

## What Will Your Children Remember About You?

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When my first child was just a baby, I'm sure my mindset was something like, "I might have 18 to 20 years with this gift from God. That's plenty of time to train her up in the way she should go (Proverbs 22:6)." But the older she and her siblings get, the more I find myself saying, "Where has all the time gone? They are getting so big, so quickly!" I have yet to meet a conscientious parent who didn't feel the same way.



Of course, the ultimate desire of believing parents is that their children become followers of Jesus Christ. This is an urgent matter that requires diligently teaching them God's word, carefully exposing their sin, and faithfully proclaiming the gospel to them. In Paul's words, we must "bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4).

But is parenting only about words? I don't think so. Most adults, when sharing memories of their parents, don't typically remember too much of what their mom or dad said, but how they lived. For example, a son or daughter might say, "My dad was such a hard worker, he typically went to work even if he was sick," or, "When my mom saw our ailing neighbor outside, she always stopped what she was doing to cheer her up."

Here are two statements I hope my kids say about me when they grow up:

*"My dad trusted in God to take care of our needs."*

Stress is normal for all of us. Work situations, financial difficulties, and physical troubles are just a few sources of potentially great anxiety. But God is powerful, and He is always faithful to His children. I want to live a life that demonstrates my belief in that.

The famous missionary to the cannibals, John Patton, was deeply influenced by his mother's faith in God. He recorded one story about her "because of the lasting impression made upon my religious life."<sup>1</sup> They didn't have much when he was a boy. He remembers a season of "deep distress" because of a miniscule harvest. His father had even left the home to find work, and they were eagerly anticipating his arrival the following evening. However, they were very hungry *now*. Patton said his mother got all of the children to bed,

"assuring us that she had told God everything, and that he would send us plenty in the morning."

The very next day, not knowing their desperate situation, Patton's grandfather sent them a bag of potatoes and "the earliest homemade cheese of the season." Patton recalls, "My mother, seeing our surprise at such an answer to her prayers, took us around her knees, thanked God for His goodness, and said to us, 'O my children, love your Heavenly Father, tell Him in faith and prayer all your needs, and He will supply your wants so far as it shall be for your good and His glory.'"

*"My dad loved the local church."*

At one point during Jesus' ministry, his mother and brothers came to take Jesus home—thinking he was "out of his mind" (Mark 3:21, 31-32). When they arrived to seize Jesus, He was teaching in a crowded house, so they sent for him. Mark recorded what happened next.

And he answered them, "Who are my mother and my brothers?" And looking about at those who sat around him, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother." (Mark 3:31-35)

The family Jesus came to save—the group of people that did God's will—took priority over even His biological family! Shouldn't the same be true of us regarding our relationship to the local church? This doesn't mean we shouldn't ever love and interact with our earthly family. But choosing to eagerly and whole-heartedly participate in the life and meetings of the church will affect how our children view the bride of Christ, and even Jesus Christ Himself. What are we really communicating to our children if we typically choose family parties or outings instead of the church meeting?

I am a pastor. So, perhaps you might then say, "Of course your kids will say that you loved the church!" Not necessarily. It is essential that they see me faithfully live out the "one anothers" of the New Testament. And if I want to leave a legacy of love for the church, it is critical that I talk about fellow church leaders and members with words full of love, respect, and appreciation.

When your children grow up, and they are asked, "Tell me about your dad," or, "Tell me about your mom," what do you think they will say?

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<sup>1</sup> This story and all quotes are from John G. Paton, *John G. Paton: Missionary to the New Hebrides* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 2007 [Reprinted]), 21-22.