**Newborn Promise Podcast-Episode 6**

*“Tips For a First Time Dad” with Timothy Ateek*

Audra Haney: Thanks for tuning in to The Newborn Promise Podcast. You're listening to tips for a first-time dad, with Timothy Ateek. For today's show notes, transcript, and more information about your Newborn Promise Project, please visit grahamblanchard.com. ... Well welcome back to The Newborn Promise Podcast, this is Audra Haney and I want to say a quick hello to hopefully a large amount of new male listeners today, because this episode is tailor-made for you and we are so honored to have you here with us. We know that have taken seriously being on the cusp of becoming a dad, or holding that baby in your arms for the first time, can be an intimidating experience. Maybe you had an awesome father figure to light your way, or maybe you're starting from scratch. Either way you're probably asking, "What does this role look like for me and my family?"

Today we've invited Pastor Timothy Ateek, better know as TA, to join us today and share some advice he would have loved to have as a first-time dad. TA is a husband to Kat, a dad to two sons, and is also the director of Breakaway Ministries, a nondenominational meeting for students on the campus of Texas A&M University. We loved his great sense of humor, but also his heart to deliver some serious dad truth on topics such as: making mistakes, finding mentors, quality time, and helping your kids see the bigness of God. New and expecting moms, you are not off the hook. There's also some great insight and encouragement for you in this episode, so be sure to keep listening along with that soon to be dad in your life. ... Pastor TA, thank you so much for being here. We are just going to jump right in. Tell me a little bit about your family. We're going to cover some of those fun dad topics later, but give us a picture of what your family looks like today.

Timothy Ateek: You bet. Well, my wife's name is Kathryn. We just celebrated 10 years of marriage in October. I like to consider myself the poster child for the How did that Guy get that Girl Foundation. She's just a better person all around. She's better looking, she's more funny, she's more spiritual, just all around incredible. I'm so thankful for Kat and we have two boys: Noah is seven and Andrew is five. That's the Ateek family right now.

Audra Haney: Well that sounds fun and busy. I also know that you're deeply involved with college students. Tell me what do some of those conversations look like when they ask about marriage and family life.

Timothy Ateek: Well, I think that the most interesting thing for me, or one of the greatest privileges that I feel like Kat and I have had in ministering to college students is that we've gotten to give college students a vision for what a healthy marriage can look like. We have spent a lot of time with college students who just come from broken homes. I think about one girl in particular who has just been around our family a lot, and I think in a lot of ways just lost hope in the idea of a healthy marriage. I think that Kat and I have had the privilege of just helping recast that vision and reshape students' idea and understanding of not a perfect marriage, because we have a really imperfect marriage, but of one that really strives to be healthy in God honoring. We talk about relationships a lot. It's a passion point for me to talk to students, not just about dating relationships but about giving them a vision for the future, and how to establish habits now that are going to help have marriages and be parents that are really honoring and pleasing to the Lord.

Audra Haney: I love that. Tell me maybe about the transition for you when you went from that life stage of being a single guy to a husband. How big of a change was that on a scale from one to ten, and why?

Timothy Ateek: Well, I think for me it was a big change. Scale of one to ten I would say that it was probably a ten, just because ... Getting married to Kat just made me realize how selfish of a person that I am. When you're single, you spend all your time thinking about yourself, not all single people do that, but you're only thinking about what you need. Then when you get married and you live with someone 24/7, it's no longer about just your preferences. Now you're called to lay your life down for the other person. I just remember distinct moments where I just was confronted with just how selfish I am because now it's no longer just thinking about myself, it's thinking about my spouse. At the same time, it's the best transition that I've ever made, and I would never do it over. I never miss dating, I never miss being single. I'm so thankful for God bringing me together with Kat. It was the best decision I made besides putting my faith and trust in Jesus Christ.

Audra Haney: Tell me about the transition. It's a big leap to go from a single guy to a husband, but to go from being just a husband to also being a father, that's a big leap as well. Tell me about how that transition was for you.

Timothy Ateek: I think that it was such an exciting transition because it was something that Kat and I had wanted, and so when the Lord blessed us with Noah we were so excited. At the same time, everything changes. Now instead of just thinking about my wife I had to think about Kat and Noah. That was God shaping me, just refining me to not just think about myself but to lay my life down now for Kat and Noah. I think the other transition there was just ... The best parents in the world are the people who don't have kids yet because before you have kids you can assume the type of parent you're going to be, and you think about how you're going to succeed as a parent. Then when you get into being a parent and you meet reality, it's a huge shift. When we had Noah, Kat had an instant connection with him just as a baby. I was more kind of like, "Okay. Let's do something." There was just that shift that took time to get used to.

Audra Haney: What were some other things that were surprising to you when you became a parent?

Timothy Ateek: For me I just, this is just me personally, I realized that I wasn't nearly as easy going with my kids as I thought that I would be. I was a lot more protective of my kids than I thought that I would be. You deal with fear more than you ever think that you will because you never want anything to happen to your kids. You have to find this balance of protecting your kids, yet also letting them experience life. I still haven't figured out that balance, but it was a huge shift. We did probably a much better job with Andrew. Everybody's firstborn probably needs counseling at some point, just because parents had to work out the kinks with the firstborn. It was just a growing process, working through fears, worries, and concerns, and just not anticipating those at all.

Audra Haney: What are some things that you wish someone would have sat you down and taught you before you became a father?

Timothy Ateek: I think that some of the best things that I've learned along the way is that you're going to be a very imperfect parent, and that's okay. I think I went into marriage and I put a lot of pressure on myself that I had to be really perfect. If you go in expecting to be a perfect parent then you're going to spend a lot of time feeling like a failure, because you're doing something that you've never done before. You can read books about it, and you can have other people tell you about it, but until you get into it, it's just ... Everybody's learning on the fly no matter how much insight you've gained from outside sources, and so just the freedom to fail sometimes.

Part of the best thing that I'm learning, some of the best things I can teach my kids is how to ask for forgiveness and to own up to screwing up, so to sit with my kids and be like, "Hey, you know what? Daddy was ... I was just too harsh right there and I need to ask for forgiveness for it," that's okay. That's good for your kid to learn that. Then I think that ... One thing that a mentor has just really helped me see is that people emphasize quality time, but it's really quantity that leads to quality. Not every moment with my kids has to be this magnificent moment. It's really just putting in the time with your kids that leads to the sweet small moments. I put a lot of pressure on myself to just maximize every moment and sometimes the best thing you can do is just laugh with your kids, or just enjoy just being present.

Audra Haney: Yeah. I think that's really powerful. Talk to me, you mentioned mentor, and I think women, not to make this men versus women, but I think women tend to naturally seek out community a little more typically. They're better at finding those support systems and being transparent usually, but what advice do you have for expecting dads when it comes to the importance of finding community and other dads you can connect with during this journey?

Timothy Ateek: This is a passion point for me. This is so much bigger than parenting. This is just the normal Christian life. You look back in the garden and God looked at Adam and said, "It's not good for man to be alone," and He provided Eve in that moment for him. This is so much even bigger than marriage. We have been wired to represent God and one of the ways that we represent a Triune God, who is a God of community, is to live in open, honest, transparent relationships. I believe that every person on the planet really needs to have a couple of men or a couple of women with whom they're fully-known and fully-loved. Every single one of us needs people in our lives who won't just tell us what we want to hear but they'll tell us what we need to hear, and they've kind of seen behind the curtain of our lives and they're familiar with our weaknesses and our sinful tendencies, our insecurities.

The reason I even say all that is that parenting brings out all of your imperfections. Parenting will help you become really well acquainted with the areas that you're weak in. You need, just like girls need girls, guys need a couple of guys who they can just sit with and be like, "Man, I stayed at work longer today because I didn't feel like going home to be with my kids. It just sounded exhausting," guys that we can share that with and they can speak back and just say, "Man, let me just encourage you. You're not crazy, but here, let's take some steps."

Audra Haney: Yeah, and I think that transparency is so important. In addition to transparency, talk to me about humor. I know this is a big one for you and your family.

Timothy Ateek: Well, I tell college students, and this might be overly simplistic, but when they're trying to figure out if they're going to be able to marry someone, I just ask them, "Okay. Does ..." If I'm talking to a guy I say, "Okay. Well, does she love Jesus? Okay. Can you laugh with her?" That's my second question, because I think humor, besides ... I think that God will use humor to save marriages. If you can laugh together and pray together then you'll probably stay together. I think that humor will cover a multitude of sins, and what I mean by that is that there's moments where I just blow it as a dad. I just I'm too short with my kids, I don't discipline them in the right way, meaning instead of just working through it with them I'm too quick to correct them instead of just direct them and coach them.

In those moments, when I can ask for forgiveness and then we can start laughing together and just having a sweet moment of wrestling or doing impressions or funny voices, or chasing around the house and laughing, it brings closeness and unity. Laughter is of utmost importance in the Ateek household. We laugh a lot and it heals. It heals hurts in our family and it does a lot of good.

Audra Haney: I'm Audra Haney and you're listening to The Newborn Promise Podcast, a production of Graham Blanchard Incorporated. One of our main goals for The Newborn Promise Project is to remind expecting parents that parenting is primarily spiritual. There's a lot to prepare for physically, but it's the spiritual aspects that matter the most. We had TA talk to us about the differences when you're parenting spiritually, and how that awareness helps him as a dad.

Timothy Ateek: First and foremost the best thing that I can do for my family is walk with the Lord, to spend time with the Lord every day, seeking Him in His word, and in prayer. It's the best thing that I can do. The best things that Kat and I can do together is pray together, and please hear me, we've got a long way to go in this. Even just this year we've taken steps towards praying together more and it draws us together and it gives us an opportunity to really think about what the needs of our children really are, and to pray for those things. There's no one else in the world who's going to have more time with my kids than me, and so the best thing that I can do is utilize the time that God's given me with them to point my kids to them. One of the greatest responsibilities I feel is to give my kids a big view of who God is.

It's just so easy as a parent to want our kids to behave well and to be obedient people, and we think that that's a godly thing for our kids to be obedient. Obedience is a part of the Christian life but obedience is what comes when someone has a big view of God. That's something we really try and work on, is helping shape our kids view of who God is. We will talk about God's attributes on the way to school, talk about His love or look out the window and talk about His creativity. This week I've been asking my son Andrew how big God is and he's trying to say, "Is He this big? Is He this big?" I just keep coming back, "He's even bigger. He's even bigger." That's the responsibility that we have and nobody's going to do a better job of that than us, because we're the ones who have their time the most.

Audra Haney: That was so great. Do you have any practical things that come to mind for expecting dads, just for shepherding? Maybe suggestions on things they can do to help them shepherd their family well?

Timothy Ateek: Yeah. I'll tell you some things that we've done. These are things that have worked for us. It's different for everyone. The first few years when your kids are infants, it's really just a matter of praying for them. It's good to help them learn names and just talk about the Lord, share God's stories, and just let your kids hear you guys talking about the Lord. When my kids really got to four, five, six, that's when we really started getting to have good conversation. One thing we did for a season, we called it just Bible time, where we would read a story in the Bible but we would act it out. For Noah's Ark, I told my kids, "Okay. You guys got to go to your room, get all your stuffed animals and put them on the couch," so like they're getting on the ark. I got a spray bottle, a water bottle, filled it up with water and started spraying them at it like it's the flood coming. I was moving the couch back and forth so they could kind of experience it, and they loved it.

David and Goliath, I just put some crumpled up paper under the table, they had to go find the rocks and slay the giant. Those sorts of things bring the Bible to life for kids. One thing we do right now is we use the Jesus Bible app which is really phenomenal. It's just on our iPad. We'll read it at night and then on the way to school in the morning. I'll tell them why I thought that that was a ... What I liked about the story. I'll ask them questions about it. We try and talk about God's stories. If there's something that God did in my life or something cool that happened, I want to share with my kids because I want them hearing how I'm experiencing the Lord.

1 Timothy 4:12 says, "Let no one look down on you because you're young, but show yourself an example of speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity." I look at those five words as five words that I want to be true of my kids. We've talked about each of those words at different times. Try and use anything in the world to illustrate truth. The other day they were watching a TV show and it talked about courage. It's not a Christian TV show but I was able to say, "Man, that was courage." God told Joshua in the Bible, "Be strong and courageous." There's different opportunities to sit with my kids and just say, and it doesn't have to be some big magnificent moment, but just driving in the car, "Hey, look at the cars going the other direction, we're going this direction. There's a right way to go and there's a wrong way to go. Can you imagine if we were driving the opposite direction on the other side? That's what happens in life when you do things the way that God doesn't want you to do them," stuff like that.

Audra Haney: Those are so awesome. I'm definitely filing some of those away for my family too. Talk to me a little bit about some of the unique pressures of spiritual parenting as a dad. What are some things for dads listening that you can tell them are going to be unique to their role?

Timothy Ateek: For me personally, I believe that God's called me to set the pace in our household. People talk about the fathers being the leaders of the family. I believe that God has given me that responsibility, that husband and wife are equal, yet God's given each one a specific role. I think that my role within our family is to just set the pace. If I want my wife and I to be praying, then I probably need to initiate us praying. If I want my family talking about the Lord, then it's probably good for me to initiate that. That doesn't mean that my wife can't do that, it just means that I feel responsible for it happening within the context of our house. That's something that I'm really imperfect at and working on but I just want to be a good pace setter.

Every household looks different, but me being the dad I feel ... Having boys I feel a strong responsibility of just showing them and helping them understand what it looks like to be God's man. There's times where my kids, they'll be in trouble and I'll tell them, "Hey, God has given me the responsibility to help you learn what it looks like to be His man." We'll use that language. We have man time where we can just spend time together as boys and do fun things together, but I feel like that's my responsibility at least in my household.

Audra Haney: You've touched on so many good things but, what would be your main advice for men on the threshold of parenting?

Timothy Ateek: The thing that's been the greatest thing for me is to talk to other men about parenting. It has been so helpful for me to have men in my life who are one to two seasons down the road. I have a mentor here in town who has a son, he's in high school right now. I talk to him often and just pick his brain. I'll tell him where I'm really struggling with my kids and ask his counsel. That has just been so helpful, and to have people who are in a season behind, to then get to impart wisdom to them. It's a really great thing to have people on both sides of you, people who you're investing in and people who are investing in you, because you gain the wisdom and then you get imparted. It's just a really life-giving experience. I would just say, you are not alone in this. You're not the first person to go into this, but you're unwise if you choose to go about it alone.

Audra Haney: In addition to that, what advice do you have for wives? How can they best support their husbands as they become new dads?

Timothy Ateek: I would just say to cheer them on when they do something well and extend a lot of grace when they don't. It's just a whole new world for guys and for wives as well. I do think it's a reality that when men are first-time parents, there's not that instant connection that there might be between the baby and the mom, just for even some practical reasons. To give the dad some grace as he grows into that and to be patient with them through that, but then to also, to celebrate the really great moments of parenting. It goes a long way for a man to hear it. "Man, you're doing a great job as a dad, and what you did right there with our son or with our daughter I thought was just really great," that just breathes large amounts of life into dads.

Audra Haney: That's some really wonderful advice. Would you mind just closing out our time together, praying for the men especially as they stand at this important threshold about to form their families and take on this role of dad.

Timothy Ateek: Lord it's a huge privilege that you give us to be parents. God thank you that you haven't left us alone in this world to figure it out. You are our Heavenly Father, and you're a perfect father, and so we can learn so much by just looking to you and how you respond to us. Thank you for your love for us, for your grace that is towards us every day, for your patience with us Lord. God I pray for all the soon-to-be parents and God thank you in advance for what you're going to do in their lives, and for how you're going to use parenting to refine them into the men and women that you want them to be. God I thank you that the greatest ministries that we can have on this planet are really not through our jobs or through our churches, it's through our marriages and our families Lord.

I just pray that you give people confidence as they step into parenting Lord, that they would sense your grace as they move through it God. That you'd protect marriages as things change, and there's more time constraints, and just pray God that you would use these families God to just bring you great glory and that you would put yourself on display through different families and that many people would come to know you through them Lord. We love you, we trust you, in Jesus name. Amen.

Audra Haney: Well thank you dads for tuning in and for new expecting moms for cheering them on. We are so happy that you were able to join us today. We want to invite you to tune in next week as we share an interview with Kari Jobe. She's a worship leader, Grammy nominee, and Dove Award winner, who also has the new title of mom. She shares about her first eight months with her son Canyon, and how it's changed her spiritual walk and even her songwriting. You really don't want to miss this sweet segment. Remember, you can get today's show notes, transcript, and more information about your Newborn Promise Project at grahamblanchard.com.