

# Performance Fathering



GRACE COMMUNITY CHURCH  
**F.I.T.**   
FATHERS IN TRAINING

# The Bragging Dad...

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Le9PcBW7XDM>

**Q: Pretty funny, but have you done any of these things?**



# Performance Parenting

- Performance parenting is:
  - ... by default
  - ...easier
  - ...passed down
  - ...self-centered
  - ...potentially destructive



# Why Dads Choose Performance

- Observed and learned from fathers
- Too time consuming to do otherwise
  - Need to control others, especially kids
    - Insecurity
    - Insufficiency
    - Inhibitions
    - Lack of internal qualities
  - Living Vicariously through kids
  - We want our kids to be the best
  - Side effect of cultural advances



**“The more we are ‘out of control’ internally, the more we need to control externally...”**



**...The more we are ‘in control’ internally, the less we need to control externally.”**

- He has a GIFT!

Example from: <http://www.wingclips.com/movie-clips/searching-for-bobby-fischer/he-has-a-gift>

**Q: Who's it all about?**



- From [www.highperformancekids.com](http://www.highperformancekids.com)

“High Performance Kids provides you with the tools to raise confident, happy, well adjusted kids, and to set them up for a great life!

- Imagine the satisfaction of going to bed each night KNOWING you've done the right thing by your kids that day
- Imagine having more time to do what YOU want to do, without detracting from your children's upbringing
- Imagine LETTING GO of all the GUILT that comes with being a parent”

**Q: Is anything wrong with this approach?**

- From [www.psychologytoday.com](http://www.psychologytoday.com)

“Our national preoccupation with performance is at least partly culturally induced. Not only are we a freedom-loving culture that values individuality, independence, and initiative; we are also a performance-loving culture in which ambition, competition, and achievement are prized as well. The high performers across all kinds of human endeavor are paid a lot of positive public attention (and often a lot of money), even serving as role models to spur the efforts of young people and the hopes of their parents on.

**Q: Do you agree with this statement?**



- From [www.psychologytoday.com](http://www.psychologytoday.com)

In parenting, this performance ethic can run very deep in at least two ways. Parents can find themselves in rivalry with other parents over whose child is excelling and advancing faster, over whose child is earning the better opportunities, over whose child is receiving the most glowing reviews. And parents can feel impelled to encourage their child to do well now in order to do well later.”

**Q: Is one way better or worse than the other? What are the deep seated motivations behind each approach?**

- How Performance Parenting can get out of control!

Link to Video: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5EfmLNSQLGI>

**Q: Although this is an extreme example, would somebody be willing to share with us an example that you have seen or experienced yourself that is similar?**

- Funny role reversal...

Link to Video:

<http://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=overbearing+dad&qsn=&form=VBREQY&pq=overbearing+dad&sc=2-12&sp=-1&sk#view=detail&mid=74B14190FE6975D619CA74B14190FE6975D619CA>  
A

**Q: How does the shoe feel/fit when it's on the other foot? Have you ever actually put yourself in your child's shoes – so to speak?**

- From [www.thrivingfamily.com](http://www.thrivingfamily.com)

I am what you might call a “trophy parent.” Daily, I catch myself showing off my kids to the world. From helping too much with homework in the pursuit of perfect grades to bragging about them on Facebook, I want my family and friends to see only the best in my children. My kids are perfectly placed on a shelf for the world to see.

Looking around, it seems I’m not alone in this regard. Performance-driven parenting is an easy trap to fall into. Most every Christian parent I know wants well-behaved, successful and responsible kids who love Jesus. We encourage, nurture and direct them to that end. But we aren’t careful, those healthy motives can get twisted, and our kids can spend their childhood fulfilling their parents’ dreams and needs, losing out on discovering who God created them to be and what He is preparing them to do.

**Q: Is anyone willing to share with us, ways you’ve seen yourself playing the “trophy parent”...?**

- From [www.thrivingfamily.com](http://www.thrivingfamily.com)

### **How we got here**

My grandparents' generation did not raise trophy children. Grandma and Grandpa had different concerns, like providing the basics of food, shelter, clothes and education. Success in these areas brought them to their knees in thanks to God. Kids worked hard to do their part. The home did not revolve around their activities. Responsibility and duty were the primary goals of parenting.

I believe the shift toward “trophy children” started with my generation, and it is rooted in our privileged society and a desire to ensure that our kids succeed, which sometimes means protecting them from failure. Around the 1980s, our culture's parenting style became more encouraging and nurturing. Hovering even. We did not want our kids to feel like losers. Instead of “Three strikes and you're out,” we allowed kids to stay in the batter's box until they hit the ball. We affixed gold stars to every assignment to boost self-esteem. We overindulged them with excessive praise for every attempt, regardless of outcome, to help them all feel like winners.

Other parents have gone a different direction, obsessing over their kids' achievements and looking for big moments on the stage and field. We accelerate progress with preschool reading programs and year-round sports and activities, pursuing marks of excellence that often have no relation to the real-world milestones needed later in life.

**Q: Do you agree with this assessment and why?**

# The many faces of trophy parenting

**Vanity Parenting** means using a child's accomplishments and attributes to impress family and friends. It only takes a few minutes on Facebook to see this parent in full swing. Her status updates are carefully crafted to present an image she wants the world to see. If her children appear successful, then she will look successful.

**Perfection Parenting** raises the bar too high. This parent experiences frequent irritation and frustration when his children make mistakes or don't measure up. The issue is not that his kids are "not getting it," but rather that his expectations are misplaced.

**Competitive Parenting** compares the strengths and weaknesses of her child to that of other children. When we compare our child's weaknesses to the strengths of another, we live in defeat and discouragement. Comparing a child's strengths to another's weaknesses will give the child an overinflated view of himself. Each child is unique, so no comparing necessary.

**ROI Parenting** looks for a “return on investment” from sports and activities. The hope is that one day the time and money spent on activities will be paid back in the form of college scholarships or a career in that particular activity. There is nothing wrong with signing kids up for organized leagues, but when we commit them to specific activities at early ages, they miss out on other opportunities, not to mention valuable playground time and neighborhood pickup games.

**Gifted Parenting** believes God did something extra special in the birth of her child. This tendency is often seen in parents who struggled with infertility or endured a long adoption process. Parents who believe their child is extra special look for extra special opportunities and activities for their child.

**Companion Parenting** has parents shifting their performance expectations of kids to be relational in nature. This can happen in a home where the parent needs a buddy to participate in sports or hobbies. It can also happen in a strained marriage (or single-parent home) where the child takes on the emotional burdens of a spouse.

**Rescue Parenting** takes an unexpected route toward success. These parents create “successful” environment for their kids by protecting them from loss, pain and struggle. This is the hovering parent who nurses them through challenging situations by simply removing failure as an option. This parent forgets that character is built more on the bench than on the field. We all have stories of trials that shaped us into who we are today.

**Q: Which forms of parenting are most prevalent in our culture (here in Ramona) and why?**

**Wanting the Best:** Fathers want the best for their kids. Many lose track of the big picture and focus only on getting the best life NOW... they want success, happiness and they expect that they can “do all things”. We even see kids wearing eye black patches like Tim Tebow that say **“PHIL 4:13”**. Many take that verse out of context. I can hear dads saying... “come on junior, you can do all things through him who strengthens you.” But when we read the verse in context...

Phil. 4:13 <sup>10</sup> I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at length you have revived your concern for me. You were indeed concerned for me, but you had no opportunity. <sup>11</sup> Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. <sup>12</sup> I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. <sup>13</sup> I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

**Q: What's the proper context?**



**Attitude Check:** Many fathers find their joy and satisfaction in performance... I think it's just a man thing. How well they do or how well their child does in any given activity... is the standard by which they are measured.

...But we need to have an attitude that is more in line with a poor spirit (Matthew 5:3, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.") .... we need an attitude that says, "I cannot perform without You".

**Q: Who's in charge?**



# Performance Fathers in the Bible

- Aaron – Nadab & Abihu (Lev. 10:1-20)
- Isaac – Jacob & Esau (Gen. 25:27)
- Eli – Hophni & Phinehas (1Sam. 2:12-36)
- David – Absalom (2 Sam. 13-16)

# From Performance to Shepherding



- Determine to spend more quality time with your child
- Pay attention to how they learn from you
- Listen with your heart, not just your ears
- Find a male mentor who has parented well
- Develop a back up plan

# The Good News...

But if God's fatherhood is only a *model* for us, it cannot come as good news but only as further condemnation of our own poor performance. The *good* news is that this God, the Father of Jesus, is now our Father because of his love and the obedience rendered by his Son. In Christ, we do not dread this Father's displeasure as condemnation and judgment, but feel his fatherly hand in redemption and correction. In other words, the good news is not that God is our model of fatherhood, but that in Christ he has become the Father even of bad Christian dads.

So the good news for bad fathers, first and foremost, is also the good news for bad mothers, children, grandparents, employers, and employees. This is why, in our headlong rush for relevance, all of our "practical" preaching on fatherhood, motherhood, marriage, and family can become the most impractical preaching of all apart from the gospel.

\*From [Modernreformation.org](http://Modernreformation.org)

# Our Deepest Resistance...

In his well-known exchange with the rich young ruler, Jesus was asked, "What is the one work I must do to be saved?" as if Jesus had come as a new and improved Moses, with some additional law, some new bit of practical advice for saving entrepreneurial types such as this fellow. Knowing that the young man wanted to justify himself, Jesus pointed to the law-not a new one, but the familiar one. "All this I have done from my youth," the young man replied. Nothing new here: this is the old list he learned in Sabbath school. No doubt, he really thought he had done it all. Like many young men and fathers today, he may have had his checklist of principles for success in life. He was probably even doing the time-management thing. He was all put together-that is, until Jesus showed him the real intention of the law. "Go sell everything you have and give it to the poor," Jesus commanded. Now he was undone. True, there was no law requiring a vow of poverty, but Jesus' intention was to expose both the deepest meaning of the law as selfless love of neighbor and the deepest resistance to this law of love in the heart of this young man.

# A promise...

There are too many commands given to us as fathers to take our vocation lightly. We bear tremendous responsibilities for the rearing of our children. God works through means, and fathers are significant instruments of his own covenantal nurture. Yet it is the Lord's faithfulness that keeps us and our children in his Son by his Spirit. Far from motivating carelessness, this nevertheless allows us to relax in a proper appreciation of God's sovereignty.

Uptight over whether our children will walk with the Lord, we often communicate this in all sorts of unintended ways. Eventual rebellion becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. We are responsible to God for how we raise our children, but we are not ultimately responsible for how our children respond to God, whose ways are notoriously mysterious. Sometimes fathers are not responsible for particular expressions of waywardness on the part of their children. But even when they are, the good news is that they are the Lord's and he has made them promises that no human father can make, much less keep.

**Next week, we will talk  
more about the role of  
Shepherding Your Child's  
Heart.**

## **Small Group Discussion Questions:**

1. What parenting style did your father use to raise you? If you had to give it a name (or describe it in one word), what would it be?
2. How has that affected the way you currently parent your child?
3. Do you have any particular resentment or praise regarding the style your father used? If you have resentment, have you forgiven your father for what was lacking in how you were raised? Have you praised him?
4. Do you feel you use perfectionism and/or performance expectations in parenting your child? If so, is that a good thing or a bad thing (or both)? Why do you use it?
5. When do you find yourself using this approach? Is it the norm, or are there particular circumstances that lead to its use?
6. How would you describe God's (our ultimate Father) parenting style?