

Being Intentional for God Takes More Than Cheap Words

Best-selling author and speaker Tommy Newberry has joined business leader and entrepreneur Curt Beavers to write *I Call Shotgun*, a strategic playbook for men who want to become loving and effective fathers to sons. By preparing dads to confidently pass down a legacy of values and ideals, *I Call Shotgun* equips men to have long-lasting and deeply influential relationships with their sons.

The following is an excerpt from *I Call Shotgun*, a compilation of letters between select fathers and sons:

Zach,

Some dads say that their families are important, but then spend very little time with them. Some wives say their husbands are really important, but then spend very little time taking care of their marriages. Many teenagers say college opportunities are critical, but then spend very little time studying. Some people say that their health is a big priority, but then spend very little time exercising their bodies. Many people also say their relationship with God is the most important thing in their lives, but then spend very little time growing that relationship.

Talk is cheap, Zach.

Life is a battle of priorities. We can figure out what is truly important to people by observing how they use their time. It is not what people say or intend to do that reveals their priorities; it is only what they actually do that demonstrates where their hearts are. When it comes to priorities, it is hard to argue that anything else is more important than your faith, right?

But it is not enough to merely have good intentions. If you're going to "seek first the kingdom of God," as we're taught in Matthew 6:33 (nkjv), then doesn't it makes good sense to schedule at least a little time with your Creator first thing in the morning? When your first interaction of the day is with your heavenly Father, your day is established upon the rock of his truth. If there is a more compelling reason to wake up a little early, I don't know what it is.

One of the most life-shaping habits you can develop is waking up early enough to invest time with your Creator before you get fully engaged in your day. This seems like a pretty easy thing to do, but it is actually rather rare. I know the idea of getting up even earlier than you already do is not all that appealing right now, but it really doesn't get any easier as you get older; now is the time to establish the habit. It might be as little as ten or fifteen minutes, but it makes a huge difference. Connect with the Lord before you get busy with the school stuff and before you have tossed your attention to the various other activities and obligations of the day.

The early-morning hours are ideally suited for prayer, Bible study, and personal thinking time. Even though you may be a bit groggy, your mind is clear, relaxed, and receptive to insight and inspiration. In just a few minutes, maybe right before or after you take your shower, be still and remind yourself that God is in control. Read the Bible for a few minutes. Complete a devotional passage. Pray for the day and for your life and for all those you love and also those difficult people in your life. Contemplate the size and scope of God. Remind yourself that any problem is small when compared to your heavenly Father. Thank God for what he is doing in your life and thank him for being with you everywhere you go, from classes to practices to parties and everywhere in between.

Take time every single day to surrender and open every

corner of your life to him. There is no better example of living on purpose and putting first things first than making this morning time with God a nonnegotiable daily priority. You'll often be tempted to skip this time, but discipline yourself to put first things first. After all, what other activity could you claim to be more important?

You will never know how different your day might have been had you skipped this most valuable time together. Since he created you and the universe, why not let him help you create your day? Investing this time first thing in the morning is a single discipline, but it carries with it multiple rewards including insight, strength, wisdom, and peace of mind.

Additionally, you'll move on with the rest of your day with the confident assurance that you have, for today, sought first the kingdom of God. Think about it.

Love,

Dad