



MEN OF FAITH, SURRENDER & STRENGTH Randy Hain

FATHER AND SON

During a coffee meeting with a friend not long ago, he said, "You seem to have your act together on the fatherhood front. What's your secret?" I was surprised and taken aback, because I don't think I have my act together at all. I don't mean that out of false humility. I pray every day to be a better husband and father, because I know all of the areas where I fall short. Before I could answer my friend, he received a call on his cell phone and had to run. The topic, however, stayed on my mind and was the impetus for this post.

What does "having your act together" as a Catholic father really mean? I'm not the expert, but it seems that this sort of father likely has his priorities straight with Christ first, family second, and work third. This kind of dad spends quality time with his family, not just time. This man is a role model to his family in living out his Catholic faith and being the light of Christ to others. This father has joy in his heart and is a man of prayer. This Catholic dad honors and loves his wife, and lifts up the Sacrament of Marriage in the eyes of his children as something special and sacred. This sort of father finds in St. Joseph, the Patron Saint of Fathers, the ideal role model for how to serve God and his family.

What sort of rules or maxims might this Catholic father, who has his act together, follow to stay on the right path? If we consider what Scripture and the Church teach us, we can look to these four points as our guide.

1. Our vocation is to get our families to heaven.
2. Our children are always watching us. They will likely model later in life what they learn at home.
3. We are made for heaven, not this world. Let's act accordingly.
4. Our children are God's gift to us. The love and care we

show our children is our gift back to Him.



Feeling convicted? Me too.

So, why did my friend say what he did over coffee? I believe he knows that I try to be a good father despite my numerous failings. He sees that I keep at it and don't give up. He knows that I constantly pray for guidance and help. I don't really have my act together, but I do sincerely believe failing as a dad is not an option, because my children would ultimately pay the price, if I am not successful in my vocation as a father and husband. "It is easier for a father to have children than for children to have a real father." (Pope Saint John XXIII).



Guess what dads? Sometimes, you and I simply have to try harder. We have to give our best, even when we don't feel like it ...

Guess what dads? Sometimes, you and I simply have to try harder. We have to give our best, even when we don't feel like it. We have to sacrifice some work time, fun time, down time, and me time for the sake of our families. It would be wise (although scary) for us to realize that our kids watch our every move and they will be like us one day. I pray that is a good thing.

Dads, I encourage all of us to take the four points listed above to prayer. Let's not allow our pride to keep us from asking for help. Seek the intercession of the Blessed Mother and St. Joseph. Let's pray for each other, challenge each other, and encourage each other. Let's live out our vocation to fatherhood with courage and honor, for as Archbishop Gomez of Los Angeles said, "It's a promise to be faithful to the vocation of being a father. Even after a long day of work, even if he'd rather be doing something else—instead he will smile and laugh, and take delight in spending time and playing games with his kids. Because that's what fathers do. They keep their promise to love."

In the absence of us stepping up to our commitment as fathers, what are the alternatives? What can happen? After

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reflection and prayer, it seems obvious to me that most fathers likely face the same choices:

We can relinquish our fatherly responsibilities to others.

We can allow peers, TV, the Internet, video games, and a godless materialistic culture to raise our children and just hope for the best.

OR

We can live up to our responsibilities and our vocation as fathers. We are called to be holy, and our clear vocation is to help our family get to heaven. That is a tall order and requires courage, hard work, difficult choices, and lots of prayer.

How often do we say we want the second choice, but lose focus, get busy, and allow the first option to occur? I am afraid it happens all too often if we are honest with ourselves.

What can we do to make the second option the automatic choice? None of us are perfect, but perhaps we can follow these five basic steps to stay on course.

Make the most of our time together. My younger son and I have been having great conversations on the way to his sport practice and when we throw the football in our front yard. My older son and I take long walks together for our best conversations. The important thing is to maximize every minute with our children as opportunities to share and guide them to good decisions in life. Making family dinner time a priority is one way to help make this happen. Know that efforts to get our attention, are often potential cries for help. Our kids need us, but are we available?

Listen before lecturing. This is difficult for me! The fastest way to have my sons clam up is for me to cut them off with a "coaching moment." I can coach later, but I need to hear them out first and encourage them to share their thoughts.

Dad's Favorite Sayings

- 10) When I was your age...
- 9) A little bit of dirt never hurt anyone.
- 8) Go ask your mother.
- 7) Were you raised in barn?
- 6) You don't know what hard work is.
- 5) It builds character.
- 4) Don't make me stop this car!
- 3) You're grounded till you're thirty.
- 2) Money doesn't grow on trees.
- 1) Because I said so.

Be great Catholic role models. It doesn't get more basic than this, but do we realize how often our children are watching our every move? They will love God, be excited about Mass, and have devotion to our Catholic faith if we do. They will likely pray faithfully, if we do. They will be more likely to grow up following the magisterium and staying out of the "Catholic cafeteria line", if we do.

Honor the Sacrament of Marriage. Want to see our children get married and start great

families some day? We must love our spouses and model the kind of marriage we want them to enjoy. Show open affection, say "I love you," and make sure the kids know how much we honor and respect the person we have married. We are dooming our kids to a marriageless future or possible divorce if they grow up in a home where the Sacrament of Marriage is not treasured and valued.

Tune out popular culture and "detach." Guess what? If we are obsessed with American Idol, buying junk we don't need, and trying to keep up with the neighbors, our kids are likely to grow up emulating our behavior. I am beginning to feel that every minute spent in front of the TV or the computer is wasted time and a missed opportunity to interact with the family. This may be the hardest thing on the list, but we can do a better job with our time and focus.

Guys, doesn't being a better father feel like a wrestling match that never ends? This subject often comes up in my daily prayers as I seek discernment and courage to do the right things. The alternative to my daily struggle is to be apathetic, which will virtually guarantee that my children will grow up drifting without a good foundation of faith, values, and a sense of what is truly important in life. Kids are like clay looking to be formed and developed. In our absence, those who only see our children as consumers, or who seek to do them harm will step into the vacuum.

Remember the fourth point stated earlier in the post? Children are God's gift to us. Taking excellent care of His creation, is our gift back to Him.

Adapted from <http://www.integratedcatholiclife.org/2014/08/andy-hain-important-rules-for-catholic-fathers/>



The 7 most important words in your Christian Marriage

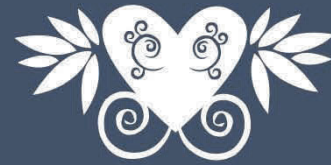
By Christ Goswami

You know that feeling of slight panic? The sweat of gentle terror? You're in the supermarket and you suddenly spot the Anniversary or Valentine's Day Cards, and the immediate thought is, "Did I miss it? Is it today? When is it?!" Yeah, me too. Greetings cards are a small but meaningful way to mark the importance of our marriage – otherwise we wouldn't feel so guilty when we forget, or almost forget, to buy one.

And yet down the years our society has increasingly devalued the marriage relationship. There are choices now where you can pick 'n' mix the type of relationship you want with the level of commitment you feel like making. The problem is, without the commitment, you're setting off on the wrong foot from day one. After all, it's much easier to walk out of a relationship which you never committed to in the first place – right?

But while the idea of staying with the same person for the rest of your life might be under question to people around us, for Christians it's still both the ideal and the expectation. Sometimes it might not be possible, but mostly it is possible. We will have problems and struggles – whether we are Christians or not - but the promise we made was to stay together "till death do us part", that means literally until one of us attends the graveside of the other.

I can't remember many sermons, either ones I have heard or ones I have preached (...that's not so good). But sometimes you hear a sermon and something sticks. I remember many years ago someone telling me the "7 most important words



"A great marriage is not when the 'perfect couple' comes together. It is when an imperfect couple learns to enjoy their differences."

in a Christian marriage". I don't remember anything else in that sermon,

but I remember Brian Buhler's seven words:

I'm sorry

For many of us these may be the most difficult two words to say in the entire English language.



We spend so much of our time convincing ourselves that we're in the right. And even when we realise we were not as right as we thought we were, we don't actually need to say sorry because "my partner knows me and will understand". This is another way of saying "I'm too proud to apologise".

In a very real sense, I think pride is at the heart of all human failing. Pride will be the last sin to go. In other words, even when we have accepted all the other things we did which were wrong, some of us will somehow still hang on to an excuse - "yes but here's *why* I behaved like that" We'll desperately find a way to salvage some pride.

I love you

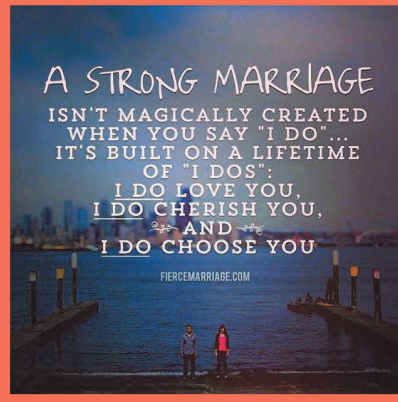
This is one of those things where we think "this is obvious - why do I need to say it?" But that would be like God saying: "of course I love you, why do I need to keep reminding you? There's no need for me to keep writing it in the Bible is there?"

Of course there are lots of ways to say "I love

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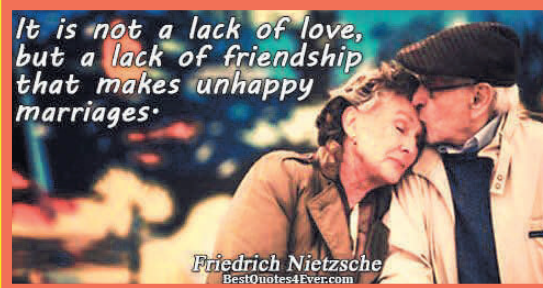
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you". We might give up something we would rather do for the sake of our husband / wife; we might perform an act of kindness; we might just give each other time to go on a date. But the words themselves also matter, and can have a power of their own.



Let's pray

There aren't just two people in a Christian marriage. God is also present and that means finding times when the three of you can talk together. But praying together does something else as well. It means we lay out on the table what we're concerned about, what's on our heart. If we have children, it gets us on the same wavelength for our hopes, fears and aspirations. And then it does the most wonderful thing, where the two of you can hand it all over to the third person, to God.



What's special about these seven words?

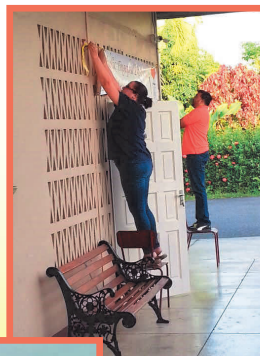
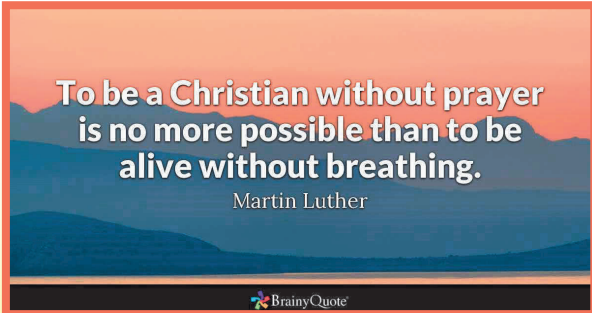
They are all ways of releasing pressure and getting on the same wavelength as each other, kind of like doing a level-set on your relationship. In fact, to coin a popular expression: in many situations these phrases are game-changers.

They demonstrate the complete truth of James 3. James points out how our tongue (our words) can devastate a relationship. He says: a whole forest catches fire from the spark of a hurtful comment, a huge ship is knocked off course by

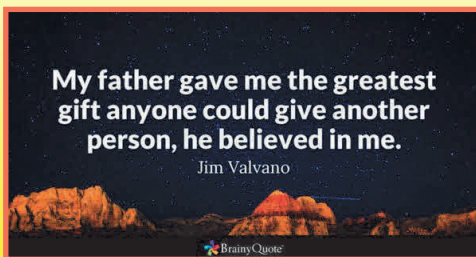
the rudder of a single thoughtless remark. But what we often don't realise is that the exact opposite is also true. A damaging situation that has gone on for months can be put right by two simple words "I'm sorry".

I believe all three comments are sacrificial. In saying them we lay aside something of ourselves. We make ourselves ever so slightly vulnerable. In fact we begin to imitate Christ himself, who "being in very nature God, didn't cling to equality with God..." Surely, being Christ-like is better than being "right"?

Adapted from <https://www.premierchristianity.com/Blog/The-7-most-important-words-in-your-Christian-marriage>



The future ladies of CEETT with their Mothers



Supporters of May EE weekend



If you are married, you may have discovered why marriage is so important and experienced some of the good that comes from it. Or, maybe marriage was hard for some of you, and you're no longer married. However, there is hope. But that hope starts with realizing that marriage can be more amazing than you have experienced or even thought. I've been married many years and have experienced both the amazing as well as

5 REASONS WHY MARRIAGE IS SO IMPORTANT

me and my wife. We are more effective working as a team versus working as individuals. Through challenges, we have both matured. And a side bonus, we have wonderful kids that came from our union. Those are all good and wonderful, but I've also discovered something even greater. God has created marriage to reveal more about Him, and how awesome He is. And this is revealed through many of His purposes for marriage.

Here are 5 reasons that explain the importance of eliminated loneliness for marriage:



When a man and woman love one another with that unconditional love, contentment follows and joy abounds.

1. Beginning

Marriage is the beginning—the beginning of the family—and is a life-long commitment [Tweet This]. It also provides an opportunity to grow in selflessness as you serve your wife and children. Marriage is more than a physical union; it is also a spiritual and emotional union. This union mirrors the one between God and His Church.

2. Oneness

When a man and woman get married, the “two become one.” Marriage is a bond like no other. It gives us a life partner, a teammate, as we move through the challenges of life together.

3. Purity

Marriage is designed for purity. We are under assault by temptation nearly every minute, and from many directions. The bond of marriage gives us the support to defeat that temptation by engaging in deep, satisfying love—a love that gives to, and receives from, our mate physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

4. Parenting

When a marriage produces a child or receives a child through adoption, it is one of life's greatest blessings. Roughly 40% of children being raised today are in a home without a father. The effects of that fact are staggering. Father absence causes increases in mental and behavioral disorders as well as criminal activity and substance abuse. But when children are raised in a healthy marriage, they get a front row seat to see and experience the lasting benefits of strong family.

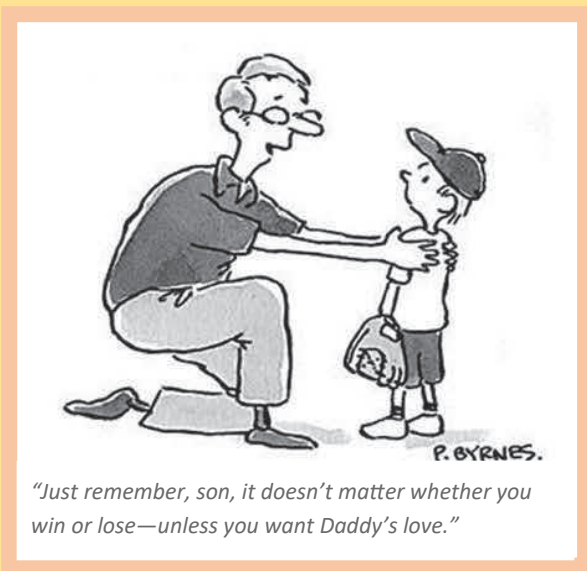
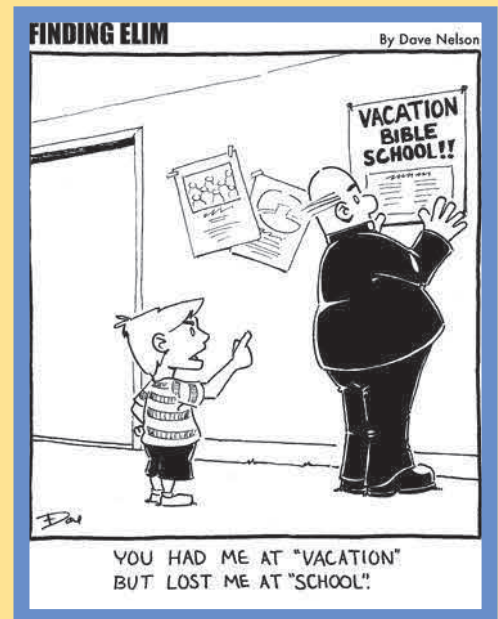
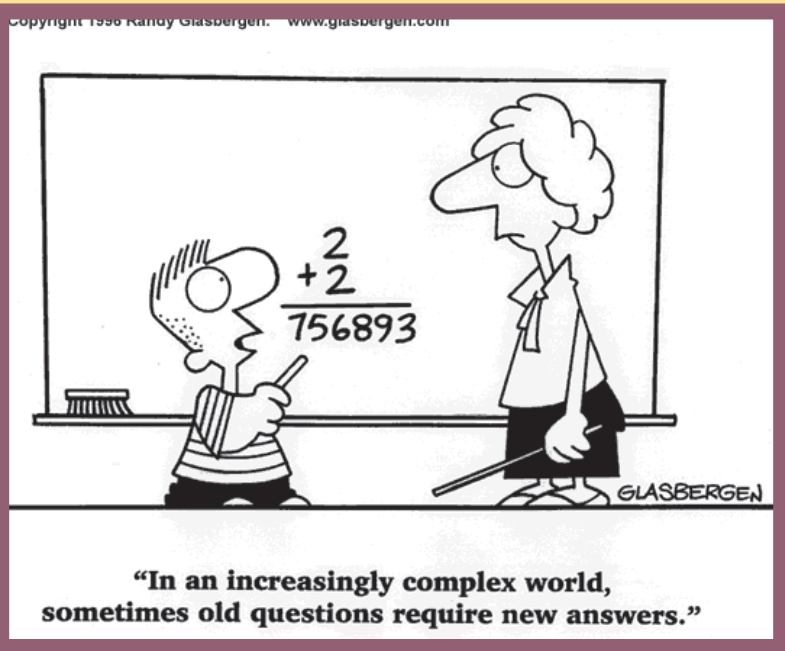
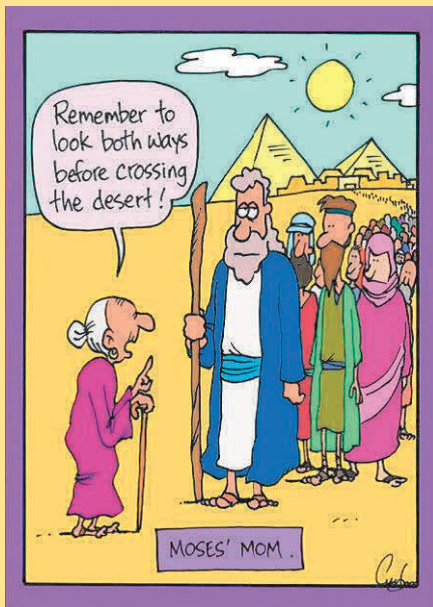


I would rather stand with God and be judged by the world than stand with the world and be judged by God.

5. Love

Marriage is designed to mirror our Creator's unconditional love for us. It's a love that will always be there and will never leave us or forsake us. When a man and woman love one another with that unconditional love, contentment follows and joy abounds.

<https://www.allprodad.com/5-reasons-why-marriage-is-so-important/>



THREE THINGS IN HUMAN LIFE ARE IMPORTANT. THE FIRST IS TO BE KIND. THE SECOND IS TO BE KIND. AND THE THIRD IS TO BE KIND.

HENRY JAMES

nurturingmarriage.org