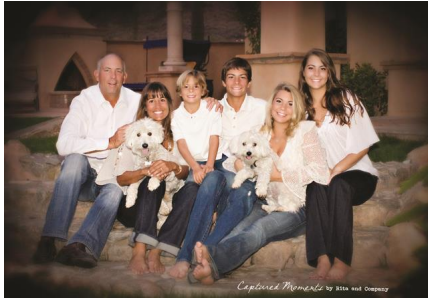


MASK's Dad Dialed In: Tom Lehman

Written by Editorial

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Parenting is tough. It's not a world for the weak or those who don't pay attention. And to make matters more challenging, there is no real guidebook or a guaranteed how-to book on raising kids.

I know from personal experience that all of the above is true. Hopefully, my wife and I have learned from our mistakes as we've gone through the process of raising our four kids. We can only hope that our core belief that unconditional love overcomes all holds to be true.

It wouldn't be unfair to say, however, that we have had no preparation for the job of a parent. Most of what I do in my life and the way I do it, especially when it comes to my kids, is what I saw modeled by my own parents and what I have learned from the words of the Bible. My sense of right and wrong, my work ethic, my priorities and my faith are all things I learned from my mom and dad or have learned from the Bible.

They are also the things that I have tried to pass onto my own kids. I find myself doing and saying certain things when it comes to parenting that I heard my folks say and do. I now see my own kids relating to others in that same kind of way.

It's become easy for me to see how things (both good and bad) can be easily passed from generation to generation. The real difficulty—and also joy in the long run—is giving your kids what they need rather than what they want.

For my wife and I, our goal has always been to be a parent first. There will be plenty of time for being pals later. What kids need are boundaries, and enforcing them isn't always the most popular thing with your kids. This is why I said right off the bat that parenting is not for the weak.

It has been my experience that rules fairly enforced are exactly what our kids have needed. Add in a huge amount of unconditional love and our kids have learned that we want what is best for them in all things.

Sometimes, there is no gain without a little (or a lot) of pain. What I know to be true is that our kids know we have their back. That doesn't mean that they get a pass for being a goofball. What it does mean is that they can trust us to be there for them all the time and, to the very best of our abilities, give them what we think they need.

We would take a bullet for our kids and they know that. The result is that we see them being willing to do the same for those that they love. As a father, that kind of love and loyalty makes me very proud.