

Fathers Can Learn from the New GM

“Not everything that can be counted counts and not everything that counts can be counted.” – Albert Einstein -

Sometimes less is more; at least that’s what the “new” General Motors says. Part of their restructuring plan involves ditching vehicle models that have been less than exemplary and focusing efforts upon a few tried, tested and true brands. It’s a philosophy fathers could learn from.

You see, the models of fatherhood are likewise numerous and some of them, quite frankly, are nothing more than relational lemons.

An example is the “Dapper Dad” model introduced on MSN Lifestyle under the banner, “Top 10 Most Fashionable Fathers”. Renowned papas like David Beckham, Tom Brady and P. Diddy were captured by camera decked out in designer duds showcasing far-out fabrics and vibrant colors.

Imagine my surprise in scanning the piece to discover my chiseled profile was missing – by accident I assume. Maybe it was the combination of shorts, sandals and black socks I wore last summer. I’m actually pleased to NOT be associated with such a fatherhood faux pas - it’s sexy and sleek but has serious mechanical flaws. In short, it’s an Edsel, and will usually leave one stranded. Note to MSN – mothball this sucker and do everyone a favor.

Another defective image of fatherhood is the “Ya gotta be tough” model. Like the Chevy truck ad, this type of dad strives to be “like a rock”. None of this hug your kid stuff or mushy love nonsense. They believe the last thing this world needs is another mama’s boy. “Helpful” advice includes, “How to punch the lights out of the neighbor kid who’s being a twit”. Tender love is the quiche of their soul; strategically avoided. Sadly, this model of fatherhood generally leaves an emotionally starved child in its trail of tough-love exhaust.

A third twisted model of fatherhood is the workaholic who quips, “Of course I love you, don’t I pay the bills”. They are the eighth dwarf belting out a hearty rendition of “Hi ho, hi ho, it’s off to work we go.” Buy groceries, pay utilities, make car payments and purchase braces. Emotional attachment to a child may happen, but it’s secondary to bringing home the bacon.

Reality is kids ache for an up-close Dad – not this long-distance stuff. Hugs don’t transmit well over the phone. A family travesty occurs each time a child stands at a window weeping as a work truck unnecessarily disappears around the corner. Ideally, this dad-model would be taken off the road – literally.

Perhaps Albert Einstein had these flawed father-models in mind when he said, “Not everything that can be counted counts and not everything that counts

can be counted.” Men, there is a higher way of doing this adventure called parenthood.

Glenn Penner, CEO of Voice of the Martyrs Canada emphasized this in his interview with Faith Today (May/June, 2009) His 7 year battle with cancer appears to be reaching a climax as doctors recently informed him that he had mere months to live.

He was asked, “Glenn, what do you wish you had done more of during your life.”

He shared, “I wish I’d spent more time with my kids. I spent a lot of time on the road...I wish I could have touched base with my kids a little more. I wish I hadn’t gotten caught up in things that actually weren’t so important. I spent a lot of time on things that, in the grand scheme of things, probably didn’t matter.”

Sounds like Penner and Einstein have a lot in common.

Fellow fathers, never forget that time is the most precious gift we give our kids. Indeed, it is priceless – leaving gold, stocks and cold cash in the proverbial dust. You see, finances, when lost can be regained. But time, that’s a different story - it can never be restored. A minute spent is gone forever. Accordingly, wise fathers shower their kids with time. And no, it’s not about quality over quantity – kids deserve both.

In his interview, Mr. Penner laments not touching base with his young un’s a little more. Most of us relate. Dad’s, our mouth is more than a target for our fork. It is a finely tuned instrument engineered for blessing via words of love, affirmation and encouragement. King Solomon observed, “Pleasant words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones.”

Despite Glen Penner’s regrets, his words resonate with the beautiful sound of love. Glen, take heart, your kids have read more than your words; they have read your life. And the theme has been unselfish love. That’s a priceless heritage.

There are too many dead-beat father-models that have been manufactured and promoted. Societal acceptance does not necessarily equate with quality. Dads, be smart about the model you buy into. The decisions we make drastically affect the long-term destinations of those who are along for the ride – our children.

Use the KISS principle (Keep it simple stupid). Serve your kids ridiculously large portions of time, use your mouth to cheer them on to a championship attitude and love creatively and consistently even in the life-storms that will inevitably arrive.

And remember, it's never too late to rid ourselves of models which are no longer working and step into one that will transport us into a brighter future.

It really can happen – just ask the “New General Motors”.

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