

Notes To Dad

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Dads Children, and The Meaning of The Holidays

Here is a question for you fathers reading this article: "How do you help your children celebrate and focus on the meaning of the holidays?"

What is your answer?

Is it, "Well, I . . . I . . . I, that's their mother's job!"

A father's job is more than

working hard to provide the money to buy gifts and the food that is on the table. Don't take me wrong, that is a very important job. However, it is not the only responsibility fathers have in helping their children understand the meaning of various celebrations at this time of the year. Think of Bob Cratchit in A Christmas Carol by Charles Dickens. His income was

meager, yet he instilled in his children the value that Christmas was a time to celebrate family and what they meant to one another. He did this by demonstrating his love for them through affection, tenderness, and caring.

I asked several dads how they helped their children focus on the meaning of the holidays. Here is how they answered:

Many fathers work on service projects together with their children. Some help their children collect items for relief boxes being sent to third world countries, while others assemble and deliver fruit baskets to the elderly and shut-ins.

As they work with their families they discuss the importance of being thankful for their bounty. It is important to be physically present and available to the children. Take time to answer questions that

arise, questions that challenge the mind and the heart. For example, "Why is it wrong to tell a lie?" or "Why is it important for me to say I am sorry for hurting my brother's feelings?"

Visiting with grandparents and extended family members is another popular aspect of the holidays among fathers. This imparts to children the significance of maintaining a connection with family members.

Making gifts or baking special "goodies" with children, to give to family, friends and neighbors has a special part in one father's celebration.

Another dad enjoys decorating the family Christmas tree. He told me it was an opportunity to reminisce about the past. Over the years special ornaments have been accumulated, and as these are placed on the tree, the story is told about the meaning of that particular decoration. This tradition helps to bridge the past with the present to give the family a sense of continuity.

One dad shared that helping to set the tone and atmosphere of happenings within the home was an important job. His presence and guidance provide the leadership to help keep his family on track. He

does not view his job as, "Kicking back and going with the flow."

All of the fathers agreed an important part of sharing the meaning of the holiday is to teach children the spiritual or religious significance of the season. All of the dads interviewed attend special church services with their families and read one of the biblical accounts of Jesus' birth in Bethlehem during the Christmas season.

One dad describes lighting the candles on an Advent Wreath to help his children prepare for the arrival of Christmas Day. Another holiday tradition in his home is to bake a birthday cake for Jesus and have his daughters frost and decorate it. On Christmas morning they light the candles and sing "Happy Birthday."

All the dads interviewed felt they did not contribute significantly to teaching the meaning of the holidays to their children. Yet, their answers reflect fathers who are making a major impact on what their children believe is important in their families' celebration. Therefore, dad, your presence and involvement with the family during the holidays are worth more than the presents and the food your hard work affords.

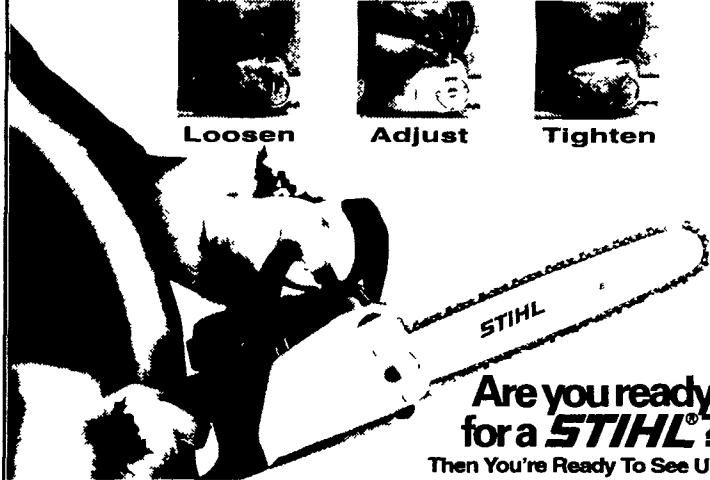
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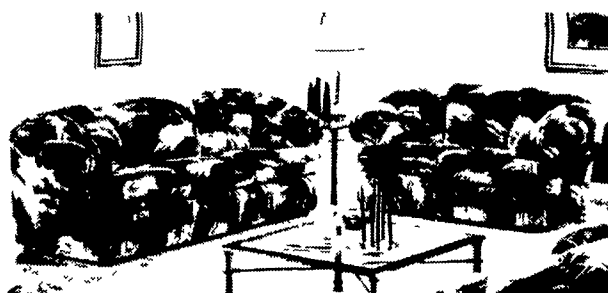
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