



Links Players

PARENT OF THE YEAR

Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord. (Ephesians 6:4, NIV)

NOT MANY OF US WILL EVER GET THE CHANCE to be Francesco Molinari. Neither will we defeat Jack Nicklaus in the blazing sun at Turnberry. And of course, we will never be given the belt of Young Tom Morris, for upon his third win, it was his to keep for all time. In other words, not many of us will get the chance to be called Champion Golfer of the Year.

This does not preclude, of course, other goals—whether or not these come with titles and awards. You won't normally find people passing out trophies for best neighbor or friendliest customer, though you might get to park in the Employee of the Month spot soon if your sales numbers are good! But even if you could win every one of these, you might trade them all to be named Parent of the Year.

Some things are better left unmeasurable, I know. There really are Mom and Dad awards out there, and the winners always strike me as deserving, but these heroes are only representatives of the thousands (millions?) of other parents who are doing a bang-up job with their children, young and grown.

The writers we find in Scripture didn't skirt the practical. While God is focused on the workings of our heart (what we often call our spiritual life), the evidence of what's inside our hearts shows up in what we say and do in the real world. And nowhere is the world more real than behind the walls of our homes and around our family tables. How Mom, how Dad, are you doing in these places?

When I pray for friends who are having struggles with their children, my prayer is nearly always the same: "Lord, bring *shalom* into this household." *Shalom* is the prevailing peace that manifests itself not only in the niceties of deference, but which reaches below the surface of our beings where we experience security and love. It's an interior peace that comes from God. Oh yes, it will result in parents who do not exasperate their children with criticism, impatience, harshness, and hypocrisy. But it will reach so much deeper, to the place where children recognize the grace and kindness of God in their parents, the kindness even that leads to repentance.

Do you want your children to believe in Christ and follow the ways of the Lord? Believe him first yourself, and allow yourself to be changed, that your children might be changed by the Spirit's witness in you.

Opening questions If you could win one of golf's major trophies, which would you want it to be? What life goals, when achieved, would you like to have noticed and maybe honored?

READING Luke 6:45; Romans 2:4; 2 Thessalonians 1:11-12

The heart and the mouth (Luke 6)

How do Jesus' words set the order of priorities for our lives? How might a person tend to his or her heart before God?

The character of God (Romans 2)

If we are called to reflect God in our lives, what specific godly characteristics are we directed toward in this passage? How would emphasizing these characteristics in your role as a parent make a difference in your family?

A prayer for fulfillment and faith (2 Thessalonians 1)

How might you pray this prayer in reference to your parenting? How might you pray it in reference to what you desire most for your children?

Written by Jeff Hopper ©2019 Links Players International.