

How Dads Should Build Leaders

Do you consider yourself a leader, dad?

You may or may not be in a leadership position in your career, and you may or may not be naturally wired that way. But I believe you are leader if you're a father. It's a leadership position, for sure.

I want to help equip you for that, with help from my close friend Wayne Gordon, pastor at the Lawndale Community Church in Chicago. What has happened in that neighborhood under Wayne's leadership has been called a miracle: A blighted community has been transformed into a place of progress, purpose and hope. I had the privilege of serving there with Wayne for five years during the 90s.

Wayne's book, *Real Hope in Chicago*, talks about the principles that helped to transform this community. His insights on leadership are especially valuable, and I wouldn't be doing my job if I didn't pass them on to you—with my own added emphasis on fatherhood. After all, fatherhood is about leading today and raising up leaders for tomorrow.

1. See 15 years into the future. The little children you see today—or even the teenager—will grow and mature. Even if things seem difficult right now, don't give up! Your investments in your children's lives will make a difference, even if you can't see it for weeks, months or even years.

2. Make them feel important. That's how gang leaders build closeness and loyalty, and it works even better in families. When your child knows that he is precious to you and has a contribution to make in your household, he develops the confidence to develop into a leader.

3. Don't go anywhere alone. Future leaders need to get out in the world, experience life and become familiar with its

problems and mysteries. And they need to see how dad handles those issues. So include a child when you go to the hardware store, to the weekend softball game or to the church service project—and sometimes, if you can, even the out-of-town business trip. That's how you share your life with your children, strengthen your relationships and give them a vision for the world.

4. Be accessible. Our children need to know that they are among our top priorities, and one way we communicate that is by being available—even when it's not convenient for us. When a child knows they can get your full attention in a time of need, suddenly they gain a confidence to reach beyond themselves.

5. Expose them to other role models. Give your kids opportunities to learn from gifted youth leaders, caring coaches and teachers, and other positive influencers. As we're sharing the best of ourselves, we also need to share others with our children.

6. Let them fail. It's hard to stand by and watch your child fall short of a goal. But that's often when the most growth occurs. At times, we may need to take a few steps back to allow our kids to move forward through the process of making mistakes and learning from them.

7. Love, love, love. Love is empowering for a child; it gives confidence and security so she can try new things or recover when something has gone wrong. And I know you already know this, but dads, our love needs to be expressed in actions and in words.

Dads, it's inevitable that our children will grow up and eventually be out on their own. Let's make sure we're equipping them to be responsible leaders who really make a difference.

Dad—please share your thoughts: What leadership principles

have you seen at work in your fathering? You can join the conversation either below or on our Facebook page.

Action Points for Dads on the Journey

- Tell your children your heartfelt dreams for each of them.
- Include at least one of your children when you run errands around town and, if you can, take one on an occasional out-of-town business trip.
- Talk to your children about a coach, boss or other leader who has been influential in your life. Share about what made him such a great leader.
- Give your child opportunities to make some decisions as he becomes more responsible and refines his leadership skills.

Carey Casey is the CEO of the National Center for Fathering, a nonprofit organization dedicated to changing the culture of fathering in America by enlisting 6.5 million fathers to make the Championship Fathering Commitment.

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