

Valentines 2010

The sentiment 'It is more blessed to give than to receive' is realized when we freely express love and truth to our family and friends¹. Let's be **intentional**, and take the time to **convey a sincere, concise, heartfelt message to a parent, parents, or other immediate family member**.

The Challenge

Those of you willing to accept the challenge, some structure, examples, and resources are provided below. You may be wondering, "What should I say? How should I say it?" The right answer is going to come from your humble and thoughtful consideration, but some ideas, examples, structure and resources are provided below.

I encourage each one of us to spend some time thinking about our relationship with our parents/immediate family and consider if and how we can grow the relationship even more. You may have some very real and tough issues between you and your family or may not have both of your parents in your life at all. Dealing with these struggles is something that takes time, consideration, patience, and very tough decisions. No matter what you choose to do, I encourage you to reflect on how you can enhance your relationship with your parents and immediate family.

Specific Challenges

1. Take responsibility for trajectory of the relationship: Intentionally take the initiative to reach out.
2. Speak truth into his/her life:
 - a. I admire X about you; you have X noble characteristics.
 - b. You impacted me in X way; I am grateful and model my life after your example.
3. Humble ourselves: "I realize I didn't treat you well, I ask for your forgiveness."
4. Reconciliation: "You hurt me when X, I forgive you."

Love Boldly: Did you do it?

Join us at the post-party for free food and a chance to hang out with others who took the leap to love a family member out loud this Valentine's Day. There will be a chance to swap stories (for those who feel inspired to share), and we'll be sure to have you well-fed and out early enough so you can get on with the rest of your Friday night festivities.

RSVP and details: <http://www.pingg.com/rsvp/3g8wny38zx37w6jwc>

Approach: The Greatest of these is Love²

Hope, Forgiveness and Motivation – *I wish I Knew You Better* (attached).

HOPE. You may have been burned and burned again, you may not want to show love or try again, your anger may be completely justified, but what if there's a chance *things could be the way we used to dream?* Selfless love from a humble heart tears down many walls.³

FORGIVENESS. The evil of bitterness and resentment slowly tears us apart and turn us into cynics. Unresolved issues prevent us from seeing the good

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Don't Wait

*Before It Is Too Late
If you've a tender message
Or a loving word to say
Don't wait 'til you forget it
But whisper it today.*

*We live but in the present,
The future is unknown
Tomorrow is a mystery,
Today is all our own.*

*The tender words unspoken
The letters never sent
The long forgotten messages
The wealth of love unspent.*

*For these some hearts are breaking
For these some loved ones wait
So show them that you care for them
Before it is too late.*

¹ Acts 20:35

² 1 Corinthians 13:13

³ Psalms 130:7; Isaiah 29:19; Jeremiah 17:7

in others (there's at least a little there, promise). Try to see hurtful actions from their perspective – let's ask ourselves, "Why would a reasonable, rational, decent person do this?" [See Resources]⁴

MOTIVATION. "Why should I rock the boat?" "What if it hurts?" "What if it doesn't turn out like I want?" "I'm scared." "I'm comfortable with the way things are – they aren't great, but I know how to handle the current pain/lack of meaningfulness." If the relationship isn't growing, it's deteriorating. Yes, all relationships require intentional effort. Yes, love is risky. Yes, we want to avoid pain. However, **only with the risk of hurt comes deep joy.**⁵

Many parents rarely hear that they are "good enough", that they are "great" from their child's heart, or that they are still loved despite their mistakes. Some parents live wondering, doubting and living with guilt that they have messed up their child's life – *how much do you have to hate your parents to push off sharing the truth with him/them?*

Ideas: What could I do?

Consider taking care of relationships with the men in your family first. In general, I believe that most men will do the most noble, loving and courageous things to positively impact the family when he knows that he is unconditionally supported by each and every person in the family! Likewise, women tend to respond to positive encouragement, love, and appreciation. Many mothers have a tendency to be self-critical; be sure to nourish your affections for your mothers as you do with your other close friends.

Questions to Ask Yourself

What can you do or say that will speak directly into a core area, passion, fear or need in his life?

- What qualities do you admire about him/them that you've never clearly told him/them?
- What were some of your favorite things to do together when you were growing up? Can you do them now?
- Where was he/them when he/they seemed to be full of life, passion and excitement?
- Does he/they love a hug? A walk? A run? Your undivided attention for a couple hours?
- When have you seen him/them laugh the most?
- What food or drink does he/they love, but is really hard to find?
- How could you bring about or relive a cherished memory? (e.g. Make a sandwich just like that deli down the street that you went to every Wednesday night until they closed 15 years ago)
- What does he/they collect?

Framing a Letter

- Tell the details of a time when your father/parents demonstrated noble characteristics.
- Tell of times you enjoyed, the joy it brought and the fond memories you cherish.
- Share stories to affirm that he/they still has/have those admirable characteristics.
- Focus on the positive and good times, but be truthful and honest; don't say anything misleading.
- Share a hurt, then - that you love him/them, that you've forgiven him/them completely, that want to put it behind you and that you want work together through the remaining issues.

Tangible Ideas to Spark Creativity

Whatever you choose to do, choose something that costs you heart, emotion, time and energy (because your money isn't good here). Consider those cherished, loving actions other have done for you and do that for him/them.

⁴ Ephesians 4:26-27;

⁵ Psalm 84:11; Psalm 55:22

Focus on the message and keep it simple and personalized (express your love, how thankful you are, how they've impacted your life, provide unconditional love).

- Flowers (reply to the email and ordering and payment will be taken care of)
- Post-card (reply to the email and the short message will get out)
- Hand-written letter (great for those less-intimate relationships)
- Phone call
- In-person visit/time
- Pictures: booklet, simple scrapbook, framing a collage of pictures
- Things you made when you were in elementary school⁶
- A Jar of Messages: small note cards of things you love about them, words that remind you of them, poems, inspiration quotes, etc.
- Baked Goods: wrapped with ingredients - "made with 100% appreciation"
- Coupon Book of love gestures: "Mom/Dad's Night out"; car wash; homemade dinner
- "20 Reasons Why You are Awesome" note card flipbook
- Memory Box

You Don't Understand My Situation

You're right. I have no clue about your situation or experiences, nor do I claim to know the answer. I'm just like a beggar who has just been given some food (joy) and has brought back the little I have to share with my friends.

There are lots of valid excuses, but there are more compelling reasons to reconnect - because restoring the relationship is *good, right* and supremely *beautiful* (characteristics of Christ).

- I have a poor relationship with my parent(s)
 - Read of Stephanie who changed her relationship with her mom after asking herself, "Do I wish I knew my mom better?" (also see: The Pianist - this brother and sister are getting on the train to their concentration camp to never see each other again)⁷
- My parents aren't together anymore or are no longer alive
 - Complete healing is available and possible (through Christ)

Examples

Integrity: The Journey⁸

My father didn't have a good relationship with his dad. My grandfather (dad's dad) died a few months prior to me sending my booklet. When our family was heading to the funeral my dad said, "You know I was more devastated about breaking my fishing poles last week than hearing that my dad died." While I listened to my dad and his sister talk about the frustrations they had with their father, I remembered my dad's definitive resolution when I was quite young, "I will not turn into my father." Those statements carry much weight (since I didn't know my grandfather too well) until after my grandfather's death.

⁶ Elementary ideas: <http://www.marthastewart.com/photogallery/valentines-day-projects-for-kids>

⁷ *I Wish I Knew You Better* by Stephanie: Please find as a related attachment

⁸ *Integrity: The Journey* by Jason: Please find as a related attachment



It's Up To You


One song can spark a moment,
One flower can wake the dream.
One tree can start a forest,
One bird can herald spring.

One smile begins a friendship,
One handclasp lifts a soul.
One star can guide a ship at sea,
One word can frame the goal.

One vote can change a nation,
One sunbeam lights a room,
One candle wipes out darkness
One laugh will conquer gloom.

One step must start each journey,
One word must start each prayer.
One hope will raise our spirits,
One touch can show you care.

One voice can speak with wisdom,
One heart can know what's true,
One life can make the difference,
You see, IT'S UP TO YOU!



So, my story's purpose is to dispel his fear and speak the truth that God has for him - "Dad, you aren't like your father. You ARE an amazing, loving, sacrificing, compassionate, and noble father. You do actively love your wife. I dream that I will be half the father to my children that you are to me."

The Love Dare⁹

"This Valentines, I'll present a photo storybook to my dad as we make some quality daddy daughter time playing chess in a nearby park. This coming after I have begun a journey to take the Love Dare; I'm on day 6." ~Andrea

Resources: Don't make the same mistakes as others

Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking When Stakes are High¹⁰

Frame and strategize how to have those difficult conversations in a healthy and mutually beneficial fashion. Utilizing these proven strategies will increase your likelihood of success when broaching a difficult topic where opinions vary, the stakes are high and emotions run high.

Crucial Confrontations: Tools for resolving broken promises, violated expectations, and bad behavior¹¹

Resolve failed promises and missed deadlines, transform broken rules and bad behaviors into productive accountability and strengthen relationships while solving problems. Develop the confidence to face tough issues that routinely plague families due to individuals who either can't or won't deal with failed promises.

Storytelling: Telling Your Story

We need to be able to communicate so that our audience (e.g. family) can feel our love (or pain). We need to live lives that inherently tell great stories (e.g. embarking on this mission).

Story¹² by Donald Miller describes the fact that we need to tell great stories with our lives. He also describes the vital elements of story and that we need to incorporate all of these when sharing.

The Six Stories You Need to Know How to Tell¹³: Develop your stories so that your message is well-received and remembered by including the critical aspects in a compelling fashion.

The Five Love Languages¹⁴

Be sure to express love in ways that are more likely connect with your family and not simply what/how you would like to receive love. Recognizing love languages can help you identify practical and powerful ways to express love, simply by using the appropriate love language.

- Words of Affirmation: Actions don't always speak louder than words. Hearing the reasons behind love sends spirits skyward.
- Quality Time: Nothing says, "I love you," like full, undivided attention.
- Receiving Gifts: The receiver of gifts thrives on the love, thoughtfulness, and effort behind the gift.
- Acts of Service: The words he or she most wants to hear: "Let me do that for you."
- Physical Touch: Hugs, pats on the back, holding hands, and thoughtful touches on the arm, shoulder, or face.

⁹ *Daring to Love* by Andrea: Please find as a related attachment (*The Love Dare* stories: <http://www.40daylovedare.com/stories.asp>)

¹⁰ *Crucial Conversations* Summary: <http://www.frumi.com/images/uploads/crucialconversations.pdf>

¹¹ *Crucial Confrontations* Summary: <http://www.frumi.com/images/uploads/CrucialConfrontations.pdf>

¹² Listen to *Story* by Donald Miller: <http://www.marshall.org/teaching/download.php?filename=MTEExMTA3Lm1wMw%3D%3D>

¹³ *The Six Stories You Need to Know How to Tell*: <http://storytellingcenter.org/resources/articles/simmons.htm>

¹⁴ *The Five Love Languages* Summary: <http://www.frumi.com/images/uploads/TheFiveLoveLanguages2.pdf>