

Tuck Us In Dad?

When my wife and I began having children, many years ago, we were advised by many people to TREASURE those times, because, as we were told, “they grow up so fast; before you know it, they will be up and out on their own.”

Of course as young new parents, we took this wisdom with a grain of salt. It seemed, at the time, like we had a lifetime ahead of us, all the time in the world. But what everyone told us then was true: before we knew it, they had all grown up and were gone. Of course, they still come home to visit now, but we no longer have those precious days of our kids’ childhood. Those days have passed.

Our three children are all grown up now. Our son is the only one married. He and his wife live two hours away from us and have given us a precious grandson. Proverbs 17:6 tells us, “Grandchildren are the crown of the aged.” How true! We love that little guy SO much! Our middle daughter is now a Registered Nurse in that same city, and our youngest daughter has just graduated Bible College with Summa cum laude honors.

They grew up so fast. I remember the day we dropped our youngest daughter off at Bible College in Iowa (so far from home), and I cried as we drove away, knowing that we were now “empty nesters.” The last one was now on her own, and my wife and I were now, once again, alone. I wanted to go back in time, and do it all over again. I questioned how I had raised our kids, if I had done a good enough job, if I had been a good Dad to them, and thought about all the ways I could have done better, ...if only I had known then what I know now.

One regret I have still haunts me. You see, as my kids were growing up, I was the one who always tucked them in at bedtime and said their prayers with them, every night. But as they got older – I guess about high-school age – I was getting

older too, and my work was always extremely demanding. I would come home from work completely worn out and tired, and slowly, I began to tell them, "You're old enough to say your own prayers now, and tuck yourselves in. You don't need me to do it with you anymore."

I'll never forget: occasionally, my daughters would still ask, at bedtime, "Tuck us in, Dad?" And my exhausted response would be, "No, not tonight. You're old enough to do that yourselves now. You don't need me to help you with that anymore." This is the biggest regret I have from my parenting days, because I didn't realize how precious those times were. Or how, on those occasions when they still asked me to tuck them in and say prayers together at bedtime, maybe they really NEEDED their Dad on those nights especially – even as high schoolers.

Eventually, they stopped asking... and now, of course, they don't ask at all anymore. They are adults now...those days are truly gone forever. I still get choked up just thinking about how stupid and selfish I was, too tired to spend that precious time with my little girls, when I had the chance – even though they were now "old enough" to tuck themselves in.

Sometimes we have the privilege of having our 2-year-old grandson spend the weekend with us, and then I get the chance to read Bible stories with him, play with him, and of course, tuck him in at night with bedtime prayers and a kiss and a hug. It's the most beautiful thing, and I tell my son and his wife, "TREASURE these times, because before you know it, he will be all grown up and gone." Of course, with their whole lives ahead of them, they take my advice with a grain of salt. I guess the experience of the thing is the only thing that will prove the point. We don't realize what we have until it is gone.

I tell you this because I believe God feels the same way about HIS children, those who are saved by His grace, those whose

Heavenly Father they are. I'm talking about me now. And you, if you are a genuine Christian, one of God's kids. We are HIS children. We are precious to Him, and no matter how old we are, we will always be His "little ones," even if we're 100 years old. He still wants us to come to Him daily, and spend time with him daily. He does not EVER want us to "move away from home." Home is with HIM, even though we still live on this earth, and see Him now only dimly.

God does not want His kids to just "come home to visit." And God wants us to always ask Him to tuck us in at night with a prayer, a hug and a kiss. We never become "too old" for that. As a father myself, I know how it grieves me that those precious days of my kids' childhood are gone now. They have their own lives, and though they still often come to me and ask my advice on things, ask me to help fix things, still look to me as their Dad, we no longer have those daily, close interactions, we no longer have that daily private time together... and I deeply regret, ... that in my ignorance, I let that time slip away much too soon. It didn't have to happen that way. It could have lasted longer, if only I knew then what I know now.

Jesus loves the little ones, and those with the faith of a little child. He told His disciples, "'Let the children come to Me; do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God. Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.' And He took them in His arms and blessed them."

In fact, Jesus felt so strongly about His love for children, that we read in Matthew 18: "And calling to Him a child, He put him in the midst of them and said, 'Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever receives one such child in My name receives Me, but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be

better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea.'” That is GREAT love. The love of a father for His children.

Yes, God loves the little children, and He loves US old folks too, when we are humble and child-like in our worship of Him. But in our human ignorance, we “grow up” so fast. We become wise in our own eyes. We tend to lean on our own understanding, ...as if we were able to truly understand anything. We tend to “visit” God on the weekends, but we do not commune with Him daily. It’s very sad, and as a father, I can tell you, it GRIEVES the heart of our HEAVENLY Father that we act this way.

Even more disturbing is all the dysfunctional families there are in this world today... children with no fathers; homes in which neither parent knows the Lord and so they have nothing of God to share with their children. The children grow up with uninvolved parents, too busy to spend any time with them at all; no spiritual training, living lives of self-centered narcissism. The parents don’t tuck their kids in or say prayers with them – and I’ve seen far too many that teach their kids horrendous swear words rather than the PRECIOUS Word of God. What kind of home is THIS for a child to grow up in? It is no wonder we have such a messed up culture. It is truly heartbreaking to see families that are SO lost.

Recently, I have been asked to speak at several funerals. During those times, I have taken the opportunity to share the Gospel message, because funerals are one of those rare instances when people are truly seeking hope... even unbelievers are HOPING that what they have heard about God just MIGHT be true, and they are yearning for comforting words of HOPE. There is no greater hope than that of the Good News. So when I speak at funerals, I speak specifically to those who do not know Jesus, those who are not saved, those who know OF Him, but have never taken Him seriously or, if the truth be told, never given Him the “time of day.”

I explain that life goes by SO quickly. James 4:14 tells us, "What is your life? It is even a vapor, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." I think of the elderly in nursing homes, 80, 90-years-old or more... I have spoken with many older people, and they all wonder the same thing: "Where did the time go? It went so fast..." "It seems like only yesterday," they say... I know that I don't feel as old as I am. Inside, I still feel like about 30 years old... but sometimes when I look in the mirror, I see my Dad looking back at me. Where DID the time go? It seems like just yesterday I was tucking my little kids in with bedtime prayers and a kiss. And now I'm a Grandpa!

I think one of the biggest hindrances to people coming to Christ and a saving knowledge of God the Father – not to mention the gift of the Holy Spirit – is that well-meaning preachers have put so much focus on the salvation message. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." Absolutely true! But so often, we put the heaviest emphasis on life AFTER death. And no one thinks about death. No one thinks about old age. No one even considers how fast our lives go by... to us, it seems, we have all the time in the world to "get right with God."

Yet our lives ARE but a vapor. And some squander their lives in vain pursuits of the pleasures of this life, thinking they can get serious about God "later," when they're older. But as we all know, for a lot of people, death comes very suddenly and unexpectedly. They never get that chance. And for others, who plan to get serious about the things of God when they're older, "when they have more time," when they're retired, maybe... the longer you put that off, the easier it IS to just put it off, and eventually, you find yourself on your deathbed, having squandered a lifetime apart from God.

The POINT is this: the GOOD NEWS of the Gospel is NOT JUST about life AFTER death. The TRULY Good News is that God wants us NOW, in THIS life. He wants to be our Father NOW. He

wants us to be His children NOW. He wants us to come to Him as little children. He wants to love us, guide us, teach us, lead us, FATHER us. Because He LOVES us. He wants us to be HIS precious little ones.... He wants to give us the KINGDOM of God, IF we will go to Him as a little child.

Some say Christianity is a "crutch" for the weak. How ridiculous. That's like saying for a young child, having good parents is a crutch for the "weak kids." God designed marriage and family as a model for the relationship He wants to have with US – in THIS life. You see, life on this earth is our "childhood," if you will. And when we "graduate" from the "school" of this life and "move out," those who are in Christ don't move AWAY from their Heavenly Father – they MOVE IN with Him! But meanwhile, we can have a constant, deep, loving and intimate relationship with Him – ALL OUR LIVES! Those who put off getting to know Christ, following Him, learning of His Father in heaven and the FAMILY of God He wants to adopt us into, are missing out on a LIFETIME of blessing.

It is said that those on their deathbeds rarely regret the things they did.... but they regret deeply the things they did NOT do. So I urge you today, if you do not have that deep, intimate relationship with your Heavenly Father, if you are not so close to Him that He tucks you in with a prayer and a kiss every night, no matter how old you are; you CAN HAVE such a relationship. Go to Him. He promises that all who seek Him will find Him... to all who knock, the door will be opened. He doesn't hide from us, but REVEALS Himself to us and allows us to choose if we will become a part of His precious family, or if we will remain outside that family.

Without the Heavenly Father, you are a spiritual orphan. And you do not even realize it, but you remain a child of your father, the devil, living in a dysfunctional, loveless, self-centered "home" on this earth. Only those who are part of the family of God are His. And once you are His, you become a

child of the King of Kings – not just for eternity after you die – but RIGHT NOW, in THIS life. I guess if you've never had such a home and family, you have no idea what it is you're missing. And THAT is the Good News that so many preachers fail to get across.

Becoming a Christian is not JUST about your eternal salvation; walking an aisle, saying a prayer and then you're "good to go," your ticket to heaven is "punched," and you can call yourself a Christian... that's actually taking the Lord's name in vain, if the truth be told. Understand that. Becoming a TRUE CHRISTIAN means becoming adopted into the family of God, and living FOR and WITH Him. In fact, through the gift of the Holy Spirit, Jesus Himself will be INSIDE you, all through this life. That's what being "born again" IS. There is no greater blessing in this life.

So I urge you. Don't reject this message. You may be a spiritual orphan today. You may have come from a very dysfunctional family on this earth, and you may be currently a child of the devil. But there IS a Heavenly Kingdom, and the King has offered to adopt you, to rescue you from that life. He longs to take you in His arms and bless you. Call upon Him today: "Tuck us in Dad?" I guarantee, He will NOT be too tired for you. In fact, it will be His greatest joy and all the angels of heaven will rejoice when you simply ask Him. May Christ be praised.

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