

DAD TIRED

AND LOVING IT

JERRAD LOPES



HARVEST HOUSE PUBLISHERS
EUGENE, OREGON

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from The ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Verses marked NIV are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

Verses marked GW are taken from GOD'S WORD. GOD'S WORD is a copyrighted work of God's Word to the Nations. Quotations are used by permission. Copyright 1995 by God's Word to the Nations. All rights reserved.

Cover design by Bryce Williamson

Cover photos © good_reason08 / Getty Images

DAD TIRED...AND LOVING IT

Copyright © 2019 by Jerrad Lopes

Published by Harvest House Publishers

Eugene, Oregon 97408

www.harvesthousepublishers.com

ISBN 978-0-7369-7716-6 (hardcover)

ISBN 978-0-7369-7717-3 (eBook)

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Lopes, Jerrad, author.

Title: Dad tired : and loving it / Jerrad Lopes.

Description: Eugene, Oregon : Harvest House Publishers, [2019]

Identifiers: LCCN 2019011912 (print) | LCCN 2019014448 (ebook) | ISBN

9780736977173 (ebook) | ISBN 9780736977166 (hardcover)

Subjects: LCSH: Fatherhood—Religious aspects—Christianity.

Fathers—Religious life.

Classification: LCC BV4529.17 (ebook) | LCC BV4529.17 .L67 2019 (print) | DDC

248.8/421—dc23

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2019011912>

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, digital, photocopy, recording, or any other—except for brief quotations in printed reviews, without the prior permission of the publisher.

Printed in the United States of America

19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 / VP-RD / 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

CONTENTS

The Towel Boy	7
---------------------	---

PART 1: THE KINGDOM OF GOD AROUND YOU

1. Color-Blind	13
2. Satan's Cesspool	25
3. Football Jerseys	45

PART 2: THE KINGDOM OF GOD IN YOU

4. The Syrup Aisle	65
5. Hide-and-Seek	83
6. Squirrel Food	101

PART 3: THE KINGDOM OF GOD THROUGH YOU

7. Lost in the Woods	125
8. A Case of the Ronalds	145
9. Headed to Aspen	167
Final Thoughts	187

THE TOWEL BOY

When I was a junior in high school, I landed my first-ever job at a local gym in town. I have to admit, as a sixteen-year-old boy, it sounded pretty cool to tell your peers that you worked as a gym employee. I never really told them exactly what I did at my job; I just wanted my friends to imagine that it was something amazing. In my mind, I hoped they pictured me lifting weights and teaching other people how to get in the best shape of their lives.

The truth is, I was a towel boy.

My job was to collect the nasty, sweaty, used towels from around the facility, throw them in a giant bin, wash them, fold them, and then hand them to the members as they walked in the front door.

It was far from glamorous. In fact, most of the time it was completely disgusting, and I spent the majority of my shift trying not to vomit. But I was determined to convince my friends that I had the best job in the world—and, more importantly, that I was an expert in physical fitness.

I wasn't an expert in physical fitness, however. I was a towel boy.

I didn't possess the skills to get my friends in shape, but I could offer them a clean towel.

Sometimes when I tell people I run a ministry for young dads, I secretly

hope they think I'm an expert in parenting. In my mind, I imagine they look at me as a young father who has wisdom well beyond his years.

The truth is, when it comes to parenting, I'm a towel boy.

At the time of my writing this book, I have a seven-year-old boy, a five-year-old girl, and a baby girl on the way. It would be insane for me to try to convince you that I have some secret knowledge of what it means to be a superdad.

When it comes to stumbling your way toward becoming the spiritual leader of your home, I am getting tripped up right alongside you. In fact, as I wrote this introduction, I had to pause, step away from the computer, and go yell at my kids in the front yard.

Here's the thing: As a young dad, I'm not necessarily looking for a magic formula on how to raise kids, written by someone much older than me.

I'll take all the advice I can get, but I also know there are no shortcuts or get-the-perfect-kid-quick methods out there.

I'm not looking for the latest parenting trends. I'm looking for Jesus.

That's why I wrote this book.

I personally wanted to know what the Scriptures had to say about what it means to lead my family well. Like many of my peers, I didn't have a dad around when I was growing up, so I had no one to teach me what spiritual leadership looks like.

This book is filled with a lot of practical tips on how to become the spiritual leader of your home, but it goes much deeper than some how-tos. It aims to get at the heart behind them.

If you have raised a child who is older than two years old, you know they all go through the "why" phase, when they question everything.

**When it comes
to parenting,
I'm a towel boy.**

In some ways, I'm not sure I ever left the "why" stage. I know I'm supposed to be leading my family as the spiritual leader of the house, but I wanted to know why. Why did God call us to this task? And what does spiritual leadership look like today?

I don't think I'm qualified to teach you how to be the perfect dad. But I'm willing to toss you a clean towel. I'm willing to hop on the treadmill next to you and start fresh at this whole spiritual leadership thing. Most importantly, I'm willing to join you in chasing after the Perfect Father as together we learn what it means to raise children who passionately follow him.

Ultimately my prayer is that by the end of this book, you will have fallen more in love with Jesus and as a result help your wife and children do the same.

I'm glad to be on this journey with you, brother. Let's start stumbling forward.

**I'm not looking
for the latest
parenting trends.
I'm looking
for Jesus.**

— PART 1 —

THE KINGDOM OF GOD AROUND YOU



COLOR-BLIND

Why the Gospel Changes Everything

I'm color-blind.

Sometimes I find myself watching online videos of color-blind people trying on corrective color-blind glasses for the first time. In case you haven't heard, apparently someone has invented eyeglasses that can allow a color-blind person to see the world in normal color. One man's wife surprised him with a pair of these glasses as a gift, and as the viewers, we get to see his response to seeing the world in color for the first time.

At first, he's trying to play it pretty cool. As any confident man would do, he doesn't seem to act overly surprised or emotional. From behind the camera, you can hear his wife say, "Look at your kids' eyes." And that's when things take a turn. As he looks down at his daughter and stares her in the eyes, he begins to get emotional. He fights back the tears as he sees the beautiful color of his daughter's eyes for the first time.

He's a wreck. I'm a wreck. It's an emotional mess.

He was born color-blind, but now he can see. For the first time in his life, he can see how things were supposed to be.

Leila, my wife, once signed me up for a color-blind study at the local

college to see if we could pull off a similar video. I spent hours in a lab failing all kinds of tests and confirming that my eyes really are broken. I tried on one pair of eyeglasses after another but with no luck. Leila stood by with her camera constantly recording my reactions. But there was nothing. They didn't have a single pair of glasses that could correct my color-blindness.

**Sometimes
I think none of us
can see the world
as it should be.**

To this day, I'm not able to see the world as it should be.

Sometimes I think none of us can see the world as it should be.

One of the scariest parts of our world is that nothing really surprises us anymore. Think about this: What news story would you have to hear to make you genuinely surprised or shocked? When I turn on the news or scroll through the news app on my phone, I read story after story of all kinds of evil and wickedness. But to be honest, I'm not surprised. We have heard so many terrible stories that they have become normal to us. Even something as terrible as a school shooting doesn't surprise us anymore. We almost expect it. It has become the new normal. In fact, did you know that as I'm writing this, the Columbine shooting, which is implanted deep into many of our minds, isn't even in the top ten worst shootings anymore?

The brokenness, wickedness, tragedy, and pain have become our new normal.

But it's not normal.

This isn't the way things were supposed to be.

WHERE IT ALL STARTED

My kids love the story of creation and the start of humanity told in

Genesis. We read it weekly. They are fascinated by the idea that God can make something out of nothing. They especially love the part about God walking with the humans in the garden. And of course, they giggle every time they hear that Adam and Eve were naked and unashamed.

“That’s how it should be!” I constantly explain.

I am always trying to teach my kids that shame isn’t normal. Hiding from God isn’t normal. Feeling far from God isn’t normal. Yes, those things describe *our* normal. We feel those things every day, but they aren’t the way things are supposed to be.

“Normal” in the book of Genesis, and in the story of humanity, lasts for about three chapters before things take a terrible turn for the worse.

Satan, disguised as a serpent, presents an interesting proposition to Adam and Eve: “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?’” (Genesis 3:1).

The very first words we ever see from Satan are a lie.

God didn’t say they couldn’t eat from any tree. In fact, quite the opposite: God said they could eat from any tree in the garden except one—the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Satan has been telling lies about God since day one. But really, he wasn’t tempting Adam and Eve with a piece of fruit. Keep in mind that they are in the most glorious and robust garden in the history of the world. There is no shortage of good fruit all around them. Satan wasn’t tempting them with an apple—he was tempting them with satisfaction outside of God.

Satan’s goal was to convince Adam and Eve that God was holding out

**The very first
words we ever see
from Satan
are a lie.**

on them. That there was something better, more satisfying, outside of God's design. And they fell for it.

Satan tempts you and me with the same lie to this very day. He continues to plant this idea in our heads: "I wonder what life is like outside of God.

I wonder if there is something better for me, something more satisfying than God alone."

His tactics are extremely effective, but they aren't new. He has had one objective from the beginning of time: to convince humans that life is best lived outside of God's design and outside of the way things are meant to be.

Only three chapters into the Bible, things take a radical turn for the worse. What was once normal becomes radically abnormal.

It once was normal to walk with God. Now the new normal is to run and hide from God.

It once was normal to be in relationship with God and other people without friction and shame. Now it's normal to endure friction and suffer death in relationships.

Everything that was normal, everything that was exactly how God designed it to be gets flipped on its head.

If he were anything like us, he would have bailed. He designed a perfect world, a world where we could thrive with him and each other. A world with no death, no tears, no shame, and no pain. It was perfect. And we, in our desire to pursue satisfaction outside of him, stepped out from under his design. It was our choice, not his. He could have left—and maybe he should have.

But he didn't leave.

If I were new to the Bible and heard this story for the first time, I would

**It was once
normal to walk
with God.
Now the new
normal is to run
and hide from God.**

assume that the next few chapters would describe God going through a fit of fury. Everything that he spent time creating perfectly has just been destroyed, and the normal reaction would be for him to be really upset—maybe even destroy the humans he just created. I wouldn't be surprised to read about lightning bolts and wrath. He had every right to be furious.

But do you know what God is doing on arguably the worst day in human history?

He's taking a walk (see Genesis 3:8).

Catch this: On the worst day of the history of the world, God isn't stomping around like a toddler who just got his tablet taken away. Instead, we find him taking a walk in the garden.

Instead of running away from the mess or shouting from afar, we see the God of the universe walking with his creation on their worst day. We learn from the very first pages of Scripture that God isn't afraid to be near broken and messy people.

Don't get me wrong—God is upset. How could he not be? He created everything and knows how it works best, and yet he is watching his creation tear things apart.

I once spent an entire week building a wooden playhouse for my kids to play in, only to find that they had taken it completely apart because they thought it would be more fun to see what the wood does if they throw it into the pool. It's frustrating when someone breaks something that you've spent so much time creating.

But somewhere hidden in the consequences, we find a glimmer of hope from our good Father. Instead of bailing, and instead of destroying

**Do you know
what God is doing
on arguably the
worst day in
human history?
He's taking a walk.**

Instead of bailing,
and instead of
destroying everything,
God makes a
promise to bring
everything back to
the way things were
supposed to be.

everything, God makes a promise to bring everything back to the way things were supposed to be. In essence, God says, “Don’t worry. I’m going to fix this.”

A NEW NORMAL

Fast-forward thousands of years, and it’s hard to find anyone in Scripture who remembers those normal days of walking in the garden with God. What once was normal now seems abnormal. And what was once abnormal seems normal.

Sickness and death weren’t normal. Now everyone gets sick and eventually dies.

Murder wasn’t a thing. Now you can’t turn more than three pages into a story without someone killing another person.

Adultery was unheard of. Now faithfulness is a rare quality to be found.

Brokenness, evil, and wickedness have become the new normal.

There’s a story in the Gospel of Mark of Jesus healing a paralyzed man. The man’s friends, full of faith, are desperate to get him in front of Jesus to be healed. Unfortunately, the room is crowded with people, so they decide to cut a hole in the roof of the house and lower their friend down. That’s some serious commitment.

Jesus looks at the man dangling down and says, “Son, your sins are forgiven” (Mark 2:5). Jesus’s words here are interesting because the man didn’t come to get his sins forgiven—he came to get his legs fixed. Jesus always had a way of getting to the heart of the issue and recognizing the deeper problem at hand.

Jesus’s talk of forgiving sins upset the religious leaders. They knew that only God could forgive sins, so for Jesus to make that statement with such

**In his kingdom,
there is nothing
but grace.**

authority was the greatest and boldest statement he could have made. It was a statement that would eventually lead to his death.

Listen to how the rest of the story unfolds:

“Why does this man speak like that? He is blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?” And immediately Jesus, perceiving in his spirit that they thus questioned within themselves, said to them, “Why do you question these things in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Rise, take up your bed and walk’? But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins”—he said to the paralytic—“I say to you, rise, pick up your bed, and go home.” And he rose and immediately picked up his bed and went out before them all, so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, “We never saw anything like this!” (Mark 2:7-12).

**Jesus wasn’t
being abnormal;
he was showing
them what normal
looks like.**

“They were all amazed,” Mark says. In fact, all throughout the book of Mark, you find people who are amazed by the way Jesus talked, taught, and healed.

They were amazed because it wasn’t normal for them to see radical grace, unending forgiveness, or physical healing. In fact, they had never seen anything like it before. But to Jesus, this is what normal life looks like. In his kingdom, there is nothing but grace. In his kingdom, there is no such thing as sickness or death.

Jesus wasn’t being abnormal; he was showing them what normal looks like. He was reminding them of how things were before humans stepped outside of his design. Jesus was giving them a pair of color-blind corrective

glasses and showing them what the world was supposed to look like. He was pointing them back to normal life.

YOUR KINGDOM COME

When I was a kid, I used to think the point of being a Christian was going to heaven—or more specifically, not going to hell. I remember sitting in church one day and hearing the pastor give a lengthy sermon on how terrible hell is and how to avoid it simply by repeating a prayer after him. So like any logical person who doesn't want to be burned in a fire for all eternity, I repeated the prayer.

When I got home that night, I was nervous that I didn't truly mean the words I had said in the prayer, so I prayed it again, just to make sure God knew I was serious. I ended up praying that prayer about ten thousand more times over the next several years, constantly worried that I wasn't sincere enough or that maybe God had forgotten that I really didn't want to go to hell.

As I grew older, I learned that Jesus never asked anyone to repeat a prayer to get into heaven. In fact, nowhere in the Bible does anyone say that the key to salvation is to simply repeat a prayer asking Jesus into your heart. You'll also never find Jesus talking about hell to scare people into heaven.

In Matthew 6, Jesus teaches his disciples how to pray. Listen to what he says:

Pray then like this:
Our Father in heaven,

Jesus never asked anyone to repeat a prayer to get into heaven. He also never talked about hell to scare people into heaven.

hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil (Matthew 6:9-13).

Check this out. In the second sentence, Jesus tells his disciples to pray that God's kingdom and his will would be done on earth as it is in heaven. Jesus didn't tell them to pray, "God, make this life go by quickly so we can experience heaven one day." No. Instead, he tells them to pray that heaven would come here to earth. Jesus is teaching his disciples that heaven isn't just a "someday" thing. It's a "here-and-now" thing too.

**Following Jesus
means we get to
be part of
experiencing
heaven coming
to earth today.**

When Jesus is preaching radical forgiveness and healing the sick, he is giving the world a glimpse of heaven. He is bringing chunks of heaven, and God's will, down here to earth. And what's crazy is that he tells his disciples to pray for the same.

Following Jesus doesn't just mean we get to avoid hell. Following Jesus means we get to be part of experiencing heaven coming to earth today.

A BIGGER STORY

You likely picked up this book to find some practical tips on how to be a

better dad. But if we miss the bigger story going on around us, we will simply turn into moral adults trying to raise moral children. And that's not God's design for your life or for the lives of your children.

Amid your busy life, your stress at work, and the chaos of trying to be a husband and father, a much bigger story is unfolding around you. There is a story of God keeping the promise he made in the first pages of Scripture. He is in the process of turning things back to the way they are supposed to be. He is transforming the abnormal parts of our hearts and world, making them normal again. This is God's plan for your life. He wants nothing more than to take what has been broken in you and make it new again. And here's the crazy part: He picked you to help do the same thing in the lives of your children.

God doesn't want you to simply raise moral children. He wants their hearts to be radically in love with his.

Before the creation of the world, God knew what was going to happen. He knew we would step outside his design and into a world of brokenness. He knew he would spend thousands of years on a rescue mission to recapture our hearts. And he knew he wanted to include you in the rescue of your child's heart.

God doesn't want you to simply raise moral children. He wants their hearts to be radically in love with his. In his sovereignty, and in the middle of your mess, he has chosen you to be part of that mission.

This is the good news, the gospel of Jesus Christ: God didn't bail on us but instead promised to fix the mess.

Brother, God wants to fix the mess in your heart. He wants to take your pain, your brokenness, your past, and your shortcomings and give you a new life. God is relentless in his pursuit of your heart and turning things back to the way they were designed to be. The fact that you picked up this

book and are reading these words is evidence that God is still chasing after your heart. He won't stop until things are back to the way they are supposed to be.

Sometimes as tired dads, it can seem like our only objective is to survive the day. There have been many nights where I've laid my head on my pillow and tried to think about what I accomplished as a parent. It often feels like

I spend most of my days saying "No!" or "Don't touch that!" or "Not right now." When I zoom in to the daily moments of my life and parenting, I am often discouraged. My guess is that as a dad, you've probably felt the same.

**There is a
bigger story going
on around us,
a story in which
God has
included you.**

As a follower of Jesus, I am convinced that there is more to parenting than simply surviving. If we get lost in the chaos of dirty diapers, grumpy bosses, and overflowing dishwashers, we'll lose sight of the bigger story of God's redeeming work around us. We'll forget that God is relentlessly at work fixing the broken-

ness of our hearts and equipping us to be part of that same work in the lives of our children.

If we miss that story, the rest of this book is pointless. On the other hand, if all you gain from this book is a bigger picture of the gospel and God's work throughout the world, it will be worth it.

You're a tired dad—I get it. I'm tired too. But let us not forget that there is a bigger story going on around us, a story in which God has included you. My prayer for my own life and for you as my brother is that these words from Paul will one day be true of us:

"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith" (2 Timothy 4:7).