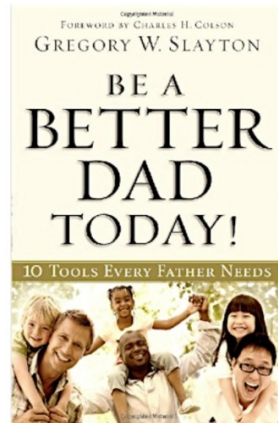




Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on June 14, 2012

## Book Review: Be a Better Dad Today

[Be a Better Dad Today](#), a book by the Honorable Gregory W. Slayton, is designed to help dads become better fathers, husbands, and men. With Father's Day fast approaching, it may prove to be a wonderful gift, particularly for new dads who may be overwhelmed with their new and potentially frightening responsibilities. Focusing on ten specific fatherhood tools, the book does a wonderful job of emphasizing the importance of fatherhood and providing specific criteria to help dads be excellent fathers, regardless of their situations.



Slayton is a well-known professor, author, diplomat, businessman, and philanthropist. He was appointed by George W. Bush as the U.S. Consul General and Chief of Mission to Bermuda, and has been extended twice by the Obama administration. He is the only Republican ambassador in history to have received a Distinguished Foreign Service Award from members of the Congressional Black Caucus.

But among his numerous achievements, Slayton seems to deem his greatest one his family. That is made absolutely clear throughout *Be a Better Dad Today*.

The inspiration behind Slayton's book is his own broken relationship with his father, who had abandoned the family when Slayton was young. Slayton had not spoken to his dad for the last 25 years of his father's life. According to Slayton his father was "the saddest man I have ever known." He was motivated by his father's failures to write a book that would inspire fathers to aspire for greatness, regardless of issues they may have to overcome.

The book is the product of over 30 years of research on six different continents. Slayton writes in his book, "For more than 30 years now, I have had the privilege of studying fathers and fatherhood in widely different societies and cultures around the world. In every part of the world, at all times, fatherhood matters more than almost anything else."

The research is evident, but perhaps even more importantly, *Be a Better Dad Today* truly appeals to the spiritual qualities of fatherhood, with a number of biblical references throughout the book. That is why it has reached the No. 1 spot on the Top 20 General list from the Evangelical Christian Publishers Association (ECPA).

Tim Keller of Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York City said, "*Be a Better Dad Today* is perhaps the most practical and down-to-earth manual you will find on how to be an effective father. No one will be able to read it without being both spiritually convicted and personally equipped."

Slayton does not avoid or shy away from spirituality in his book. In fact, he writes in the book that a father cannot become great without "a strong dose of God's grace."

Quoting Malachi 4:6, Slayton writes, "God's desire is to 'turn the hearts of the fathers back to their children...and the hearts of the children back to their fathers.' I believe that Scripture is His desire for us today as individuals and as a culture overall. In fact, that is why I wrote this book."



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Slayton's book begins by outlining the importance of fatherhood and explaining why being a father is perhaps the hardest and most important job in the world. For example, children in the United States who grow up without fathers are more likely to spend time in prison or develop addictions.

But in addition to the focus on fatherhood, the book also places an emphasis on developing a partnership with wives so that they may help the father to achieve his true potential, as both a dad and a husband.

The book follows by painting a picture of what Slayton calls a Noble Family Vision, which is a map of sorts of what type of father, and type of family, the reader wants to develop. The book then provides specific tools to help fathers achieve that Noble Family Vision, and even offers insight into how that vision may be achieved in the event that circumstances change and the trials and tribulations of life make that vision seem unreachable.

Slayton has identified 10 tools that help fathers reach their vision: Family First/Family Fun, which focuses on being a hands-on father that enjoys family time; All in Marriage, which emphasizes the role a loving marriage plays in the achievement of the Noble Family Vision; True Moral Compass and True Humility, emphasizing the need for high moral standards for the father as well as the family with a particularly emphasis on the appropriate discipline of children; Heartfelt Love, focusing on tenderness and dependability; Empowering Servant Leadership, which requires fathers to put the needs of their families before their own; Relationship Tools that Work, such as listening skills and the ability to relate; Heaven's Help, emphasizing the need to call upon God for guidance and to remain a spiritual guide in the family; Other Good Dads, which asks fathers to maintain friendships with other fathers and husbands who may be a positive influence; Optimistic Never-Surrender Attitude, that highlights the necessity to never give up on the Noble Family Vision, or on fatherhood; and finally, Dynamic, Whole-Person Support, that summarizes the notion that the father must be an emotional, physical, mental, spiritual, and financial support to his family.

Each chapter delves deeply into the tools and provides wonderfully interesting and effect anecdotes, as well as toolkits and instructions to the readers about how to best understand and utilize the tools.

Slayton also poses questions to his readers throughout the course of the book for greater reflection, and gives brief but vital instructions to his readers that allow them to further place the reading into context.

The final part of Slayton's book focuses on special circumstances. He contends that the ideal situation includes a complete family unit, with a father and a mother, but recognizes that there are circumstances in which that cannot be. Therefore, he also writes in his book on what it entails to be the best "single dad you can be." He addresses a number of different scenarios in this section wherein the family unit may be broken for any reason, and provides instructions that may still help fathers in those circumstances achieve that Noble Vision.

Slayton's book also addresses long-distance fatherly relationships, as well as how fathers may handle what he dubs "beanballs" — life's trials that create obstacles for achieving the Noble Family Vision.

Throughout the book, Slayton quotes a number of reputable figures, ranging from politicians and pastors to comedians and businessman, all of whom provide their own take on fatherhood.

It's worth noting that because of Slayton's experience in politics, some of his closer affiliations are with people that not every reader may necessarily like or relate to. Fortunately, the book's focus remains on fatherhood and does not venture into political discussions or debates.



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Also worth mentioning is that Slayton believes so strongly in the power of his book, and regards military fathers in particular so highly, with particular respect for their special circumstances that often forces them to be absent parents, that he has made the book available [free of charge](#) to military fathers as his Father's Day gift to them.

The book is available to military fathers through the Help Our Military-Every Dad (HOME) program. All military dads have to do is request the book through their military chaplain.

"Serving in the US Military is one of the most honorable professions, but let's face it, it's also an extremely hard one, especially on families," Slayton says. "My hope and prayer is that the tools and ideas put forward in [Be A Better Dad Today](#) will be a powerful help for military dads."

Overall, the book is a wonderfully spiritual, refreshing and easy to comprehend guide for fathers to tap into their full potential. I would encourage fathers of all ages, as well as fathers to be, to consider reading it because no parent is perfect and anyone can benefit from Slayton's wise words. His experience and research is clear throughout the book, but its greatest assets are its relatability, spiritual nature, and effectiveness in providing the necessary tools to really help shape fathers.

Those interested in purchasing a copy of *Be a Better Dad Today* may visit [BeABetterDadToday.com](http://BeABetterDadToday.com) to do so.



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