

Dad's Best Present: Sons Who Are Godly Leaders

Rex Jones knows a thing or two about raising sons—he's got three of them—and he's trained them to make an impact on the world for Christ.

The Jones boys—Barrett, 22; Harrison, 20; and Walker, 18—are all talented football players. Barrett, a graduate student in accounting, is an NCAA unanimous all-American lineman for the University of Alabama who, in the past year, has won both the Wuerffel Award for combining exemplary community service with athletic and academic achievement and the Outland Trophy for being the best college football interior lineman. Harrison is an upcoming junior at Alabama and plays as a tight end for the Crimson Tide. Walker, a rising senior at Evangelical Christian School in Cordova, Tenn., is on his high school football team and plans to play college football like his brothers.

Early in their marriage, Jones, director of advancement at Evangelical Christian School, and his wife, Leslie, decided to be "intentional" in their style of parenting and raise their sons with a clear focus on Christ. They wanted "to teach and train these kids to be a resource to the world," Rex said.

"The world needs Christian men leaders," he continued. "I don't know that they'll be pastors or missionaries, but ... the world needs good Christian lawyers and doctors and dentists and people who are in professions that can influence people."

The Jones boys have accepted their father's challenge. Barrett has led three mission trips during his spring breaks from college; two of them included his entire family. The Joneses returned from a week-long mission trip to Nicaragua in March.

During that trip, Jones encouraged Barrett to take the leadership role for the team of about 30. He urged all three

of his sons to disciple their friends on the trip.

Barrett understands the value of participating in missions and the importance of encouraging others to get involved.

“Missions is something that’s extremely important to the Christian community because God is so much bigger than just America—He’s a global God,” he said.

“We can only [reach] so many people,” Jones said. “But if we train other people to [reach] people, then it becomes exponential.”

Jones also sees the family’s mission trips as a time to expand the vision for missions. He challenges participants “not only to experience serving on these mission trips, but to have a goal in their lifetime ... to be able to do the same thing with their families.”

His hope is that each of the 30 people on the trip will go on a future mission trip and take 30 of their friends.

“That would be 900 people around the world that God could use to make a difference, and that’s our goal.”

Barrett, Harrison and Walker each use football to share Christ’s love with their teammates and the spectators.

“Obviously sports are for fun—that’s why I do them—but also you can have a great influence on others,” Walker said. “As we’ve seen with Barrett, really it’s given him a pedestal to be able to share the gospel and share his faith, and that allows people to watch him more closely. I believe that if you take that opportunity and you make the most of it, then that can really change people for Christ.”

Jones says despite Barrett’s fame, the Jones family keeps him grounded.

“He has two brothers and a mom and a dad who work really hard

to keep him humble, and we have fun doing that,” Jones said with a smile. “... it’s a great love that we have for each other. I challenge him to maximize his time to be able to use it wisely to do what God is wanting him to do.”

The Jones brothers are appreciative of their father’s leadership, character and influence as a Christian role model in their lives.

“He’s a picture of Christ for me,” Harrison said. “He’s taught me everything that I think I want to teach my kids one day.”

Laura Fielding *is a writer for IMB.*