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**Cultivating Kids
Who Love to Read**

with Jasmine Berry

Inspiring Good Dads

to be Great

by Mal White

The Bible 'Not on Gen Z's Radar' by Adrian Blenkinsop

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Cover: Author Mal White is inspiring good Dads to become great



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Inspiring Good Dads to be Great

Author Mal White explains how and why he came to write *Good Dads GREAT DADS*.

It has been said that only 10% of Australian men have a close relationship with their fathers. Most men would like to think they will enjoy a life-long relationship with their children but the statistics tell a different story.

Children are the worst affected when their dads are not actively involved in their children's lives. Many people carry what has been called a "father-wound."

Children need the regular input and validation from their father so that their self-esteem gets the appropriate boost it needs and so they can have "dad-inspired" confidence to face whatever life will throw at them.

I wrote *Good Dads GREAT DADS* to offer fresh inspiration to the Dads in Australia so that our generation can make the change that needs to happen.

As a father of three boys I needed to learn what it took to be a good father so I read books from great writers on the subject such as Steve Biddulph (Australia) and Dr. James Dobson (USA).

As my boys grew and my wife and I faced the many challenges of parenting I discovered that being a dad was not an easy role. Being a dad that wanted to be the best I could be took a lot of work and at times I failed. Today I enjoy a quality relationship with my adult sons for which I am eternally grateful.

I am glad I learned from others and then applied their wisdom to my role as dad. I am now reaping the rewards of making some very wise investments into my children's lives and our relationships.

In my professional life I have had the privilege of working with families in the community for twenty-five years as a teacher, counsellor and mentor.

I witnessed first hand the personal pain many children, teenagers and adults experience either because their father inflicted some form of damage or just simply was disengaged, unavailable and never gave them the affirmation they needed.

My own father was around, and whilst I have fond memories of him he was typical of his generation in that he was a fairly closed book emotionally. So there were some gaps in his fathering that did affect areas of my life. I wanted to address these gaps in fathering my own children.

In 2007 I was at a career high, working for World Vision to establish the national KIDS HOPE mentoring program, with national leadership responsibilities and regular speaking engagements.

However, my life came to a grinding halt when on 30 April I was diagnosed with Leukemia. I was 43 and my children were 14, 15 and 17 years old. I was unable to work full time and for two years I was barely able to work at all.

During this time I was not sure how long I might live for. But I still wanted to be doing something meaningful so I set up a blog called *Good Dads GREAT DADS* and started writing my thoughts and sharing my passion about how kids need their dads to be effective in their lives.

It took a number of years to get well and all the while I kept writing about ways to be highly engaged in our children's lives and their personal development. By 2013 my blog readership grew to span 106 countries.

I dedicated time to writing *Good Dads GREAT DADS*, the book, and in August last year it was published. It has been so successful that we have already had to do a second print run.

Having Tim Costello of World Vision write a wonderful reflection on Fatherhood as the

foreword and getting solid endorsements from the Australian Fatherhood Foundation have reinforced the importance of the messages that I have endeavoured to share in *Good Dads GREAT DADS*.

My aim was to make *Good Dads GREAT DADS* an easy read, full of personal stories and great pictures of dads engaged with their kids.

The book offers a range of practical suggestions for dads on how to build depth into their relationships with their children. It offers tips on how to really boost their child's self-belief and how to give them the confidence to do well at school and in their life's vocation.

The book is written to encourage dads to know how important they are in their child's welfare, their wellbeing and their personal development.

I would like our generation to be the one that says we will not leave a "father-wound" in our children's hearts and we will build life-long relationships with our kids.

The contents of my book are not complicated. For example; communicate your thoughts and feelings with your children, plan one to one dates or weekend getaways with them, read with your children, write a special letter or note to your child, know when and how to share your life wisdom with them and understand the unique personality of each of your children and relate to them accordingly.

We cannot turn back the clock but we can make a fresh start and work to become the father our children need us to be. None of us want to live with regrets. The encouragement is to learn all we can and then take the initiative to be highly effective in our children's lives. They are worthy of our greatest efforts and their future is in our hands.



Tim Costello, CEO World Vision writes,
“Mal has tapped into a deep well of reflection and wisdom. I know that many will find this book a valuable help in enhancing their journey towards becoming great dads.”

Warwick Marsh, Director of the Australian Fatherhood Foundation writes,
“Every dad in Australia needs to read this book, it could be the greatest investment you make in your role as a parent for the sake of your children.”

Cultivating Kids Who Love to Read

Rise editor Wendy Rush talks to Jasmine Berry, creator of a unique initiative that helps parents read to their children.

“The more that you read, the more things you will know. The more that you learn, the more places you’ll go” said Dr Seuss in *I Can Read with My Eyes Shut!*

Dr Seuss knew that learning to read is the first step in expanding our world and realising our life’s potential. At the very least it is crucial for us to function properly in society but unfortunately it seems there are many people who have been left behind in this regard. The 2012-2013 Federal Government funded ‘Let’s Read’ initiative highlighted that almost half (46%) of Australians over 15 years of age lack the literacy skills they need to meet the demands of everyday life and work. ‘Let’s Read’ reported that reading with children aged 0 to 5 years is probably the single most important activity parents can undertake to enhance their child’s future ability to read and write.

In her book *Reading Magic*, South Australian author Mem Fox says “... if every parent -and every adult caring for a child – read aloud a minimum of three stories a day to the children in their lives, we could probably wipe out illiteracy in one generation.”

Mem’s idea sounds great, but these days even the most conscientious parent would probably struggle to find opportunities to read three stories a day to their child. We all seem to be pressed on every side, not least those who have young ones to care for. And while many children are blessed with loving and involved grandparents, they are not usually available ‘twenty-four-seven’.

But don’t despair, because ‘twenty-four-seven’ help is actually available. Jasmine Berry, a mother of young children herself, has come up with an idea to supplement – but not replace – reading to your child.

Jasmine was looking for an educational alternative to television for her two little ones and she specifically wanted to find a website where stories were read to children in a natural and simple video format. She hoped to find something similar to the ABC TV show *Play School*, where stories would be available ‘on demand’.

“My children adore me reading to them but I could literally read to them for an hour and they’d still want more. And you know what it’s like running a household, the chores never end! So I went searching

for websites that offered what I was looking for. Unfortunately I found nothing suitable. The sites I did find were animated, so it felt like the children were watching television again. They often had American accents and they also had advertisements. So I decided I would make my own!”

Married for ten years with a four year old son and a six year old daughter, Jasmine is an occupational therapist by profession with experience working with children, specifically children with autism. But when she began work on *Read to My Child* almost two years ago, she had had no experience with website design, video production, copyright or publishing.

“The first step was finding a web designer. I was very lucky to have Jamie Druitt, founder and developer of *Talklife* (an iPhone-based app), as my mentor. He put me in touch with my web designer in Vietnam and we had lots of Skype chats while I explained what I was looking for. Language was a barrier so we typed messages to each other and, while he could see me, I wasn’t allowed to see his face as he is quite shy.”

Despite the challenges of distance and language, the site began to develop and then came the task of locating someone who could record the stories.

“I was lucky enough to know someone at our church, Matt Gray, who produces very high quality video, and he agreed to record for me. I’ve recorded four times, and one of those sessions was with a different videographer because I was trying to save money. While his price was cheaper, the quality of the recording was poor, so it was a disappointing waste of time and money unfortunately.”

At the time of writing Jasmine has just over thirty stories on the site, all endorsed by publishers, authors and illustrators. Gaining the required copyright permissions was a very slow process and it seemed to take a long time for the publishers to respond. She received many refusals. Despite the site being not-for-profit, some publishers were understandably concerned about seeing their valuable intellectual property being made freely available on the internet.

“I’ve been lucky, though, to have been supported by a number of very high quality authors, including Jackie French and Hazel Edwards. (Hazel wrote *There’s a Hippopotamus on my Roof Eating Cake* and is an Order of Australia recipient). It was

interesting waiting for responses - some publishers said ‘yes’ that I didn’t expect, and some who I thought would say ‘yes’, actually said ‘no.’”

Jasmine has also recorded two videos of her singing nursery rhymes, partly for parents to learn the tunes but mainly to entertain small children.

The response from parents has, in the main, been very encouraging. But as with all of us who step out into the public domain to do something a little different, Jasmine has also been targeted with some negative comments.

“People have posted things like ‘if you don’t have time to read to your children you shouldn’t have them’ but these types of comments I just ignore. They don’t understand that the site is not intended to replace parents reading to their children, which is a precious experience. It is a TV alternative at those busy moments in the day when something just needs to get done, like dinner on the table.

“Despite the odd nasty comment (and I admit I am an overly sensitive type of person), the experience has actually been incredibly rewarding. I had a dream to do something, I persevered, I put in the time, effort and money, and it is now entertaining children all over the world, including the UK, USA, Australia, China, Vietnam and other countries. There are also three Christian stories on the site, which is fabulous.

“My hope is that parents who may not read very well, or who may read in monotone - like my husband Scott! - might learn from the site about how to read to their children. For example how to put on voices, change their inflection and volume, when to pause and how to engage with the story. But my main aim is that children will be read to more. The statistics are alarming. I understand that less than fifty percent of kids are read to once a week, and it is crucial for language development, literacy and social development, and it aids with communication between parents and children.”

While Jasmine feels very strongly about the importance of reading to children, she is ultimately driven by her strong Christian beliefs.

“My passion is my faith and trying to live like Jesus did. For me this means continuing to practice being more patient with my

children, not losing my temper, showing more kindness and generosity to everyone, giving of my time, skills and money into things that I know would be important to Jesus. Just generally putting love into action and keeping that at the forefront of my mind, irrespective of how I feel on any given day.

“Ultimately I would like *Read to My Child* to share the gospel through the Christian books I read. I would like the site to increase the number of books that children have read to

them, and to help parents know how to read to their kids.”

Roald Dahl, author of *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, *Matilda* and numerous other well known children’s stories has been described as “one of the greatest storytellers for children of the 20th century”. He claimed that being read to as a child taught him more about writing than any English lesson he attended.

We don’t know what talent lies untapped in the minds and hearts of our children. Reading to them is the first step in helping them to engage with language and learning in a fun way, carrying the enjoyment with them as they grow. And to borrow from Dr Seuss, the more we read to them, the more they will know, and the more places they will be able to go!

Go to *Read to My Child* at www.readtomychild.com.au



Jasmine’s Tips for Reading to Your Child:

- Make sure your child is able to concentrate – a tired or hungry child has difficulty paying attention.
- Sit them down comfortably in a quiet place, without distractions.
- Use different voices for different characters.
- Allow for pauses for your child to ask questions – this helps them to learn.
- Take your time and enunciate your words as clearly as possible.
- Ask questions such as ‘What’s going to happen?’ and allow your child to respond.
- Play games such as ‘Can you see something in the picture that starts with “b”?’ ‘How many chickens are in this picture? Let’s count together’. Games can be tailored to your child’s age.
- Take your time on each page, there is more to a book than just reading the words.
- Most importantly, make it fun!



Gardens that Build Communities

Horticultural expert Martin Crabb talks about the worldwide trend back to communal gardening, designing and building a community garden, and the many benefits that flow to those who get involved.

It's becoming difficult to connect with other people in a personal and meaningful way, when we have the advantage of a multitude of electronic social media options at our finger tips. But the humble vegetable patch seems to be providing the opportunity for change and bringing communities back together again.

Over recent decades, community gardening has experienced a worldwide resurgence. It's like a journey back in history, where growing and sharing fresh produce is becoming an important way of interacting with others. People are discovering the benefits of working the soil, planting the seeds and reaping the benefits with a shared passion, fostering good health and giving people a place of belonging.

This simple timeless social activity is a wonderful reminder of the way things were.

Asians have learned this lesson, demonstrated by their popular local village markets that have been a daily way of life for generations. How can tourists forget the vibrant colour, exotic produce, unaccustomed aromas and the hustle and bustle of such places? Take the coast town of Hoi An in central Vietnam, as an example. Here you can watch the local community in action, with fresh grown produce delivered by narrow canoes, enthusiastic sellers and keen shoppers determined to get the freshest and best. Whilst this experience can't be replicated in Australia, we can model community sharing in our own backyards through community gardening.

When the Soviet Bloc collapsed in 1989, the city of Havana in Cuba lost its food imports and agricultural resources leading to widespread food shortages.

Havana residents responded by creating self-sustaining kitchen gardens on balconies, backyards and once vacant or abandoned plots. They relied on organic fertilizers such as chicken or cow manure and household food waste, to enrich the soil. This unused land, sometimes only a few square metres, became social hubs in the production of food and medicinal supplies.

Havana's farms and gardens are steadily increasing; both in size and number, and people are developing new skills, bringing together cross generational communities and promoting healthy living. The gardens also bring environmental benefits. Many empty lots, which earlier were informal garbage dumps, are now productive and pleasant to the eye.

Here in Australia we are discovering the benefits of community gardens, bringing together people from all walks of life, backgrounds and ages, fostering a lively and connected community. Here they can learn from each other, often from the rich diversity of our multi-cultural society. Whilst gardening is the focus, they foster community hubs for a range of activities – learning and education, playgroups, arts and creative activities, sharing food and new recipes, community events, celebrations and relaxation.

Currently, there are more than fifty community gardens registered in South Australia.

Most of our local schools and kindergartens have vegetable gardens as part of their curriculum. Children seem to have a connection with playing in the soil, planting and experiencing the fun of picking ripe fruit as I have found with my own children. Churches can play their part. In New York City, a Bronx Baptist church is reaching out to tough urban youth by welcoming them to be a part of their community garden and their involvement is having a positive impact on their lives.

As a member of the Enfield Baptist Church, I have been able to share my passion for growing plants and vegetables by designing a community garden ideally located at the front of our *Lifewell Community Partnership Centre*. The majority of building materials are reclaimed products like old red home bricks, hardwood housing trusses, timber shipping crates and stones salvaged from a neighbour's yard. Along with the environmental benefits, I have found using recycled materials helps to achieve a creative and unique rustic appeal.

Opening this Autumn, the finished garden will complement our desire to encourage and connect with our local community in an authentic and practical way. The garden will promote nutritional, healthy eating and be an avenue to give helpful tips through a range of workshops. Hopefully, many 'home-grown' success stories will eventuate. The opportunity will also provide a wonderful opportunity of sharing one's faith, by exploring the way God is with us through the gifts of nature and gardening together.

As Edythe Neumann said, “The act of gardening can teach us something about ourselves, about our interdependence with the world of nature, about the relationships between work and creativity, and about how we might begin to discern those spiritual facts that elude us in other aspects of life. Gardening can also be an expression of community and conversation – another way to say that God is with us on the earth, a way to picture God's presence with us – through the gifts of nature and gardening together.”

For information on how to get involved in your local community garden or how to start one: www.communitygarden.org.au
www.communitycentressa.asn.au (Sector Development)

Gen Z is the generation born since the mid-1990s, often called 'the Net' generation. According to social researcher Mark McCrindle, Gen Z is "the most digitally supplied, globally connected, and formally educated generation in history." Adrian Blenkinsop, author of 'The Bible According to Gen Z' writes about his new resource for youth leaders that aims to connect Gen Z with God's story.

Once upon a time in a large church hall, located in a small country town, I sat doing a Bible study. It was a regular Friday night youth group occurrence that I still remember clearly, mainly because I don't ever recall 'passing' the Bible study.

I failed it mainly because it involved either memorising Bible verses, or reading chunks of scripture then answering a series of questions about that passage. Those of us in the youth group had our 'Bible study' marked at the end of each Friday night, and mine –not surprisingly – never found its way onto that prestigious position on the fridge door at home, where various sporting and art awards were placed for all to see. No, I ensured my failed attempts at Bible study met a quick and ignominious end in a bin long before I was picked up by my parents at the end of youth group.

Those Bible study experiences in my early teenage years shaped a view of the Bible as being old, hard to understand and impossible to engage with at any level. Especially for a young guy who loved being active, had the memory of a gnat, and hated anything resembling study!

Fast-forward a number of years.

What many of us have long suspected is true: That is, young people (and often those who lead them) that identify themselves as Christians are saying that the Bible is not on their radar. It's not something they even consider. For many of them, their view of

the Bible is exactly the same as mine was all those years ago. Little has changed.

It's fair to say that this is a crisis.

As with any issue as important as this, you can only run around waving your arms in the air crying 'it's a crisis, it's a crisis' for so long until you need to stop and begin to address the issue. We need to acknowledge the nature of the crisis, and then begin to explore how together we can respond.

The Bible according to Gen Z aims to do just this. It is a great resource designed to equip leaders with a framework and understanding of youth culture, as well as giving practical and proven methods for engaging them with the Bible.

There are stories from ministry leaders working in diverse contexts across Australia that explore their challenges, and their 'wins' in engaging their young people with the Bible. For instance, at a forum I ran in NSW a youth leader wrote: 'I'm finding it tough trying to engage the diverse cultures. You have to almost 'tailor' a Bible engagement method for different cultural groups in your youth ministry. That takes time, and it takes real thinking and an understanding of those different cultures!'

A youth pastor in a church with a high percentage of 'at-risk' young people in a really rough neighbourhood wrote "every Friday night at youth I don't preach – I just tell Jesus stories. My kids mostly can't read, but they love hearing good stories – so that's what I do. You can see the light come on for them as they hear the story and God starts to speak to them. They often go home that night and re-tell the story there as well."

At another forum I ran, we discussed creative ways of engaging young people with the Bible, and one leader wrote 'When we involve our whole body in the process of Bible engagement, many more young people

'get it' than when we use just auditory or visual methods. It can be as simple as going for a run before reading a New Testament passage about seeing life as running a race (for example, 1 Corinthians 9, Hebrews 12) or standing on a shore reading any of the stories of Jesus and his disciples and boats. (John 21, Mark 6). With the breeze in their faces and waves lapping at their feet, the stories can surprise and engage our young people in new ways.'

We also asked a number of youth influencers from across Australia to respond to the research findings, and outline their own suggested responses to this issue.

'One young person in a hundred will pick up the Bible out of curiosity or interest. The majority who read the Bible frequently are part of Evangelical or Charismatic Churches and youth groups'

'Many young people believe much of the Bible is based on 'myths and legends' and 'fables' that are 'exaggerated'. They have doubts that the miracles in the Bible actually occurred.'

'Young people struggle with the language of the Bible. Often their unanswered questions about genocide, strange rituals and miracles, and bizarre laws causes them to simply give up on it'

'Pentecostals read the Bible most often, followed by Baptists, Lutherans and Presbyterians. These groups tend to emphasise the importance of God speaking to the individual directly through the Scriptures'.

What's the state of Bible engagement among young people?

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THE BIBLE 'NOT ON GEN Z'S RADAR'

Is the Bible relevant to Australian young people anymore?

How can we get our young people engaged with the Bible more?

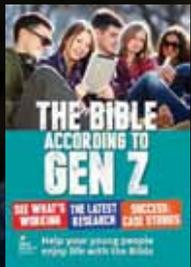
What's working, and why?

Getting young people interested in the Bible is hard work. Why is it so hard, and is anything working? Now for the first time there is a resource which not only presents a clear picture of the state of youth Bible engagement, but gives practical ways of engaging young people with the Bible that you can adapt and use in your own ministry, whether in a school, home or church setting.

As well as the edited and easy-to-read research findings, there are stories and reflections from a wide range of youth practitioners and comprehensive case studies of approaches that are working. It's a 'must have' for those involved in ministry to young people, and a resource for anyone with a desire to see young people connect deeply with God's story, the Bible.

The Bible According to Gen Z is published by the Bible Society Australia

For more information, please contact Adrian at adrian.blenkinsop@Biblesociety.org.au.



To purchase the hardcopy version go to: www.biblesociety.org.au. Go to the SHOP and search for 'essays' in Advanced Search. To purchase the eBook go to: www.amazon.com and type the book title into the search field.

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My Brother's Shadows

By Hayley Reynolds

This was a tough but rewarding read – one that drew me in emotionally and spiritually. It is Hayley Reynolds' honest, intimate and often graphic account of her younger brother Wayne's battle with leukaemia and associated complications. At times I struggled to come to terms with the tragedy that was unfolding at the turn of each page.

If you have ever questioned where God is in the midst of suffering, or you want to provide genuine support to someone who is suffering, this is a book you must read. It still leaves many questions unanswered, but it presents an honest account of a family's struggle as they draw strength from scripture while they negotiate the full gamut of emotions and reactions to Wayne's worsening condition.

Hayley doesn't sugar coat anything, and she certainly avoids platitudes to the extent of criticizing some of the responses she and her family received from Christian friends. It is a heart wrenching, tear prompting, grief sharing account.

In addition to leukaemia, Wayne battled an aggressive fungal infection and other sometimes frightening complications. Despite this, 16 year old Wayne's faith was unshakable 'God's glory is far more important than my suffering'.

The book highlights how the support of community, prayer and the closeness of family are the things that sustain us most through harrowing times.

Hayley shares honestly about her turmoil as a 22 year old who had her plans for life unfolding before her, then had to walk away from them because of her brother's illness. She is candid about her struggle to maintain her faith in the midst of it all, believing Wayne would be healed and trying to do what she could to help her brother and her parents through.

'Wanting to find some sense in all the madness, I was left only with unanswered questions.'

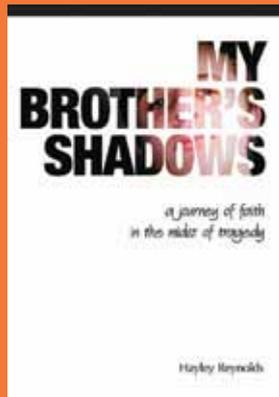
So many times she felt that God had abandoned them, at the same time somehow knowing that they needed to keep worshipping Him. What in the world was God doing? Hayley describes how Wayne faced his dire situation with determination, humour and the belief that however bad the circumstances, God was still in control.

The book concludes with a reflection on suffering as evil that results from humankind's falling away from God - suffering was something God never intended for us.

In *My Brother's Shadows*, Hayley shares her view on faith, healing and unanswered prayer. Her family did not see the miracle they were hoping for, but Hayley's faith, rather than being destroyed when her brother died, was ultimately saved.

Reviewer: Wendy Rush

'*My Brother's Shadows: a journey of faith in the midst of tragedy*' is published by Acorn Press and can be purchased at www.acornpress.net.au. (Also available in eBook format).



The Celtic Stone

By Nick Hawkes

The Celtic Stone is a fictional story about an Australian pilot, Chris Norman, who travels to the Isle of Skye on the west coast of Scotland where he has inherited his grandfather's meagre estate. Intrigued by a place where a house cow can feature in someone's will, and curious to discover how the Aboriginal man who saved his life came to be wearing a Celtic cross, he settles into the remote islander way of life, drawn especially by the beautiful, blind Morag and a recently orphaned young boy.

The story has romance, mystery and a peppering of fascinating facts on topics as diverse as eye surgery techniques, West Scottish history and energy saving house design. I think it would appeal to a wide audience of both men and women.

It is set in a part of the world that I have read very little about and I enjoyed reading about the way of life there. I could really feel the warm, inviting atmosphere of Chris Norman's new home in contrast to the harsh climate outside.

The beginning of the book grabbed my attention. The perspective of the Aboriginal man and the descriptions of the Australian desert were fascinating and evocative. "The white man left his marks across the sky as well... How could they make smoke straight as a spear, fly across the sky?" I would have liked to have somehow returned to that at the end, to bring the story full circle.

Perhaps mirroring the attitudes of a remote, local community towards newcomers, the main body of the story takes a while to warm up but by the last few chapters I could not turn the pages fast enough. The Celtic cross has an intriguing and perilous history.

Nick subtly conveys biblical truth making the book suitable for both Christians and those who are questioning the Christian faith. The main character struggles with the universal questions of suffering and loss. When he challenges the chaplain at Iona, an historically key centre for Christianity in Scotland, he agrees that "there are no easy answers to the question of suffering." The chaplain continues to explain that God "has set a time to make all things new... In the meantime he promises to be with us in our suffering, to give us strength to overcome it and...to empower us to do something about it whenever we come across it."

The over-arching message of the book is that God's plans and purposes are so much greater and he works through even seemingly disastrous circumstances to bring about His good and perfect will.

The characters are authentic, their voices are distinct and the plot rises like a wave on the wild West Scottish coast, finally crashing to a climactic end. I enjoyed this book and am sure you will too.

Reviewer: Cindy Williams

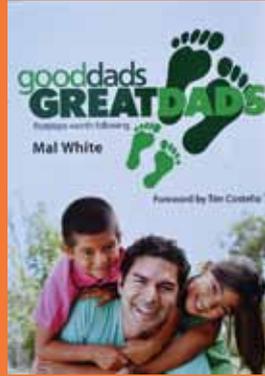
'*The Celtic Stone*' is published by Even Before Publishing and is available in all good bookstores or online at www.evenbeforepublishing.com.



Good Dads GREAT DADS

By Mal White

My guess is that anytime you read a book about either parenting or marriage it is going to help you become a better spouse/parent because it prompts you to reflect on how you presently act and how you could improve. *Good Dads GREAT DADS* is a highly practical book that triggers the reader to consider what messages they are conveying to children. The whole book comes from the assumption that all dads need encouragement and that many of us are already good dads, but it asks the question "how do we become great Dads?"



As I read *Good Dads GREAT DADS* it did spur on my imagination and creativity pondering what could I build together with my kids as a memory-making experience that 'included them' rather than was just 'for them'. The idea to 'Go Somewhere' just one-on-one with your kids is certainly something that resonates with me as there are few things that can communicate to your child just how important they are to you more than a serious chunk of quality time together. Even the challenge to 'Say Something' that deposits into your child's well being prompts the reader to be aware of the choice of compliments, with great examples of character building phrases.

The concept of parenting as mentoring the ones you love the most is a worthwhile thought to focus on in the midst of the daily grind. White does acknowledge that along with the joy and frustration of fatherhood comes the inevitable heartache as older children pass into adolescence and demand space from their parents. There are no guarantees, love them at the age they are at and enjoy it to the fullest.

The chapter titled 'Share Something' encourages dads to be vulnerable and share of their weaknesses with their children so they can learn from their mistakes as well as their strengths. The benefits of reading to children can be easily attested to but White also promotes writing personal positive hand written notes to children; I can certainly imagine my sentimental little girl storing a nice note from me as a keep-sake for the years ahead.

White briefly mentions praying together with kids and letting them know that you thank God for them. The chapter on understanding the different personality types is a helpful reflection point when considering family dynamics with wider relatives as well as with your own children.

Good Dads GREAT DADS is an encouraging and practical point in the right direction. It is a helpful reminder that "good intentions get you nowhere in your relationship with your kids and they certainly don't assist your child to get the boost in life they need to be emotionally and socially strong."

Reviewer: Scott Berry

'Good Dads GREAT DADS' can be purchased from Koorong Books, Dymocks Rundle Mall, local bookshops or online at www.gooddadsgreatdads.com



Bring back the Fathers

Tragically, it seems that the very notion of family is under attack. Unfortunately, in the West's headlong rush for political correctness and redefinition of families, we haven't really been allowed to talk about the consequence of what happens when God's idea of family is fractured. Without being alarmist, and whilst fully applauding the need for some to leave abusive husbands and fathers, let me report that the sociologist Francis Ianni found that most gang members in America came from households where no father was present. In fact the very absence of a father figure made belonging to a gang appealing as the gang became a kind of surrogate family.

A thirty year study that tracked every child born on the Hawaiian island of Kauai in 1955 found that five out of six delinquents with an adult criminal record came from families where a parent (almost always the father) was absent. Another study of 11,000 people from urban areas in New York, Florida and Missouri conducted in 1988 concluded that the proportion of single-parent households in a community is an accurate predictor of violent crime and burglary.

Guys, we've got to rescue a future for our kids by rediscovering the craft of being a father. I'm pretty sure that being an absentee provider of family funds will not cut it. I'm pretty sure that not giving spiritual leadership in the home won't cut it. Men, please give your children a reason to live and a good example to follow.

For more see: 'The Bible on the Key Issues of Life', by Dr Nick Hawkes, available from bookshops. Nick has degrees in science and theology. He is a pastor, writer and broadcaster.

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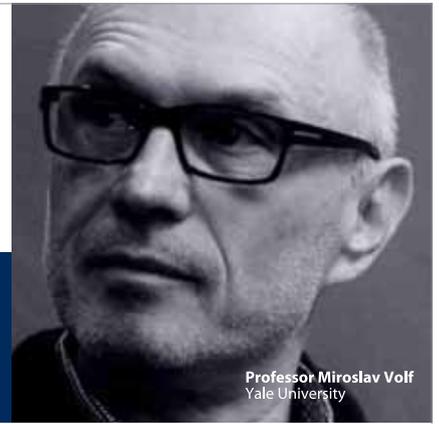
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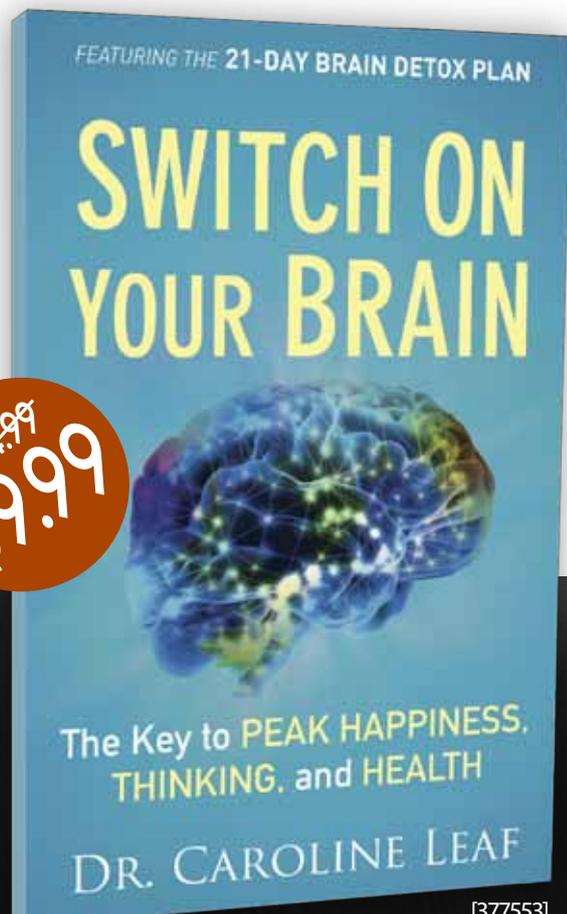
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