

DR. JOSH AND CHRISTI STRAUB

FAMOUS AT HOME



*7 Decisions to Put Your Family
Center Stage in a World
Competing for Your Time,
Attention, and Identity*

Foreword by *Gary Chapman*

In a world obsessed with fame and fortune, *Famous at Home* is exactly what families should aim for—being famous to the people who matter most. Josh and Christi wonderfully articulate how you can intentionally show up for your family and navigate the roadblocks that will inevitably appear. This is the perfect book for anyone wanting to become the best version of themselves not only for themselves, but for their family.

BOB GOFF, author of the *New York Times* bestsellers *Love Does*, *Everybody Always*, and *Dream Big*

I'm so thankful for friends like Josh and Christi and resources like *Famous at Home* as my wife and I navigate parenthood in such a busy season of life. We've become more motivated and intentional about learning how to be the best parents we can be for our three kids. This amazing book has helped us grow and educate ourselves around what it really means to be famous and what kind of fame is most important. This will be a book we read many times over the years as we continue to grow and navigate our most important responsibility and honor—being a parent.

TYLER HUBBARD, singer, songwriter, and musician

When Josh and Christi first mentioned the phrase “famous at home” a few years ago, I started clapping. It's such a perfectly simple, perfectly powerful way to think about the impact you can have inside your family. I knew the moment I heard their vision for this book that it was going to be a life-changing work. I'm so glad they're sharing this idea with more than just me over a cup of coffee in Nashville. This is a book that every parent could benefit from, and I couldn't be a bigger fan!

JON ACUFF, *New York Times* bestselling author of *Soundtracks: The Surprising Solution to Overthinking*

The family is an “oven for growth” in which Mom, Dad, and their children all experience healthy ingredients such as attachment, structure, acceptance, and values. God’s design is that each person then becomes well-adjusted, loving, and competent. So often, however, parents feel conflicted, overwhelmed, and disconnected from one another, and those stresses are replicated in their children. Josh and Christi Straub have provided a tremendous resource to help parents become the successful, close, and happy family they have always wanted. Using their own vulnerable narratives, examples of people they have worked with, the latest neuroscience and research, and biblical principles, they give the reader a right-now and practical guide to starting in a new and better way.

JOHN TOWNSEND, PhD, *New York Times* bestselling author of the Boundaries series, founder of the Townsend Institute for Leadership and Counseling and the Townsend Leadership Program

If you’re like me, you’ve wasted so much time worrying over what other people think of you, only to realize none of it matters. This book is the antidote. I now want to be famous to only five people—my wife and four sons—because that’s where fame matters and that’s where my real mission is. This book is full of vulnerable moments and good stories, but most importantly, it will change you. Go read it. Quick.

JUSTIN WHITMEL EARLEY, business lawyer and author of *Habits of the Household: Practicing the Story of God in Everyday Family Rhythms*

We want to be famous in a lot of places—at work, in society, and in our towns. But Josh and Christi show us so clearly that if we want to have a true impact—in our work, society, and towns—it starts with being famous at home. This book is clear, wise, and full of truth.

JEFFERSON BETHKE, *New York Times* bestselling author of *Jesus > Religion*

In a culture that prioritizes fame and success, our efforts to be recognized are often directed outward to the world rather than inward to our families. Then it is our families that get our tired, overwhelmed leftovers. In this book, Josh and Christi outline how to prioritize family. They offer reminders that those who too often get the least of us not only deserve but also bring out the best in us. I'm grateful for my friends Josh and Christi Straub—for their vulnerability, their passion for emotional health, and their commitment to bringing healing to families.

SISSY GOFF, LPC, MHSP, director of child and adolescent counseling and bestselling author of *Raising Worry-Free Girls*

Famous at Home is not only timely but is also absolutely essential for anyone who desires to break the dysfunctional generational cycles they experienced growing up and ensure they are not repeated within their own family. Our friends Dr. Josh and Christi Straub not only provide a clear blueprint on how to do this but they teach it using their own lives. We highly recommend this book for those who are ready and serious about making their family a priority above all else.

JAMAL AND NATASHA MILLER, CEO of Miller Media Group, Inc., and founders of The One University

In today's culture, it's too easy to find our value in what we do for a living. Josh and Christi remind us that there is something else that holds significantly more importance—our role in our families. As an actress, people may use the word *famous* to describe me, but I would much rather be famous at home to my four biggest, forever fans—my husband and three children. Take a dive into this purposeful book to refocus on leaving a meaningful legacy by putting your family center stage.

CANDACE CAMERON BURE, actress, producer, *New York Times* bestselling author

DR. JOSH AND CHRISTI STRAUB

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To Landon, Kennedy, and Micah,

Wherever God leads you, trust him.

Whoever you serve, may it be from his love.

Whatever you do, may it be for his Kingdom.

You are and always will be famous at home.

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FOREWORD

Most Christian couples agree that family should be a priority in their lives. However, many lack a clear picture of what that looks like. Some think it means attending their kids' activities, such as recitals and athletic events. Others focus on giving their children experiences that create memories, such as elaborate birthday celebrations, exciting vacations, or adventurous world travel. Still other couples want to make sure their children have the best possible education, and they are often willing to sacrifice in order to provide it.

In some families, the marriage relationship is parked on a side street while the couple focuses on the well-being of the children. Other couples realize that keeping their marriage alive and vibrant is one of the best things they can do for their children. So they plan regular date nights, speak each other's love language, and do their best to process conflict in a healthy manner.

We all have our own ideas about what is most important in nurturing a healthy family, and we judge our success based on how well we do those things. We congratulate ourselves by saying, "I have only missed one of my son's ball games in the past two years." While this is commendable, all of us would probably agree that there is more to being a good parent than attending our children's events.

One of the saddest things I have ever heard was the lament of an adult son after the burial of his father. “I never knew my father,” he said. “He worked out of town Monday through Friday, played golf on Saturday, and watched football on Sunday. He provided for us financially, but I never knew him.” I walked away with tears in my eyes. My guess is that the father saw his role as financial provider and may have even congratulated himself for a job well done.

As Christians, our first allegiance is to God. Knowing him and serving him is our first priority. When we have this attitude, we pray, “Lord, show me how to invest my life in serving you by serving others. Where do I begin?” I believe God’s answer is, “Begin with the people closest to you.” If you are married, the person closest to you is your spouse; and if you have children, this includes them as well. Couples who love each other as Christ loves us begin by serving one another. That becomes our first priority in serving God. Then we seek together to follow the example of our heavenly Father in parenting our children.

In *Famous at Home*, Josh and Christi Straub share biblically based and practical ideas on how to put your family center stage by making it the focus of your service to God. When you prioritize serving one another in the home, you not only create an atmosphere in which your family can thrive, but you also equip your family to extend that attitude of service to others. I believe that one of the reasons the church has not made a greater impact on the world is that many Christians have never learned how to make service a way of life in the home. If you are eager to show up in meaningful ways for the loved ones under your roof and to make your family a launching pad for a life of ministry, *Famous at Home* points the way.

Gary Chapman, PhD
Author of The 5 Love Languages

AN INVITATION TO BE FAMOUS AT HOME

JOSH

It was September 2014 when I got the call. My dad's heart had failed. The left chamber was no longer able to pump blood into his organs. They, too, were shutting down.

In the three frantic hours that followed, with no flights available until the next day, Christi and I packed up all the belongings required for a six-week-old, a two-year-old, and two emotional adults to make a seventeen-hour, straight-through-the-night drive from Missouri to Hershey, Pennsylvania. With thirty minutes of sleep in a forty-two-hour span, we arrived in Hershey in time to see my dad coming out of surgery, where he had received a heart pump to do the work of his left chamber.

The next three weeks were difficult. Christi was living with in-laws while caring for a screaming two-month-old who didn't sleep and a needy two-year-old. I wasn't much help, as I spent most days driving an hour back and forth to the hospital and tried to work on the days in between.

Unbeknownst to us at the time, my dad would stay in the hospital another three months, needing another heart pump replacement by December. In mid-November, having returned home to

Missouri a few weeks prior, Christi and I flew out for a job interview I had for an executive position with a company on the other side of the country. It was the first time she had left our babies behind, and the trip was a disaster. On the day we arrived, Christi melted into tears during a meeting with the head of the human resources department. Just the impression I wanted to make, bringing an unsupportive and overwhelmed wife.

Here we were, in survival mode, our time pulled toward our high-maintenance babies and my dad's needs and facing a possible reprieve with a job that could give me a sense of identity I felt I was missing.

A month later, with dwindling finances, my dad still in the hospital fighting for his life, the looming prospect of moving across the country for a job, and a difficult four-month-old and two-year-old in tow, we inexplicably decided to drive twenty-one hours to spend Christmas with Christi's parents in Canada. Looking back, we have no idea what we were thinking.

To add chaos to chaos, two days before Christmas my dad surprised us all when he was released from the hospital. Now that we were just an eight-hour drive away at Christi's parents' house, all I could think about was my dad having a chance to hold his four-month-old granddaughter for the first time.

But Christi resisted.

Big time. With big-time tears.

I felt alone. Why couldn't she see my perspective?

But this wasn't one moment. This was a monthslong fade—one in which I had worked hard to keep all the plates spinning. And in my laser-focused efforts to fix everything and be everything for everyone, I became blind to what Christi had suffered.

In the previous five months, Christi had given birth, gotten little sleep, and been unable to breastfeed our daughter. Suffering

from debilitating and chronic back pain, she had endured the seventeen-hour drive to Hershey, the three weeks living with in-laws, and the gut-wrenching trip across the country for a job opportunity that didn't pan out. Now, having driven twenty-one hours to Canada, I was demanding we drive another sixteen hours round trip back to Pennsylvania.

Convinced she was just being selfish, I packed up the kids and drove them, by myself, through an unexpected snow squall that had me petrified.

I made it, though. Saw my dad. And celebrated with him and the kids as best I could.

I thought I was putting my family center stage.

But upon my return, our marriage needed some work. Christi was bitter. In postpartum depression. On the bottom rung of life. She resented me, and I couldn't understand why. I felt like I was doing absolutely everything I could—getting up with the kids at night, cleaning the house, making a living, and honoring my parents. In my mind, I was crushing it.

In Christi's mind, nobody was crushing anything.

That was several years ago.

Today, we are each other's greatest teammates. Our gut instinct now is to fight *for* each other, not *against* each other. But Christi and I needed help to start functioning from our strengths. We weren't on the brink of divorce because it's not in our vocabulary, but we were emotionally and spiritually exhausted.

Not until we got honest about all that was stealing our time did we begin redeeming it for ourselves. Not until we saw what was robbing our attention did we turn it toward our family. And not until we were willing to look inward did we begin to see the unhealthy places we had put our identities. That's when we started fighting for each other. That's when we committed to making the

decisions we needed to make moment by moment to find our way forward again—looking not merely to survive but to live fully alive, because our family was now center stage.

Putting Your Family Center Stage

Your family might not be as broken as we were at that time. On a family health scale of one to ten, with one being “hopeless” and ten being “crushing it,” we were probably at about a three during that season. You may very well be on the crushing it end of the scale or at an eight and just looking for direction to sustain the health and growth your family already enjoys. Or perhaps your family is in the middle at a five, feeling like you’re just going through the motions. You’re not falling apart, but you’re not fully connected, either, and you might feel stuck. Or maybe you’re where we were, on the lower end of the scale, at a two, or on the brink of losing your family. You’re really struggling and feeling hopeless.

Wherever you are right now, we wrote this book to help you move closer to the crushing it side of the scale, to help you become famous at home by putting your family center stage. That’s not easy to do in a culture that competes for your time, attention, and identity. But when a career, a business endeavor, or any other role or activity takes center stage, it’s all too easy for your family to get your leftovers instead of your best.

The pull toward work or any other endeavor that affirms our identity often provides a dopamine bump in our brain that being at home with our loved ones does not. Crushing it on our “stage” for superiors, stakeholders, or followers provides a much higher level of instant gratification than an oft-interrupted game of Chutes and Ladders in which our opponent struggles to know which way is up and which is down. Our ego also knows the difference between the

accolades of our coworkers, fans, followers, or customers and the appreciation (insert sarcasm) we receive at home.

Many of us put more effort into becoming famous on stages outside the home because that's where we find our identity and significance. Your stage could be on social media, in a boardroom, on a sports field, in a hospital, on the battlefield, in a government building, on a farm, in an arena, or in any other role or activity to which you attach your sense of significance. But putting a career or any other source of identity center stage can wreak havoc on the relationships with the ones you love the most.

For some, their stage is the home. Think of the stay-at-home parent on the front lines raising kids and supporting the often-times more public or, in the eyes of the world, "more important" stage of his or her spouse. Cooking meals for, picking up after, and chauffeuring tantrum-throwing, nitpicking, and unappreciative kids all day leaves even the most intentional stay-at-home parent feeling unseen and insignificant.

As a marriage and leadership coach to high-capacity leaders and organizations, I see firsthand the toll that putting work center stage takes on the home. I've seen it in military officers, Forbes 500 executives, musicians, pastors, professional athletes, and husband/wife entrepreneurs—no matter the stage, the ache for deeper family connection is the same.

Christi and I often hear phrases like these:

- "I lead hundreds at work but feel like I can't lead anyone in my own home."
- "My spouse and I have sadly become roommates."
- "I feel like all I get is his/her leftovers."
- "I feel like all I have to give is what's left over."
- "I feel unappreciated at home."

No one wakes up one day and decides, “I’m going to ruin my marriage, neglect my kids, and cause mistrust in my family.” Yet our busyness and personal pursuits—our time and attention pulled in other places—can create a slow fade that leads toward just that. The problem for each of us is that the lure toward the immediate gratification of achievement and success outside the home can wreak long-term havoc inside the home.

The promise of *Famous at Home* is that you really can show up in intentional and meaningful ways for your biggest fans—the loved ones under your roof. You can have healthy personal rhythms that enable you to show up as the best version of you for your family. You can have a rock-solid marriage—one in which you and your spouse fight *for* rather than *against* one another. And you can have a mission for your family, a purpose that enables you and your kids to feel part of something so much bigger than yourselves alone.

This is what can happen when you put your family center stage.

How to Read *Famous at Home*

Famous at Home includes the practical and life-changing coaching strategies we use with our clients, but we also live this stuff ourselves. We never ask anybody to do something we’re not willing to do. As you read and work through the book, you’ll be invited into the ups and downs of our own story. You’ll also meet families we’ve had the privilege of coaching through our organization, Famous at Home. Every story is real, though the names and details have been altered to protect the families’ privacy.

You may find it helpful to have a journal or notebook with you as you read. In addition to writing down notes and personal insights along the way, you’ll need a place to write your responses to

coaching exercises. As an option, we've also created downloadable worksheets you can use to complete the coaching exercises. Access the Famous at Home worksheets at www.famousathome.com/book.

Famous at Home is organized in three parts. In part 1, "What It Means to Be Famous," we explore who was famous for you and why it matters. We'll also consider what you might be chasing as a source of identity and significance. Where you place your identity often speaks into the struggles you have as a family. It can also impact your willingness, or unwillingness, to make the decisions necessary to be famous at home.

In part 2, "An Overnight Success a Decade in the Making," we focus on the daily perseverance required to become famous at home. Just as there are famous musicians who put in years of hard work before becoming a seeming overnight success, there is hard work to be done to put your family center stage. We'll walk you through the deeper work you can do in your emotional and spiritual life to build a foundation for genuinely putting your family center stage over the long haul.

In part 3, "Seven Decisions to Put Your Family Center Stage," we walk you step-by-step through a process to help you discover and live out your family's purpose in everyday, doable ways. When you apply the Seven Decisions to put your family center stage, you'll learn how to better care for yourself so you can show up for your family. We'll help you develop an emotional vocabulary to better understand the inner worlds of your loved ones, as well as daily practices you can use to connect with your spouse and kids at a heart level. As you work through various coaching exercises, you'll establish your family rhythms, family values, and a family mission that gives meaning and direction to your family purpose.

No matter where you currently are on the family health scale, whether on the low end of hopeless or the high end of crushing

it, we believe the relationship you have with your spouse and kids can be filled with connection, adventure, and purpose. Even if you don't have much hope for that right now, let us hold that hope for you. You really can leave a legacy for your kids that will echo throughout the generations. And the good news is this: *It's never too late to get started.*

We have seen dire circumstances turn into beautiful marriage stories. We have seen fractured parent/child relationships fully restored. We have seen families on the verge of falling apart rebuild such life-giving relationships that they became a source of hope for other families. All because one person—yes, it takes just one person—was willing to make some new decisions. Decisions that didn't require a lot of time, but that shifted the atmosphere of the home—from exhaustion to rest, from resentment to forgiveness, from distrust to trust. We can't wait for you to read the stories of how this happens and how it can work for your family as well.

This is your invitation. Let's be famous at home.



PART I

WHAT IT MEANS TO BE FAMOUS

JOSH

Following dinner at the home of friends, our family arrived home about an hour and a half past our kids' bedtime. When I walked in to pray with our son Landon, he was standing beside his bed looking out of sorts.

"Dad, I knew I was going to do that," he said, disheartened. In what felt like slow motion, I watched as his bottom lip started to quiver and his eyes filled with tears.

"Buddy, what's going on?" I asked, sitting on the edge of his bed as I pulled him in close.

"I left my rubber band at Braxton's house."

"A rubber band? I can buy you a whole bag of rubber bands," I said, going into fix-it mode.

Sobbing, he continued. "No, Dad, this was my spec-spec-special rubber band. I wasn't even going to take it with me, but I did anyway, and now I forgot it. I know right where I put it, too."

I had a decision to make as a dad. Was he overtired? Sure he was. Was he overvaluing a rubber band? In my mind, yes. But did this mean something to him? You bet it did.

I grabbed my phone and texted Braxton's dad as Landon watched. Still not grasping the magnitude of the moment, I tucked Landon into bed, prayed with him, and kissed him goodnight.

As I went to brush my teeth, I got a text. The rubber band was in safe hands. I'd be picking it up off our friends' front porch in the morning.

I can't believe I'm picking up a rubber band, I kept thinking.

I walked back to Landon's room and told him the good news.

"Dad," he said, sitting up in bed, "you're the best! Thank you so much for helping me get it back."

I was leveled by the importance of the moment. I had no idea how much time he spent with that rubber band. He used it for

Lego builds, racetracks, and other engineering contraptions. This rubber band was essential to so many projects it had its own place on his nightstand—and in his heart.

Looking back, I'm glad I handled it the way I did. Had I made the moment about me, playing the hero by buying a whole bag of new rubber bands, or playing into my parental fear by belittling the rubber band as something not worth crying about, or playing into Landon's carelessness for taking something he knew he'd lose to a friend's house, I would have missed the sweet experience of his gratitude and mile-wide smile.

You might still be thinking, *It was a rubber band. The kid was tired. You're making something out of nothing.* I might be. But I don't want to risk the consequences of accumulated failed opportunities to enter my child's world because I make the moment about me. Instead, I want to make the choices that will make me famous to my kids.

That's why part 1, "What It Means to be Famous," takes you back to who was famous for you and why it matters. So often, we are unable to show up in these ordinary but meaningful "rubber band" moments with our loved ones because somewhere on our journey we left behind our own inner child. And in a renewed search for significance, we give our time, attention, and identity over to anything that will fill the emotional void, bolster our ego, and heal our pain—a chase that can make us famous, but perhaps not in the way we imagined.

Capturing those sweet experiences of gratitude and mile-wide smiles from your biggest fans often requires rediscovering your own mile-wide smile. Let's go figure out what's stealing it and what it really means for you to be famous.

BEING FAMOUS

Who Showed Up for You?

JOSH

The house was situated right next to a country road in rural central Pennsylvania, but it wasn't one of those lonely country roads that winds slowly through the hills. No, it was a 45 mph bypass for the 55 mph main drag from one town to the next.

The house also sat smack in the middle of a concrete block manufacturer. Across the road was a lot filled with block trucks, gas tanks, and maintenance garages. Flying dust was common as trucks came and went, taking the next round of blocks to a job site, perhaps to build the basement walls of someone's new home.

The inventory lived on the same side of the road as the house. Stacks of cinder blocks, massive bins of sand, stones of all shapes and sizes, and topsoil were piled right against the back and side yards of the house—a child's playground dreams come true!

My sister and I were the beneficiaries because our grandmother lived in this house. Mispronouncing “grandma” when I was a little boy was one of the best mistakes of my life, as my grandma became affectionately known as “Me-maw” to everyone around her. And affection is what I felt in her presence. Deep feelings of joy, connection, and safety. Not to mention the sensory comforts that seemed to saturate my soul every time I walked through her door.

The taste of ham, sweet potatoes, and the fixings of fresh homemade meals every holiday.

The smell of freshly cut grass and the sight of the poplar leaves that changed color with each season.

The sounds of laughter every Sunday afternoon as we played games in that old house.

The feel of glue, pipe cleaners, and beads while making homemade Christmas ornaments.

Loving intentionality motivated everything Me-maw did. And all of it gave me a much-needed sense of stability and safety in the years following my parents’ divorce when I was ten years old.

To the outside world, Me-maw wasn’t known. But to me, nobody was more famous.

If I had a bad week at school and needed to smile again, I knew I’d be going to Me-maw’s house that weekend. When there was turmoil in the family, I went to see Me-maw. No matter what life threw at me, Me-maw was my stability. Her consistent presence kept me safe, gave me hope, and allowed me to be me.

Today, if you were to walk through the cemetery to the plot where Ruth Straub is buried, you would see one word under her name on the headstone: “Me-Maw.” There’s no question what made her famous.

We trusted her to show up.

Who Is Famous to You?

Growing up, who was your Me-maw? Who allowed you to be you? When you felt afraid, who was the calming presence that helped you reenter the world with confidence? Whom did you run to for hope when it seemed like everyone else had let you down? Who put a smile on your face when you felt sad? Did your parents provide this sense of safety for you? Or was it another family member, such as an aunt or uncle or a grandparent? Was it a coach, a close family friend, a foster parent?

What did your Me-maw's house look like? Smell like? Taste like? Sound like? Feel like? Was it your own home? The home of a friend? A school, a rec center, or a youth camp? Give yourself the gift of a few minutes to go back in time and recall that person and that place in your mind's eye.

At Famous at Home, we do an exercise similar to this at the start of a yearlong coaching program called the Leader's Heart Cohort. This cohort is like a business mastermind mentoring group, except we focus on the leader's inner life more than the leader's professional life. At the first meeting, we ask participants to introduce themselves to the group using the words of someone—living or deceased—who believes or believed in them.

I love watching the participants' faces during this exercise. Some light up thinking of the person who loved them dearly. Others smile hesitantly, wanting to believe that the good things coming out of their mouths hold true, but not yet believing those words themselves.

Every now and again, some participants have a difficult time thinking of anyone who believed in them. At that point, we ask if a pet loved or championed them. If not, we move to a moment in their lives in which a coach, teacher, parent, pastor, or friend

encouraged or stood up for them. Or we simply invite them to “tell us about a time when you felt loved.”

We all deserve to be loved. To have someone who shows up for us. The Bible says, “Such love has no fear, because perfect love expels all fear” (1 John 4:18). When I was a child, Me-maw’s love calmed my fears. Me-maw’s house was an emotional safe haven.

Being famous at home is about showing up in love for our spouse and kids. And we show up best when we do so from a place of feeling truly loved ourselves.

What It Means to Be Famous

In twenty-first-century America, fame often comes by way of an extraordinary talent or skill, such as acting, dancing, singing, or athletics. For the most part, we tend to celebrate people who entertain us. That includes social media celebrities and influencers. But the relationship we have with famous people is a one-way street—we know who they are, but they have no idea who *we* are. They don’t show up for us when we feel sad. They don’t celebrate our parenting wins. They don’t connect with us when we need a listening ear.

We can’t trust them to show up. Nor should we.

Yet, clinging to the picture-perfect worlds of famous people is perhaps one reason why teenage and young adult loneliness, depression, anxiety, and suicide continue to rise, while happiness, life satisfaction, and flourishing decline. Kids who have grown up following famous online influencers desire the glamorous life these celebrities appear to live, but they lack the basic relational skills required to navigate even an ordinary life well. They don’t know how to ask for help or have a heartfelt human connection with anyone willing to enter their pain or simply hold their hand through it.¹ Screen time does not and cannot fulfill the deepest relational longings of our hearts.

Recall again the one person who showed up for you when you were a child, even if it was in a single moment. In showing up, they gave you a visceral taste of heaven on earth. Love to calm your soul. Trust to settle your mind. Permission to be yourself.

The beloved disciple John described the source of such experiences of feeling loved when he wrote, “We love each other because [God] loved us first” (1 John 4:19). How well we step into the shoes of another person’s world and truly love them for who they are without making it about us flows from feeling loved by God. We tap into that feeling when we recall how someone showed up for us when we were a child. Experiencing the love of a trusted adult in childhood is foundational for how well we show up for others when we become adults.

Jesus drew on this transformational experience of divine love when he addressed his disciples shortly before his arrest and crucifixion: “Dear children, I will be with you only a little longer” (John 13:33). At first glance, it might seem condescending to address other adults as children. But Jesus used this affectionate address for his disciples only once in the Gospels,² and understanding the context in which he used it makes it even more meaningful. The Greek word that translates to “Dear children” is *teknion*. It is a term that conveys deep affection. Jesus used it to express his heartfelt tenderness toward his disciples right before he gave them a new commandment: “Just as I have loved you, you should love each other” (John 13:34). Did you catch the connection? Before commanding them to love, he wanted them to know they were loved by him.

The apostle Paul built on this teaching when he wrote, “I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may . . . *know* [Christ’s] love that surpasses *knowledge*—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God” (Ephesians 3:17-19,

NIV, emphasis added). Notice how Paul used wordplay to make a distinction between two kinds of knowing. To have “knowledge” (the Greek word *gnosis*) is to know about God; but “to know” (the Greek word *ginosko*) “indicates a relation between the person ‘knowing’ and the object known.”³ In other words, we can know about God, but Paul wants us to experience—to “be aware (of), feel . . . be sure, [and] understand”—God’s love, because it fills us with “all of the fullness of God.”⁴

When we experience this kind of love from God, it frees us from the spirit of judgment, shame, and condemnation. We become free to be ourselves and to show up for others because we trust God to show up for us.

We can show up selflessly for our spouse because God first loved us.

We can love our kids as Jesus loves us because we, too, are his children.

We can participate in divine love and show up for others filled with the fullness of God.

That’s because God created human relationships to function in much the same way, giving us a taste of heaven on earth as we experience his love through others who show up for us.

Though my relationship with Me-maw when I was growing up was filled with loving experiences, there were other relatives with whom I had no experiences—I merely knew about them. It was Me-maw’s showing up that rooted and established me in love, a love that helped me to become the husband and dad I am today. Now I get to pass on the fullness of her love by loving my kids the way she loved me.

Though you may not always get it right in the moment, your ongoing presence and commitment to showing up in the lives of your spouse and kids instills in them the fullness of your love.

When you're famous to the world, you're renowned and celebrated for a talent or skill. But when you're famous at home, you're renowned and celebrated for showing up in the one place that matters most.

Twenty Years from Now

I'll never forget teaching our daughter, Kennedy, to ride her bike without training wheels. I did wind sprints up and down our road, holding the bike loosely enough to help her learn but tightly enough that she wouldn't fall. I encouraged her. I picked her up when she scraped her ankle on the pedal. I told her she had what it took to ride on two wheels. She just needed me to believe in her more than she believed in herself.

Two nights later, Christi and I watched our daughter ride her bicycle around the cul-de-sac without training wheels like a pro. I stood on the sidewalk cheering like a raving lunatic, with a high probability of embarrassing Kennedy had others been watching but an even higher probability of giving her a taste of the raving love our Father in heaven has for us.

It is the accumulation of moments like this one, of showing up every day, that help our children *know* they are loved.

With this in mind, fast-forward twenty years from now. What do you hope your grown child might say if a friend were to ask, "Who showed up for you when you were a kid?" What moments do you hope your adult child will remember?

Though Kennedy might not remember me cheering like a lunatic the night she learned to ride a bike, I hope she grows up feeling loved and celebrated in all of her "bike riding" moments. In her mind's eye, I hope she always sees me jumping up and down for her achievements, hears my voice cheering her on, and feels my embrace in her failures as well as her successes. And I hope all of it

becomes the fuel that enables her to be brave in every circumstance she encounters as an adult.

Can you show up for your kids in absolutely every moment? Probably not. But you can show up, and the ordinary moments add up. You can tuck your kids into bed each night. You can watch a ball game, a dance recital, or a gymnastics meet. You can hold your kids in their distress, laugh with them at the dinner table, or teach them something you know. No act of showing up is ever wasted.

All of it is fuel.

All of it is “fame.”