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JERRAD LOPES
OF THE *DAD TIRED* PODCAST

DAD TIRED



JESUS-CENTERED ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ABOUT
FAMILY, FAITH, AND FINDING YOUR PURPOSE

THE
DAD TIRED

Q&A MIXTAPE

JERRAD LOPES



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To the men of the Dad Tired community
who are stumbling their way toward Jesus
and helping their families do the same

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INTRODUCTION

I remember walking back to my locker, trying to fight back the tears threatening to pour out of my eyes. As a sixteen-year-old sophomore boy in high school, there was almost nothing worse than crying in front of your friends. I stood there with the locker door open, hiding my face and pretending to rummage through my loose papers until I could compose myself before emerging back into the real world again.

My very first girlfriend had just broken up with me, and it was the worst day of my life. I couldn't imagine how I could possibly go on with the rest of my life, let alone make it through the rest of that day.

After what seemed like an eternity, I was jolted out my sulking when my best friend, Chris, gave me a sudden and unexpected slap on the back. It felt more like he was trying to kill a giant spider than give a friend a warm embrace of comfort. I hate unexpectedly being slapped on my back; it's a major pet peeve.

"You okay, man?" he asked.

"Yeah, I'm fine. Why?"

"You don't seem fine. You look like you're about to cry."

Young teenage boys aren't typically the best at reading the emotions in the room, and Chris was putting that reality on full display.

"Shut up, man. I'm fine. Jessica and I just broke up. She was dumb, anyway. I'm fine. Let's just go to class."

I tried to act tough, but I wasn't fine, and Chris knew it.

When the final bell rang for the day, I made my way to the parking lot, eager to get home and process my emotions away from my classmates. As I got closer to my '98 Toyota Tacoma, I couldn't help but notice something out of the ordinary sitting on top of the windshield.

"This mixtape should cheer you up—Chris." Attached to the note was a burned CD (not a cassette tape) with the words "breakup mixtape" written in sloppy permanent marker.

I sat down in the cab of the truck, enjoying a moment of silence and solitude before sliding the CD into the truck's player.

"You'll Think of Me" by Keith Urban started to play through the speakers. I slowly leaned forward and rested my head against the steering wheel, closing my eyes and letting the tears that had been so desperately trying to make an appearance all day finally start to fall.

That mixtape, or more accurately, mix CD, became the soundtrack of my sophomore year. It was the background music from that disc that carried me through the various heartbreaks, celebrations, and confusion of my teenage years. Even to this day, when I hear certain songs from that CD, they bring up emotions tied to those memories.

In many ways, this book is meant to serve you in the same way Chris's mixtape served me back in the day. My hope is that it will act as the soundtrack that carries you along through the many seasons you'll face as a husband, disciple, and father.

To be honest, not every track (a.k.a. chapter) will be totally relevant for the season you may be in. Maybe some tracks will offer you hope in the middle of

Regardless of the current situations
you and I find ourselves in, we
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truths found in Scripture.



discouragement, while others may be exactly what you need to hear during a time of celebration, like when welcoming a new baby to the family.

I suggest you skip to the tracks that make the most sense for where you are right now. Something that might not resonate in this season of life may be exactly what you need to hear a few years from now.

I'm not naive; I know you may be in the middle of some really tough things. Pain much deeper than breaking up with your high school sweetheart. You may be experiencing the deep pain that comes with the loss of a child. Or maybe you've found yourself unexpectedly out of work or struggling to provide for your family. The truth is, the older we get, the deeper these wounds seem to cut.

You need more than a mixtape. You need more than some songs that will emotionally carry you through a tough season. You need more than someone's advice that seems relevant today but may not make any practical sense five years from now.

Whatever challenge you're currently facing as a dad, you need the truth of the gospel message as your guide.

You need the gospel. You need Jesus.

Regardless of the current situations you and I find ourselves in, we need to be reminded of the eternal truths found in Scripture.

Whether it's a job loss or a new job. Great health or a devastating diagnosis. A new baby or the loss of a child. Wherever you are, you need Jesus.

I think what meant even more to me than receiving that mixtape back in high school was the fact that my friend Chris was there to walk alongside me in the pain. Listening to songs that could eloquently articulate my hurt in ways that I couldn't possibly verbalize as a sophomore in high school was nice. But it was even nicer to be able to process that hurt with a close friend.

Whatever challenge you're currently facing as a dad, you need the truth of the gospel message as your guide. But I bet you could also use a friend to process that truth with. And honestly, I know how hard it is to find a good friend like that. It's easier to find a guy who will barbecue some burgers and watch a game with you than it is to find a friend who will help point you closer to Jesus.

So here's my encouragement to you: Take a minute right now, and ask God to show you who that friend could be in this particular season of life. Hopefully, someone quickly comes to mind. If so, have the courage to reach out to them and invite them to read this book with you.

If, after spending some time in prayer, no one comes to mind, I would invite you to consider joining our Dad Tired Family Leadership Program. The program is made up of a bunch of guys from around the world who are serious about leading their families well. These men aren't just like-minded friends; they are men who are excited about linking arms with other brothers to chase after what really matters. If you could use some friends like that, we'd love to have you join us. Visit dadtired.com/lead to enroll. Use the promo code MIXTAPE to get a discount.

All right, man. This is me officially handing you *The Dad Tired Q&A Mixtape*. Know that I've spent countless hours in prayer over this and, more specifically, over you. I pray that this little book simply offers the background track to the grand story Jesus is preparing for you and your family.

Excited to jam out with you,
Jerrad

Track 1

DIAPERS, SLIDES, AND DISCIPLESHIP

What Is Spiritual Leadership?

Today I drove my fourth baby home from the hospital. I don't care how many times you make that drive, it's always nerve-racking. We live about forty-five minutes away from the hospital where she was born, and it took me nearly two hours to get to our house. Turns out, other people don't care about the precious cargo you have onboard and will still relentlessly honk at you as you drive thirty-eight miles per hour down the highway. Even my wife, Leila, looked at me and said, "Babe, I think she'll be fourteen by the time we get home. You can drive a little faster."

I'm called to protect my babies, and I don't care how many middle fingers from angry drivers I might see in the process.

We're dads; that's what we do. We protect.

As I was leaving the hospital this morning, another dad joined me on the elevator down to the parking lot. His wife had just given birth to their first baby the day before, and he was rushing down to get the car ready for their departure. I was standing in the back of the elevator as he hurried to get on

before the doors closed behind him. I couldn't help but smile as I watched him.

"Congrats, man. You're probably really excited," I said to him as I watched him fumble his bags. Based on the amount of stuff he was trying to juggle, you would have thought he was leaving on a three-week trip to the desert. He had three massive water jugs in one hand, two suitcases, a diaper bag nearly choking his neck, and a car seat tucked into the crease of his elbow.

"Thanks, man! It's our first!" he said as sweat dripped off his forehead and down into his eyes.

"Can I help you with any of that?"

"No, that's okay. I think I've got it." He settled into a much-needed pause as the elevator doors closed and took us down to the lower level.

"You visiting someone?" he asked after gathering his breath. His eyes were looking down at the box of cookies I was holding in my right hand.

"Oh, no. We just had our fourth. I'm headed down to pick up the car."

"Nice! And...all you have is a box of cookies?"

I sat there in silence for what felt like fifteen minutes.

"Um...I guess I'm just now realizing that this is basically all we brought to the hospital."

We both started laughing like we were old friends sharing an inside joke.

When the elevator reached the bottom, I held the door open so my new dad-friend could make an escape without getting crushed.

"It gets easier; I promise," I shouted as we eventually parted ways in the parking lot.

We both laughed again.

THINGS HAVE CHANGED

As I sat down to write tonight, I started to think about my interaction with that dad on the elevator. It struck me how excited he was and how hard

he was trying to be a great dad for his baby from day one. Even in my very brief interaction with him, I got the sense that this was the greatest day of his life, and he was going to do everything in his power to make sure he was the kind of husband and father that his family needed him to be.

I don't think he's alone in that.

I remember right after we had our first child, my grandfather called to congratulate me. He shared a few parenting tips, but it wasn't his advice that stuck out to me during that short call.

"You know what's funny, Jerrad?" he said through a chuckle. "I made it through parenting three kids without changing a single diaper!" It was almost as if he was bragging to one of his old drinking buddies.

For my grandpa, and many others like him, fatherhood meant working hard to put food on the table. That was his standard for what it meant to be the man of the house, and if you did that well, then by every account, you had succeeded as a husband and father.

But I think things have changed.

I live in South Carolina, and I try my best to get outside as often as possible with my kids to enjoy the beauty around us. I'm always struck that whenever we go to a park, you can't help but notice the number of dads playing with their children. Whether it's going down the slides, pushing them on swings, or kicking a ball in the grass; they're everywhere! There is such a sharp contrast from what I remember in my own childhood. Parks used to be the place where only moms would congregate with their kids. Now they are filled with men who are working their tails off to be fully engaged fathers.

Something deep in our bones knows that our role as a husband and father is so much more than simply showing up.

For many of us young dads, we long to do more than just pay the bills and keep a roof over the heads of the ones we love. Our childhoods taught us that our souls need more than food on the table. Our hearts need to be engaged. Our longing for adventure needs direction. Our wandering soul needs a guide to show us the way. Something deep in our bones knows that our role as a husband and father is so much more than simply showing up. And whether we can find the words to articulate it or not, there is something deep within us that drives us to be more than the men who have gone before us. Not that all the men who have gone before us have failed (although some have—majorly) but that we should take the baton that has been placed in our hands and run farther with it.

It's that internal longing that almost instinctively motivates us to go down the slides, wash the dishes, cook a meal, practice ballet, wrestle on the floor, play hide-and-seek, and yes, Grandpa, even change the diapers.

The fact that you're reading these words right now gives me the sense that you know exactly what I'm trying to say. In this very moment, you are doing your best to be a better father and husband. Men who don't care about being a better husband, disciple, and father don't typically read books about it.

And because of that, I want to pause and say something to you that you may not have heard in a while, or maybe even ever.

You're doing a good job, man.

Seriously. Your kids are lucky to have a dad like you.

Maybe your dad was awesome, and you're trying your best to fill his shoes. Or maybe your dad was terrible, and you're committed to being everything he wasn't. Maybe you find yourself somewhere in between. Either way, you're here right now. Reading a book about how to be a better dad. That says a ton about you.

You're doing a good job.

“I’M AN AWESOME DAD”

If you’re anything like me, you probably just read that last sentence and let it go in one ear and out the other.

You might be thinking to yourself, *Yeab, that’s nice of you to say Jerrad, but you don’t really know me.*

I’ve met dozens of guys who are changing diapers and going down slides but still don’t feel qualified to lead their families to Jesus. They find it hard to talk with their kids about the Lord when they are still trying to figure out their own relationships with him. In short, they simply don’t feel qualified or equipped to be spiritual leaders in their homes.

A few years back, I was hanging out with a bunch of dads during one of our friend’s son’s birthday parties. One dad, whom I had never met before, turned to me and said, “So, what do you do for work?”

“Oh, I write books for young dads,” I said.

“Nice! I’m an amazing dad!” he said with a giant smile on his face.

I started laughing...until I very quickly realized that he was being serious.

I wasn’t quite sure how to recover from that awkward moment and ended up replying with a simple, “Cool.”

I was so caught off guard; who says that they’re an amazing dad?

I mean, maybe he was an amazing dad. I have no idea. I just had never in my life met a guy who said he thinks he’s an amazing father.

Until that moment, I would have said that 100 percent of guys feel like they have room to grow. Now I have to change my make-believe statistic to say approximately 99.99 percent of guys feel like they have room to grow as dads.

Most of us know we have fallen short of what we expected from ourselves as dads, not to mention the standards we know God has for us.



Maybe that's you. Maybe there is a part of you that gives yourself some credit because you know you're trying your best. But that internal voice inside of you keeps telling yourself that you need to be doing better, and if you don't figure it out quickly, you're going to fail your kids miserably.

Let me give you some good news.

You remember Moses from the Old Testament in the Bible? The guy literally murdered someone before God used him to be the spiritual leader of a massive group of people. You want to know the best part of the story? When God calls him to lead his people, Moses begs God to pick someone else. Not because he feels like murdering someone who disqualified him, but because he doesn't feel like he speaks well enough. I think Moses may have been confused about which one of his shortcomings should have disqualified him. Regardless, he was convinced that he was not the right guy for the job (Exodus 2:11-15; 4:10).

Maybe you're not the murdering type like Moses was but more like Jonah, running the opposite direction of where God wants you to go with your family:

The word of the LORD came to Jonah son of Amittai: "Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me."

But Jonah ran away from the LORD and headed for Tarshish. He went down to Joppa, where he found a ship bound for that port. After paying the fare, he went aboard and sailed for Tarshish to flee from the LORD (Jonah 1:1-3 NIV).

Or what about Abraham, a guy who literally laughed at God when he was told he was going to be used by him in mighty ways:

Abraham fell facedown; he laughed and said to himself, "Will a son

God has worked with
guys like you before.



be born to a man a hundred years old? Will Sarah bear a child at the age of ninety?" (Genesis 17:17 NIV).

Moses tried to convince God that he wasn't qualified. Jonah ran away from God in his rebellion. Abraham was so convinced that God couldn't use him that he laughed at God. Yet here's what they all had in common: God used each of them in unique and powerful ways.

You might be sitting here today thinking that you have way too many shortcomings to lead your family well. Or maybe you've just been flat-out disobedient; you know what God wants you to do, but you haven't done it. Maybe you're like Abraham and laugh at the idea that God can change the world through you.

Wherever you're at on that spectrum, the reality is that God has worked with guys like you before. This isn't his first rodeo. And if you're willing, he's prepared to use you in mighty ways for his glory too.

Maybe the point isn't about having it all together. Maybe it's more about being willing to go where God sends you. So as we dive into this whole spiritual leadership thing together, I guess I'll just ask you point-blank:

Are you willing to go down whatever path God has for you as a disciple, husband, and father?

If you said yes, you just qualified yourself to be the man God is calling you to be.

Let's go.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. When you think about God using you to lead your family, who do you relate to more? Moses, thinking you're too sinful to be used? Or Abraham, thinking there is no way God can do big things with your life? Or Jonah, knowing what God wants you to do but running in the opposite direction?
2. On a scale of one to ten, how would you rank how well you're doing at being the spiritual leader of your home? How would you define spiritual leadership in the context of your own family? What would it look like to improve as the spiritual leader of your household?
3. Are there any men whom you've looked up to as the spiritual leaders of their homes?