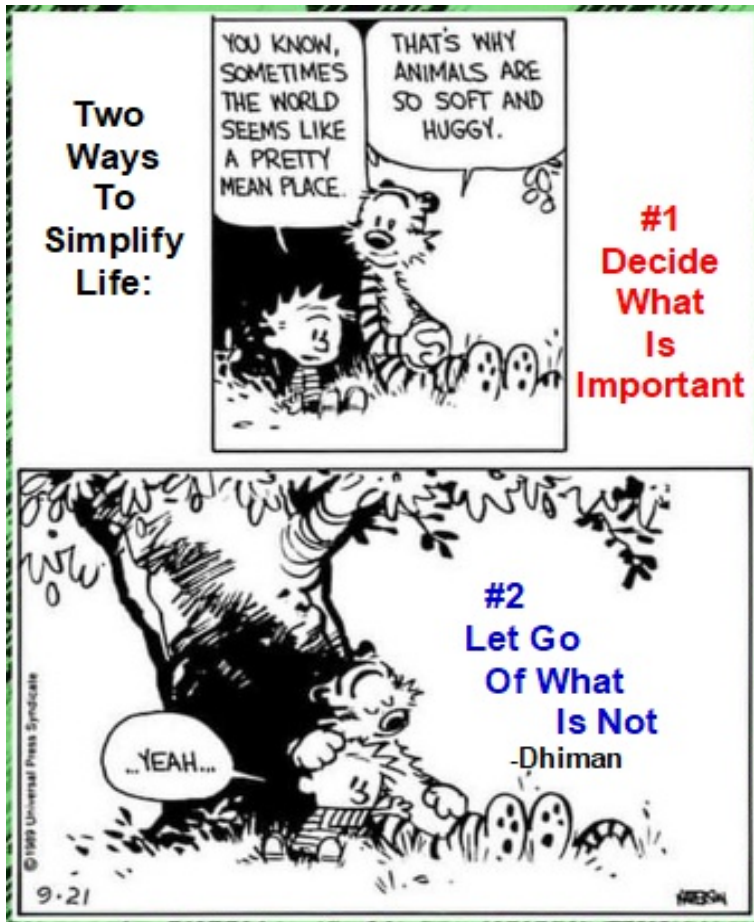
We believe so much in the sovereignty of God that when hard times come, we know that God is at work for our good and his glory.

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Chapter 2: Lessons (theirs learned)

This chapter 2, builds upon the insights shared in chapter 2 of Book 2.



Where the goal by now, your teens are realizing that learning while you go is good. But to never forget – they, like you, will be learning lessons over all the years that we have upon this earth. And when we understand that lessons are good – we find that we are looking at, and pursuing life with a positive attitude.

And that is what you want them to understand. That is that **attitude is key** if we are going to learn from our challenges = we learn if we

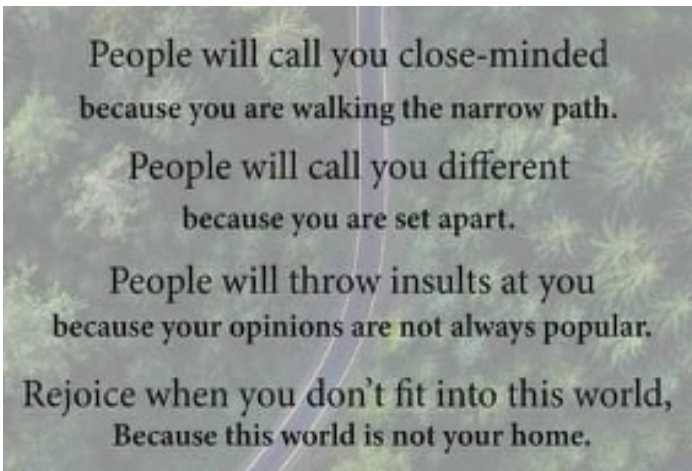
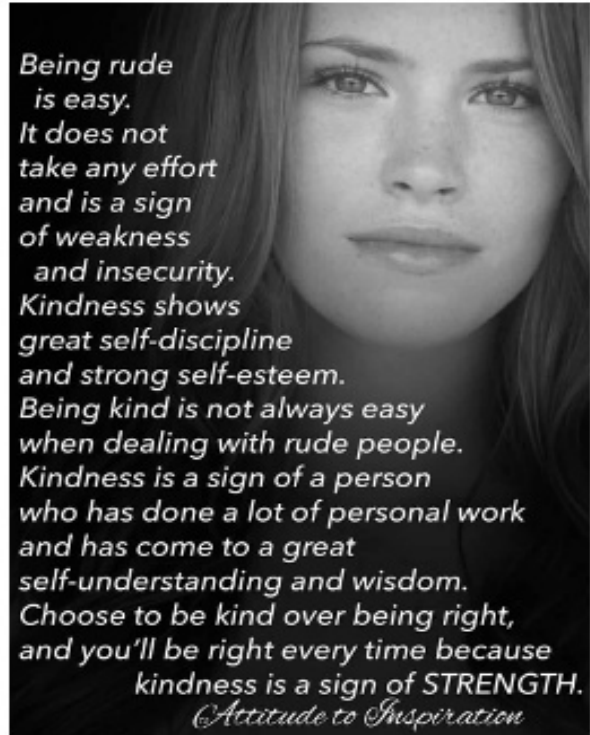
want to learn. But if we (they) are arrogant, they will not learn from their challenges and they will keep on stumbling (struggling) until they do. Which then brings this challenge upon you. That being, you need to determine how best and when, to talk, share, discuss lessons learned and to see where your teen is in regards to their embrace or not on the value of learning lessons.

Then, once you have as best you can – a good idea on how they view the values of lessons, you can determine how best and when – to have discussions over time on aspects like these. And yes, if you have at some time before, touched on these – then consider the follow up for now. Do the times unfolding prompt new, better examples to discuss?

For example: does your teen know how you and your wife feel about drug/alcohol/sex abuse? About the concern that marijuana as a gateway drug can possibly lead to teens thinking . . . 'I can try and stop anytime that I want' . . . but sadly, too many can't and we have so many opioid (fentanyl laced) deaths, etc. etc.

And then, remember that there are also the things that pop up in anyone's life – that they need to deal with. Like the words shown in this image. If you and your wife don't talk with your kids on how to deal with these types of things – where do you think they will get their insights, to gain their wisdom? From the hard-knocks that they have to experience or will others influence them?

Last and not least, is probably the most challenging topic to talk about and to learn – and that is the aspect – is your teen one who follows the crowd, or blazes their own path? The reason I bring this up is because



I never realize how important it could be (until years later), that our teens need to realize, who they are matters. And that the lessons they learn as they go through their years is critical to the development of their character. And yes, it is so true what they say . . . 'what others say about you is your reputation

but what you know of yourself – is your character (make it honorable).

Is there anything else? Most likely yes. In the words above, I've only touched slightly on a variety of topics that point to things that teens need to be aware of, to learn of and to be ready for. The challenge ends up being . . . how much will we as parents do, to help them to learn, so that they are prepared for their adult years as best can? And that is why I liked this image and words, as well as the other ones I've found and am sharing. Because there is so much for us all to learn. We can do it through our own experiences – or, we can look, we can read, we can see, and we can hear. For anything that helps us to learn is good to know aka **think, think, think, and learn, learn, learn as best you can.**



Chapter 3: Integrity (taught)

Now this chapter got me to thinking . . . *'What can I share as to the topic of integrity and what our teens should know of, or at least be aware of?'* I came up with these two considerations for you.

First, If you haven't talk with your kids, your teens as to what integrity is and why it is important to have – then do so. For if they do not learn that there are things that are honorable, that are right, that are needed, then they will easily learn the opposite of those (which would be sad).

Second, is if the aspect of right and wrong is understood, then what is causing so much violence – for example – mass shootings? There is so much that could be said on this, but I will share this for your review.

Paul Harvey got it right: "It must have been the guns..."
[He shared ...]

For the life of me, I can't understand what could have gone wrong in Littleton, Colorado. If only the parents had kept their children away from the guns, we wouldn't have had such a tragedy. Yeah, it must have been the guns.



It couldn't have been because half of our children are being raised in broken homes. It couldn't have been because our children get to spend an average of 30 seconds in meaningful conversation with their parents each day. After all we give our children quality time.

It couldn't have been because we treat our children as pets and our pets as children. It couldn't have been because we place our children in day care centers where they learn their socialization skills among their peers under the law of the jungle while employees who have no vested interest in the children

look on and make sure that no blood is spilled.

It couldn't have been because we allow our children to watch, on average, seven hours of television a day filled with the glorification of sex and violence that isn't fit for adult consumption.

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It couldn't have been because we allow (or even encourage) our children to enter into virtual worlds in which, to win the game, one must kill as many opponents as possible in the most sadistic way possible.

It couldn't have been because we have sterilized and contracepted our families down to sizes so small that the children we do have are so spoiled with material things that they come to equate the receiving of the material with love.

It couldn't have been because our children, who historically have been seen as a blessing from God, are now being viewed as either a mistake created when contraception fails or inconveniences that parents try to raise in their spare time.

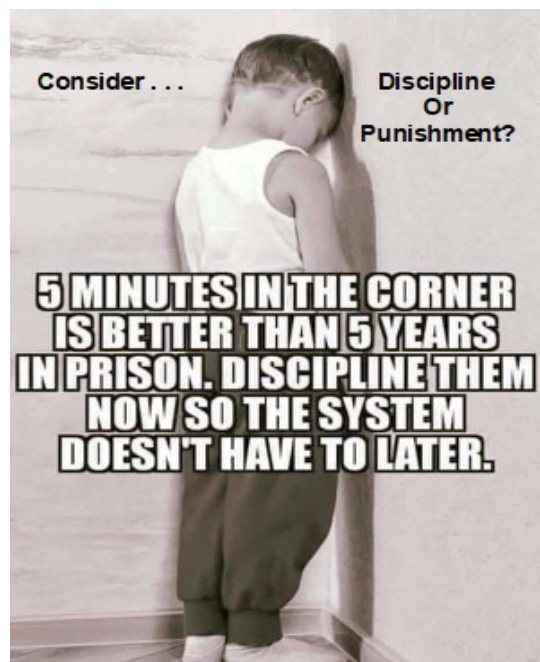
It couldn't have been because we give two year prison sentences to teenagers who kill their newborns. It couldn't have been because our school systems teach the children that they are nothing but glorified apes who have revolutionized out of some primordial soup of mud.

It couldn't have been because we teach our children that there are no laws of morality that transcend us, that everything is relative and that actions don't have consequences. What the heck, the president gets away with it.

Nah, it must have been the guns.

Now, the above words are different to say the least. I shared them as a wake up type sharing that all parents need to teach integrity, accountability, respect, compassion and honor – at a minimum. Because if we can't help to make sure these values get passed on – tragic events can unfold. The challenge – how best to do so?

And that is the challenge for you. Have you talked, shown, modeled integrity and the other values that you believe are good for you teen to know, to embrace?



If yes, thank you. But if not so much, now is the time to start doing so.

Oops, and also this . . . As a father who has now become a Gramps, I find that now, I don't wish or pray that my kids, their spouses, and their kids become successful. My hopes and prayers are that they become people of character – with integrity, respectful, compassionate and those who pursue a growing faith. To me, those are critical for an honorable life. My question for you – what do you want your loved ones to be?

Chapter 4: Perspectives (appreciated)

For me, this is a simple concept to understand, but a challenging one to embrace. And that is what I ask of you to consider as you read on through this chapter 4.

I'll start with this. Perspective is the double edge sword of the teen years. The better we understand that and at least can see things from our teens perspective and they from ours, helps to ensure that our relationships for those years, grows positively.



Topics to consider surfacing, to start seeing how they feel about them or what they know? The goal (my recommendation) is to share your perspective, carefully and to get theirs. For example, in our society, younger people like socialism, older ones like capitalism. Also, what about the different forms of government seen across the world, and to what degree is your teen aware (democracy, theocracy, dictatorship, etc.).

Basically all of these have pros and cons – yet the teens across our country may have anything from a deep concern for at the most, and or an apathy to some degree.

Now, if those are not topics you would like to raise with your teen, what about building an awareness to making good decisions on what is safe or not (drinking, drugs, distractions, watching out for their friends and their friends for them). Or there are so many topics that touch on so many aspects of life. For example, there are so many books or movies that have come out, that have a lot of powerful messages, lessons, and or insights contained (some of my favorites: To Kill a Mockingbird, Sophie's Choice, Saving Private Ryan, Passion of the Christ, Fearless, The Traveler's Gift, and Wind River just to name a few). Or, when you talk with your teen you could ask them about movies, books or whatever that they like and why? It all comes down to this. How you, your wife, your teen and or another sibling view things (perspectives), could be somewhat different and that is okay. The key is to be aware and to be careful – that there could be other perspectives that would be good to consider and in some cases, to embrace.

And with all of that, I'll close with this ponder for this chapter.
[a different perspective that you may not have seen]

In a mother's womb were two babies.

One asked the other, "Do you believe in life after delivery?" The other replied, "Why, of course. There has to be something after delivery. Maybe we are here to prepare ourselves for what we will be later."

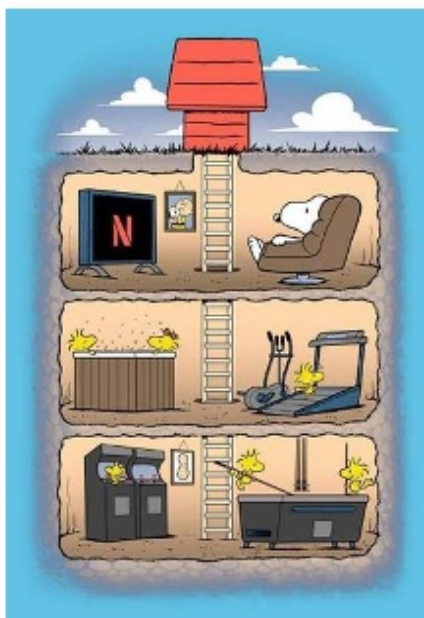
"Nonsense," said the first. "There is no life after delivery. What kind of life would that be?" The second said, "I don't know, but there will be more light than here. Maybe we will walk with our legs and eat from our mouths. Maybe we will have other senses that we can't understand now."

The first replied, "That is absurd, walking is impossible and eating with our mouths? That is ridiculous!"



Our umbilical cord supplies nutrition and everything we need. Also, the umbilical cord is so short. Life after delivery is to be logically excluded." The second insisted, "Well I think there is something and maybe it's different than it is here. Maybe we won't need this physical cord anymore." The first replied, "Nonsense. And moreover, if there is life, then why has no one ever come back from there? Delivery is the end of life, and in the after-delivery, there is nothing but darkness and silence and oblivion. It takes us nowhere." "Well, I don't know," said the second, "but certainly we will meet Mother and she will take care of us." The first replied "Mother? You actually believe in Mother? That's laughable. If Mother exists then where is She now?" The second said, "She is all around us. We are surrounded by her. We are of Her. It is in Her that we live. Without Her, this world would not and could not exist." The first added: "Well I don't see Her, so it is only logical that She doesn't exist." To which the second replied, "Sometimes, when you're in silence and you focus and listen, you can perceive Her presence, and you can hear Her loving voice, calling down from above."

I know when I first read this parable (from **Your Sacred Self** by Dr. Wayne Dyer), I thought it was a great explanation of the concept of GOD. And it also reminded me of the challenge of how best to talk about abortion with our kids or others? It was shared to give you another example to consider as to what, when and where will you, if you do, to talk with your teen(s) on the variety of subjects where the challenge of perspective is so critical.



How we view things makes all the difference. For example, C.S. Lewis once said:

We don't have a soul, we are a soul and we have a body.

Okay then, anything else?

Just this. The sooner that we all (young and old) learn that if we have a broader perspective on the aspects of life, we will be better prepared on how to take on the ups and downs and everything in between that can unfold. So please, think about this and decide what you will pursue on this with your teen(s).

Time Out (#1) Please also know this.

This is here to make a recommendation. If you have not already, get a pen & paper/notepad, or your laptop or whatever so that you can jot down notes or thoughts as you go through all of this.

In the pages above and below, there is only so much that I will share. I may touch on concerns or ideas that maybe you're thinking on or what I may share may just trigger a whole bunch of things that you want to possibly pursue with your teen(s).

I'll give you an example. What do you want your young one, who is quickly interacting with a more and more complex world to know? What about drugs, sexting, tic-toc challenges (or anything on social media), diversity, sexuality, gender, mass-shootings, kids that shouldn't have guns - have guns, and yes, there are probably so many other things that may need to be on your 'notes'.

So, don't be afraid to do what you need to do.
And if you can have a smile or a chuckle along the way
to keep you going - go for it!



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This space is blank (#2) for any notes you may want to jot down.

Chapter 5: Cheering (is memorable)

Now this topic is more than just a 'go and cheer your kids in their sports or whatever pursuits'. Yes, please do so but also open your mindset as to what are the types of things that you should be 'cheering on' your kids?

So then, in starting to think about this, what should you do or not do? I would recommend that you consider these.

“Sports should be about kids and their passion, not about parents and their goals.”

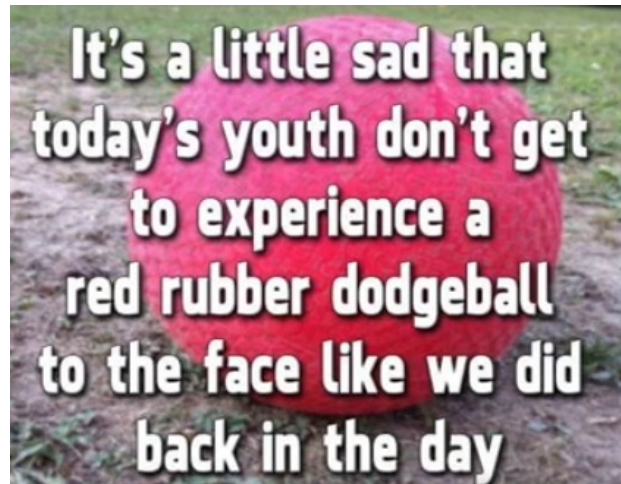
- Mike Matheny

First, hopefully as your kids have grown through their years, you and your wife have done your best to attend their events and to have cheered them on. Don't stop as they move through their teen years. Know that it is great to cheer, encourage and to congratulate them as they pursue sports, music, and or the arts and academics. As to why? **Our kids need to see that we are in their corner – rooting them on and in being proud of their good efforts.**



Second, where the above gives you a good reminder on the easier to remember things – you also need to think about the other things that your kids say and do – that are cheer worthy. How they stick up for others, how they help around the house, how they are doing in school, and how they respect others. Now, is there more? Yes, and you need to look for those.

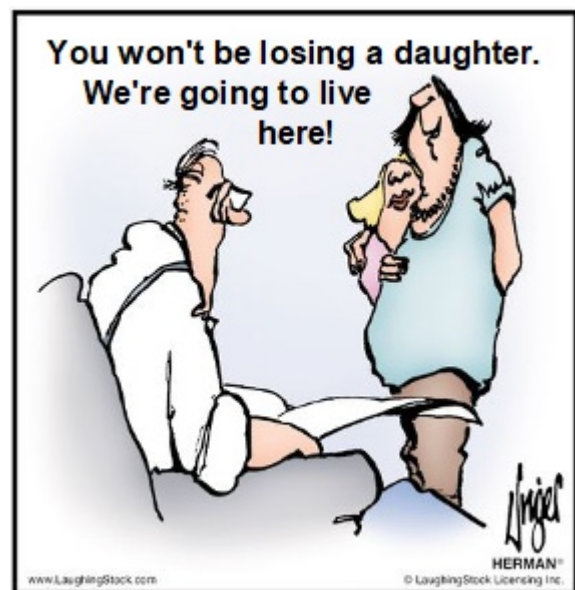
Is that it? Yes, there always is and that is why you are thinking about all of this. Just do your best and be careful in how you 'voice' your cheering on. For example, when they get knocked down or ruffed up, don't just say . . . “Walk it off and get back in there.” Do the best that you can to understand what type of encouragement, of cheering on is best for them and those moments that are unfolding for them. For what you say and do when they're 13, may be a lot different for when they are 17 (and each year in between).



Chapter 6: Love (carefully)

What are the 11 words that a Dad never wants to hear? Yep → And yes, as you can see by now – I am using a mix of everything in order to help you to think about all the different things that you may need to consider as you pursue the what to do and the what not to do in your kid's teen years.

So, lets get started on this as to what to consider. For me – thinking back to my Dad Years when our kids were teens – I would say now that I was more 'wishful' then 'helpful'. For example – our daughter (and oldest), I was always glad when she went out and about with her group of friends. Yes she had some boyfriends as the years rolled on, with those mixes of happy and then sad, tears times. For our three sons – let me just say – it was quieter and easier. But in



reality – I probably had hardly ever really known what they were doing or dealing with. So my first recommendation is to try (as best you can) to not be clueless. Hence - talking, having conversations, encouraging them with their 'friends' to spend time at your home, is a great way to gain insight as to – is there more going on or not.

Also, as you gain awareness – you have to also remember that all kids, even yours if you have more than one – are different. So what you can



say and do with one, may need to be different for another. And this is my tie in to this image and the words it contains. I liked this because it reminded me, that in whatever efforts that we pursue – even relationships, we can have failures. When that happens, yes, it can feel like a gut punch. And here is the big challenge for you. There's a good chance that at some time in your teen's 'growing up' years, they are going to get into a

relationship or two that will end. For when that happens, they will feel like 'it is the end of the world' . . . but you and your wife can help them to see that it is not. So then, think about love and of what aspects of it that you want your teen(s) to be aware of. Because the better prepared that they are for then (the ups & the downs), they'll be better positioned for love in their adult years (= *** as found on page 56).

Did I forget anything? Probably – but that is why these words are here. You need to think about this, discuss it with your wife and together, do the best that you can to show the love that you have for each other, and for your family. And yes, when they have their questions – be prepared for 'the sex talk' with them (and yes, you can share that at any time).

Time Out (#2) Remember . . .

After I wrote those words about, I paused and thought something is missing. And the answer to that is this. There is a lot missing. So please, as a Dad of your teen(s), make sure you make the time to think about all that you want you kids to know because what I have shared is just the tip of the iceberg (as the saying goes).

If you and your wife have more than one child, you don't want to think of the first one as the 'practice child' (they're not a throw away pancake). They need your best efforts, the same as all the rest of your kids. And a way for them to learn what love is, is to see love from you and your wife - cause that's what parents do. So, think on what is happening in your teen's life. Find a way to talk, encourage, ask or whatever on those things that you want teen to be aware of - so they are prepared - if at all possible - as in: what if they're at a place where shooting erupts, if they're in a car accident, if someone who they are with has a drug overdose, or x, or y, or z ???

[and know]

It comes down to this. One of the most helpful things that you can do for your teen(s) is to help them to learn how to see what is unfolding around them, for them to have the confidence to do what is right and needed, and to trust them to make good decisions. Now, will all of those decisions be good ones? Nope, because they are teens. And yes, being the parent of a teen is being able to forgive them for those times they choose wrong - cause it is going to happen. Which this reminds me of what Alex said - I shared in **Book 1, Coulda** - *Remember that even when they are bad, they are good at heart.*

Chapter 7: Learn (how)

Know this. Teens already think that they are smarter than you. So, in knowing this – are there other things out there that can help you to think as to what else you should say or do to help you teen(s)?

Well, I've always appreciated the wisdom some song writers share via their lyrics. So, consider these three

[Verse 1: Tom Petty]

She was there at the bar, she heard my guitar
She was long and tall, she was the queen of them all

[Chorus]

*Last night, thinking about last night,
Last night, thinking about last night*

[Verse 2: Tom Petty]

She was dark and discreet, she was light on her feet
We went up to her room and she lowered the boom

[Chorus]

*Last night, thinking about last night,
Last night, thinking about last night*

[Verse 3: Roy Orbison]

Down below they danced and sang in the street
While up above the walls were steaming with heat

[Chorus]

*Last night, thinking about last night,
Last night, thinking about last night*

[Verse 4: Tom Petty]

I was feeling no pain, feeling good in my brain
I looked in her eyes, they were full of surprise

that being a '**Last Night**' hook up, which could end up being a '*Why did I do that?*' regret. So then, does this song give you any ideas as to talks (warnings) to have?



TEENAGER FOR SALE.
FULLY EQUIPPED WITH
ROLLING EYES, DEEP
SIGHS, AND SARCASTIC
COMMENTS. PLAYS VIDEOS
GAMES AND TEXTS 200
WPM. NO REASONABLE
OFFER WILL BE REFUSED.

songs – and if you can, go and listen to them as well (they have some great insights):

The first is this one from the **Traveling Wilburys** and I share it as a reminder of what can happen to your teen(s) . . .

[Chorus]

*Last night, talking about last night,
Last night, talking about last night*

[Verse 5: Roy Orbison]

I asked her to marry me she smiled
and pulled out a knife

The party's just beginning she said,
"Your money or your life?"

[Chorus]

*Last night, talking about last night,
Last night, talking about last night*

[Verse 6: Tom Petty]

Now I'm back at the bar, she went a little too far
She done me wrong, all I got is this song

[Outro]

*Last night, thinking about last night,
Last night, thinking about last night
Last night, talking about last night,
Last night, talking about last night
Last night, thinking about last night,
Last night...*

The second song is '**I hope you dance**' by **Leann Womack**. And as to why? I like the lyrics because they address aspects that we may not usually consider when we are thinking on those things to share, to encourage, and to challenge our teens to consider.

So, pause here on reading these words and read through the lyrics in her song. Because there

is a good chance – in it, you will see things that you like and will want to find a way to share and to discuss with your teen(s) in some way when

I hope you dance (Time is a wheel in constant motion)
I hope you dance (Always rolling us along)

I hope you dance
(Tell me, who wants to look back on their youth and wonder)
I hope you dance (Where those years have gone?)

I hope you still feel small when you stand beside the ocean
Whenever one door closes, I hope one more opens
Promise me that you'll give faith a fighting chance
And when you get the choice to sit it out or dance

Dance, I hope you dance
I hope you dance (Time is a wheel in constant motion)
I hope you dance (Always rolling us along)
I hope you dance
(Tell me, who wants to look back on their youth and wonder)
I hope you dance (Where those years have gone?)
(Dance)
(Tell me, who wants to look back on their years and wonder)
(Dance) (Where those years have gone?)

teen will go by fast enough. Help them to ensure they make those years

I hope you never lose your sense of wonder
You get your fill to eat, but always keep that hunger
May you never take one single breath for granted
God forbid love ever leave you empty-handed

I hope you still feel small when you stand beside the ocean
Whenever one door closes, I hope one more opens
Promise me that you'll give faith a fighting chance
And when you get the choice to sit it out or dance

I hope you dance, I hope you dance

I hope you never fear those mountains in the distance
Never settle for the path of least resistance
Livin' might mean takin' chances but they're worth takin'
Lovin' might be a mistake but it's worth makin'

Don't let some hell-bent heart leave you bitter
When you come close to sellin' out, reconsider
Give the heavens above more than just a passing glance
And when you get the choice to sit it out or dance

you can. Why? It is critical for your young ones to know that we only get one pass at our youth. And yes, they may be wanting so badly to be older, that they may not realize how lucky they are to have what we all end up calling . . . 'our teenage years'.

Their years as a

ones they are glad they had (aka good experiences, good lessons, and good memories). Which then brings us to my third song for you. It is one that you can say is a type of prayer for our kids – the what we see in them and want for them. It is '**Forever Young**' by **Rod Stewart**. And yes I'll admit that I appreciate this song more now that I'm older.

May the good Lord be with you down every road you roam.
And may sunshine and happiness surround you when you're far from home.
And may you grow to be proud, dignified and true.
And do unto others as you'd have done to you.
Be courageous and be brave. And in my heart you'll always stay

Forever young. (Forever young), Forever young. (Forever young)

May good fortune be with you, may your guiding light be strong,
Build a stairway to heaven with a prince or a vagabond.
And may you never love in vain. And in my heart you will remain

Forever young. (Forever young), Forever young. (Forever young)
Forever young. Forever young

And when you finally fly away, I'll be hoping that I served you well.
For all the wisdom of a lifetime, no one can ever tell.
But whatever road you choose, I'm right behind you win or lose,

Forever young. (Forever young), Forever young. (Forever young)
Forever young. Forever young, For forever young

And the reason I share this is as a reminder. We, and our kids, can get so caught up in the day to day of our lives, we can drift away from our relationship with God. To avoid that, we need to stay 'plugged in' daily and that is by our prayers. Prayers of thanks, prayers for help, prayers for comfort. Why? It's a relationship with great long term benefits.

Which then brings us to this last consideration. And yes I know that all that I have shared is to just help you to think so you can determine what helps you to think and do what is needed. **But, is there more?** Yep, for example – from Tony Dungy and his All Pro Dad writings. He shares the following [*it's just a good example that there are others out there with great insights to consider as you pursue your Dad actions*].

5 Reasons Why Teenagers Don't Listen

You're doing a lot of talking, but your teenage child doesn't seem to be doing a lot of listening. And instead of sharing your wisdom, it seems like you're selling echoes. I feel your pain, because after successfully surviving the teenage years of my two children and educating high school and college students for more than two decades, I discovered 5 reasons for teens not listening to adults.

1. Because we don't listen to them.

Teenagers will listen to anyone who listens to them. Did you hear what I just said? They will listen to *anyone* who listens to them.

Do you realize how dangerous that is? But it's true.

For that reason alone, if you want your teenager to listen to you, start by listening to him or her. Because if you don't listen to your teenagers, their friends will. And in turn, your teenager is going to listen to them. And do you really want your 14-year-old daughter taking advice from a person who's only had 14 years of life experience? I didn't think so.

2. They question the source.

As dads, we're pretty good at giving advice. Life has taught us many lessons, and we feel almost obligated to pass that wisdom on to our children. But as noble as our intentions are, there's one small problem: Teenagers don't believe half the stuff we're telling them.

Why? Because, many times, we don't always model what we're teaching. In other words, we're not practicing what we preach.

If you want your teenagers to listen to you, never ask them to do anything you're not willing to do yourself.

If you want your teenagers to listen to you, never ask them to do anything you're not willing to do yourself. Lead by your example, not by your explanations. It is said that "children don't hear what we say, but they watch what we do." But I assert that if they see what we're doing enough, they'll eventually listen more to what we have to say.

3. They're afraid of being judged or disappointing us.

When it comes to raising teenagers, one of the toughest things to learn when to keep your mouth shut. I must confess, when I first began my teaching career, this was difficult for me. But I soon realized I wouldn't last a year in teaching (let alone 24 years) if I didn't control my urge to fix, correct, solve, and resolve every problem a student had. Even with my own children, I learned that the less I tried to "solve" their problems, the more they came to me with their problems, seeking advice. And the key to your children confiding in you and listening to you is this: Never be shocked by what your teen tells you. You can't change the outcome or undo it anyway. So instead, ask non-judgmental questions. Trust me, they'll listen to you more because you stayed calm and didn't react the way they expected.

4. Because they're hurting.

Teenagers who are hurting but never get healing for it can end up hurting themselves and others. And sometimes the only reason a teen refuses to listen is he or she is hurting and suffering in silence and just doesn't know how to express it. So, if you choose to ignore your teenager's pain, your teenager is going to choose to ignore you. You don't need to have an answer for your teen. You just need to be ready to give him or her a safe place to share his or her hurts with you. Don't be a dad who just loves your children; be a dad who listens to them with empathy.

5. Because they're afraid of becoming us.

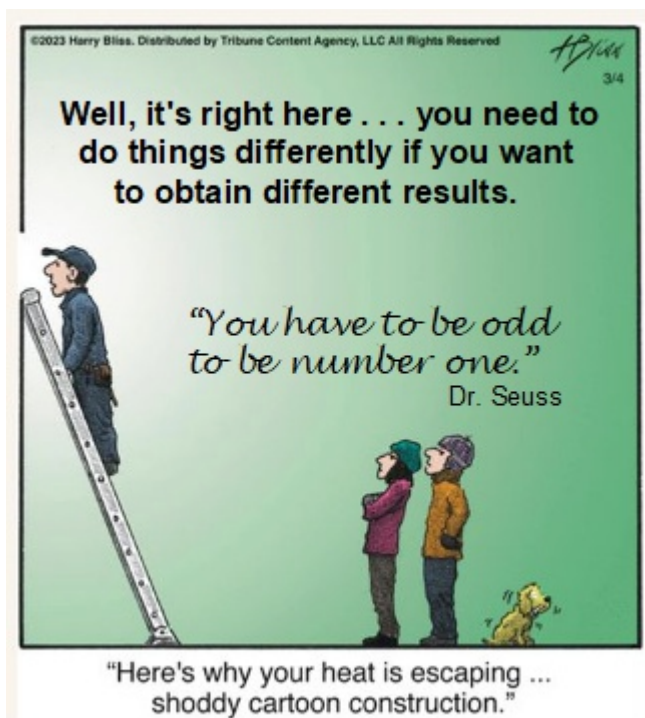
If you really want to get your teen to listen to you, then simply become the kind of person you want your teen to become. Many teens are secretly afraid that if they do what we do, listen to what we say, and follow the path we recommend, then they eventually will end up at a destination they most want to avoid, called "boredom."

Their response: "Why listen to you?"

That's why—to make sure your teen doesn't tune you out—it's important that you become the kind of person, in character and deed, who's worth listening to. If you live your life in such a way that commands, not just demands, your teenager's attention, you'll never have to worry about keeping his or her attention.

There you go – plenty to ponder and to pick from and this brings us to the end of this **Book Three – Shoulda**. And like Book 2, now all you have to decide are upon these 3 . . .

First - is there anything in all of the above, to do a re-read on?



Second – do you want to see the story on '**The Cross**' that is shown in the epilogue (below)? It is the wrap up to what was shared at the end of **Book Two – Woulda** . . . that being '**The Sword**'.

Third – is then the critical question – what will you do next? And remember: Be ware of the . . .

Stupid is as stupid does (it has tripped up many of dads).

Time Out (#3) And yes, this is the last one.

This is here, before you read the story below (**The Cross**), because after I looked it over again – I thought how best for any Dad to share that with their teen? Why? As I mentioned before, every kid is different. Some teens may like to read, some may enjoy talking with their parents and yes, some may be in a stage where they really don't want to interact with their parents unless they have to (and if they do, it won't be with a smile on their face).

So, here is one approach that you may want to consider.

What if you printed out this **Cross** story below and talked with your teen and said . . . *"I have an offer for you. There is a different type of story that I'd like you to read. I'll give you a couple of pages each week, you then read those when you can. And then for your choice, I'll buy you breakfast or lunch and we just talk about what you read. As to why? I'd like to know what you think or any questions you may have on what you read. Then, after each talk, I give you \$20.00 as a thanks."*

Now why do something like this? It is a way to show your teen you appreciate them doing something for you, you want to spend some time with them and have a fun talk about some different things – just to get their perspective. And yes, 20 bucks of easy money a week, may not be too bad for taking up an hour or so of their time.

The key: **This is a story about life being so precious.** And if it or anything else can help your teen to understand this, to embrace it, and to live it – they will be on a great track for adulthood.

Should'a (Fatherhood - staying engaged - the Teen years)

This space is blank (#3) for any notes you may want to jot down.

Epilogue: [consider] The Cross

The Back Story: What you will find over the remaining pages were my thoughts coming together – a few years after writing **The Sword**. I had wondered, what could I share that might be of interest for older kids aka teens? And to go with that – what I could write that I could give out in one way or another, that I could have various discussions with our grandkids (because our kids were now parents of their own).

That became this – **The Cross**.

It is a mix of history and possibility
with the opportunity to see what
others would think and say as to either
questions raised or insights gained.

And yes, it is just one way to share
something that may be worth reading
and pondering on or, it may at least
be something that could trigger some
better ideas that you would want to pursue.



[and so it begins]

I knew something was happening when I could not open my eyes. This was not the first time and I was pretty sure it was not the last. I found it best to pause, to take a slow and long deep breath, to collect my thoughts and to then open my eyes slowly. It was dark, hot and the smell of smoke was overwhelming. As I tried to open my eyes a little wider, I found myself coughing and struggling for air. Each breath was a challenge, no matter what I tried I could not breath without coughing. I also realized why it was hard to open my eyes, it hurt and felt as if I were in a sand storm or a fire of some type. But what and where, I did not know.

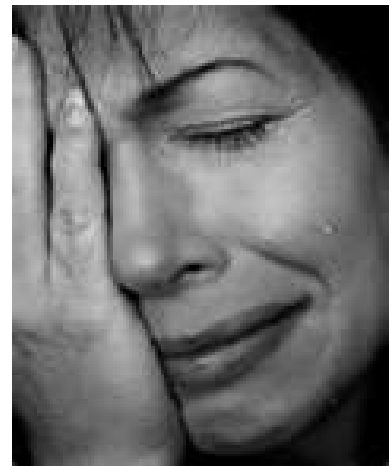
As my head began to clear, I realized I was inside a building. I heard cries, I heard screams and as I looked around me, there were two women lying next to me. One was crying softly and the other was not making a sound other then the deep breaths she was struggling to take. I wiped my eyes and began to focus on what I saw around us. We were in a stairway, below us was debris with no way to go down and nothing but black smoke was behind us and up the stairs.

I then saw a fireman working his way down to us, he was covered in black soot. As he worked his way to us, I heard him ask, "*Are you okay?*" It was not a scared voice or a mad voice, it was the voice of a calm but serious man. It was also a familiar voice, similar to ones I had heard in the past. I had to chuckle slightly when I heard the older

women say to him... "*You're an angel*" and his reply...

"No ma'am, just a fireman trying to do my job".

He didn't know it yet but she was more right then he knew at that time. I was glad he was working his way toward me, I just wanted to know what was wrong and what was happening but before I could ask him, the woman lying on the floor who had



been crying, yelled out... *"Where is God, why is he not helping us?"* The fireman's reply to her was short but calming.... *"God's a little busy right now Ma'am, but He sent me up here to help you and the others"*. He then paused, looked at the mess blocking the stairs and then he looked at me and said *"We can't get down this way and the stairs I came up has collapsed. Stay here, keep them here and I will find another way and come back for you all"* I think he knew that I knew this was not good, I nodded and back he climbed up the stairs and into the smoke.

The women next to me turned and fell into my arms sobbing. It was all I could do to just slid to the floor with her in my arms and as we sat on the floor. I then heard her say... *"Oh God, please help us, please help us. I know you did not cause this and I trust you will bring us through"*. It was then that the happenings of the previous hour came to me in an instant. I had been standing at the window with others and we were looking at the smoke that was billowing from the south tower. Who I was and where I was now raced into clarity. This was another of those times like the so many before. I didn't know why I was there or who I was to see. Was it the woman who was crying in my arms or was it to see that fireman for those brief few minutes? I do know their names were known by their families and I knew I was their for their last moments. They may have been afraid but I saw that their faith was in action. The next moment, where we were and who we were, was gone.

I now knew that this time was significantly different then the others. It seemed like I was drifting up and away, when I saw the picture that was seen by so many afterward. It was what looked like a cross made from the building's wreckage. It was a metal cross that represented the destruction, the death and the hope of a country that was shocked by the evil that had attacked it. I knew then that those images would haunt thousands in the days, weeks and months to come.



As I wondered, what would be next? These words came into my mind. **Remember Faith...**
For each day, each hour, each minute has glimpses of heaven within it.

I then looked up and said . . . **Faith – just have it.**

Next were the words that he asked me *"What do you want?"*
I opened my eyes and tried to quickly determine where I was.

Looking at him I quickly felt the awareness come into my mind. Over the years I've seen innocent people hurt just for being at the wrong spot at the wrong time. He then continued. *"I've seen my friends die just trying to serve their country and from what I can tell, most back home don't care."* He paused a moment and then continued *"I lay here looking at what's left of my legs, my stumps and I wonder why God saved me, why am I still here, what could possibly be good in my life after this?"* He then looked up at me and said *"Just do me a favor and pull the plug on me... I don't want to live like this, I have nothing else to live for"*.

I looked at him, I looked around the room. I then knew we were in an Army field hospital that I for some reason, I knew to be in Iraq and that this young man had stepped on an IED. He had no legs and then I saw myself in the mirror of his room. I had a gold cross hanging from my neck and thought.... okay, it looks like I'm a priest, let's see where this goes. I was surprised that the only thing that came to my mind, was to talk about my past. For some odd reason it seemed like this would be okay, so for the first time I did talk as I had never done before.

I asked him as I sat down in the chair next to his bed... "Do you want to hear the truth or something I can make up just to make you feel better?" My comment appeared to have surprised him and his expression of anger began to change to a what I have learned over all my years, was a look of sadness. He asked *"I just want to know, is there a reason for all this suffering and is there a purpose for me in this world?"* I leaned in and whispered into his ear.... "I can't tell you what will happen in the weeks, or months or years to come but I can tell you what I've lived through. And if after you hear that and you still want me to help you to die today, I will."

I sat back down and waited for his response. He looked down to where his legs had once been and then he looked back at me.

"Sure, let's do it" he said softly. I then asked him to listen and whether he believed what I said would be up to him. I decided to share with him a few of the events that I have experienced. As I prepared to tell him what I've never told another before, the blur of time had me wondering, how long has it been? I had seen so many deaths that now I was not sure of the exact count. I have lived short lives, long lives, I've had minutes and in some cases, hours or even days of experiences. All of them had one thing in common, that was that they lead up to a sad death in one way or another. So I closed my eyes and began to share the following.

"I remember the rocking of our ship, the awful smell and the constant sea sickness we had as we crossed the ocean. My wife was giving birth on the ship, she was having a terrible, painful child birth. What seemed like days at that time was actually a few short hours. I could describe the details but I would prefer not. The reality, my wife and baby had died, so close to our new land. But know this, being on the Mayflower was not a new hope for me but just another of the so many terrible memories that haunt me". I then paused to see if he was paying attention, he was so I continued. "How about some specifics? Years later, I was there on July 2nd, 1776 when I heard General George Washington say... *"The time is now near at hand which must probably determine whether Americans are to be freemen or slaves; whether they are to have any property they can call their own. The fate of unborn millions will now depend, under God, on courage and conduct of this army. We have therefore, to resolve to conquer or die."*

I could tell he was puzzled by what I shared. I explained to him that I did not know at that time but I would be there for years as our young country was struggling to become the world power it would one day become. I told him that I was not the simple preacher who he saw before him but more of a time traveler. One caught in the horrors of a never ending series of death, after

death, after death that were too many to count. I told him how I was there when our first president took his last breath. That the deaths I had seen before then did not seem to matter to me as they unfolded but at his death, the death of a great man, I have remembered every death since then.

I tried to explain to him that little did I know at that time, of the number of military experiences, the horrors from that time and after that I would experience since then. I saw in his eyes that the look of doubt had left him and he wanted to hear more so I continued... "I have been at the battle of Gettysburg and saw the horror of such a sad loss of so many lives. I was surprised that I lived through that but to only find myself a short time later on April 15th, 1865, I was there in Ford's Theater. I saw John Wilkes Booth as he fled from the theater and I was then standing behind Edwin Stanton, our Secretary of War, at President Lincoln's bedside when he then said... *'Now he belongs to the ages'*. And yes, sadly, President Lincoln's death like President George Washington's death showed that great men and all those men and women unknown, all share the same fate. Death is at the time and place that is known only to God".

I paused when I saw this wounded warrior close his eyes... "You still with me?" I then asked. *"Yes I'm listening, and please continued"* he replied in almost a whisper. Something was now happening and I was not quite sure but I knew I should continue and shared. "I was there at the Alamo, we fought as best we could but we knew that we had to fight for the freedom of Texas that we all so believed in. It was there that I learned of Honor. It was March 6th, 1836. There were 187 of us against 3,000 or so of Santa Anna's troops. We had to hold them long enough for Sam Houston to gather the army he needed. It was dawn that day when we started and I saw that it would become our last stand. I saw Lt. Colonel William Travis, Colonel James Bowie,



Major James Bonham, Davey Crockett and all the others fight to the last man. Our fortifications were breached, those that did not die by canon or gun fire, died in hand to hand fighting. It was a bloody

morning that no one should have ever seen but also one that no one should ever forget."

He nodded as I talked, it appeared he was visualizing what I was telling him so I continued on. "I remember that battle in contrast to the battle of Little Big Horn. That was one we won, and for that day I was an Indian warrior. We had General Custer and his men divided, out numbered and in the end, they were totally defeated. I remember when it was done, the heat of the day, the sweat from our bodies and the smell of death. At first we celebrated but then as I looked at the dead, I remembered they were fathers, brothers, husbands and sons. That was just one of many experiences that I cried for; not only those of my brothers that died that day, but for those that died and I did not know." He then opened his eyes and asked... *"I need to think about what you've said. I won't tell anyone what you've shared but can you come back tomorrow and tell me more?"* I smiled at him and said "Sure, I can stop back tomorrow after you've had lunch". That next day I returned, I walked in and he had me shut the door. He was excited, he had me sit down and he stated ... *"I've thought about what you said and I want to hear more"*. He then pulled himself up as best he could and I could tell he

believed what I had told him but I could also tell that he was not sure of how to put it into perspective.

You would have thought that just those experiences were plenty but I have had so many military experiences that I could talk to him about. I have been there at those well known and those only known to a few. I then continued and told him of June 4th, 1918 at the Battle of Belleau Wood when my buddy, a US Marine by the name of Daniel Daly yelled out "*Come on you sons of bitches! Do you want to live forever?*" He laughed as I told him we were scared but we fought on. I told him that WWI was a terrible war, but most survived the trench warfare and the poison gases. I told him I was surprised that my buddy Danny, how his words then, strengthened us for that fight that day. I told my new friend that by day, I had already seen enough death and no, I did not want to live forever. It was at that time I too was wishing to close my eyes for one last time.

I told him that it is true about wars, at the time they are the scariest times on this earth. For those who have fought and die, it is a hell that no one should live through. I went on to explain that it doesn't matter the year or the capabilities of those who fight. From swords to guns to cannons to bombs. It is the violence of death in those battles that all should know at least once, in some form or fashion.

I then told him to close his eyes and to visualize a sunny Sunday morning on a beautiful island in the Pacific ocean. Then to make that day December 7th, 1941 during the attack on Pearl Harbor. "Yes we were surprised, yes there were men and women dying, people were screaming and ships were sinking but I'll never forget the words that our Naval Chaplain said '*Praise the Lord and pass the ammunition.*' Howell Forgy was his name and it was the day that I learned God is not ignoring us . . . He is with us with tears in his eyes."

I told him that I can only imagine the sadness that God feels for those that die in battle, for those pursuing freedom and those that died for their country in which they thought was an honorable action. And I can honestly say I've now learned just a small portion of what God sees year after year after year after year.

After a pause and a deep breath, I just continued talking about those deaths and as I did so, it also reminded me of how many I have seen. I told him how I suppose that all the deaths I have

seen have been horrible but a few continue to stand out in my mind and are the ones that are alive in my nightmares. For example I told him, one of the worst was when I was there as we stormed Omaha Beach, on D-Day, June 6th, 1944. I then added, "As men were dying all around us, Norman Cota told us . . . '*Gentleman, we are being killed on the beaches. Let's go inland and be killed*'. Although we smiled from what he said, it was a day that we all were scared, and we were mad at the enemy that were slaughtering us. While we tried to crawl up that beach head, I could hear the prayers of those around me who just wanted to live through that day. I saw my friends and hundreds of others that I did not know, die all around me that day. I was devastated.

I paused again and took a drink of water that was on the stand by his bed. He was there looking at me and nodding. He too had seen death and I could tell he now was beginning to see what he has lived through in a different light.

Photo # 80-G-19943 - Wrecks of USS Dorries & Cassin, 7 Dec. 1941



We continued to talk, he asked questions and I answered them as best I could. I told him that I had lived thousands of moments in the concentration camps that I can not restate without being sick as to the horrid memories I would share. I told him that what the Nazi's did to innocent men, women and children was what should never happen again; and that was why his service to our country was so important.

As our talk continued, I told him it didn't matter if it was the horrors of WW2 that I had seen because just a few short years after that, I saw even more. From the cold deaths during the winter battles of the Korean War to the pain and sadness that I then sweated through in the jungles of the Vietnam War to the ugly times I experiences in Afghanistan and Iraq. I told him I found time and time again that the friendships you make as you join the service during times of war, help you to live through the times you wish you didn't have to bare but then they tare at your heart when you loose a battle buddy.

We went on to talk for a couple more hours and then I was surprised when he asked me if that was my plight - to experience just these deaths of war? I told him no, that there were so many tragic times that I has also seen. I then shared with him that I was with the crowd at Dealey Plaza on November 22nd in 1963 when President Kennedy was assassinated and that there was more to that story. That I was there with Dr. Martin Luther King on April 4th, 1968 when he was killed. I told him that when you think of the sad deaths of these two men, you think first of them and how their lives were cut short, that you don't think of their families and the traumatic loss that their loved ones had to deal with.

I then stopped to look up and away from this young soldier. I stood up, stretched my legs and then knew it was time to wrap up our talk.... "I can tell by the look in your eyes that you're still wondering, is this all true or just a tall tale? I'll tell you this,

I could go on and on but I'll close with this. You might be old enough to probably have heard about Jonestown, Guyana when the Reverend Jim Jones poisoned 780 members of his Peoples Temple Church on November 18th, 1978. I want you to imagine how hard it is to see a friend or a loved one die in an accident or by an illness but then try to imagine seeing over 700 people willingly line up to drink poison and sadly not knowing that they know not what they do."

I wanted to make sure he was listening to these last words so I looked into his eyes and continued... "Know on that day in Guyana, hundreds of lives were wasted. There is no better way to describe it. I tell you, I've seen death in every form and fashion. The only honorable death is after a long life and a body is worn out from trying to live the best life possible. Anything less than that is a tragic." I then leaned over and gave him a hug. I shook his hand and told him... "Know that history should teach all that the people of Jonestown put their trust, their hope, and their salvation on the wrong man. And sadly, that type of mislaid trust has happened so many times throughout history.

I now ask you, what do you believe, who do you trust and what hope do you have?" As he pondered that, I then added "Are you ready to die or are you willing to fight for another day, for better days ahead?" I then watched him sit there and consider all that I had shared. I then asked if he knew of the Archangels... of Michael - God's soldier, of Gabriel - God's messenger, and of Raphael - God's angel of healing?

He looked at me with a tear sliding slowly down his cheek and he replied. *"Thank you... if you have seen all that, then I can live through this. I hope God can forgive me for doubting him, I know now that I may not understand the terrible things I've seen or done or may yet live through but I do want to fight for each day, no matter what it takes."* He then laid his head back, he closed

his eyes and then said with a slight smile... *"And as for Michael, Gabriel and Raphael, I just thought they were mutant ninja turtles, you know, made up"*.

His response made me smile and I was pleased with what I saw next. He looked like he now had the peace that he wanted. I told him to remember these words from John 8:32... **"And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free"**. He did not die that day and as I left, the priest who I had become for my visits with him, did not die as well. It was then that I knew that things for me were changing.

The hope I had lost so long ago had now a new flicker. My experiences were changing and it appeared that God was now leading me down a new path. Before I had apathy, over time I then learned sympathy and now as I've experienced these last years after years of so many deaths, I was learning empathy.

And as I walked away, these words came into my mind.

Remember Hope...

Know that God charts our life's course and a river of hope runs through it.

I then looked up and said, **Hope - keeps us going.**

Now, was it a day, week, month or year later? I have no idea but here we were, sitting in our tent, just the two of us. This time was different, we were not together for just minutes or for days. We had been fighting side by side for a month or so and I knew this experience was a unique one. He had become the brother that I wished I had. We could laugh at each other, tease each other and then when duty called, we had each others back.

I found myself thinking, God... this friend can not be the one, please let it be me.

It was 0400, we both were up and I think we both knew that something about today was not right. He asked me... *"You ready to die today?"* I nodded my head in the positive and said to him, "Can I tell you something that you're not going to believe?" He gave me that smirky smile of his and said *"You're not going to tell me you love me or something like that, are you?"* I chuckled and then told him... "I need you to know that I pray that this day is the end for me. I can feel that this day is different, I know this is the time for my confession. I need to tell you something I've never told anyone else". I paused and looked at him as he sat back down. He had that look of this better be good. I then said "I want you to know I'm not who you had served with these last six months or so. You may not believe me but what I'm about to tell you is true".

His manor changed to an expression of belief and his response was as if he knew this was something for him to listen to, *"Okay, I'm ready"* he replied. I took a sip of coffee and started to talk.

"There was a day so long ago and it is all I see now in my dreams, night after night after night. It is only now, after so many years, that I have learned what God wants me to know. I've now seen the three faces of death. I've lived a thousand lives, I've watched people die that I did not know who they were or even who loved them. I've watched people die that I had come to know and love. And lastly, I now know that either you or I shall die today and I pray that it is me".

His look was now of a slight doubt but I then continued... "I no longer sleep at night because now there is nothing I can do, to ensure I can trade my life for another. I want you to know that as a child I did not know my father. I became a bitter, angry young man. As of today, it was over 1500 years ago. I was a warrior and killed many in my quest. Today I know we fight for good but back then, I fought for evil. I did not know it but I was

experiencing then the first face of death. As long as others died, I was fine. I am who I am I thought. I was the son who thought more of himself, who turned against his friends, against his father and against his faith. My real name is Mordrid and I'm sure that name means nothing to you but at that time, my father did not know my name or who I was. It was at a time that the world would call the dark ages. Little did the world know how dark those times were. My mother was what you would call a sorceress. She wanted my father but he did not want her. Long story short, she tricked him and she made him see his wife when he slept with her. He did not know that I was born, he did not know that she raised me to do one thing and that was to kill him. She was evil in every way and she had one purpose for me and that was to become King but I know now it was only to unleash the hate that was within her".

At that moment, my friend stood as if to walk away, to laugh at the ridiculous story that I was telling him but I grabbed his arm and continued.... "It happened on a day much like this, a day of battle. Only then my father's army had defeated mine. I came to him with my surrender but I knew his weakness. He hated death, he hated evil and all he wanted was peace." My friend's hands were now on mine. He was stronger then I was but for some reason, he could not undo the grip I had on him. He was going to hear the rest of my story and it was as if God was directing my every word, my every action.

I knew that I had to finish my story and so I continued... "As I bowed to my father, I went down on one knee. He turned his back on me for only a second. He had turned to face his people and to proclaim to all that evil was defeated but before he could speak, I was there with my hatred and plunged my hidden dagger deep into his back... As my father fell, I fled and as he died, I escaped in the confusion that erupted. Then later and from a distance; hiding in the woods that day, I saw his burial procession.

His followers took him to the lake and they laid his body upon a boat. They set the sail and let the boat drift out from shore.

Then I saw an archer shoot a flaming arrow into the sail. It caught fire and within minutes, the whole boat was a flame. I then saw his soldiers placed a cross in the ground. Four words adorned it, those being Faith, Hope, Love and Peace. My father's life was lived in pursuit of those. Mine at that time was the opposite. I laughed then at his demise and little did I know that night, when I went to sleep, I would later wake to my purgatory that I've been living since then".

I then paused to see his expression. *"Good story buddy and I could almost believe it but I hate to tell you, how can I believe it?"* he replied. "There is only one way I can prove it to you" I said and then stood up and before he could stop me I took my knife and plunged it into my stomach. I wasn't sure who I was but I knew this day, with this body, I was not going to die. I pulled the knife out and showed him the blood that dripped from it. I did not fall and I did not swagger in pain. I then lifted my shirt and there before our eyes, the wound was closing by itself.

His look was unbelieving and he asked *"What does this mean?"* I replied with tears now falling down my cheek, "Today my friend is the day that you will die and there is nothing I can do to prevent it". He looked at me and smiled in disbelief.... *"I'll tell you what, I don't know if what I just heard and what I just saw was what I think it was but I know I'm not dying today and you can bet on that"*. He then got up and walked out of our tent. I stood there wondering, what would happen next, did I fail in someway?

It did not take long and the blur that had unfolded was now beginning to become clear. We were spread out, we were in a fire fight but we got them all. When we raced forward, I saw that of the men we just killed... now made me sick. I threw up when I realized it was not just the enemy, it was our guys as well.

We were mad, what went wrong, how could this of happened?
As we turned them over, that is when I saw Pat. I had just talked
with him just an hour before and now he was dead because of us.
As I walked back to my tent, I thought that his death should not
be overlooked or ever forgotten.

It was April 22nd, 2004. It was this day that I realized a person
I came to love as a brother, had made the ultimate sacrifice and
lived a life that believed in a cause was better then desire for
fame. His name was Pat Tillman.

And as I struggled with this, these words came into my mind.

Remember Love...

In life we can do no great things,
only small things with great love.

I then looked up, and then looked down and said . . .

Love - Is not as visible as it should be.

It was then that I awoke to find myself out in what appeared to
be the middle of who knows where. The trees around me looked
somewhat familiar but the date and location were unknown.
I stood up and began to wander around just a bit when I saw him
walking toward me. I squinted to see his face, but for some
reason I did not recognize him but inside it felt as if I knew who
this should be.

As he got closer, I thought at first, what event will now unfold,
what side of death will I see, his or mine and if mine, whose body
am I in at this time? As I tried to ponder the situation about to
unfold, he stated... **"It is time"** and his words brought me out of
my puzzlement.

"Time for what?" I replied. ***"To see what you have learned"*** my new accomplice stated. "Sure but I have one question" I asked and before the words could form on my lips, he answered, ***"I am called Niac by some, the angel of death by others or as some would say... the Grim Reaper. I've been with you for every death you have seen this last millennium and a half. What you may not know is that you were given the gift of OWIHIMO , that is to see life coming and going, from within as someone about to pass on and from the outside by someone who was meant to be there. You now have a perspective on one of life's most complex aspects."***

What he said was now clear to see. That sense of familiarity I had was now replaced with recognition. As he came close, those were the eyes I saw at every death I had seen over the years. Strangely I now felt calm, I was ready for whatever he wanted. "What would you like me to do?" I asked. It was simple what he requested, he asked what lessons I've learned from all of the deaths that I had witnessed. I then thought for a minute and then responded . . .

"First, what I would say was probably five hundred years or so ago as a young American Indian boy, I found myself fighting with another boy. I don't really remember what we were fighting about but the other boy's grandfather stopped us. This elder of the tribe asked us why we were fighting? Neither of us spoke up. He then sat down with us and taught us a lesson I have never forgotten. He warned us that we all have two wolves living within us, one evil and one good. He said the evil wolf causes us to get angry, to fight, to lie, to do the wrong things that we should not.

He said the good wolf causes us to help others, to be happy, to speak the truth, to love others and to do what is right. His grandson asked him, if the wolves fight as we do, which wolf wins? There was a pause and his grandfather then responded...

"The one that you feed".

It was then I learned that in this world and within ourselves are the forces of good and evil. Our thoughts, our words, our actions define our character. We need to recognize evil, to act against it, and to embrace the good. I always thought the saying... *"For evil to prevail only requires that good men do nothing"* went hand in hand with this lesson. I know I will never forget that story because I never got the chance to have a son or daughter to teach this to as that old Indian had taught us.

Second, I think it was probably 60 or so years ago. I got the chance to become a friend to an old woman who was seeing her doctor. Her health was failing so fast she had to be hospitalized. At her bedside, I found myself holding her hand, talking to her as she was breathing her last breaths. She wanted me to know of a woman who helped her, who became her friend, to not forget her story. She told me that this friend of hers... Betty, had been in deep despair and tried to kill herself by jumping from her apartment window.

She told me that Betty did not die but was paralyzed from the waist down. As a crippled woman, she told my friend that she sensed Jesus telling her. "You've had a healthy body but a crippled soul. From now on you'll have a crippled body but a healthy soul". It was from that moment that Betty surrendered her life to God. She prayed for a way to share His grace and it was then she got an idea. Betty put an ad in the newspaper that stated "If you are lonely or sad, call me. I'm in a wheelchair and seldom get out. We can share our problems, I love to talk". My old friend I was now talking to told me she was the one that called Betty. She told me she never forgot how her crippled friend reached out to her and to so many. Now this new old friend of mine was on her deathbed. She wanted me to know Betty's story, she pleaded with me to share it with others, to make it a part of my life, to use my life for helping others.

This old lady passed away that night after we talked. She taught me that God wants us to help others, for when we do we discover His gifts for us. Its too bad that all people don't slow down to reflect on the lessons they have learned in life and to appreciate what they have learned and of all of those they have met.

The third was what I learned about 10 years ago. I got to be a young teenager, a boy with a lot of anger. Over the summer I got to live and learn the life of a 14 year old. I had fun but I got angry when things did not go my way. One day I got mad at my father because I lied to him. I hit the wall with my fist and put a hole in it. I expected my father to blow his top but he didn't, he took me out to the garage, he handed me a hammer and a box of nails. What surprised me was when he told me to take those nails and to hammer them all half way into the wall of the garage. He said for me to hammer away until my anger had ended. I had no problem hammering away and in fact I did so for 20 minutes. What was interesting is that this type of event unfolded four or so more times that summer. I like so many, did not learn the first, second or third times. The last time I blew my top, my father took me out to the garage but we had a problem. We were out of nails. He looked at me, he handed me the hammer and said I had to now pull all those nails out and put them in a bucket. About two hours later I was done. I was surprised that I was tired but there I was with a bucket full of nails.

What I didn't realize at the time, my father was watching me pull the nails out. When I had finished, he walked in and stood beside me and we both looked at that wall. He took his hand and slowly moved it across the holes and then asked me to do the same. He then said... "Son, the nails are gone just like your anger but the nail holes still remain. These nail holes are the same as the wounds that we create by the hurtful things we say or do. We need to remember that we can apologize for the bad

things that we do but no matter what we do to make amends, the hurt we've caused can last long after the apologies are said".

The next day I saw that father who I lived under, die of a heart attack. He had taught me it is easy to get mad, to say or do hurtful things.... that I must control myself and to know anyone can do something bad and say they're sorry, but it takes a special person that finds the ways to avoid those situations. I learned that I wanted to avoid which was a huge part of my life - anger.

Finally, although it took me these many years to learn these lessons and sadly, after living thousands of deaths, I can only now appreciate these words from the apostle Paul. He wrote... ***"Put on the full armor of God, that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil."*** I realize now that all should learn these words from Ephesians 6:11 and unfortunately so few do. I have learned that we can not control our life but we can take actions to live a life founded and growing in faith. I also know that too many people use their Bible just as a decoration. It is unfortunate that all don't know it is a book to be read, to be studied and the words shared - to be embraced."

I was surprised that when I finished talking, the look upon my guest changed greatly. He replied... ***"Thank you for living through all that you have and for learning what you now know. It appears you have learned in 1500 years what took me more then twice that. For now I can tell you who I am. I had a brother once and I also wanted my place in prominence. His name was Abel and my name was Cain. I caused his death and ever since then, I have been at every death known to mankind. I thought God was punishing me but He knew I had to learn what love and hate were, how service and sacrifice versus greed and corruption had unfortunately spread throughout myself and this world. I was not punished but given the chance to redeem myself."***

I now knew that the Angel of Death was Cain, was once a man like me. I found he already knew my next question because he answered it before I could ask it. ***"The reason we are together is as I stated when we first talked. It is time for you to know that what separates the angel from the demon and the sinner from the saint is what some call a gift and what others call a curse. It is the ability to choose. The choices that we make are not to be taken lightly. Each one becomes embedded into our soul and they become the strands that come together to define our character. You now have a choice. It is time for me to move on and for you to take my place."***

It was that simple. That pain of all those years, of all those deaths was now off of him and he was now at peace. He did not say another word, he just turned and walked away.

I sat there and wondered.... do I choose if I accept this or not? I thought of how so long ago I made a bad choice, of all the lonely deaths, the tragic deaths the accidental deaths and the horrific deaths I have since experienced. Initially I thought I may not be able to do this but my decision now was not difficult at all. I just wondered, how long will this be for me? Then I looked upward and prayed "Dear God, I know I was a sinner and the evil in my heart was immense but I pray that I am the last one to do what you now have for me do for if there is to be another after me, that means there is another who is as evil as I was. I pray not for another to take my place some day but to trust in you my heavenly Father for all that is to unfold."

As I then closed my eyes, I pondered. . . if mankind can not learn to look up in Hope, within for Faith and to each other with Love, then they can not be at Peace. I then wondered how the blur I had lived through for these hundreds of years could be replaced by something even more intense. I then opened my eyes and found myself falling into the water but with a calm I had

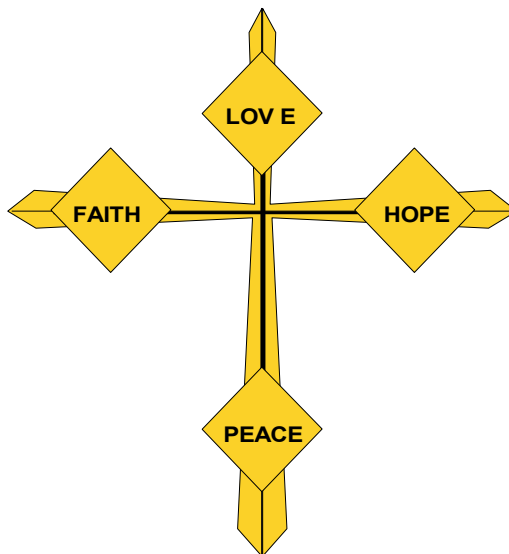
never had before. Was I dreaming? No, and as I went deeper and deeper, it was hard to see but as I got closer it looked like a sword sticking up from the bottom of the lake. It can't be can it, is it Excalibur, the sword of my father? It was there like a cross standing vigil in the murk of the deep. I'm not sure why I was shown this but I know that I will find out at some point in the time ahead, whether it be a hundred or a thousand years.

I then closed my eyes again and I know that this sounds silly . . . with peace in my heart and ready to be God's witness, I know now that we are to grow our faith, to share our faith, and when possible... to help others to come to faith. I was now ready to direct those to heaven's gate and also ready as needed to escort those to hell's door. My only question was how many more?



And it was after my mind asked that question, the answer I was given was - **Remember Peace... is not a choice but a way of life.**

I then looked up, smiled and said . . . **Peace - is a gift.**



There you go, my last story with a lot of everything – and yes, more on death than I would normally like to see referenced, but there was a reason. That is to point to its sadness and to hopefully then point to the goodness – life. Now, is any of the above, useful or does it trigger any ideas to pursue something else?

While you think about that, I offer the following. If you share this 'Cross' story with your teen(s), please have some talks in some way to get their comments. Because, if you can see how they think, what they know, what they like or not, it is a great way to see how well they are getting ready for the more challenging years yet ahead for them.

So, to help – here are some questions you may want to leverage.

- _ What are you aware of about 9/11?
 - _ **What do you think about when you see or hear about tragic deaths?**
 - _ **What do you think of those with handicaps or special needs?**
 - _ If you think about key people in our country's history, or major events, are you proud, angry, apathetic?
 - _ **How would you summarize WW1, WW2, the Korean War, Vietnam War, the wars in Afghanistan, Iraq?**
 - _ **What about cults, mobs, protests/demonstrations?**
 - _ **What about heroes and about horrible people?**
 - _ **What did you think about the 3 lessons?**
 - _ **What about redemption?**
 - _ **What about life?**
 - _ **Was there anything in this story that you liked?**
- Or, if you paused and thought a bit, what questions would you have and would ask of your kids?

And in closing. After I had written this last story, I kept looking for the 'what else is out there' to help Dads to be better Dads. What I found that I really liked, was Tony Dungy's **All Pro Dad** series of insights so I began grabbing those, adding to them a bit and posting as more free reads for those interested (see my D2B website . . . <https://decide2be.weebly.com/oh2c.html> for those if you are interested).

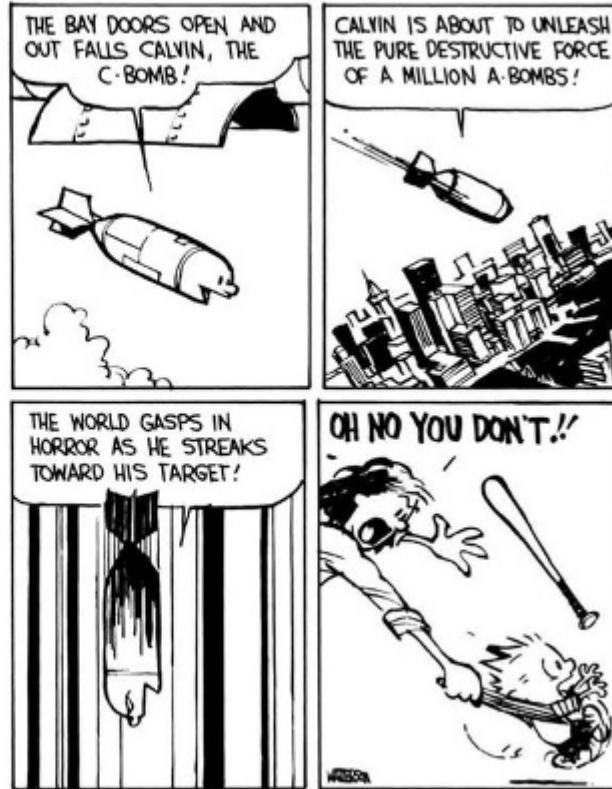
That is it, thank you and remember:

If at first you don't succeed – maybe you just have a hard time learning how to succeed :)

Just kidding on that last sentence above.

Do your best and remember, if the following is true for you, it's also true for your teen(s).

Know this:
One day can change your life.
One day can ruin your life.
Just remember that you get only one chance at life, so live it as best you can, with no regrets.



And what you think, say and do today - maybe more critical than you ever would have thought.

So, thank you for wanting to be the best Dad that you can be. It would be great if every Dad tried to do so

(and tell your kids you are proud of them doing their best).

*** = If they think they are in love with the 'one' . . . tell them as a teen, they will know for sure if they wait 5 years (aka **slow things down**).

Should'a (Fatherhood - staying engaged - the Teen years)

This space is blank (#4) for any final notes you may want to jot down.