



Framework Children

Adapted from “Flip this House” series by Sam Rijfkoogel

I have had several jobs in my life. I have worked in a produce market, bagged groceries, and worked in a furniture store. I have been both a youth pastor and a senior pastor. One thing these jobs have had in common was that they each had some form of a job description. When I became a father, I had no job description to help guide my new role. It was after my children were out of high school, I discovered a job description for being a parent. Consider the following job description:

Have you ever wondered what your work as a parent would look like if you had to write a job description? Probably the closest many of us have come is jotting down a few notes for the baby sitter — reminders about snacks, bedtime and how much television the kids can watch. But most of us haven't really thought about what our job truly entails, and I think this contributes to much of the stress we feel as parents. Lots of energy is invested in a list of tasks that — in the grand scheme of things — do not matter. This, of course, takes energy and time from the things that *do* matter.

What is a parent's job description? Let's start by looking at a couple of things that don't belong on your job description. Understanding what your job *isn't* is as crucial as understanding what it *is*.

Impossible job No. 1: Ensuring outcomes. You would do anything for your children, and in your job as parent you will have countless opportunities to influence and guide your child toward wise choices. But you simply cannot control every step along the journey. And that's all before you even consider your child's independence and free will — that beautiful gift from God that gives a child the ability to choose what paths he or she will take in life.

Impossible job No. 2: Perfection. Discipline, orderliness, education, birthday parties — there are hundreds of opportunities to succeed or fail in parenting. But perfection shouldn't be on your job description. It's simply not possible to know exactly what to do in every circumstance, to never make mistakes. And God is not watching with a clipboard, evaluating every move. He knows we're not perfect. He loves us anyway.

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Your job description can be boiled down to this: A dad's main job is to validate his children. Validation means letting your child know over and over, through words and actions: "Hey, you matter to me. You belong in this family. You're a hard worker. I love you."

Three ways to validate and nurture your child. **No. 1:** Physically connect with your child. Healthy physical connectedness from dad is critical. **No. 2:** Keep your voice gentle and lighthearted. Dads, ensure that your communication is upbeat and pleasant as much as possible. When correction is needed, see if you can turn the situation around by keeping that unthreatening tone of voice. **No. 3:** Keep your child safe. Dads, reassure him that you will protect and rescue him. And be sure you are there to rescue him as much as possible.¹

¹ Tim Sanford, "A Real Job Description for Parents," Focus on the Family, 2016, <http://www.focusonthefamily.com/parenting/parenting-roles/be-the-parent/a-real-job-description-for-parents> (accessed July 6, 2017).

COURAGE

C1: Describe your dad when you were growing up. How do you feel your dad prepared you for a role as a dad today?

C2: What did you glean from the article in the introduction?

C3: Read and answer the following.

Colossians 3:20 (ESV) Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.

- What do you glean from this verse?

- Who are the children in this verse?

C4: Read the following quote and answer the questions.

Frederick Douglass was an African-American statesman who, having escaped from slavery, became a leader of the abolitionist movement and campaigned throughout his life for equality of all people regardless of background, saying, “I would unite with anybody to do right and with nobody to do wrong”. In 1855 Frederick Douglass had a series of dialogues with white slave-owners who could not, or would not, comprehend that slavery was morally wrong and it was during these communications that he wrote, “**it is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men.**”²

² Andrew Rowland, “It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men,” WordPress, April 25, 2014 <https://drandrewrowland.wordpress.com/2014/04/25/it-is-easier-to-build-strong-children-than-to-repair-broken-men-frederick-douglass-1817-1895/> (accessed July 6, 2017).

- What does the statement “**it is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men,**” mean to you?

- What do you think “strong children” means?

- How are you helping build strong children?

STRENGTH

S1: What did you glean from the article in the introduction?

S2: Dads play an important role in leading their children. Read and answer the following.

Titus 2:7 (ESV)

- In the area of being a dad, what does this verse mean to you? How can you apply this verse to your life?
- If you are a father, on a scale of 1-4, with 1 being very well and 4 being not very well, rate yourself on how well you have been a positive example to your children. Write out a plan to improve, or if you don't have children yet, write out a plan to be a good example.

S3: Look at the following parenting timelines and answer the following.

Dictator (0-5 years)

Trainer (5-12 years)

Coach (Teen years)

Friend/Mentor/Advisor

- What are some descriptors you can think of for each segment of your child's lives?
- If you are a father, on a scale of 1-4, with 1 being very well and 4 being not very well, rate yourself on how well you have lead in each segment of your child's life. Look at the next segment of your child's life (future dads, start with segment one). In the next thirty days, find three men whom you respect as a dad and ask them how they handled that segment? What did you glean?

S4: Some dads do not want to set boundaries (principles) with their children because the parent is not keeping those boundaries (principles) themselves. Read and answer the following.

1 Corinthians 11:1 (ESV)

- Whether you have children yet or not, as a parent, how does this verse relate to you as a dad?

- Have you ever:
 - Told children to be honest, but when the phone rung told a child to tell the person you are not at home?

 - Told children that the Bible is the Word of God, but they have never seen you read it?

 - Told children that God answers prayer, but they never see you on your knees?

- How can you make sure your life is one that children should be imitating?

ENDURANCE

E1: What did you glean from the article in the introduction?

E2: Read and answer the following.

Colossians 3:20 (ESV)

- Look up the word “obey” in a Bible dictionary. What does this word mean?
- Why is getting under God-given authority the first lesson God teaches?

E3: Read and answer the following.

Ephesians 6:1–3 (ESV)

- What are three things from these verses that are a result of obeying parents?
- At what age can you stop obeying your parents? Why?

E4: Even though a time will come when you are no longer required to obey your parents, there will never come a time when you are no longer required to honor your parents.

- How do you honor your parents?
- How can you honor parents whose behavior towards you was abusive?

E5: In the next thirty days, find three men to discuss obedience and honor. What did you glean from the conversation?