

Eternal Connection: Jewish People and the Temple Mount

The Jewish connection to the Temple Mount as a sacred Jewish holy site has existed since ancient times.

The Jewish people have a historical, religious, spiritual and national connection to the Temple Mount area dating back to antiquity. For the Jewish people, it is the holiest site on the entire planet.

It was the location of the creation of Adam, the binding of Isaac, as well as both the First and Second Temples. When the Jewish Temple existed, all Jews used to visit there to perform sacrifices to G-d three times per year, as commanded by G-d. It was the sacred building that housed the Ark of the Covenant in which the Ten Commandments were stored.

Archaeological treasures found there demonstrate that a Jewish Temple used to exist on the Temple Mount. While the Islamic Waqf has attempted to destroy such evidence, Israeli archaeologists have been able to rescue some of it, such as a fragment from a Herodian-style, Second-Temple-era sculptured stone that used to stand on the Temple Mount; a Babylonian arrowhead attesting to the destruction of the First Temple; and the seal of a First-Temple-era priestly family.

The Western Wall also still stands today as a visual reminder that a Jewish Temple used to exist on the Temple Mount.

Despite Palestinian Authority claims that no Jewish connection existed, many Muslim religious sources throughout history have accepted the Jewish connection to the Temple Mount area. According to the Global Research in International Affairs (GLORIA), "In Sura 17:1 of the Quran, the 'Farthest Mosque' is called the al-masjid al-Aqsa. The Tafsir al-Jalalayn, a well-respected Sunni exegesis of the Quran from the 15th and 16th

centuries, notes that the 'Farthest Mosque' is a reference to the Bayt al-Maqdis of Jerusalem. In Hebrew, the Jewish Temple is often referred to as the Beyt Ha-Miqdash, nearly identical to the Arabic term."

Furthermore, GLORIA notes, "In the commentary of Abdullah Ibn Omar al-Baydawi, who authored several prominent theological works in the 13th century, the masjid is referred to as the Bayt al-Maqdis because, during Muhammad's time, no mosque existed in Jerusalem. Quranic historian and commentator Abu Jafar Muhammad al-Tabari, who chronicled the seventh century Muslim conquest of Jerusalem, wrote that one day when Umar finished praying, he went to the place where 'the Romans buried the Temple (bayt al-maqdis) at the time of the sons of Israel.'"

Even upon the destruction of the Jewish Temple, Jews have continued to journey to the Temple Mount area in order to weep over the destruction of their holy site. According to the Cairo Genizah, following the Arab conquest of Jerusalem in the seventh century, 70 Jewish families relocated to Jerusalem and lived very close to the Temple Mount. The Cairo Genizah claimed that they established a synagogue in Warren's Gate, that wealthy Jews used to contribute money to pay for the upkeep of the Warren's Gate synagogue, and many Jews used to go on pilgrimages to the holy site until the Warren's Gate synagogue was destroyed during the First Crusade.

Yet even following the destruction of the Warren's Gate synagogue, Jews continued to travel to the Temple Mount to pray. One medieval Jew, Nachmanides, wrote shortly after making Aliyah to Eretz Yisrael around 1263, "But the loss of all this and of every other glory my eyes saw is compensated by having now the joy of being a day in thy courts, O Jerusalem, visiting the ruins of the Temple, and crying over the desolate sanctuary."

In modern times, many Jews travel to the Western Wall,

otherwise known as the Kotel, to pray and place a note to G-d inside the cracks of this ancient wall. According to Abraham Lincoln's secretary of state, William Seward, Jews were praying at the Western Wall well before the rise of modern Zionism.

For the original article, visit .

How to Be a Dad Who Turns Difficulties Into Blessings

How is fathering a child with special needs a "privilege"?

Rob is a veteran father of four whose oldest child has Down syndrome. Recently we were both in a group of dads, and Rob made a startling statement. He said that, despite all the physical, emotional and financial stresses, "If any of you ever get the privilege of having a Down syndrome child, it's the greatest gift to your family, because it creates the sensitivity and the awareness of others that kids just don't have. It was a real gift to us; it made all our kids more compassionate, more aware, more sensitive."

Did you catch that? Having a special-needs child made Rob and his entire family more perceptive about the needs of each other as well as people outside their family, and now they are more willing and able to jump in and help someone when they see an opportunity. They are better people because they were part of a family going through unusual circumstances.

Now, I know Rob made those comments with a bit of trepidation.

He doesn't wish difficulties on any other dads, and I wouldn't either.

On the other hand, who defines what is a difficulty and what is a benefit or blessing? Do we look just at our own convenience or our long-held hopes and dreams? Or should we try to see things more from a larger perspective—where life isn't about pursuing *happiness*, but rather making the world a little better for those around us?

And that goes for our kids too! Maybe the best condition for them to become mature and responsible isn't a life where everything works out great and there are no challenges. Maybe dealing with unexpected surprises and trials is the best way to grow. (And we know that meeting challenges also prepares us to help others to face those same challenges.)

In our family, one of my children experienced struggles in school and was found to have a mild learning disability. Not a major trial, but it set me back for a while. And it wasn't long before those more self-centered thoughts turned to love and concern for my child. My consuming thoughts were: *Hey, this is my time to step up. I have to be a father. I need to be there for my child!*

Ever since then, I keep growing in admiration and respect for dads who have special-needs children and step up to the challenge. If you have children with similar issues—like autism, Down syndrome, a life-threatening disease or something else—I know you're very familiar with this. It's often dads like you who set the mark and help us define what it means to be a committed dad. When the needs of your child required some extra sacrifices, you stepped up. You put your child's needs before your own, and you've never regretted it.

For the rest of us who face the routine rigors of being a dad but aren't facing the overwhelming exhaustion of raising a child with more pronounced disabilities, I would say: "Dad,

take a page from the playbook of the most committed dads you know. Make the radical decision to sacrifice your own desires and goals for the sake of your children.”

And then: “No matter what your children’s gifts, abilities and weaknesses may be, cherish them for who they are. Be flexible, and grow with them. Let them teach you what it means to be a committed father.”

Action Points for Dads on the Journey

- Coach your children through situations they perceive as trials. When they complain, help them see a different perspective, and challenge them to step up and meet the task head on.
- Remember that you set the tone for your family. Stay positive during challenges; inject hope and humor into your family life. Your wife and children will follow your lead.
- Be ready to adjust to your child’s unique situation and find new ways to interact with him or her. Maybe your child needs more physical affection or more verbal interaction. (Talk about the specifics with his or her mom.)
- If you’re married, continue to invest yourself fully in that relationship. Difficulties with a child so often lead couples to withdraw and eventually divorce. Get whatever help you need to maintain a strong marriage; it’s a huge benefit to your children.
- It’s critical to have other men who will support you through challenges—similar to the group I was in with Rob. Find another dad who’s been through your situation, and ask him lots of questions.

What about you, Dad? How have you become a better dad—or how has your family changed for the better—because of a trial or challenge you’ve been through? Please leave a comment below. You can encourage another dad who may be going through that

difficulty right now.

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For the original article, visit [.](#)

How to Deal With Struggles With Patience

We live in a world of instant gratification. We want it all, and we want it now. We're a nation of express lanes, fast food, high-speed Internet and smartphones.

Sure, there are benefits, but it's a problem when we impose those same expectations on people. We demand instant acceptance from our peers, instant response from our employees and instant help from our spouse, regardless of the circumstances. And when we don't get the immediate response we expect, we react negatively.

My type A personality and our demanding world have joined forces and resulted in one of my biggest struggles: being

patient. Being patient with circumstances and being patient with people is something I have to work hard at. Both my kids and my wife, Susan, are helping me with it.

My Kids Have Taught Me

My kids have taught me a lot of things, and I can tell you, it's a very humbling experience. One thing they've shown me over and over again is my lack of patience. For example, they've pointed out my impatience with the grocery store cashier during checkout, with the waitress at a restaurant and while hurriedly driving them to school.

You get the picture. It's kind of embarrassing to admit, but I was even impatient while in traffic today when my son Marky was with me. When my children point out my impatience or other faults, I can respond by being defensive and telling them to be quiet. Or I can listen and thank them for pointing it out to me and ask them to keep reminding me. I'm pleased to report I've been patiently doing the latter. Here's another lesson learned from my children on patience.

My Wife Has Taught Me

My wife also knows my struggle with patience. It was Oct. 11, 2010. Susan was sitting across the table from me in the conference room at a Family First leadership team meeting. I received a text from Susan during the meeting at 10:47 a.m. I know the exact time because I saved the text as a constant reminder. It simply said, "Patience, kindness." She saw how I was being short and cutting people off in the meeting and gave me a gentle nudge in the right direction.

The Choice

Patience is a choice. When you're patient, you choose to hold your tongue instead of releasing its venom. You choose to have a long fuse instead of a quick temper. Patience is choosing to control your emotions rather than letting your emotions

control you.

Do you struggle with being patient? What do you do about it?

Portions of this blog post came from Mark Merrill's book, All Pro Dad: Seven Essentials to Be a Hero to Your Kids.

Mark Merrill is the president of Family First. For the original article, visit .

4 Foolproof Tips for a Fun, Effective Workout

I wrote recently on the 4 Signs Your Workout Needs a Facelift. In brief summary, the signs are:

- 1. You're bored.** If your mind is wandering during your workout, it's a sure sign you need to crank up the intensity or switch fitness activities.
- 2. You talk too much.** If you can carry on conversation with the runner or lifter beside you, you're likely not challenging yourself well enough. And challenging workouts are what make us look fitter, feel stronger and become healthier all the way around.
- 3. You're sitting too much.** Seated exercises generally only target one muscle group at a time. Compound, multijoint exercises, such as squats and pull-ups, engage several muscle groups at once, thereby burning more calories and building

more muscle, all in much less time.

4. You're not getting stronger or looking fitter. A fitness plateau is a discouraging place to be. If you're not seeing improvements in your strength or your physique, it's time to make some changes to continue your journey upward!

Before I began implementing more advice, I was on the brink of throwing in my gym towel. I was bored, I was frustrated and my enthusiasm was running out faster than you could say "whey protein." The four forthcoming tips helped me renovate my workout, transforming it from dull and fruitless to fun and fulfilling. It's my belief that with a few tweaks, you too—regardless of whether you're a cantankerous couch potato or an on again/off again gym goer—can not only commit to, but genuinely enjoy exercise.

Tip No. 1: Keep It Simple

Late-night infomercials and a few highly caffeinated personal trainers may endorse "state-of-the-art" gadgets that claim to give you buns of steel and rock-hard abs by the Fourth of July, but the truth is, simple "old school" exercises leave BOSU-ball balancing acts and Shake Weight gesticulations in the dust.

Multijoint, compound movements that require just your body and some weights (when you're ready for them) are *classic* for a reason: They work! Exercises like squats, lunges, push-ups, pull-ups and—my favorite total-body movement—the burpee, activate multiple muscles simultaneously, which means you're burning more calories and building more muscles in less time.

Another wonderful perk of keeping it simple is that you can get a terrific workout in practically anywhere. Do push-ups and sit-ups with your kids during *American Idol*. Perform burpees while you wait for lunch to microwave. Install a pull-up bar in a doorway or in your garage and commit to practicing chin-ups three days a week. (You can even buy resistance bands

that assist you if you're unable to do a standard pull-up.) As you grow stronger, slowly adding exercise equipment like a barbell and a few dumbbells to your home gym will make the simple stuff just a bit more challenging.

Tip No. 2: Step Away From the Treadmill

Many people are quick to join a gym for the sole purpose of camping out on the cardio deck until the cows come home or the pounds fall off—whichever comes first. Yes, cardio does help you burn calories, but wouldn't you love it if your body burned calories even while you were reading this article? If you lift weights, then it can, thanks to a little thing called "excess post-exercise oxygen demand," or EPOC. The greater the EPOC effect, the higher your metabolism is increased and the more calories you burn hours after exercise.

Scientists have coined this recovery period "EPOC" to describe the time it takes for our body to return to its resting state and have identified those exercises that place the greatest recovery demands for this process to occur. Research has demonstrated that EPOC is the greatest as a result of resistance training and interval training. The prolonged elevation of the body's demands and increased metabolism after weight training can last up to three hours after your workout. Why spend another monotonous hour on the elliptical machine?

Tip No. 3: Get Your Sweat On!

I've spent enough time in the gym to know that making exercise a social event can be hugely beneficial and highly motivating. As a CrossFit coach, I celebrate this notion of community, of nurturing friendships and holding one another accountable to a consistently fit lifestyle. What's not okay is when the social aspect begins to overshadow the workout itself. Who can argue that it's not difficult to focus on correct form and proper breathing or give a 110-percent effort when you're chatting about last weekend's concert or tomorrow's beach day?

As I mentioned earlier, resistance and interval training garner fat-burning, muscle-building, calorie-blasting, long-lasting results. If you're working out at the intensity you should be, your heart rate should be elevated and you should be sweating and "feeling the burn." Completely transforming your body does not take a lot of time, but it does take a lot of effort.

If you'd like an example of what an all-out effort feels like, try this simple three-exercise sequence. Set a timer and perform the following as fast as you can, being sure to maintain proper form:

15 push-ups

10 lunges each leg

15 sit-ups

Repeat five times.

Tip No. 4: Accept a Challenge

If you plan to do the workout prescribed along with Tip #3, then you're already well on your way to jumpstarting your fitness because accepting challenges is a surefire way to prevent workout burnout.

T.S. Eliot famously said, "If you aren't in over your head, how do you know how tall you are?"

Feeling the exhilaration of learning a new skill, taking up a new sport you thought you were too old or out of shape for, running your first mile nonstop—these are victories won after we've taken a leap of faith, a plunge, if you will, into murky waters that threaten to rise above our heads. But when we tell fear and panic to disappear and summon our strength and courage, we will likely find that the water isn't so deep after all. Bidding farewell to the safe harbor of one's comfort zone is often the toughest part of a new adventure.

Whether it's embarking upon an entirely new fitness program—such as CrossFit, in my case—or making your way to the squat rack for the very first time, keep your ears and eyes open for new ways to challenge yourself both mentally and physically. Doing so will ensure that your routine doesn't become, well, routine. Remember: Variety is the spice of life—and of your fitness!

Stay fit and stay faithful.

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For the original article, visit [Creation House's Fit for Faith](#).

Chia: More Than Simply a Pet

Most of us know of chia from three decades of TV commercials about “the pottery that grows!” However, this humble little seed from Mexico and Guatemala has much more amazing potential for us to discover—so much that it now looks like 2013 will undoubtedly become known as the year we “rediscovered” chia. (If you count the original Chia Pet, then it's the year we “re-rediscovered” chia.)

Chia's fascinating story began thousands of years ago, when chia seeds were a daily staple in the diets of ancient Mayans and Aztecs. In fact, the word *chia* is derived from the Mayan language, meaning “strength,” and Aztec warriors relied on chia seeds to boost energy and increase stamina. Recently,

this tiny seed became a favorite of athletes, especially distance runners, who tout it as an endurance-enhancing superfood. Today, we are finding out there is so much more to chia's story.

Chia also provides your body with vitamins A, B, E and D and minerals such as calcium, copper, iron, magnesium, manganese, molybdenum, niacin, phosphorous, potassium, silicon, sodium, sulphur, thiamine and zinc. Chia seeds are also an amazing source of protein, and they help to modulate blood sugar, which is great news for diabetics.

Plus, if you're looking to boost your nutritional intake, look no further than the chia seed. Per gram, chia seeds contain:

- 8 times more omega-3 than salmon
- 6 times more calcium than milk
- 3 times more iron than spinach
- 15 times more magnesium than broccoli
- 2 times more fiber than bran flakes
- 6 times more protein than kidney beans
- 4 times more phosphorous than whole milk

Because chia seeds are so versatile, different types of chia seed products are now popping up everywhere—chia snacks, chia bars, chia drinks. Along with the ready-made products, chia is readily available in its raw form, which can be used in many ways. It can be made into pudding or used as an egg substitute for the vegan crowd. Or you can sprinkle it into your yogurt, oatmeal or smoothie. Some people simply add it to their water.

For those of you currently using flaxseed in your diet, you may want to consider switching to chia. With flaxseed, you have to grind it, then use it before it goes rancid. Chia is much easier to use (it doesn't need grinding and has a much longer shelf life), and its benefits are superior to flaxseed.

Oh, and just in case you were wondering, the new Ch-Ch-Ch-Chia Pet this year is Chia Hello Kitty.

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For the original article, visit [.](#)

UN Peacekeeping Force Along Golan Heights Verges on Collapse

Syrian rebels briefly seized control of a border crossing along the Israeli-controlled Golan Heights on Thursday, prompting the withdrawal of a major Austrian peacekeeping contingent and heightening fears in Israel that it could soon be dragged into the neighboring country's civil war.

From the Israeli side of the Golan, Syrian tanks and armored vehicles could be seen across the border. Large explosions could be heard throughout the day, and thick smoke and flames rose from the area. Israeli TV stations showed images of Israeli tourists flocking to the Golan to look across the frontier and gawk at the fighting.

Israeli troops along the border were on high alert, although the Israel Defense Forces said no special actions had been taken in response to the escalation.

By nightfall, the situation appeared to be quieting down. Deputy Defense Minister Danny Danon said forces remained on

high alert, but no special actions had been taken.

“We are following very carefully what’s happening in Syria,” Danon told *The Associated Press*. “We will do whatever is necessary to protect the interests of Israel.”

Israel fears that Islamic militants who have joined the rebel ranks in trying to oust Syrian President Bashar Assad will turn their guns toward Israel if they topple the Syrian leader. Islamic groups are believed to be active in the fighting in the Golan area. Israel has also expressed concerns that Assad’s sophisticated weapons could slip into the hands of hostile groups, including Assad’s ally, Hezbollah.

Israel has kept a wary eye on the fighting next door since the conflict erupted in March 2011, and in recent months has been bolstering its forces in the area and reinforcing a fence along the frontier.

The rebels overran the border position near the abandoned town of Quneitra early Thursday, holding their positions for several hours before Syrian government troops retook it. The international peacekeepers who maintain a 40-year-old truce receive most of their supplies through that position from Israel.

Fierce gun battles forced peacekeepers to seek shelter in a nearby base, and the Philippine military said one of its men serving in the force was wounded in the leg when a mortar or artillery shell struck the area. U.N. diplomats said an Indian peacekeeper also was wounded.

In Vienna, Austrian leaders defended the decision to leave, saying the country could no longer justify its troop presence.

“Freedom of movement in the area de facto no longer exists. The uncontrolled and immediate danger to Austrian soldiers has risen to an unacceptable level,” Austrian Chancellor Werner Faymann and his deputy Michael Spindelegger said in a

statement.

Austrian Defense Minister Gerhard Klug said he expected the withdrawal to be done within two to four weeks, but it is possible to complete it "within a few hours" if new violence threatened the soldiers' security.

"For the first time, it was not possible for the Syrian government to guarantee proper support of the U.N.," he said.

The decision dealt a heavy blow to the 911-member U.N. force, which includes the 377 Austrian peacekeepers as well as 341 from the Philippines and 193 from India. Croatia withdrew its contingent in March amid fears it would be targeted.

Israel and Syria agreed to the creation of the U.N. Disengagement Observer Force after the 1973 Yom Kippur War, during which Syria attacked Israel in a failed effort to retake the Golan, which Israel captured in the 1967 Six-Day War.

U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said the U.N. was urgently looking for troops to replace the Austrians and warned that any military activity in the zone separating Israeli and Syrian forces could jeopardize the long-held cease-fire.

In a statement, the U.N. Security Council strongly condemned the intense fighting in the area of separation, urged respect for the 1974 disengagement agreement and called on all parties to allow the peacekeepers to operate freely.

The Security Council will meet on Friday to discuss the Austrian withdrawal. British Ambassador Mark Lyall Grant, the council president this month, said peacekeeping officials were meeting with contributing countries to see whether any states would be willing to offer troops to replace the Austrians.

"We consider UNDOF to be an extremely important mission," Grant said. "We support it and we want it to continue."

Israel's Foreign Ministry said it regretted Austria's decision and expected the U.N. to uphold its commitment.

"While appreciating Austria's longtime contribution and commitment to peacekeeping in the Middle East, we nevertheless regret this decision and hope that it will not be conducive to further escalation in the region," the statement said.

Strategic Affairs, Intelligence and International Relations Minister Yuval Steinitz (Likud) also expressed regret at the Austrian withdrawal.

"Israel can trust only the Israel Defense Forces," he said.

Speaking on condition of anonymity under military protocol, IDF officials said several Syrians wounded in Thursday's fighting were brought into Israel for medical treatment. Others who entered Israel were returned through alternative sites. It was not clear whether the wounded were fighters or civilians.

The IDF officials said several errant shells landed in Israeli territory. Although no injuries were reported, the army restricted access to a main road running along the border for several hours and ordered farmers with fields in the area to remain indoors.

Nadav Katz, 65, of Kibbutz Merom Golan, situated near the crossing, said the area was covered with smoke and residents could hear gunfire and mortar shells exploding nearby.

"We are concerned that things might evolve into something much harsher that will affect us," said Katz. "We like the idea that for 40 years the area was peaceful and quiet. Tourists have been coming, fields have been cultivated and children were born."

Katz said he trusted the IDF to defend the area, but residents felt betrayed by the fleeing U.N. troops. More than anything,

though, he said people viewed the Syrian fighting as a terrible event.

“People are simply sad over the slaughter,” he said.

The IDF officials played down the significance of Thursday’s fighting, saying that Quneitra was important symbolically to Syria, given its history and location along a main route to Damascus. The town has been largely abandoned since the 1967 war, though the crossing is sometimes opened to allow Druze residents to export produce or cross into Syria to study or to marry their brethren.

Israeli officials say they have no interest in taking sides or becoming involved in the fighting.

But the IDF has intervened on several occasions, firing at targets inside Syria in response to shelling that landed on the Israeli side of the Golan.

In one such incident last month, Syrian troops targeted an Israeli jeep they said had crossed the cease-fire line into the Syria-controlled sector. Syria said it launched two missiles in self-defense, accusing Israel of violating the cease-fire deal.

In Washington, U.S. State Department spokeswoman Jen Paski said: “We’ve been very clear about our concerns over regional instability caused by the crisis in Syria. [Thursday’s fighting in Quneitra] is of course another example of that, and we continue to call upon all parties to avoid any action that would jeopardize the long-held cease-fire between Israel and Syria.”

Western countries have shown little appetite for being sucked into the Syrian conflict, but there is also a clear aversion to letting Assad, heavily backed by Shiite Iran and its Hezbollah ally, emerge victorious.

Moshe Maoz, a Syria expert at the Hebrew University, played down Thursday's incident. He called it a small victory for the Syrian military and said little would change even if the rebels gained control of the crossing.

"It's symbolic, but neither al-Qaeda nor the mainstream groups are going to shoot at Israel because they know Israel will retaliate very heavily," he said.

For the original article, visit .

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10 Ways to Really Love Your Child

My own children are grown now. I did a lot of things wrong, but here are 10 practical love-in-action things I did right for you to consider. Remember, love is what love *does*.

1. Lead Your Children in Family Devotions

Three or four days a week during the school year, we had a 15-minute family devotion. I usually started with a life situation—something in the neighborhood, from the newspaper or a school situation. Then I read a Scripture passage that applied. We finished with each of us saying a short prayer. To make the prayers more than "Let us have a good day," we also prayed for someone in need each time.

2. Establish Work Boundaries

To make family my priority, I set up some rules: Leave work no later than 6:00 p.m., don't take work home and don't work weekends. During my evening commute, I'd let my mind process what I'd been doing during the workday—until I drove over a creek about a mile from our home. Then I would put everything into a mental briefcase and toss it into the creek. That gave me a couple of minutes to prepare to greet my family.

If you want to lead a balanced life, decide how many hours you want to work, and stick to your guns. Put work appointments on your calendar in pencil, but put your family commitments in pen. Love is time, and time is love.

3. Make Your Family Your No. 1 Ministry

A tornado ripped through our church building. The call went out for volunteers to help clean up on Saturday. But my son had a game that day, and I thought the game was a higher priority. On Sunday the volunteers were asked to stand and be thanked publicly. I briefly felt guilt and shame for not having been there with them.

Without intending to do so, churches can put pressure on you to serve others to the neglect of your own family. What's your response going to be? No one else cares about your family like you do. No one else can, or should, take responsibility to disciple your family. That one's on you. You have to set boundaries. Your most important small group and ministry is your family. Until you get this right, you really shouldn't be doing ministry anywhere else.

4. Spend Time With and Date Your Children

When our kids were young, we played board games after dinner. I endured endless, mind-numbing repetitions of Candy Land and Chutes and Ladders—games that require the IQ of a goldfish. I drove our kids to school during the week and stayed home with them every Saturday morning while Patsy ran errands. I cherished this time with them. Once they became teenagers, I

started taking one child out every Tuesday for a dinner date and something fun, like ice cream, go-carts or the mall. Looking back, those were the best, and almost only, one-on-one times we had. If you're not intentional about this, a whole year can go by without you sharing a single deep conversation with your kids.

5. Pray For and Encourage Your Children With Words Every Day

I realized that my wife and I were probably the only ones who would intentionally be praying for our kids every day. So I made up a list of things to pray over: their salvation, growth, integrity, work ethic, protection, future mates and so on. I don't think it's a coincidence that all the specifics we prayed for are today a reality.

I also made it a goal to tell each of my children daily, "I love you, and I'm proud of you"—words I didn't hear growing up, which still affects me today. There's biblical precedent for this: At both the baptism of Jesus and the transfiguration, God spoke and said, "You are my dearly loved Son, and you bring me great joy." In other words, "I love you, and I'm proud of you."

6. Pay Your Children to Read the Bible

Nothing has more potential to transform our children into faithful followers of Jesus than reading God's Word. But it probably won't happen by itself.

Patsy and I had an unconventional idea about this. When our kids were about 12 and 9, we decided to pay them to read the Bible. We told them, "If you will read five minutes a day for 25 or more days in a month, we'll give you the money to buy whatever CD you want." I thought I detected a yawn.

Then we added, "And if you read 25 days for 10 out of 12 months, we will pay you \$250." Suddenly their eyes lit up!

Finally we said, "But if you read 25 days or more a month for all twelve months, we will double that and pay you \$500." That really got their attention! Our kids made monthly calendars, taped them to their mirrors, and made an X through each day they read. We put them on the honor system and even gave them the ability to make up missed days.

Was that bribery? I don't know. But our kids always did their daily devotions, and they both love Jesus. Paying our kids to read the Bible was the single best thing we ever did for our children's faith.

Be careful to focus on shaping their hearts and not controlling their behavior. It worked for us because we raised our children in a grace-based home rather than a performance-based home. Don't let it become legalistic.

7. Attend as Many of Your Children's Activities as Possible

Perhaps because of my own experience with my parents not attending my games, I decided from the start that I would never miss a recital or a game. And I never did. Fortunately, my work allowed that flexibility. One of my greatest joys came the day my son said, "Dad, I don't know what I want to do, but whatever it is, I want a career that lets me attend my kids' games like you attended mine."

8. Eat Dinner Together

The dinner table can be the medium that allows families to transfer spiritual and moral values from one generation to the next. So we made eating dinner together a priority. We worked around school activities and didn't answer the phone during dinner. That's not likely to happen every night without fail, but at least don't make choices that preclude it.

9. Expose Your Children to Ministry

We participated as a family in many of the ministry

opportunities offered by our church. In fact, we selected ministries precisely because we *could* include our children, such as housing visiting missionaries and delivering Thanksgiving meals. When they were older, our kids went without us to youth camps and on mission trips, which helped them build confidence in their own faith.

10. Make Your Children Responsible to Attend Church

Just as it's foolish to let your kids skip school, it's foolish to let them skip church. When kids are young, they will freely go to church if you go. Once our kids were teens, though, we experienced resistance. They were "too tired to go to church" after being out on Saturday night. So rather than do battle every Sunday morning, we transferred responsibility for attending church to them. If they were too tired to attend church, they could sleep in and skip church, but then the following Saturday night, they needed to stay home so they wouldn't be so tired. Guess how many times that happened again?

You Hold an Awesome Power

Right now, your kids desperately need to know that someone loves them as they are. They yearn for someone who will overlook their faults, forgive their sins and love them without reserve. They hunger for someone who delights in and believes in them. They thirst for someone who thinks they're great—who thinks the best of their motives. Whether they can articulate it or not, they long for someone who will make them feel safe.

You Are God's Designated Solution

Are you willing to make the first move ... and keep on making it?

Challenge yourself to risk everything to be a vessel of God's love. It will transform your relationships, starting at home.

Use the love word indiscriminately, even recklessly. Ask God to empower you to be uninhibited in love. Jesus proved it's true: There's nothing more powerful in this world than a man who will love without reservation.

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What's the Big Deal About the Land of Israel?

God's plan was not only to get the children of Israel out of Egypt, but also to plant them in their Promised Land.

Following their deliverance through the Red Sea, Moses and the children of Israel sang to the Lord:

"You will bring them in and plant them in the mountain of Your inheritance, in the place, O Lord, which You have made" (Ex. 15:17).

And once He planted them in their land, God's perfect will was that His people never leave: "Moreover I will appoint a place for My people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own and move no more" (2 Sam. 7:10; see

also Amos 9:15).

Their eventual replanting in the land is not a side interest, but at the very heart of God's purposes: "I will assuredly plant them in this land, with all My heart and with all My soul" (Jer. 32:41).

Just as God's whole heart is devoted to Israel's planting in the land, eventually their whole hearts will turn back to Him: "For I will set My eyes on them for good, and I will bring them back to this land; I will build them and not pull them down, and I will plant them and not pluck them up. 'Then I will give them a heart to know Me, that I am the Lord; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God, for they shall return to Me with their whole heart'" (Jer. 24:6-7).

By the way, what is this territory called in the New Testament? The land of Israel. (See Matthew 2:19-20.)

I'd love to hear your perspective. Drop me a line.

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For the original article, visit .

10 Practical Ways to Battle Sexual Temptation

Infidelity is a big cause for divorce in the United States. The causes for infidelity are varied and not just confined to

sexual lust, but certainly lust is the starting point in most cases that later lead to adulterous sex.

This is the great conundrum of life for many men. Our DNA is pre-loaded with the strong instinct to feel attraction and desire, yet life and morality demand that we are able to control those instincts in proper balance. So how do we do that?

For the sake of our marriages, relationships or just spiritual well-being, we need to be able to find the answer. You are in a battle against sexual lust. Here is how you win:

1. Consistent prayer. Prayer is the act of communicating your thoughts, worries, hopes and dreams to God. Lift up the desires you are feeling and ask for help. God made you and knows you and can deliver you time and time again. Here are 10 Things to Pray for in Your Marriage.

2. Avoid pornography. Besides the obvious reason—that avoiding porn will help guard against lust—there are psychological reasons as well. Porn creates unrealistic expectations and desensitizes our minds toward our spouses. They can't possibly live up to what is viewed, and would we even want them to? This pushes the focus of your sexual desires outside of the home and can only lead to paths of destruction. Here are 10 Ways to Fight Pornography.

3. Use social media with caution. The benefits of the age of social networks are many. The pitfalls are equally as great. We are reunited with people from our past and introduced to those who are new. Old sparks can be renewed or new ones can be lit. For a married man, this can be extremely perilous. Always remain alert to true intentions when using social media. Here are 10 Marital Principles for Social Media.

4. Consider the consequences. Fear is a great protector. While pondering the object of your desire, also ponder the consequences of action. Do you want to wind up in couples

therapy? Could your lust lead to an STD or even an addiction? If you think of these things while your desires are at their peak, you will find them quickly receding to normal levels.

5. Question your intent. Most times when our minds wander sexually, we aren't really seeking pure sex. We are seeking to replace something missing in our lives and our relationships. For each man, these things will be specific to his experiences. Figure out the root issue and work to correct it.

6. Practice sexual intimacy. Do you remember falling in love and the feeling that nobody in the world existed except the person you loved? The reason for that is the high level of intimacy that was shared while you were getting to know each other. While there is no reset button to start the marital relationship over, there are certainly plenty of ways to regain that level of intimacy. Improving communication, date nights, passionate kissing and thoughtful gestures are just a few examples. When our minds and hearts are occupied in the right place, sexual lust has little room to operate.

7. Avoid tempting situations. The last thing you want to do is find yourself alone with the object of your lustful desires. If contact with that person is a must, then make sure it is always in a public space and others are around. Do not paint yourself into a corner where further action is possible.

8. Choose your friends wisely. When battling lust, there are plenty of people we can find who will enable that to grow even more powerful. As men, we all have friends who are single and living that lifestyle, who are married but cheating, or who are just drawn to trouble. You can still be their friend, but by all means avoid joining them in their choices.

9. Keep high standards. To be a gentleman is a choice—a very good choice, and this world today needs a great many more. Despite the vast amount of temptations life throws our way, we should hold ourselves to the highest of moral standards. Self-

discipline in all areas of life leads to positive results.

10. Harness your passion. In most cases, overwhelming sexual lust is really just a desire to release the deep passion inside of you that has nothing to do with sex. Instead, direct that passion in positive directions. Volunteer at a homeless shelter. Coach a youth sports team. Mentor troubled individuals. The satisfaction that comes from building and creating will defeat the destruction that comes from succumbing to the path of sexual lust and desire.

All Pro Dad is Family First's innovative and unique program for every father. Their aim is to interlock the hearts of the fathers with their children and, as a byproduct, the hearts of the children with their dads. At , dads in any stage of fatherhood can find helpful resources to aid in their parenting. Resources include daily emails, blogs, Top 10 lists, articles, printable tools, videos and eBooks. From , fathers can join the highly engaged All Pro Dad social media communities on **Facebook**, **Twitter**, **YouTube** and **Instagram**.

Are You Too Comfortable in Your Own Skin?

God has been speaking to my heart the last couple of days on this topic: Are we comfortable? Brothers, we should *never* be comfortable!

We have a tendency to become deeply involved in ourselves and our problems, and we forget about others around us. I have said this often: "This life is not about me."

Jesus certainly did not make His life about Himself and, if we are to become more Christlike, we need to not be self-centered, self-exalting or wrapped up in self issues. Also, when we get comfortable in our relationships with our brothers, we have a tendency to become very close to one or two brothers and hang out with those brothers on a regular basis. But we forget about the others. We should be aware of others and their issues, feelings and fears.

Pay attention, guys! If you know a brother who is going through a loss, struggling with an addiction, suffering through a divorce, etc., try and reach out to him on a regular basis. Let him know you care.

Here is another area where we become comfortable: We have a tendency to migrate together at events and church services, always sitting with the same group. This makes us seem like we are in a clique, and others do not feel comfortable approaching us.

Try sitting around different people. My wife and I tried this recently at church. I really think I liked it, although she is more of a creature of habit and was a bit uncomfortable.

But you know what? Christianity is not about comfort. Here is a challenge: Step out of your comfort zone and seek to be uncomfortable. Call a brother you have not had much contact with and invite him for coffee. Try sitting in a different location at church if you always sit with the same group. Go out of your way at church or an event to introduce yourself to someone you do not know and watch what happens. Serve God. Yes, I said serve!

Find someplace to serve in the church or community, maybe feeding the homeless, serving in the youth ministry, visiting a convalescent home or helping a neighbor with a chore. Get up and get moving! We can pay lip service all we want about being a Christian, but we must show it as well.

Live it, dream it, be it! Stay strong and stand firm!

“For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.” –Galatians 5:13, NKJV