



part 2 of 2—

Thoughts From a Pastor / Dad

by C. Stanley Burgess

My greatest skills have been making mistakes and blunders. Given a new chance, I'd teach my boys that it's OK to be different. I was a difficult child for my parents to raise, and I've been equally challenging to God. I grew up with little self-worth, the product of parents with low self-esteem. Yet God loved me unconditionally.

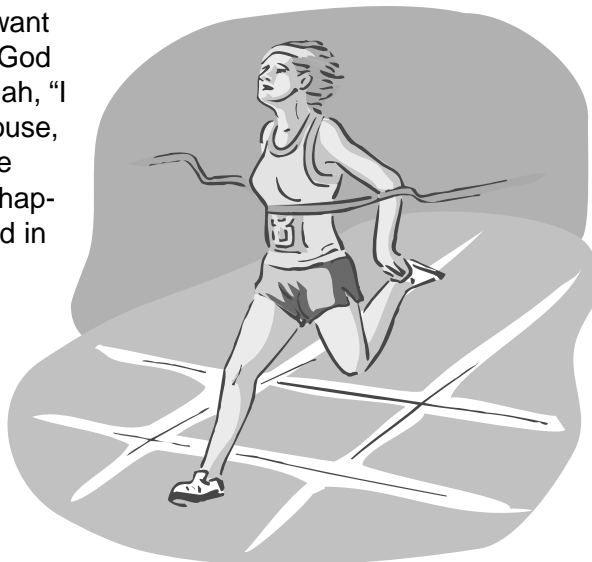
Was I able to convince my sons they could meet any challenge life might bring—and do it in their own uniqueness? I want them to know the truth that God shared with me from Jeremiah, “I went down to the potter's house, and I saw him working at the wheel. But the pot he was shaping from the clay was marred in his hands; so the potter formed it into another pot, shaping it as seemed best to him” (18:3,4). God (the Potter) fashions us, and we do not all have to conform to the same mold.

The Ultimate Finish Line

I would also like to have the opportunity to go back to the days when they were youngsters, throwing a ball back and forth to their dad, and tell them how to finish well.

Paul was concerned over this

when he wrote: “I have finished the race, I have kept the faith” (2 Timothy 4:7). My sons are both runners and have won numerous awards and honors. They know how to run well and how to finish well. They need to know that it is vital to have a personal relationship with God through His Son, our Savior. When they cross the ultimate finish line, I want them to know they were running the right course, and they ran it well.



When You're Gone

Someday their dad will be gone. How will they do? When the oldest dribbles down the basketball court and throws a pass out to the wing where his dad always was, how will he react when the ball bounces out

of bounds, untouched? When he realizes the “old man” isn't there anymore, will he play the game with increased drive and enthusiasm? When the youngest climbs to the top of a mountain pass at the 80-mile mark of a bike race, and he doesn't see his dad there to encourage him, what will he do? Will he pedal with more resolve and determination to reach the finish line? To each I believe the answer is yes.

Tell Them How You Feel

My sons are men now. When they were boys, I was always present at the major events in their lives. I watched the ball games, listened to the concerts, went to the races, taught them how to drive. One thing I did not do—I didn't share my feelings. I trusted that they captured my devotion to them through my actions, and not words. This was a mistake. A mistake my father made and I repeated.

Dad, if your little ones are still at home, tell them every day how you feel. I can no longer influence two little boys as I tuck them into bed at night like I once could. But I can still tell them the things of which I have just written. I guess the best I can do is to let them read this article and say, “Love you, guys.”

Questions for Further Study—

1. As a pastor and a father (or mother), what would you want your children to know once they cross that final finish line?
2. What do you hope your children will think and do once you are gone from their lives?
3. Why is it important to tell your children how you feel?

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