

## A Bad Day

By Rob Petillo

Every so often, even the best of us fail in our mission to be the best Christians we can be. We sometimes forget ourselves and fail to live the way Jesus would have us live, and we hurt the people we love, including our own children. As parents, we are not perfect, and sometimes have moments that, in hind sight, we wonder what we could have been thinking at the time. Thank God that our children have short memories, and tend to forgive us very easily.

Last Sunday was a tough one. It started out well enough, having had the opportunity to play drums in the praise band, which I really enjoyed, but inside I was struggling to hold it together. I was stressed out, and could not seem to calm myself down. Needless to say, what started out as a beautiful day, would soon become one I wish I could forget.

My eight year old son Robert, who we affectionately refer to as Bert for short, plays goalie in the mite hockey league at Jersey Shore Arena. He has only been playing about six months, but he shows real promise. He does not skate very well yet, but he is very flexible and has great reflexes, which usually makes up for the lack of skating ability and experience.

Bert had two games on Sunday, one after the other, and in the first game, he was playing real well. He was in good position and made several outstanding saves. Having played goalie in a men's league for the past fifteen years, I often give him encouragement and advice between periods, and sometimes he even listens to me. ...Ok maybe not, but he pretends to, which is all I can hope for. That day, however, Bert just flat out ignored me, even at one point telling me that I was embarrassing him. I have coached youth hockey, and have sometimes cringed at the way some parents embarrass their kids because of the way they are playing, and I thought to myself, "There is no way that I am becoming one of 'them'."

The second game did not go so well ...

... Neither did the ride home.

What started out as a harmless conversation about things we need to work on, as if he wanted to hear it at that point, became one of the worst parenting moments of my life. I laid into my eight year old pretty hard, just like some of those psychotic sports parents that I had come to pity, and I soon realized that I HAD become one of 'them'. Bert was silent, and when I looked in the rear view mirror, I noticed that he was crying. My heart sank in the deafening silence. I made my little boy cry over a hockey game, and I didn't know what to say or do: I was heart broken. "What has happened to me?" was all I could think. I had let the stress of my busy life take hold of me, and in the process, hurt someone who I love more than life itself.

The rest of the day was spent trying to make it up to him, and later that evening, as we sat down to watch the Ranger's game together as we always do, he sat on the other end of the couch, which he never does. I looked over at him and told him that I was embarrassed of my behavior and I am sorry, and promised him that I would never do anything like that again. Bert looked up, made his way over to me, said "I forgive you daddy", and assumed his usual Ranger-watching

position at my side, where he belongs. As we sat there, with my arm around him, I couldn't fight back the tears, knowing that we were Ok.

I would like to believe that I am a good role model for my children. Unfortunately I fail from time to time, as we all do. I would also like to believe that I do a pretty good job raising my children in the teachings of Christ. Apparently, this time the student became the teacher. I learned a lesson in forgiveness from my eight year old, who forgave me unconditionally. Children have a unique perspective when it comes to forgiveness. They have not yet learned to be filled with arrogance or pride, and forgive quite easily. That is why Jesus taught us to be like children. Scripture tells us that He said, "Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little **children**, you will never enter the kingdom of **heaven**. *Matthew 18:3*

As Christians, we believe that we are forgiven for our sins through our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, who died so that we may have life. However, we need to keep in mind that we also must forgive those who hurt us. ... "But if you do not **forgive others** their sins, your Father will not **forgive** your sins". *Matthew 6:15*

I hope when the time comes for me to forgive someone who has hurt me, I will do so with the same childlike ease that Bert forgave me; as Christ forgives us all.

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...Believe it or not, Bert is still willing to get back on the ice for the next game. I think I'll sit way up in the bleachers this week.