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Our speaker for Mother's Day, Pastor Guy Pratap, was correct in saying there are quite a few examples of good mothers in the bible. In contrast, there are very few examples of good fathers in the bible. In fact, we see failure after failure ...

- There is lack of discipline - think of Eli and his two wicked sons, Hopni and Phinehas (1Sa 2:12).
- There are poor decisions – think of David and his son Absalom (2Sa 15).
- Fathers are absent or negligent – think of Zebedee who stayed behind to fish while his two sons, James and John became Jesus' disciples.

We know there must be good men and godly fathers, but there are few recorded stories in the Bible.

- Nevertheless, 'Fathers ... (are to) bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord (Ep 6:4 NIV): We are to raise our children in a way that they know God and pleases Him.
- Anne Lamott wrote 'When you are a kid you think that dads have some kind of inner toolbox, full of shiny tools: the saw of discernment, the hammer of wisdom, the sandpaper of patience. But then I grew up I found that life handed you these rusty bent old tools – friendships, prayer, conscience, honesty – and said, Do the best you can with these, they will have to do.'
Anne Lamott.

Today, I'd like to talk about some of the tools that we have as fathers to train our children in spiritual matters. I hope you can walk away from here today encouraged by the tools God has given you.

Lessons From A Toolbelt.

Tools to Build a Spiritual Legacy.



Today, I brought some tools to illustrate my points. Even though this message is primarily addressed to fathers, the principles are general enough for everyone.

1. Hammer – Strength (& Weakness).

My very first tool came to me when I was about 10 years old, it was an old hammer. I was new to town and some boys were building a tree house in a tree at the end of the block. While we were talking, an old hammer fell on my head, literally. That may

explain a lot to some of you about me. The boys laughed and then yelled that I could keep it because it was old, and they had found it someplace.

To me hammers represent both strengths and weaknesses – think nail / thumb. I walked home with the world moving beneath my feet, the strength of the hammer met the weakness of my head. If you have ever hit your thumb, you know what I mean. That old hammer went to Japan and back. I finally lost it during our construction here (53 years). I bought a heavier hammer because it was just too light to pound 16 penny nails all day.

Men do not be afraid to show your strengths and weaknesses to your children – they need the example.

On the one hand, encourage your child in their strengths and applaud their achievements. Feed what you want to grow and starve what you want to die. One of the strongest rebukes I got from my father was when I was arguing with some lady over a cup of coffee in Japan. It rarely happens in Japan, but she intentionally overcharged dad.

- I was hitting my points like a lawyer, when my father tapped me on the shoulder and said, ‘Randal, let her win, she is poor.’ She needed my compassion.
- It took more strength of character (humility) to step away than to recover what was stolen.

On the other hand, prepare your children for the real world where there is pain and loss.

- Not everyone wins; hammers occasionally hit heads.
- Our society wants to indulge children and equalize outcomes – but God has given each of us different talents and capacities.
- The world out there is competitive, and they must learn how to compete.

As Christians, I believe we ought to excel, but we should also be humble and have an honest assessment of who we are. For example,¹

- NFL - 1 in 1010 high school players; 1 in 325 college players.
- Basketball 1 in 8,926 high school players; 1 in 525 college players.

¹ [The Statistical Breakdown Of Becoming A Professional Athlete Will Make You Keep Your Day Job \(elitedaily.com\)](http://elitedaily.com)

- Baseball 1 in 390 high school players; 1 in 44 college players.

Though they may not make it into professional level sports, all our sons and daughters will stand before God one day.

- “We should never be afraid of failure; we should be afraid of succeeding in things that won’t make a difference.” Unknown.

Dads, know who you are and don’t be afraid of revealing your failures or weaknesses. I saw my father go through a period of unemployment after he quit his office job; he picked up a couple of part time jobs. At one point working two or three jobs. His strength was how he prayed and trusted God. He lived his life before a holy God. God said to the apostle Paul, "My gracious favor is all you need. My power works best in your weakness." So now I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may work through me.¹⁰ ... For when I am weak, then I am strong (2Co 12:9, 10 NLT).’

Dads, teach your children about winning, losing, and about respecting authority. ‘Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves.’ Phil 2:3 NIV

2. Socket set - Integrity.

This toolset has been with me since I was an early teen. A friend of mine was given permission to strip wires and other copper from an old building. He asked me to help him. Later, I helped him with his job to unloaded a truck at a local hardware store. While there he asked me what I liked, I picked up this socket set. A few days later he gave it to me for help with the copper. Later, I discovered that he had stolen it and that most of his tools were stolen by helping to unload these trucks. He would ‘take the trash out’ and in the bottom of the garbage was the stolen item. He would go back at night to get his prize. This socket set ended my friendship with him. ‘Do not be misled: "Bad company corrupts good character (1Co 15:33 NIV).’

Dads, live a life of integrity.

Your thoughts determine your actions, and your actions determine your destiny – but you are not alone on this journey. Your children will do what you do - ‘monkey see, monkey do.’ Out of your integrity flows character that will impact generations.

- It starts with your heart. The Bible says, ‘Above all else, guard your heart, for it affects everything you do (Pro 4:23 NLT).’

- 'It is essential to understand that battles are primarily won in the hearts of men.' Vince Lombardi (Green Bay Packers).

What do you want your children to be like?

- If you want quick-tempered, arrogant, lazy, stingy, and selfish children, live like that.
- For me, 'Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable-- if anything is excellent or praiseworthy-- think about such things (Phil 4:8 NIV).'
- For example, growing up I never saw my father drink alcohol. It was at my 50th birthday party that I learned my grandfather had been an alcoholic. By that time, I had seen an example of a happy life. He managed life's trials through faith in God, not booze or pills.
- 'Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says (Ja 1:22 NIV).'

Dads, model a godly life and both you and your children will be blessed.

3. Pull Saw - Finishing.

This little saw is a Japanese finishing saw that cuts on the backstroke. I picked it up in Japan to finish building a pulpit for the church. Connie's father had just died and while I was here in the States, I picked up some Brazilian Cherry. I cut the pulpit roughly to form and merely had to cut it to length, glue it together, and then finish it. It was beautiful, stained in a deep red natural finish. But I bought this at Tokyu Hands Department store in Ikebukoro. It represents some of the finishing touches like sacrifice and flexibility.

There comes a point in parenting when most of childrearing is done. We never stop being parents, but our influence changes when they are older. The children grow independent and begin to have families of their own. All we can offer are 'finishing touches' and these must be done gently with care and without damage. Teaching your children how to sacrifice is a finishing touch.

- Connie and I poured our all into Seijo Grace Church. We have sold all our possessions on two occasions now and hold what we do have loosely. Just as we sacrificed for that little church, our parents sacrificed greatly and allowed us to live roughly a decade overseas and supported us in all we did.

- In our materialistic age that screams for ‘more,’ and ‘right now.’ Dads teach your children to give and be generous. Teach them how to go without something, how to sacrifice. Show them how you deny yourself and be generous. ‘You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God (2Co 9:11 NIV).’

This saw also represents the need for flexibility. For example, my intent was to purchase another saw, but this one was within my budget and had finer teeth. On two occasions I feel as though my life was bumped off course by circumstances and I had to adapt.

- James writes, ‘You ought to say, "If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that (Ja 4:15 NIV)."' I have learned that God's will for my life is designed to build me into his image not to make me great in my own sight. He will give us the desires of our heart, but in his time not ours.
- Dads teach your children to follow through with what they start and teach them to adapt and change. If there is no money for Six Flags or Disney, go fishing or to the park.

Dads teach your children to sacrifice, and to be flexible.

4. Measuring Tape - Expectations.

I picked this tape in Connecticut. Before we built our prior church building, I bought this to help us plan and dream. Along with a Christian excavator we determined how to maximize the lot and make it look beautiful. I measured the 15' offset for digging the foundation. This represents to me dreams and expectations.

We all dream that our children will do well in life; we have expectations of them, a measurement. Dads, your words of encouragement will have a huge impact on your child. Help them to dream BIG.

- My dad encouraged me at every step of my journey: college, missions, even the move out east. I was the first one in our circle of acquaintances that went to college other than the pastor.
- ‘Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a dream fulfilled is a tree of life (Pro 13:12 NLT).’
- Encourage your children to dream but do so in stages they can achieve. For example, I had one young man whose parents expected him to join the army, but he had lost his index finger. I remember simply asking him how he was going to fire a gun. I saw his face fall, when he realized that he could not join the Army.

He was so discouraged that I encouraged him to join our 500-mile bike trip. His successful completion of 500 miles gave him a lot of confidence.

This SMALL tape is a measuring instrument, it is the standard by which we measure. A successful life is not measured in money, success, influence, or beauty, rather, a successful life is measured against God's purpose for us.

- Paul felt the sting of not measuring up to human ideals: 'But they are only comparing themselves with each other, using themselves as the standard of measurement. How ignorant (2Co 10;12 NLT)!'
- Real success is fulfilling God's purpose for your life, like David: 'Now when David had served God's purpose in his own generation, he fell asleep (acts 13:36 NIV).'
- Success is measured against how close we lived to God's plan for us.

I measure my girl's success by their love of God. I expect that they live their lives in close relationship to God.

In case you don't know this yet, your child will sin. It's like a whole generation of parents think their child was born without original sin. 'We all fall short of God's expectations for us: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Ro 3:23 NIV).'

It is how we respond to our sin that matters most.

Dad, be an example of living a humble, holy life before God. 'Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up (Ja 4:10 NIV).'

If you blow it, set an example of repentance and humility before God and them. Show them how to live a life before their holy creator.

Dads teach your children to dream big and measure their lives.

5. Extension Cord - Power.

This is one of my father's extensions cords I inherited. I know we use a lot of battery powered tools, but sometimes you need to connect to real power for a table / chop saw or a heavy-duty tool. Dad always purchased more cords at Christmas when he put up lights. There are two powerful tools that require us to plug into the Holy Spirit. Spiritual power comes from connecting with the Holy Spirit.

The first is prayer. There is something special about a father praying a blessing over his children. I woke up each day of my life hearing my father pray for his children and for other needs.

- If Jesus felt the need to pray for children, how much more should we as dads pray for our children. ‘People brought little children to Jesus for him to place his hands on them and pray for them (Mt 19:13 NIV).’

Second, children will only know the love of God through how much you love them. Many people struggle understanding God’s love because they have had such a poor example of love from their fathers.

We need more than human love; we need God’s love to flow through us. ‘And hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us (Ro 5:5 NIV).’ There will be times when they show their ugly side but love them and accept them. I grew up knowing that I was loved and wanted by my parents. You represent the love of God more than you know.

Dads, pray for and love your children, connect with the Holy Spirit to pass on a spiritual legacy.

Conclusion.

We want to be a ‘good man.’ of The Bible says, ‘A good man leaves an inheritance for his children’s children (Pro 13:22 NIV).’

- Again, returning to what our Mother’s Day speaker said, ‘there is a gap between being a child of God and living our life in a way that pleases Him.’ She was from a Hindu background and knew that it is not just a onetime prayer, but a life to be lived.
- We must walk our talk. The best thing we can do is live our lives knowing that a holy and loving heavenly Father is watching over us.

Prayer for all the men.