

RESPONDING TO A CHILD'S HEART

Dad, when there's a chance to connect with your kids, you've got to take advantage of it.

We have been entrusted with a precious commodity – the hearts of our children. Let's look at two different fathers and how they handled their opportunities with their children.

First is a story from a divorce situation. The father had unlimited visitation with his two kids, and the kids called him often. The dad made plans to work with his daughter on her project for the science fair, but he never showed up. She called to leave messages for him but there was no response.

The real heartbreaker came weeks later, when the children found that their dad had come into town to get some things, but he hadn't even tried to contact them. Their mother was doing her best not to portray him as a bad man, but there are no good answers when her daughter looks at her and says, "Dad abandoned us."

The second story comes from a daycare worker, and is much more redeeming. On the day that little Jordan turned six; his father had the day off. At this daycare, they apparently do birthdays up big, and the kids go nuts looking forward their parties. The plan was that Jordan's father would take him out for breakfast, then pick up the treats and drop Jordan off at the daycare for his birthday party, then go home.

But when Jordan's dad dropped him off at the daycare, he gave Jordan another option. He could stay for his party or the two of them could hang out together for the day. Now, you'd expect any six-year-old would choose to stay for his own birthday party. But Jordan picked his dad. The two of them didn't even have anything exciting planned – just a day at home.

The daycare worker writes, "I wish you could have seen the sparkle in Jordan's eyes when he came in to drop off his birthday treats, and then turned around to go home with his dad."

In my mind, I could see that dad playing games in the home, watching some TV, maybe eating a burger, coke and fries for lunch and just goofing around. You see what kids want from us is our *TIME*. The old divorce father comment, "When I am with my kid those two weekends a month, I buy him his favorite toy, go eat at the favorite burger joint and just cram in all the activities I can.... and I tell them what they really want is your *TIME*. *It is not* another trip to McDonalds." I am glad he got a toy (he probably didn't need; I call a "guilt toy") and they stayed very busy doing things. Dads, Kids want US not more things. They want our love, the intimacy between parent and child and that is more difficult than it seems. On

another note, so do our wives. You see if can't talk to our wives and express intimacy there, you may be fooling yourself about the intimacy with your kid. When we learn to have intimacy with our Heavenly Father, it will become easier and more comfortable to share ourselves with our wives and children. And you know something; we might cut the divorce rate because one of the major reasons stated for divorce is poor communication. Hum?

Men, please recognize the place you hold in your child's heart – whether you're a single dad, a married dad, a step dad, or an adopted dad. Don't miss your opportunities to respond positively to that opening in your child's heart. Don't let fear, a job or busy activities take the place of one of your top priorities in life... being a great father. In all things listen, listen and love, love.