

# **Parenting Is A Ministry**

**Biblical Principles  
for  
Parenting**

Discipleship Wordbook for Personal Study and Small Groups

Craig Caster

## ***Parenting Is A Ministry***

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## ***DEDICATION***

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I dedicate this book to my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. It is Christ who revealed these truths to me through His Word and the indwelling Holy Spirit. I also dedicate this book to the struggling families in the body of Christ, in hopes that many will find hope, healing and practical direction for their families.

## ***ACKNOWLEDGEMENT***

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I want to thank my wife, Cha Cha for her love and encouragement to me over the years. The Lord has blessed me with a godly wife and helpmate to complete me. She has been instrumental in this book. Without her I would have nothing to share with others. I also want to acknowledge my children, Nick, Justin and Katie who have brought me so much joy and fulfillment as a father. And, finally I want to express my appreciation to my parents Terry and Barbara Caster, for their love and support.

## INTRODUCTION

In the Old Testament we learn of King Josiah, crowned King of Judah at the tender age of eight, after the assassination of his evil father, Amnon. After years of rule by godless kings, Josiah ushered in a spiritual awakening during his 31-year reign. Worship of the true God had been abandoned. God's people had turned from the living God to idolatry, exchanging truth for worldly philosophies. The Law and commandments that God had given His servant Moses had been cast aside - buried in the ruined temple. Sadly, Israel was fulfilling the words of the prophet Amos.

*"For in the eighth year of his reign, while he was still young, he began to seek the God of his father David; and in the twelfth year he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem of the high places, the wooden images, the carved images, and the molded images.*

*They broke down the altars of the Baals in his presence, and the incense altars which were above them he cut down; and the wooden images, the carved images, and the molded images he broke in pieces, and made dust of them and scattered it on the graves of those who had sacrificed to them."*

*-2 Chronicles 34:3-4*

In addition to purging Judah and Jerusalem of idolatry, the king commissioned that the house of the Lord would be repaired. While combing through the temple, Hilkiah the priest stumbled upon the long-forgotten book of the law of the Lord, and presented it to the King. As Josiah read the Word of God, his heart was so convicted that the nation had wandered from the truth of the Lord that he tore his robe and cried out in repentance. He read God's word to the people, and together they entered into a covenant to walk after the Lord and follow His commandments.

*"Now it happened, when the king heard the words of the Book of the Law, that he tore his clothes. Then the king commanded Hilkiah the priest...saying, 'Go, inquire of the LORD for me, for the people and for all Judah, concerning the words of this book that has been found; for great is the wrath of the LORD that is aroused against us, because our fathers have not obeyed the words of this book, to do according to all that is written concerning us.'"*

*-2 Kings 22:11-13*

*"Then the king stood by a pillar and made a covenant before the LORD, to follow the LORD and to keep His commandments and His testimonies and His statutes, with all his heart and all his soul, to perform the words of this covenant that were written in this book. And all the people took a stand for the covenant."*

*-2 Kings 23:3*

You may be thinking, why write another parenting book? Aren't there enough of them on the market? Could there possibly be anything new to say that has not already been said? King Solomon once said,

*"Is there anything of which it may be said, 'See, this is new'? It has already been in ancient times before us."*

*-Ecclesiastes 1:10*

In truth, everything written in this book has been written before, *long* before. The sad reality is that today, as in the time of King Josiah in Jerusalem, the majority of God's people do not know God's words. Most Christian parents have never been disciplined (trained and taught God's word and ways) in the area of parenting and family, though the family is the first ministry that God created. Within the pages of His Word, God has given us His instructions in how to raise *His* children. These truths have always been at our fingertips.

*"Behold, the days are coming," says the Lord GOD, "That I will send a famine on the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD."*

*-Amos 8:11*

*"...I have found the book of the law in the house of the LORD..."*

*-2 Chronicles 34:15*

As a biblical family counselor for several years, I have been both amazed and troubled to see that, though so many parents love their children and genuinely *want* to do the right thing, they are at a loss at *how* to parent them. They find themselves confused, frustrated, divided and locked into unfruitful and oftentimes destructive patterns within their homes. This is largely due to the poor parenting they received, as well as a lack of understanding of God's principles.

God created the family. Throughout the scriptures He communicates the value and importance of the family. I would venture to say that over 90% of the body of Christ have not received any substantial biblical instruction on parenting. How can this be? When we look at the conditions of our families within the body of Christ it doesn't take a rocket scientist to determine that we are in trouble.

God's Word is complete. He did not leave anything out. Therefore we do not need to look further for guidance and counsel for parenting. We must turn to the Creator and to His *instruction manual*, the Bible, to measure ourselves and receive instructions how to raise *His* children.

These lessons are designed to assist and guide you in this wonderful experience of parenting children. This workbook will provide direction, tools, comfort, and in essence, will hold your hand as you and your family journey together toward a common goal, aligning your home with God's truth.

The vision and purpose for the *Parenting is a Ministry Discipleship Manual* is to equip the body of Christ to minister and disciple parents in parenting. This 8-week manual includes a complete leader's guide to equip and support pastors and lay leaders who have a desire to help others in this area.

It is my prayer that the church will see the great need to teach parents these biblical truths and methods to raise their children, and to strategize and put into place an *offensive*, rather than *defensive*, approach to helping parents. Currently churches spend more time trying to fix the problems that arise due to the mistakes and lack of understanding of parents, than they do actually training parents how to parent their children.

I pray that God will raise up within the body of Christ many pastors and lay ministers who see the great need and have a desire to disciple individuals, couples or small groups through the *Parenting is a Ministry Discipleship Manual*.



## PARENTING IS A MINISTRY

### Day 1

### Week 1

#### THE INSTRUCTION MANUAL

Suppose you want to purchase a major appliance or a computer system. You choose the product carefully, make arrangements for payment, and take it home. You enthusiastically open the box and discover that it needs some assembly. Perhaps you can't find the correct parts. What do you do? If you're like most people, you try to troubleshoot or fix it on your own. Only after you're thoroughly perplexed do you search for...what? The owner's manual!

The instruction booklet that comes with most major purchases is a support manual. It gives you the information needed to set up a system or to replace broken parts. It tells you how to keep the device in optimum working condition.

If you need to repair your car, do you reach for the lawn mower manual? Hardly. If you want to set up a new computer system, do you use a dictionary? Of course not. Such actions seem silly, yet this is what many parents do when they need help with raising children. They seek advice from well meaning friends or family members, read the latest book or in some cases, turn to the *professionals*.

Many parents have reached the point of despair over a child, wishing the infant had arrived with an instruction manual. Actually, the instruction manual arrived long before the child! The parent's *instruction manual* is the wisdom of God found in the Bible. The Bible carries the authority of the *Manufacturer*. It gives direction for the health and well being of the family. A strong family is developed through Christian faith, based on the truths found in the Bible.

#### UNIQUELY CREATED BY GOD

The *Parenting Is A Ministry* workbook is not: "Craig Caster's Four Steps to Successful Parenting." I have learned valuable lessons along the way through the children God has entrusted to me. I have discovered many wonderful principles while counseling families for many years. However, the most profound truths are found only in the Word of God. The Bible is complete, lacking nothing, and gives us clear instructions on how to raise our children.

● Do you believe that the Bible gives clear instructions on child rearing?

Yes     No

Explain. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

● If you have more than one child, are any two children exactly alike?

Yes     No

Explain. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness..."*  
-2 Timothy 3:16

*"For You formed my inward parts; you covered me in my mother's womb."  
-Psalm 139:13*

Although I have taught parenting classes to many hundreds of parents, I have never known anyone to respond "yes" to the question above! Every child is different. Why? Because each one was fashioned by God as a unique individual.

We have the best intentions for our children. None of us held our newborn infant in our arms and said, "*I can't wait to mess up this child.*" Typically, we raise our children based on their personalities as they relate to our own. If we are parenting a particularly passive child, this style of parenting works temporarily. However, when personalities clash, and we lose control over a child, it produces stress and conflicts arise.

My parents raised eight children, which is a large family by today's standards. Each child presented a unique personality and challenge to my parents. Can you imagine trying to incorporate eight different systems for child rearing? Impossible!

A comforting, sustaining factor in the parenting process is that no matter what personalities our children have, no matter what changes affect our families, God's Word does not change. Within the Scriptures are the basic truths needed every day, for every person. God's Word is complete! It lacks nothing.

God ordained one all-encompassing system, with thorough instructions. Within that system we can adjust our personalities, compassion and demonstration of the love we give each child, because of their respective personalities and emotional needs.

Many Christians have become confused about what God's will and purpose is in raising their children. Parents frequently turn to secular solutions or methods that appear to be the answer to spiritual problems. Turning to an auto repair manual to fix a refrigerator corresponds to what we do in modern society. We must realize that God created the institution of the family. He offers us insight through His Word to raise our children wisely.

● **Use the space below to describe the uniqueness of each of your children. If married, discuss with your spouse. For example, Johnny is complacent, easily pleased and loves to read. Susie is strong-willed, stubborn and wants her own way.**

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**Parenting Principle:** *The Word of God is the parent's instruction manual for raising their children and does not change due to the uniqueness of their children's personalities.*

*"I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvelous are Your works, and that my soul knows very well."  
-Psalm 139:14*

## Day 2

### NO DIRECTIONS = FRUSTRATION

Have you ever been assigned a task to accomplish by a certain time and were not sure how to proceed?

I remember when I first started working with computers, I would write down the instructions, work two hours on a project only to accidently delete everything. I became so frustrated that I wanted to throw the computer out the window! Why? Because I faced a task that I didn't know how to accomplish, and I didn't have the tools and understanding needed to do the job properly. The result was frustration, anger, helplessness and an overwhelming urge to give up.

Parenting can be equally frustrating. The experience of raising responsible young people is much more important than developing computer skills; yet, we easily lose patience, become angry and can be tempted to give up.

**If you feel this way, you are not alone. You are in good company. I know this workbook will help you gain understanding and clear direction in your parenting skills.**

Many parents do quit and relinquish their responsibility to others. Sometimes they simply give up, neglecting their children temporarily or permanently. Others have abdicated their God-given duties, leaving relatives, schools or churches to assume their parenting roles.

However, God never quits being a nurturing father to His children, and we must not give up either. We must realize that parenting is a learned skill. Nurturing often comes naturally to women. However, it is not natural for men. American society currently idolizes the *tough guy* authoritative image. Unfortunately, most American men miss the fatherly joys of being a teacher, a friend and an affectionate nurturer for their children.

**Nurture** - *To nurse, to supply with nourishment, to educate, to further the development of another.*

Nurturing means to bring up and train children in a caring manner. This includes hugging, kissing and appropriate touching. Men, if your father did not nurture and show affection toward you, you may not know how to be affectionate to your wife or your children.

**Parenting Principle:** *Parenting is a learned skill. We cannot give up or relinquish our God-given responsibility to actively parent our children.*

*"And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart."  
-Galatians 6:9*

## THE MAZE OF PARENTING

The parents groaned as they read the small sign at the entrance to the amusement park's ride – *At least 45 minutes from this point. "You've got to be kidding!"* Dad exclaimed.

Glazed expressions on the faces of other parents far ahead communicated their disillusionment. Then Mom noticed children speeding through the corridors of the nearby people-sized *rat* maze. *"Let's try this maze!"*

The bright red and yellow door easily swung open at their small son's touch. Red, yellow, and blue squares, five feet tall, lined a wide path where they stood. They moved forward a few paces and then faced first a right turn, next a left turn, and then, a choice.

*"Let's go this way!"* Anna, the older daughter, called.

They followed a lane to another left turn, then a right turn and then...nothing. A dead end stopped them short!

The parents suddenly realized that this adventure wasn't going to be easy. The wall panels loomed over three-year-old James and they feared the resulting panic if they were separated. The parents grasped their children's hands and retraced their steps.

Choosing the correct path, they progressed several yards before encountering more choices. Dad weighed the options. One direction seemed to head back to the way they came, but the other direction didn't exactly lead to the way he thought they should go. The path straight ahead soon led to another turn.

Suddenly, another group of youngsters raced past. Six-year-old Anna wanted to follow them, but her mother's caution silenced her. Dad stood on tiptoe and peered over the top of a wall panel. The end of the maze was not visible, but Dad could see over one or two lanes – enough to know that a right turn would be the correct choice. *"Let's go this way."* He decided.

Anna obeyed, wistfully glancing at the other kids. Moments later, the wayward youngsters met them again. *"Hey, Dad, you were right!"* Anna beamed, and they shared a special smile. The family continued through the maze, sometimes guessing, sometimes reversing. Twice they called to an airborne rider on the adjacent SkyTower, *"Which way should we go?"* The helpful onlookers gestured in the right direction.

When they reached the final hallway, Dad and Mom breathed a sigh of relief. They were so glad that they had stayed together on their a-maze-ing adventure! They embraced one another in triumph at the end of the maze, and yelled, *"We did it!"* and slapped each other a high five.

Parenting can be like that complicated maze. We enter with curiosity, eager for a new adventure, but soon we face life-changing decisions. Children's interests, relationships, job stresses and financial constraints compete with other responsibilities that demand our time and attention. The end is not in sight. One path seems right, but it leads to a dead end. Another path may be the right way,

*"There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death."  
-Proverbs 14:12*

although it first seems contradictory. The journey is not as easy as it appeared at the beginning.

Can we, as parents, really know how to guide our children correctly? How do we stick together to keep from losing each other in the *maze*? When should we hold tightly to each other? When should we let go? How do we let go?

We tend to rely on our own wisdom and our past experiences as we guide our children. However, even these can fail.

**Parenting Principle:** *Parents need God's wisdom and power.*

## Day 3

### PARENTING STYLES

As mentioned before, our children are uniquely and individually created by God. They are all different! Parents commonly develop a parenting style based on their own personalities and the personalities of their children. As you will discover in this parenting course, we are to adapt our *approach* to our children based upon their individual personalities, but not adjust our *parenting style*. If you differ in your parenting style to each child, some will perceive you as unfair, partial to their siblings, or question your love for them.

Many Christians today have become very confused about God's will and purpose for them in raising their children. Most material on parenting available today relies primarily on worldly methods such as positive reinforcement, charts with gold stars and so on, which can produce minimal positive results. Many parents in the Body of Christ are not turning to God's Word and asking, "*God, what is Your way?*" God's Word is the original manual for family and offers us guidance and understanding for raising our children. We must believe that!

Previously, I shared with you the frustration I experienced when I first began working with a computer. When I finally understood the basic principles and techniques, it became fun. Parenting is the same way. Once you understand the purpose and have the tools, parenting can be fun. We would all agree that at times parenting is not fun, but hard work.

God wants parenting to be joyful. My oldest son, Nick, is now working, showing responsibility and is blessing my socks off! He wants to get married and start a family. He loves the whole idea of family. This is my stubborn *mule* who tested me on everything imaginable. I know he loves family because of what God has done in our home. Though we have had hard times, Nick has experienced the joy and fun that his mom and I have had in raising him and his siblings.

We learn to parent primarily *from* our own parents. What we normally do is take the good, throw out the bad and make up the rest based upon our own personalities or upon our first child's personality.

*"But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy."  
-James 3:17*

*"...I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some."  
-1 Corinthians 9:22*

As parents, we are called by God to be ministers to our children. It is very important as we move through this journey that we see ourselves as ministers. The family is an institution that God created, and He has given us the task to oversee our families.

● Do you feel that your own parents were confident in the area of parenting?  Yes  No

● Who taught you how to be a parent? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

● Take a moment and describe the way you were raised; for example, Who set the rules? Who was the main disciplinarian? What types of discipline were used? What types of affection were shown?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Parenting Principle:** Parents are called by God to ministers to their children.

# Day 4 \_\_\_\_\_

## THE MINISTRY OF PARENTING

The word *minister* is derived from the Greek word *diakonos* which means a *servant*.

**Minister** - (noun) A servant or waiter, one who oversees, governs and fulfills.

**Minister** - (verb) To adjust, regulate and set in order; to serve, render service to another; to labor for the Lord as a servant.

Some moms can identify with this term. Your day often consists of serving, picking up, cleaning, picking up, making beds, picking up and serving some more! Some days it seems endless. You may sometimes feel like a waiter. Most parents naturally resist the suggestion that they are servants/waiters for their children. I am not suggesting that we serve our children's will and wishes, but that we serve the Lord and fulfill *His* will and *His* desire for our children.

We must constantly evaluate and regulate the order in our homes. The Bible teaches us that as a minister, our relationship and total dependence upon the Master is essential. As a minister, a state of servitude is the main thought. Parenting, like serving, does not come natural to any of us. Much of the responsibility goes against our selfish sin nature. Therefore, dependence upon Christ to strengthen us and make us able to serve, is critical.

● Do you feel that your house is in order?  Yes  No

"...just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."  
-Matthew 20:28

- Specifically, when it comes to your children, do you feel that your house is in order?  Yes  No

Being a parent is hard! It requires constant giving and sacrifice, giving and sacrifice. If we do not have an understanding of God's purposes, we can become overwhelmed. Sometimes, we may feel like taking an extended vacation or screaming or even giving up! God wants to give us an understanding of His purpose in the difficulties and trials that arise, and what to do when they come. As ministers of the Lord Jesus Christ, our disposition or mindset must be to fulfill His will and purpose through our life. The key word here is *fulfill*.

We know that God is the creator of the family. In Genesis 1:28 and 2:18-24, we learn that the family was God's idea. Man did not wake up one day and say, "I want to make a life-long commitment to one woman and raise children together." As a matter of fact, if we go back in biblical history, we discover that man's idea was to have multiple wives, take them because they were pretty, to bear children, to treat them like possessions, then dispose of them at will.

- Do you see your role in the home as that of a servant?  
 Yes  No

**Parenting Principle:** As parents/ministers, we are servants of the Lord, fulfilling His will and purpose.

## GOD'S PURPOSE

**It is important to understand God's purpose for us as parents.**

I have asked many parents what they believe God's purpose is for them as parents, and I have heard many different answers. How can it be that Christians are so diverse in their opinions in this area? If we do not know God's purpose for us and *through* us, as parents, our parenting viewpoint and goals will be adversely affected.

**Purpose** - *An intended or desired result and/or a goal.*

God's purpose for us as parents/ministers can be broken down into three areas:

### 1. God's glorification

**Glorify** - *To reflect.*

We often do not think about God's glorification in our lives. When we look in a mirror, what do we see? Some of us like what we see, and some of us do not. Over the last ten years, I have put on an extra 35 pounds. My sons sometimes affectionately harass me by calling me *Flabio*. My boys are both physically fit. They do push-ups and sit-ups. Justin is a gymnast. They both have *cut-up* bodies. When I tell them that I once looked like them, they say, "But Dad, look at you now!"

When we look in the mirror we see ourselves. God is teaching us that to *glorify* Him means that we are to be *reflecting* Him. If someone asked our kids, "Do

*"Then God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.'"*  
-Genesis 1:28

"For you were bought at a price, therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit which are God's."  
-1 Corinthians 6:20

"Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven."  
-Matthew 5:16

your parents reflect and glorify Jesus?" how would they answer that question? When we are at home, how do we react to our children, to our spouses? Do our lives glorify God? Some parents would be afraid to ask their kids these questions. It is very clear that as Christians and ministers to our children, we need to be glorifying God in our homes.

● Based upon 1 Corinthians 6:20 and Matthew 5:16, in what areas in your life are you *not* reflecting Christ in the home? For example, when you discipline your kids or how you react when your kids disobey, etc...

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● Are you reflecting Christ in your home?  Yes  No  
For example. \_\_\_\_\_

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2. Our transformation

God uses many tools to accomplish our transformation. One of His most effective tools is our children. The family is one of the most awesome tools that God uses to conform us to the image of Christ. If we will yield ourselves to God, He will use the dynamics of family, marriage and children to transform our lives.

**Perfected** - To make complete or a process of transformation.

*"But whoever keeps His word, that the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him."  
-1 John 2:5*

**Transformation** - To change in outward shape or semblance.

*"And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."  
-Romans 12:2*

God wants to transform the areas of your life that are not glorifying to Him. Your children, their failures, mistakes and irritations are *God's fingers* used to transform you.

*"For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings."  
-Hebrews 2:10*

● What are your children's personalities or behaviors that bring out the worst in you? \_\_\_\_\_

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3. To love and train our children

Because our children are gifts from God, we should value and love them as He does.

*"Behold, children are a gift from the Lord and the fruit of the womb is a reward."  
-Psalm 127:3 (NAU)*

Proverbs 22:6 teaches us to,

*“Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.”*

God tells us that our children are a gift from the Lord. He wants us to treat them like gifts--to love them and to train them. This principle is clearly taught in Scripture. In Lessons Three and Four, we will be defining how to love and train our children.

**Parenting Principle:** *Our purpose as parents/ministers is to glorify God, to be transformed into His image and to love and train our children.*

## Day 5

### SERVING GOD IS MINISTERING TO OTHERS

Moses was chosen by God to take His people, the Children of Israel, out of Egypt and into the Promised Land. How many kids did Moses have? Thousands upon thousands! How many years will we be raising our children? Eighteen or maybe twenty years. For forty long years Moses tromped through the desert bearing the heartache, frustrations and complaints from all those people! In the end Moses was not allowed to enter the Promised Land with the Children of Israel. Do you remember why?

Toward the end of the 40 years, God's people continued to murmur, complain and cry out to Moses, *“Our sheep are dying, and we need water!”* We have to remember that though God was leading them by the pillar of fire by night and the pillar of smoke by day, and miraculously providing their daily food, they continued to murmur, grumble and complain. They did not show gratitude toward Moses or God. Moses spoke to God, *“They are thirsty, and their sheep are going to die.”* God responded to Moses, *“Go and speak to the rock, and it will bring forth water.”* What did Moses do? Rather than *speaking* to the rock as God had instructed him, Moses *struck* the rock, twice. *“Wham, wham!”* His attitude and disposition was, *“Here is your water, you miserable people!”* (See Numbers 20:1-13)

By striking the rock in anger, Moses misrepresented God and was prohibited by God from entering the Promised Land. For a moment, Moses forgot who he was representing. For a moment, he began to think, *“Look what I am doing for these people.”* Moses was God's servant, ministering to God's people *for* God. He put his own selfish expectations on what these people should have been doing. When he did that, he became bitter and angry. Let's put that in the context of parenting our children.

Let me give you a personal example. By the time my son Nicholas was four years old, he had seen me angrier and show more bitterness toward him than I had shown toward anyone in the world. He observed his father *lose it* repeatedly over his mistakes and shortcomings. Do you think he understood why I acted this way? No way! He did not know that he was a strong-willed *mule*. He had no idea. Was I misrepresenting God? Almost everyday! I had no idea that I was a minister. *My attitude was, “I'm your boss and here's what you're supposed*

to be doing.” God said, “No, Craig. You are ministering for Me, not for him. Look to Me. I’m going to teach you how to minister.”

Understanding God’s purpose for parenting and our role in carrying out His purpose is so critical. Again, Moses got angry and failed when, for a moment, he put his eyes on the weaknesses of the people and their failures.

● Do you ever get angry when your kids fail?  Yes  No

● Do you take their failures personally?  Yes  No

We can get in the flesh and fail to glorify God. When Christian parents misrepresent God on a regular basis in their homes, is it any wonder that their kids don’t want to go to church, pray or read the Bible? This hypocrisy offends and stumbles our children!

We go to church where everyone is smiling and talking about Jesus. Then we go home, and inside the four walls of our home, it is hell--disunity between parents, yelling, everyone arguing, etc. Our kids know hypocrisy when they see it. Yet we somehow convince ourselves that this is acceptable. We never stop to think about it and say, “Wait a minute, something is wrong with this picture!” Again, it goes back to God’s purpose--His glorification and our transformation. We need to be concerned that we are representing the Lord at all times and glorifying Him in all situations.

Moses had to sacrifice himself. He had to continually take his eyes off of the people and say, “God, I’m looking to You.” He had to fight the temptation of his flesh constantly. I can only imagine 40 long years! Let’s rejoice that we don’t have to do that! Amen? Praise the Lord!

● How does Matthew 10:38, 39 apply to you as a parent? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

I praise God for the principle of forgiveness and reconciliation and that He heals memories. My son Nicholas cannot remember the many foolish things that I said and did in front of him because of my ignorance of God’s purposes for me as a parent which are:

- 1. God’s Glorification
- 2. Our Transformation
- 3. To Love and Train Our Children

Many times I have heard parents say, “But it is so hard to continuously love them, especially teenagers, when we don’t get anything back from them.” It is hard! It does not matter if they are going through the terrible two’s or the terrible teens, we are to minister to them as God’s Word instructs us. Don’t do it as unto your children, but do it unto the Lord? If we loose sight of this basic premise and understanding of God’s purpose for us as ministers, we will fall on our face everyday. Trip...fall...trip...fall... We are people of habit. I’ll guarantee you that you have put your pants on the same way everyday for the last 20 years. When we start bad habits and practice them daily, we can begin to destroy our own children.

“But beware lest somehow this liberty of yours becomes a stumbling block to those who are weak.”

-1 Corinthians 8:9

“And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it.”

-Matthew 10:38-39

● Have you viewed your parenting role as being a minister for the Lord?

Yes     No

● What has the Lord revealed to you personally in this chapter?

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**Parenting Principle:** *To exemplify Jesus, parents must keep their eyes on the Lord and not allow their children's failures to dictate their actions and responses.*

As parents/ministers our main concern is to fulfill His will and understand His purposes for us as parents. In order to fulfill His purpose in this servanthood ministry, we must have a strong spiritual foundation. It is impossible to accomplish this without a strong foundation, which we will define in Lesson Two.

Go back through this lesson, and review the seven **Parenting Principles** you have learned. Re-write the principles below in your own words.

- 1) \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
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- 3) \_\_\_\_\_  
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- 4) \_\_\_\_\_  
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- 5) \_\_\_\_\_  
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- 6) \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
- 7) \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

*“And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus...”  
 -Colossians 3:17*

## A STRONG FOUNDATION

### Day 1

#### SEEKING GOD

In Matthew 6:33 we read,

*“Seek you first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.”*

You may be asking, “*What does this Scripture have to do with parenting?*” Our daily priority must be to fulfill God’s will, seek His perspective and prioritize our life according to what He says is important. We know how important it is for our pastors to spend time with God daily, seeking His wisdom and guidance for their congregations.

● **Are your children as important to God as the people within the church?**

Yes     No

Jesus spoke about the priority of caring for the precious spirit of children. Scripture teaches us that *parents are responsible for ministering to their own children*. God did not give this responsibility to the church. As we saw in the previous lesson, parents are ministers to their children! In recent years, many parents have taken a back seat, allowing schools, or even the church, to assume this role in the lives of their children. We have sought to reorganize the institution of God’s creation of family, seeking to come up with a different plan. However, man can never improve upon God’s perfect will, only destroy it. Due to ignorance, many parents are destroying, rather than building up, their families.

In order to build our families, we must begin with a strong foundation.

#### THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL

In both the Old Testament and the New Testament, God reiterates the necessity of His people abiding in close fellowship with Him. In the Gospel of John chapter 15, Jesus states that if we do not abide in Him we can do *nothing*.

In the Old Testament, God gave the Ten Commandments to the children of Israel through His prophet, Moses. Most people today are familiar with these commandments, but less familiar are the words that follow the Ten Commandments. These are important words, because in essence, they are God’s instruction to His people about what they were to do with the Ten Commandments. In Deuteronomy 6:1-6, we read:

*“Now this is the commandment, and these are the statutes and judgements which the Lord your God has commanded to teach you, that you may observe them in the land which you are crossing over to possess.*

*That you may fear the Lord your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments which I command you, you and your son and your grandson, all the days of your life, and that your days may be prolonged.*

*Therefore, hear O Israel, and be careful to observe it, that it may be well with you, and that you may multiply greatly as the Lord God of your fathers promised you – a land flowing with milk and honey.*

### Week 2

*“Whoever receives one of these little children in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me, receives not Me but Him who sent Me.”*  
-Mark 9:37

*Hear, O Israel; the Lord our God, the Lord is one!*

*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.*

*And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart.”*

- **Re-read the Deuteronomy passage, and circle each word or phrase that God is calling you to obey. For example, *observe them, fear the Lord, keep His statutes, etc.***

Note that the phrase “*hear O Israel*” is repeated. This expresses the emphasis that God placed upon these words. He is stressing that this instruction is essential, non-negotiable and absolutely necessary for the survival of the family and for the survival of Israel as a nation. It has been said that you can have a family without a nation, but you cannot have a nation without a family.

We have seen in our own country the adverse results when God and His Word are neglected. In our nation today, the alarming statistics tell the story: crime, sexually transmitted diseases, unplanned pregnancies, abortion, drug addiction, devastated lives and destroyed families are impacting our entire society.

We, as a society are in serious trouble. Sadly, the same is true of the body of Christ as well. We err when we take the position that these problems exist because of peer pressure, the influence of movies, television, video games or *bad kids*! Clearly God places responsibility for the children squarely in the hands of the parents! Clearly parents must first establish a strong foundation by honoring God themselves, then teach their children His ways in order for their families to survive and experience God’s blessings. Many Christian homes are in disarray today due to the fact that their foundations are weak, and the spiritual life within the home is lacking.

Deuteronomy 6:5 teaches us to,

*“...love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.”*

The *motive* for fearing God, keeping His statutes and commandments, and diligently teaching our children must be love for Him! When we pursue an intimate, abiding relationship with the Lord, He draws us into loving fellowship, *heart* and *soul*, and empowers us with the *strength* to obey. Verse 6 reminds us,

*“And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart.”*

We must hide God’s Word in our hearts through personal, daily devotions and Bible study. As we meditate on the truths and obey the principles, God transforms our thinking and changes our lives.

Notice the order, *love God, store His Word in our hearts and obedience*. This exhortation in Deuteronomy 6:1-6 corresponds with Luke 6:46-49. God’s Word is not confusing, but consistent and clear.

***Parenting Principle:*** *In order to fulfill God’s plan as parents, we must establish a strong foundation through intimacy with Christ.*

# Day 2

## THE INGREDIENTS OF A STRONG FOUNDATION

Let's review Luke 6:46-49:

*"But why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do the things which I say?"*

*Whoever comes to Me and hears My sayings and does them, I will show you whom he is like:*

*He is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently against that house, and could not shake it, for it was founded on the rock.*

*But he who heard and did nothing is like a man who built a house on the earth without a foundation, against which the stream beat vehemently; and immediately it fell. And the ruin of that house was great."*

- **The man with the ruined house heard Christ's words but \_\_\_\_\_**

To ruin our families, we simply have to do *nothing*. Nobody intentionally ruins his or her own home. However, deterioration will naturally begin to set in if careful attention is not paid to the foundation of the structure. In the passage above, Jesus made several key statements about the foundation of our lives.

He said we must *come to Him*. The first step in building a strong foundation is to accept Jesus as Savior and Lord. In Matthew 16:16-18 Jesus told Peter that the foundational rock of the church is the lordship of Jesus Christ.

**Comes to Me** (Greek, *erchomai*) – *To move toward.*

*Come to Me* implies taking deliberate steps toward Christ by accepting Him as Lord and Savior.

- **Have you accepted Christ as Savior and Lord?  Yes  No**

If you have not surrendered your life to Jesus Christ, please turn to Appendix A, *Commitment to Christ*.

After we have come to Christ for salvation, Jesus said that we must then *hear His sayings*. This means to *abide* in Christ. Jesus Christ desires to have an intimate, abiding relationship with us, that we might become His *disciples*.

**Hears My sayings** (Greek, *ekouo*) – *To hear with attention, to hearken or listen to. Metaphorically, in the presence of.*

**Abide** - *United to Him or remaining in Him in affection and love. Being with Him in heart, mind and will. Adhering steadfastly to the Savior, regardless of changing feelings and emotions.*

**Disciple** - *A student, or a learner, whose life gradually and progressively takes on the character of the teacher.*

*"And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it."*

*-Matthew 16:18*

*"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."*

*-John 3:16*

*"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."*

*-1 John 1:9*

*"If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you."*

*-John 15:7*

*“Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, ‘If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed.’ ”*  
-John 8:31

Finally, Jesus proclaimed that in order for our lives to be built upon a strong foundation, we must *do His sayings* or obey Him. God’s Word changes or transforms our hearts. When we surrender our will to God, He gives us the power to obey.

**Does them** (Greek, *poieo*) – *To produce or bring about, obvious external acts. To live out God’s Words in our lives by obedience.*

These three ingredients are inter-related, and one is the by-product of the other. After receiving Jesus as Lord and Savior, our daily abiding relationship with Him enables us to obey. We must start each day meeting with the Lord and allowing Him to prioritize our day.

We cannot *do His sayings (obey)* unless we *hear His sayings (abide)*; we cannot *hear His sayings* unless we *come to Him* daily. The stability of our family is dependent upon this strong foundation. As we abide in Him, God transforms us, and we will be better equipped to be ministers to our children.

*“And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”*  
-Romans 12:2

**Parenting Principle:** *Abiding in an intimate relationship with Christ is the key ingredient to a strong spiritual foundation.*

## Day 3

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### A BUILDING PROJECT

I worked for seventeen years as a land developer prior to entering into full-time ministry. Before beginning construction on a building, I would first consult an architect to design the structure. His first concern was the foundation that would support the structure. The foundation consisted of concrete and steel to assure the stability and longevity of the building. Soil conditions and the size of the structure were considered in the planning of the foundation.

When the foundation blueprints came back on several projects I discovered that I had to make major adjustments in my building budget in order to accommodate the design. The foundations had to be made larger and stronger due to bad soil conditions. How foolish it would have been to disregard the blueprints designed by the architect and, either skimmed on the materials in order to save time and money, or redesign according to my own ideas.

The foundation is absolutely essential to the structure. A building is only as good as the foundation it stands on. If a builder neglects to follow the architect’s blueprints, and replaces them with his own, his building may stand with an impressive outward appearance for awhile, but with the passing of time, weather

conditions and storms, the building will begin eroding. Stress cracks in the foundation and the walls may eventually result in the collapse of the entire building. The maintenance and upkeep of a poorly designed or improperly built building is costly, time consuming, as well as a cause of stress and anxiety to the owner of the building.

This illustration can also be applied to our families. If we neglect the Architect's blueprint, replacing God's way with our own, our families may have an outward appearance that *all is well* for awhile. However, with the passing of time, the different seasons we go through with our children and the storms of life, our unstable foundation will erode, and our families will not stand.

**Stable** - *Firmly established. Not easily moved, shaken or overthrown, but solid, fixed and steadfast.*

Sometimes our lives resemble a remodeling project always in disarray, unstable, unfinished and in need of repair. When parents are shaken by the failures and difficulties of their children, are not united or their behavior is not exemplifying Christ, it is the evidence of a weak foundation. God wants us to have His peace, joy and strength within our homes.

● **Are you and your family experiencing God's peace, joy and strength?**  
 Yes     No

● **Is your family standing on solid ground (or is your home unstable with a lot of *shaking going on*)?**  
 Yes     No

## INSPECTING YOUR SPIRITUAL FOUNDATION

As we have learned in Deuteronomy 6 and Luke 6, the essential component of a strong foundation is our intimate relationship with the Savior. We must practice the disciplines of the Christian life if we are to have a growing walk with God.

**Take a moment to grade yourself on your abiding relationship with Christ:**

● **How is your prayer life? Are you growing closer to God daily through prayer? Would you use words like worshiping, listening, thanking, confessing, interceding, etc. to describe your daily communication with God? Do you feel intimate with your Heavenly Father, able to honestly share your heart, or are you distant? Do you pray with your spouse and children daily?**

Grade yourself on your prayer life. A, B, C, D, or F \_\_\_\_\_

● **How often do you spend time reading God's Word? Do you only pick up your Bible on Sunday mornings and occasionally for mid-week study at church? Do you read and meditate upon God's Word in a daily quiet time? The Bible is not *cake* for special occasions, though we often treat it that way. Rather, it is *daily bread* for everyday spiritual nourishment!**

Grade yourself on your consistent devotion to God's Word.  
 A, B, C, D, or F \_\_\_\_\_

*"He is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently against that house, and could not shake it, for it was founded on the rock."*  
 -Luke 6:48

*"Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?-- unless indeed you are disqualified."*  
 -2 Corinthians 13:5

*"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God..."*  
 -Philippians 4:6

*"Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night. He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper."*

-Psalm 1:1-3

*"Honor the LORD with your possessions, and with the firstfruits of all your increase; So your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will overflow with new wine."*

-Proverbs 3:9-10

*"But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you."*

-Matthew 6:33

*"...love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control."*

-Galatians 5:22-23 (NAU)

When I come home at the end of the day, my daughter, Katie, exclaims, "Daddy's home!" I pick her up, and she wraps her arms around me. Katie and I have a game we often play where I hold her across my arms as if she were a princess on a throne. She loves the entire routine!

There once was a time when I would come home, and both of my sons would run out and each grab one of my legs. They would maul me for several minutes, each vying for my attention. Now, when I come home, my boys glance my way and mumble, "Hey, Dad." They have *outgrown* most of their excitement for dad coming home.

As Christians, we sometimes *outgrow*, become complacent or lose the excitement of our relationship with our Heavenly Father. When we first came to Christ, we were excited to read the Bible and discover new truths, to pray earnestly and anticipate answered prayer, and desired to share our common faith with other believers. If we are not careful to guard our hearts and stay close to the Lord, we will drift from *our first love*. Jesus warned His disciples in the Parable of the Sower and the Seeds that the cares of this life, the deceitfulness of riches and the desire for other things can steal our heart and devotion away from the Lord (see Luke 8). This can take place very slowly and subtly.

● **Are you giving tithes regularly? Are you trusting God with your finances?**

Grade yourself A, B, C, D, or F \_\_\_\_\_

● **How are your priorities with God, marriage, children, job, church, fellowship with other believers and leisure time? Do you feel that your priorities are in accordance with God's desires for you and your family? Are you and your family in agreement with your priorities?**

Grade your priorities A, B, C, D, or F \_\_\_\_\_

● **Are you practicing godly principles daily in your home? Is the fruit of the Spirit evident in your life (Galatians 5:23, 24)?**

Grade yourself both. A, B, C, D, or F \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

This fruit from God's Spirit is the by-product of an intimate relationship with Christ. If this fruit is absent from our life, it is the outward evidence that our fellowship with God is lacking.

● **Have complacency and familiarity caused you to neglect your relationship *with* and devotion to Christ?**  Yes  No

● **Do you need some repair or shaping-up in your life?**

Yes  No

● **Are you prepared to strengthen your spiritual foundation?**

Yes  No

- How did you fare on your foundation inspection?
  - Very good
  - Good
  - Poor
  
- Is there room for improvement?  Yes     No

**Parenting Principle:** *Neglecting daily devotion to Christ will result in a weak foundation.*

## Day 4 \_\_\_\_\_

### REBELLIOUS! WHO, ME?

What does the word *rebellion* bring to your mind? Teenagers or maybe a particular child?

**Rebellion** - *Resistance to authority; doing things our own way.*

The majority of parents today never stop to consider that the source of their family problems may be that the very foundation of their home is not built upon the priorities of Jesus Christ. The kids are out of control. The husband and wife are not unified. They argue constantly. Confusion reigns.

Participating in rebellious attitudes and behaviors is like building a house with a weak foundation or with *no* foundation. When we do not make prayer and Bible reading a priority in our daily lives, we are rebelling against God's design for the family. We are, by our actions, telling God, the Great Architect, that we are sufficient in ourselves and do not need His wisdom, strength and guidance. Many parents are unknowingly practicing rebellion on a regular basis in their own homes! The result of this rebellion is erosion of their foundation and their family.

God's Word says that rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft. Rebellion is like opening the back door of our house for the dark forces of oppression to sweep in and wreak havoc. The results can be disastrous.

*"For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry..."*  
-1 Samuel 15:23

**The erosion of our foundation begins with neglecting our devotional life, which always leads to the following:**

- 1) We stop giving of ourselves and start asking, "*What about me, my feelings and my needs?*"
- 2) We begin to wallow in selfishness and exhibit *conditional*, rather than unconditional, love.
- 3) We stop hungering (seeking) for holiness.
- 4) We cease to exercise the spiritual disciplines of prayer and spending time daily in God's Word.
- 5) We stop demonstrating sacrificial love for Christ and others.
- 6) We begin to justify our sinful attitudes, behavior and selfishness toward our children.

“...the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.”  
-Ephesians 6:16

As our foundation begins to erode, we begin to neglect the very things that make us strong parents! God’s Word gives us a grave warning in Galatians 6:7,

*“Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.”*

Deception is one of the enemy’s greatest tools by which he uses the *flaming missiles* of lies, temptations, accusations and condemnation to gradually wear down our minds and our defenses to seduce us into rebellion. If Satan can get us to believe that our actions today will have no consequences later, he has won half the battle. The principle of sowing and reaping was established by God and applies to the things we do as well as those things which we neglect to do. Let us take the offensive approach and sow an abundance of positive things into our life (the fruit of the Spirit). The Word of God teaches us in 2 Corinthians 9:6,

*“...he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.”*

● Do any of the six signs of erosion given above describe your life?

Yes     No

Explain. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

● What do you intend to do about these issues? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Parenting Principle:** *When we do not make prayer and Bible reading a priority in our lives, we are rebelling against God’s design for the family.*

**GOD IS IN CONTROL**

We all go through seasons when we are genuinely seeking God and putting Him first in our life, yet we continue to experience trials and frustration. In these times we might be tempted to believe that God has withdrawn His love or forgotten us. During these seasons we must remember that, as God’s children, we walk through this life by faith and not by sight or by circumstances.

“For we walk by faith, not by sight.”  
-2 Corinthians 5:7

Ephesians 2:10 tells us,

*“For we are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”*

As parents, we must recognize daily, and in every situation, that God has gone before us and prepared our path. When we are blessed with the presence of children in our lives, we must accept that, at times, our path can be messy! We do not see what is ahead, but God does! We do not always understand what God is doing, but understanding is not essential for faith and obedience.

We can trust God to help us do what is right. How comforting it is to know that in every situation, God has already been there. He knows. He is never surprised or taken off guard. *God has no problems, He only has plans.* We often behave as if God were not in control! God has prepared the way before us. We must fix our eyes on Him in order to fulfill His good works and to gain strength, wisdom and peace on the journey as a parent. This simple poem speaks volumes:

If I put my eyes on others, I get stressed.  
If I put my eyes on myself, I get depressed.  
If I put my eyes on Jesus, I get blessed.

- **Dads, how would you respond if you came home from work tomorrow and discovered that your house was flooded because your 6-year-old son flushed his action figure down the toilet and clogged it?**
- **Moms, how would you respond if you walked into the kitchen and found your three-year-old making a *soufflé* on the floor with raw eggs and a box of cereal?**

Parents, we must always keep in the forefront of our minds that each day and every situation that arises has been allowed by God. He not only prepared the day, but He wants to prepare us to meet the day in the proper, loving way. He wants to provide us with His grace to lovingly deal with each situation. When we are caught off guard and fail to respond in love and glorify God we must be responsible and ask our child and the Lord to forgive us.

## Day 5

### OUR TRANSFORMATION THROUGH LIFE'S STORMS

Perhaps you feel that you have a healthy devotional life, yet you are still defeated, frustrated and plagued with trials. You may be struggling to understand *why* God has allowed your present circumstances. What is His purpose? As we discussed in Lesson One, God wants to change or transform us. He will use our trials in accomplishing our transformation. Be encouraged. He promises His presence and His protection in our lives during this process.

In Matthew 14:22-31, we read that following the feeding of the five thousand, Jesus sent His disciples into a boat to go before Him to the other side of Galilee. He took advantage of this opportunity to go alone to a mountain to pray. Meanwhile, a storm arose on the sea, tossing the little boat as well as the faith of the disciples. Jesus caught up with the frightened men by walking upon the sea. He calmed their hearts, *"Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid."* Take note that Jesus sent His disciples out INTO the sea, knowing full well that they would encounter a storm! These men were experienced fishermen, familiar with the sea, yet they feared for their lives. It was not the wind or the rocking of the boat that they feared, but the water! They were afraid of drowning. The very thing they were afraid of, Jesus walked upon. Caught up in the moment, Peter asked Jesus to command him to walk on the water. He jumped out of the boat and began walking toward the Lord. But the moment he took his eyes off Jesus and onto the storm, he began to sink.

*"My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing."  
-James 1:2-4*

*"And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him, and said to him, 'O you of little faith, why did you doubt?'"  
-Matthew 14:31*

*"...with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind."  
-James 1:6*

*"No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it."*

-1 Corinthians 10:13

*"Thus says God the LORD, who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread out the earth and its offspring, who gives breath to the people on it and spirit to those who walk in it."*

-Isaiah 42:5

*"Nor is He worshiped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things."*

-Acts 17:25

● **Do you have your eyes on your kids or on your present circumstances rather than on the Lord?**  Yes  No

Peter cried out, "Lord, save me!" IMMEDIATELY, Jesus extended His hand, snatching him out of the water. The application is clear. Sadly, many parents wait until they are drowning before they reach out to God for help. Many others don't ever think about turning to God, choosing instead to seek help from the world or worldly psychology. There is nothing wrong with psychology. The study of human behavior is valuable. The problems arise when we draw conclusions and seek solutions through worldly psychology and methods rather than through God's Word.

● **Are you walking on water above your circumstance?**

Yes  No

As parents, our trials are often the result of our children's attitude or behavior. This suffering is part of God's plan. 1 Peter 2:20-21 says,

*"For what credit is it if when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, that is commendable before God. For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that you should follow His steps."*

Nobody *likes* suffering, including me! When Nick was seven years old, I came to understand that my son was one of God's *fingers*. Like a ball of clay, God was using my son to shape me. I didn't like it. It hurt! God has used my oldest son as one of the most powerful and effective tools for transforming me. For the longest time, I did not understand God's method. I was an extremely frustrated father of an extremely frustrated little boy. After crying, praying, fasting and looking for guidance in books, I finally turned to the Word! God's voice was clear,

*"This is Me, Craig! Quit kicking against Me. I am doing this because you are not like Me, and I am using this situation to transform you to be like Me."*

● **Has God placed a "Nick" in your life?**  Yes  No

The word *temptation* is often thought of in terms of sin or something forbidden; however, temptation can also refer to a trial or a test of our faith. God uses our daily family situations and circumstances to teach us that we cannot depend upon ourselves, but upon Him for His daily provision of strength and wisdom.

God is the creator of all things. He is all-powerful, all-knowing and a God of love. Nothing comes into our life that does not first pass through His hands. However, because God has given us the gift of free will, we can choose to go our own way, and remove ourselves from His care and guidance.

It was a part of God's wonderful, preordained plan for our life that we became parents, even if you became a parent as a result of sin (rape, another's sin against you or fornication, sex outside of marriage). God's Word tells us that all life is created and sustained by Him. Only God can take our sin and the sin of others toward us and turn them into something good.

*"And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to {His} purpose."*

*-Romans 8:28*

He chose our children and placed them in our care. He promises to equip us with everything we need to accomplish His will. In 2 Peter 1:3 we read,

*"...His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence." (NAU)*

In order to receive *everything* that God has for us, we *must* remain in daily, intimate fellowship with Him. What a privilege, that we can crawl up into God's lap every morning and say,

*"God, here I am! Give me understanding from Your Word. I have these kids that I don't know what to do with. Help me this day. Fill me with Your love, wisdom, patience and strength."*

Why are we so prone to go to God as a *final* resort after all else has failed? When we neglect to go to the Lord *daily*, we live our life *reacting* rather than *responding* according to His will. We miss opportunities for God to work in our lives, lose control and misrepresent Him before our children. Rather than being transformed by our trials, we become burdened and embittered by them. When we are weak spiritually, we begin to justify and excuse our ungodly behavior, believing that the fault lies in our children's personalities, temperaments or actions.

Remember that no trial or testing is beyond our ability to endure, *in the Lord*. We must look to His promises. We must rest in the truth that our trials can be God's *opportunities* to transform us and our children in this journey as parents/ministers.

*"Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it. Unless the Lord guards the city, the watchman stays awake in vain."*

*-Psalm 127:1*

As parents/ministers, the mainspring of service is not our love for our children, but our love for Jesus Christ. If we are only devoted to the cause of our children, we shall soon be crushed and broken-hearted, for we will often meet with more ingratitude from our children than we would from the family pet! But if our motive is love for God and obedience, no ingratitude can hinder us from serving our children and fulfilling His will.

Parents, the method is never the key to accomplishing God's purpose. The key is our relationship with Him. God wants us to follow Him daily; not just follow a plan. If we try to develop a *Plan A to Z*, that is what we will follow. In the process, we will forget our daily need for an intimate relationship with God, depending instead on our own plan. It is our human nature to say, *"Give me a plan! Give me four steps!"* We easily forget the very important principle of what family is all about. Planning is not completely wrong. It is when our plans supercede God's will and purpose for our life and our children's lives. That is when we get in trouble. It is not great talent or wisdom that God blesses, but faithful obedience to His will.

*"But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him."*

*-1 John 2:5*

"So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. If a son asks for bread from any father among you, will he give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish? Or if he asks for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!"  
-Luke 11:9-13

The integrity of the foundation on which we raise our children is directly related to the strength of our relationship with Jesus Christ and our daily dependence upon Him. Our daily intimacy with God through prayer, reading and making Scripture a part of our inner being will transform our hearts to become willing servants to and for others. It requires discipline and devotion. 2 Peter 1:1-4 says,

*"...to those who have obtained like precious faith with us by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ.*

*Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord,*

*as His divine power has given to us all things pertaining to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue,*

*by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust."*

● **Is there anything that God has not given you through His Word and the power of the Holy Spirit that would enable you to be the parents/ministers that God wants you to be?**  Yes  No

● **If you could take a pill each day that would give you the wisdom and power you need to love and raise your kids God's way, would you?**  
 Yes  No

What price would you be willing to pay for peace, knowledge and guidance for daily situations? The price has already been paid on Calvary! We must seek Him on a daily basis. In Luke 11:9-13, God says that we don't have because we don't ask. Our spiritual bank account is full. We withdraw from it through intimacy with Him in prayer, reading His Word and by obeying those things He asks us to do.

I emphasize our spiritual foundation because everything we talk about after this is built upon this foundation. If you don't have an abiding relationship with Christ, but attempt to take the tools, establish boundaries and discipline in your own strength, you will fail. God will not bless disobedience. He loves you. He is jealous of your devotion to Him. We must prioritize our lives and take time to meet with God every day. I know how hard it is. I am a husband, a father of three and a pastor working long hours. Every day I have to make a decision to spend time alone with God.

Reading and studying the Bible every day is essential. There are some excellent devotional books available to help you get into the Word. If you need help finding what is best for you, you might get some suggestions from your pastor or a lay minister in your church.

**Note: Turn to Appendix D for *Recommended Devotional and Discipleship Books*.**

If you are not certain where you stand in relation to Christ, or if you have not confessed your sins and asked Jesus Christ to come into your life, turn to Appendix A, *Commitment to Christ*, and learn how you can enter into a relationship with the Lord. He is waiting to welcome you!

**Parenting Principle:** *God's purpose in the storms of life is to transform us and draw us closer to Him.*

As parents/ministers our main concern should be to do His will and understand His purpose for us in being a parent. In order to fulfill His purpose in this servanthood ministry, we must have a strong spiritual foundation.

Go back through this lesson, and review the five **Parenting Principles** you have learned. Re-write the principles below in your own words.

- 1) \_\_\_\_\_  
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- 2) \_\_\_\_\_  
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- 3) \_\_\_\_\_  
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- 5) \_\_\_\_\_  
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## LOVING COMMUNICATION

### Day 1

### Week 3

#### MEETING OUR CHILDREN'S EMOTIONAL NEEDS

My three children have three very different personalities. My little daughter, Katelyn, is extremely shy. In fact, she is a little phobic. She has some irrational fears.

Every child's first birthday holds special memories. Katie's birthday party was one our family will never forget! Our back yard was filled with friends and family. Coming from such a large family as I do, family events can be overwhelming. Katie clung to her mom and me and maintained pretty well until it was time for birthday cake. When everybody gathered around her high chair and began singing to her, she fell apart and took some time to recover! Needless to say, it put a damper on the party!

That day was a turning point for my wife and me. We were beginning to realize and understand our daughter's personality. Up until she was five years old, Katie would have to be touching either my wife or me at all times when we were out in public. Disneyland was not *the happiest place on earth* for Katie. Instead, it was a scary place where she clung to us for dear life! We look back on it with humor now. On Sundays at church, she had to be holding my hand or my pant leg. If I got into a long discussion with someone, and Katie would spot her mom across the fellowship hall, she would inch away from me, then run over and grab my wife.

No reasoning or explanation influenced Katie. That was the way she was her first few years. You can imagine my daughter's school experiences. When she was four, we sent her to our little church preschool. It was traumatic, but because my office was in the church building, it did help her knowing that I was just down the hall. At preschool she stayed very close to her teacher! Her class photograph is classic. Katie, with a morose look on her face, is standing on the end of the row with my hand resting on her shoulder. She refused to get her picture taken unless I was with her!

In kindergarten she was in a larger school. She was able to cope pretty well Monday through Thursday, but Fridays were traumatic. Friday was chapel day when all the kids from kindergarten through sixth grade were led into the chapel. The kids stood up, sat down, laughed, clapped their hands, sang loud choruses, cheered for Jesus and so on. To the other kids this was pure fun, but this weekly ritual brought Katie no more pleasure than going to the dentist and getting her teeth drilled! Needless to say, Friday mornings at own house were challenging.

What would have happened if my wife and I, rather than embracing Katie's personality and learning how to accept and work with our daughter, had started pushing her away?

*"Get away. Don't cling to me. Let go. You're acting like a baby."*

What if we started ignoring her or comparing her to her brothers?

*“This is ridiculous. Nick or Justin never acted like this. Knock it off, Katie.”*

Katie was not bad, rebellious or trying to make life difficult for the family. She was very shy and easily frightened. If we had taken either of the above approaches, it would have only compounded the problem. Katie’s actions were communicating to her mom and me that she was insecure, and that we brought her security. She was revealing to us her emotional needs based upon the way God made her, and she was looking to us, her parents, to meet those needs.

Not all children are like Katie, but all children have emotional needs. Their needs are different, and the way they communicate them differs with each child. By God’s design, parents are to meet the emotional needs of their children. When parents neglect to meet these God-given needs, they take part in stumbling their own children. This is called *emotional deprivation*, and it is a common problem today. Many parents, out of ignorance or irresponsibility, are destroying their child’s spirit and damaging their self-worth. In addition, they also erode their influential power over their children by not loving them and meeting their emotional needs. I will elaborate on this later in this lesson of our workbook.

**Parenting Principle:** *By God’s design, parents are to meet the emotional needs of their children.*

- **Do you have a special child with different needs? Discuss the differences. Take a moment and write out some of the examples.**

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**COMMUNICATION TAKES TIME**

Another very important component of loving communication is spending time with your child. Loving communication goes beyond what we communicate with our mouths. As we will see, our facial expressions, our tones of voice and how much time we spend with our children are all key ingredients to communicating love. All too often *other things* take precedence over time spent together as a family; our jobs are demanding, our church commitments consuming, maintaining our homes is endless, the kids practices and lessons exhausting and on and on. The past few years we have heard the argument of *quality* time verses *quantity* time. The truth is that unless we spend time with our children, there won’t be any quality time! Quality happens during time spent together. You can’t pencil it into your appointment calendar. If we are not careful, our kids will become strangers living under our own roof.

Statistics reveal that the average working mother spends approximately eleven minutes per day in one-on-one communication with her child during the week, and thirty minutes per day on the weekends. The average father spends about eight minutes per day on weekdays, and fourteen total minutes on the weekend.

Sadly, these numbers drop when the family size grows! When I counsel parents, I always ask them how many minutes they spend each day communicating one-on-one with their kids. I have found that many parents today don't even measure up to these sobering statistics. Life has got us in a whirlwind, and unless circumstances intervene, or a crisis comes, causing us to take inventory, we don't realize that our priorities have drifted off course.

● **List your children by name and how many minutes per day you have spent with each child in the last week.** \_\_\_\_\_

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Kids today watch an average of three to four hours of television per day. Used sparingly, television can entertain and even educate our children. However, television cannot affirm them, give them self-worth, teach them good morals and values, encourage them to godliness or love them. These are valuable things that parents give their children.

One evening after a parenting class, an older woman who was raising her grandchildren, approached me and gave me the following quote, which her mother had given her:

*"By my actions today I earn the right to be heard tomorrow."*

This is so true and so powerful. Many times I have had parents complain to me that their troubled teens do not want to spend time with them or talk to them. Teens commonly tell me,

*"Where were they when I was growing up? My dad was always too busy to talk to me. Now that I'm messing up, he wants my attention! Forget him!"*

I came across a great cartoon a few years ago of a little girl playing with her dolls while her mother was peeking through the door of her room. The mom in this cartoon was smiling as she listened to her daughter, who was speaking to her doll:

*"...look at your messy room...eat your dinner...don't play with your food...pick up your dishes...don't expect me to clean up after you...no television until you pick up your toys...I said 'now,' not later...don't argue with me...you do have to take a bath tonight...don't use so much shampoo..."*

The little girl turned, saw her mom peeking through the door watching her, and responded,

*"Oh, Mommy, were you listening to me?"*

Mom said,

*"No, April, I was listening to me!"*

Parents, we need to think about what we are actually communicating to our children. Are we communicating love or simply giving orders and directions?

**Parenting Principle:** *Spending time with our children communicates our love to them.*

## MOTIVATING THROUGH LOVING COMMUNICATION

There are four main things that motivate us.

- 1) Love
- 2) Physical needs – food, clothing, shelter, etc.
- 3) Pleasure
- 4) Pain and fear

As we move into this vital section of Loving Communication, it is very important to understand that love is the most powerful motivator for our children. To help them make good choices and do the right thing, they must be motivated or *moved* by love. Parents often believe pain and fear are the most powerful methods to make their children obey. They commonly make the mistake of trying to motivate them by threatening, yelling and inappropriate spanking, which only provokes them. Our children must know that we love them. Jesus Christ, motivated purely by love for mankind, demonstrated that *love* is the most powerful motivator.

In our next lesson, you will learn to train your children by establishing rules, discipline and punishment. For this training to be effective, it must be done in love. A parent must be motivated by love in order to train their children as God commands. Love is often difficult for parents, especially as their children get older, because love requires sacrifice. Love is not merely a *noun*, a feeling or an emotion. Love is also a *verb*, an action or activity. For love to be genuine, it must be demonstrated. Aren't you thankful that God didn't just *feel* love for us? Aren't you glad He *demonstrated* that love? He asks us to follow His example by going beyond *feeling* love to *demonstrating* love!

**Parenting Principle:** *Love is the most powerful motivator.*

## REACTING OR RESPONDING

**Reacting in the flesh** – *A Christian reacting to a situation in a sinful manner, in the habit of their old fallen nature, or reacting in their own strength and understanding rather than the power and wisdom of the Holy Spirit.*

Reacting in the flesh is impulsive, based on feelings, emotional state or mood and is negative. It is communicating without thought, self-control or concern for others. We are most prone to react to those who are familiar and closest to us, especially our children. We react when we walk in the flesh (in our own strength, wisdom and understanding) rather than in the Spirit (in the strength, wisdom and guidance of the Holy Spirit). In all of our communication, and especially with our children, we must consider, "*Am I responding in love, or am I reacting in the flesh?*"

*"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."  
-John 3:16*

*"But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another! I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh...now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: ...hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions..."  
-Galatians 5:15-20*

When parents allow the enemy to get a foothold in their homes through hardness of heart, unforgiveness and bitterness toward their children, they unknowingly set in motion a habit of communication toward that child that is reacting in the flesh rather than responding in the Spirit. Like a cavity that is left untreated and causes pain to the nerve every time it comes in contact with hot or cold, a parent's harsh words deeply wound their child's heart. When this continues unchecked, the hurt, like an infection, spreads. The parents become deluded that they are justified in their actions toward their child, while the child builds up bitterness and resentment toward them.

I have worked with many parents whose relationship with their teens has become volatile due to years of reacting with unloving communication. Parents who react in the flesh rather than respond in love set the example for their children who also learn to react with anger and harsh words. Kids in emotional pain look for affirmation and relief from their peers and often turn to drugs, alcohol, pornography, sex or a variety of other self-destructive behaviors.

**Responding in love – A Christian responding to a situation with the inward guidance, love and power of the Holy Spirit.**

In order to respond in love rather than react in the flesh, it is essential that we walk in the Spirit, spend time daily in prayer, and read and yield to the truths of God's Word. Self-control is a fruit of the Spirit. When we are controlled by God's Spirit, we will take time when a situation arises in our homes to consider God's will before responding to our children. Because parents are the most influential people in their children's lives, they have the opportunity to be examples of righteousness for them. Therefore, it is vital that we seize every opportunity to respond to them with God's truth spoken in love. If we do not value them as God's children, entrusted to us for a season and take seriously our responsibility to parent them in His ways, we will unknowingly be instrumental in stumbling them from the faith. Let me illustrate an inappropriate reaction versus an appropriate response with the following story:

Three-year-old Suzie spills her milk for the third time in one day. Out of frustration and anger, her mom **reacts** by yelling at her and shaming her for being so careless. Mom could **respond** to the situation by purchasing a non-spill sipper cup for Suzie.

● **Read the following Scriptures, and briefly write out what you learn about responding properly to your children.**

*"A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger."  
-Proverbs 15:1*

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*"The heart of the righteous studies how to answer, but the mouth of the wicked pours forth evil."  
-Proverbs 15:28*

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*"But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth.*

*...since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him...*

*Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.*

*But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection.  
-Colossians 3:8-14*

*"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control..."  
-Galatians 5:22-23*

*"And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell...it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.*

*With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so. Does a spring send forth fresh water and bitter from the same opening?"  
-James 3:6-11*

*“So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.”  
-James 1:19-20*

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**Parenting Principle:** *In order to respond in love rather than react in the flesh, it is essential that we walk in the Spirit, spend time daily in prayer, and read and yield to the truths of God’s Word.*

## WHAT IS LOVE?

Love is not a feeling nor does it come naturally. We are selfish and self-centered by nature. Love is a choice. Love is a supernatural response from a heart that is yielded to God, based upon the value that *He* places on another individual. Therefore, loving communication comes from a heart that first loves and is yielded to God! We have thrown the word *love* around in our culture to the point that it’s meaning has been cheapened. We use the same word to describe how we feel about God, our children, and macaroni and cheese! Most parents will eagerly testify that they love their children. But the only real standard of measure for love is the Word of God.

In the original Greek translation of the New Testament, there were two words that were translated in English into the word *love*:

**Phileo** – *The response of the human spirit to what appeals to it as pleasurable. Phileo is friendship love, determined by the pleasure that one receives from the object of that love. Phileo is conditional love.*

**Agape** – *The response of God’s heart toward unworthy sinners. Agape is God’s love demonstrated in self-sacrifice for the benefit of the objects of His love. Contrary to popular understanding, the significance of the Greek word agapao is not that it is an unconditional love, but that it is primarily a love of the will rather than the emotions. It is choosing to love.*

God has called us to love His children with His *agape* love. It is a sacrificial love that places no expectations on the object of that love. It is not withdrawn if the one loved fails to live up to demands or expectations. Agape is love based upon the value that He has placed upon our children, not on their personalities, strengths or weaknesses.

You have most likely come to the realization that it is impossible to love with God’s love in our own strength! As Christians we have God’s Holy Spirit living inside of our hearts. If we yield to Him, the Holy Spirit will love our children through us! Because God’s love is not a feeling or emotion, it is something that you do (a verb rather than a noun) and can only be described by observing it in action. To give us an understanding of what God’s love looks like, the Lord has devoted an entire chapter of the New Testament to describe His agape love.

*“...hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us...”  
-Romans 5:5*

*"Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails..."*

-1 Corinthians 13:4-8a

In order to grasp the powerful truths about love described in 1 Corinthians 13, we are going to look at the opposite of each of these verses and see *what love is not*. I often find that parents unknowingly practice *unloving* communication daily in their homes. They do not see the pain that they are causing or understand that they are a potential stumbling block to their own children.

I want to encourage you to keep in mind as you read these verses, that the Holy Spirit *will* convict you (point out your error) if you are indeed practicing unloving communication. He will convict you for the sole purpose of leading you to confession, repentance and forgiveness in order to set you free from sinful habits. Also keep in mind that Satan will try to condemn you (to declare you guilty and beyond God's love, grace and mercy). The conviction of the Holy Spirit draws us humbly back to the Father, while the condemnation of the devil causes us to flee from the Father. Allow the Holy Spirit to inspect your heart, ask Him to change you, but do not allow the enemy to make you feel like a failure.

**Parenting Principle:** *Loving our children is based on the value God places on them, not their personalities, strengths or weaknesses.*

## Day 2

### WHAT LOVE IS NOT

#### 1. Love is not impatient.

**Patient** - *Bearing or enduring pains, trials or the like, without complaint. Free from, or in control of, anxiety, discontent or undue eagerness.*

To *suffer long* is to be patient. Impatience is putting selfish or unrealistic expectations on your child or hurrying the child beyond his/her capabilities. For example, I hear a lot of parents complain about their child's grades,

*"His brothers and sisters get A's and B's, but he gets C's and D's, and that's just not acceptable. He's just lazy!"*

Or,

*"I was a straight A student, so I know that my daughter can get straight A's if she would only try harder and apply herself. She just doesn't care!"*

Parents, did you know that academic ability is a gift? Comprehension is a gift no different than athletic or musical ability. We are not all gifted with the same abilities or talents. Some kids are challenged academically. If your first child excelled in school, you may have to adjust to your second child who struggles academically. We need to know our child and adjust our approach based upon their individual

*"But whoever causes one of these little ones who believes in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea."*  
-Matthew 18:6

*"...strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy..."*  
-Colossians 1:11

gifts, talents and abilities. Some parents have selfish motives for wanting their child to excel in school, to brag to their co-workers or compare their child to their sibling's child. Parents, we need to work with our children, always encouraging them to be who God created them to be.

Some kids are clumsy and always spill. My son Justin gets going so fast that he spills things. He is getting better. You've heard the old adage, *"Don't cry over spilled milk."* I will add, don't yell or scream or compare them to their baby sister when they spill milk!

I hear disgruntled parents tell me all the time,

*"He doesn't act his age...she doesn't want to follow the rule...my teenager is selfish...they only think about themselves...it just irritates me!"*

They rant and rave and tell me how horrible their children are. I usually respond,

*"Oh, really? That means that they are normal. That means that they are not mature yet; that you have a job to do to continue loving and training them to maturity!"*

Parenting is all about taking untrained, immature, selfish children and loving and training them to mature adulthood. We have to be patient during this process, keeping our eyes on the Lord to give us strength to remain calm and consistent.

Some children try their parent's patience more than others. Obviously, if you are parenting a child who has been diagnosed with ADD (Attention Deficit Disorder) or ADHD (Attention Deficit and Hyper-Activity Disorder) who can't sit still or stay focused, you may need more patience than the average parent. Although from my own experience working with many of these kids, I believe they actually suffer from UADD (Unwilling Attention Deficit Disorder), which makes them typical children or LOPD (Lack of Parenting Disorder). I know that there are some legitimate diagnosis; however, I believe that there are many children who are simply strong-willed, in need of strong and patient parental guidance and training rather than medication.

Parents with blended families also face scenarios that require an extra measure of patience. Often children do not accept the step-parent, and depending on their personality, they may let the step-parent know how they feel about them. Loving our own flesh and blood can be a challenge at times! Loving other children, especially children who do not accept us, can be almost impossible. Single parents who do not have a spouse to share the responsibility of parenting their children can feel *at the end of their rope* by the end of the day and have little or no patience left! Children who have experienced the break-up of their parents' marriage or who have been abandoned by a parent require more understanding and patience than children who have not experienced these hurts. We cannot make ourselves more patient, but thank God, He can. As we yield in obedience to the Lord, the Holy Spirit produces righteous fruit in our lives.

**Love is patient.**

*"...the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control..."*

*-Galatians 5:22-23*

- Take a moment and write out the ways you may have been impatient with your children. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## 2. Love is not unkind.

**Kind** - *To do good and confer happiness; benevolent; sympathetic, tender, gracious. Not cruel or harsh.*

Unkindness is anger, yelling, judging, ignoring, comparing or not accepting our child's failures or mistakes. Our homes are training grounds. God will use our children's mistakes and failures to accomplish His will for our families. He will use our child's weaknesses to minister to us about our own weakness. If we refuse to accept and work with our child in those difficult areas, we will also miss opportunities for God to work on our own weaknesses!

I was recently in a restaurant restroom washing my hands when an extremely agitated man came bursting through the door herding his nine or ten year old son, who was obviously on the verge of losing his dinner. The dad threw open a stall door and pushed the boy inside, all the while yelling,

*"Hurry, hurry, hurry. Are you going to throw up? What's wrong with you?"*

Apparently the sick boy supported himself by leaning his hands on the toilet seat. The dad yelled all the more, grabbed his son, ran him over to the sink and began frantically washing his hands, complaining, criticizing and judging the poor boy. This out-of-control father, upset because his dinner was interrupted, made a big, embarrassing scene in front of me, an absolute stranger. I could only imagine what went on in the privacy of his own home!

I felt like handing the guy my card and telling him that in the near future, he would have an angry adolescent on his hands and probably need some counseling!

## Love is kind.

- Have acts of unkindness toward your children been common in your home.  Yes  No

## 3. Love does not envy.

**Envy** - *Discontent or uneasiness at the sight of another's excellence or good fortune, accompanied with some degree of hatred and a desire to possess equal advantages; malicious grudging.*

Envy is jealousy. Parental jealousy or envy can result when parents have had a painful childhood, and their children have an easier childhood (usually an indication that parents have unforgiveness toward their own parents), or when a child's accomplishments have surpassed those of their parents. I've talked to mothers who are jealous of their teenage daughter's beauty, and fathers who envy their own sons for excelling in sports beyond them. The result of envy is that we treat the one whom we envy with contempt, with little or no value.

*"Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering..."*  
-Colossians 3:12

*"Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others."*  
-Philippians 2:3-4

*"But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace."*  
-James 3:17-18

“... out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.”  
-Matthew 12:34

“Not what goes into the mouth defiles a man; but what comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man.”  
-Matthew 15:11

“Let another man praise you, and not your own mouth; a stranger, and not your own lips.”  
-Proverbs 27:2

“When people boast about themselves, it doesn't count for much. But when the Lord commends someone, that's different!”  
-2 Corinthians 10:18 (NLT)

We should never treat our children like objects to be possessed or manipulated to fulfill our own selfish desires. Instead, we must take every opportunity to encourage them in their natural gifts and abilities, letting them know, by the way we communicate to them, that we value them.

Teenagers often tell me that their parents correct, demean, yell at and embarrass them in front of their friends. Parents, we simply cannot do this. It reveals to them, and to others, that we do not value them! Remember that what is in our heart falls out of our mouth. If you have resentment for your own parents or the way they raised you, or feelings of jealousy or envy toward your own children, you need to confess this to the Lord, repent and seek some accountability. To continue in this sinful habit is destructive to your relationship with your child and will produce greater consequences in the future. Our homes should be places of peace. When I find homes that do not have peace, this is usually one of the reasons.

**Note:** See Appendix E, *Biblical Principles for Forgiveness and Reconciliation*.

**Love does not envy.**

● **Is there a particular child to whom you have shown contempt or envy?**

Yes     No

**Explain.** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**4. Love does not parade itself or brag.**

**Brag** – *To talk about oneself, or things pertaining to oneself, in a boastful manner; to boast.*

To parade oneself is to say things such as,

*“I had it harder when I was your age. I had to walk back and forth to school in the snow; then when I got home, I had to do chores till dark every night.”*

It is never appropriate to try to impress our children with how great or wise we are, nor to belittle them in order to show them how important we are. I know it can be tempting when our kids complain about their menial chores to look back and remember *when we were their age, how hard we had it*. The truth is that our kids cannot relate. There is a time to talk about our past experiences, but never to compare for the purpose of bragging.

**Love does not brag.**

● **Is this a common practice that you use during discipline?**

Yes     No

**5. Love is not puffed up or arrogant.**

**Arrogant** – *Making exorbitant claims of rank, or estimation; giving oneself an undue degree of importance; presumptuously haughty.*

Parents, we should be *for* our children, wanting them to mature and develop in God's love, not against them. We should be a team pulling together in this journey of childhood and adolescence, not dictators ruling or lording over our children with brutality or fear. We should not try to control them, but train them. There is a big difference between controlling and training. We are wrong when we portray an arrogant "I'm the boss" attitude toward our children.

When parents oppress their children, their children will typically respond similarly to them once they reach their teen years. I have met with many parents whose pride and arrogance set the stage for their teens to become runaways. When an angry teenager decides that they have had enough of their parent's dominance and decide to leave, what can a parent do? They can contact the police, but depending on where you live, the police will do little more than put the youth in juvenile hall for a couple of days *if* they can find them. When a youth repeatedly runs away, the police usually will not continue to put forth effort to locate them. All of the threats, the *macho* and mean attitude that the parent used *lording* their authority over their child, has only served to drive them away and destroy the relationship, which in many cases, takes years to heal.

Humility does not mean compromise. God wants us to be humble. Remember that you, along with your children, are learning in this process. God has put us together with our children to train us as well as them. We are on this journey together. We must have a humble attitude.

**Love is not arrogant.**

- **Take a moment to ponder Matthew 11:29, and write your thoughts.**

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**6. Love does not behave rudely or act unbecoming.**

**Rude** – *Characterized by roughness; harsh, severe, or offensive in manor or action.*

Parents display unbecoming actions when they purposely embarrass or demean their child by discussing his/her failures and shortcomings in front of others. Parents tend to behave this way if they have come to believe that their children are their possessions rather than gifts from God. Many teens and pre-teens have told me,

*"My mom or my dad talk about my stuff to everybody. Everybody at church knows all about my problems."*

Parents often do this under the guise of eliciting prayer support. God knows the details better than we do; therefore, others do not need any details in order to pray for your family! Those little ears are listening when you are on the telephone broadcasting their sin to your friends! Even young children know what you are doing, and it hurts them! A mom tells a friend at church about a problem she had with her child. Her friend then shares the story with her spouse over the dinner table, with their child listening to every detail. That next

*"An arrogant man stirs up strife, but he who trusts in the LORD will prosper."*  
 -Proverbs 28:25  
 (NAU)

*"The fear of the LORD is to hate evil; pride and arrogance and the evil way and the perverse mouth I hate."*  
 -Proverbs 8:13

*"...not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock."*  
 -1 Peter 5:3  
 (NIV)

*"Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls."*  
 -Matthew 11:29

*“Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.”*  
-Ephesians 4:29-30

*“For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.”*  
-Galatians 5:13

week at Sunday school, that child announces your child’s mistake to the whole class! How embarrassing!

We are not to share our child’s failures with anybody unless it is for the purpose of seeking godly counsel with a qualified individual. In most cases people share the *vivid details* to get pity or attention for themselves. We need to take our family’s problems to the Lord *first*. When we need prayer support, we simply need to tell them,

*“Our family is having a rough time. Will you pray for my son/daughter?”*

If they ask for more information, that is an indication that perhaps they are not the confidant that you need to support your family in prayer!

**Love is not rude.**

● **Have you discussed your children’s failures inappropriately with others?**  Yes  No

## **7. Love does not seek to have its own way.**

This is pretty self-explanatory! Loving communication is not insisting that your children or family do only what you want. Nor does it disregard the needs of the family. As a man I must admit that this is a more common problem with men than women! We can blame it on testosterone if we want, but men are typically more dominating and determined to have it their way! I came across the following story to illustrate this point:

A father was on his way home from work on a Friday afternoon, thinking about getting home, grabbing a cup of coffee and the newspaper, crawling into his easy chair, taking a half hour nap and mellowing out after a long week at work. He arrived home, took off his shoes and began to nod off when his seven-year-old boy came running in and jumped on his lap,

*“Daddy, you’re home! Hey, dad, let’s play. Come on, daddy!”*

The dad noticed that on one of the pages of his newspaper there was a picture of a huge globe. He thought up a great plan! He told his son to bring him a pair of scissors and began cutting the globe into 100 small pieces.

*“Son, take this to your room and when you are done taping the puzzle back together, then we can play! Daddy is going to sit here and read the newspaper.”*

The little boy ran up the stairs to finish his task and the dad thought,

*“I’m so smart. Now I have time for myself!”*

The dad no sooner settled back and began catching up on the daily news, when his son came running back down the stairs,

*“Daddy, I’m done.”*

Sure enough, the globe was taped back together. The puzzled dad said,

*"Son, how did you do that so quickly?"*

His son responded,

*"It was easy, Daddy. There is a man on the back, and when I put the man together, the whole world came together."*

His sons words cut through his heart like a knife. *"When I put the man together, the whole world came together."* The Holy Spirit convicted him about his selfishness.

Most men feel that after a long, hard day at work, they deserve some time to themselves. For many years I had my own agenda when I came home from work. I would work on a project, or if I were going to be teaching that week, I would withdraw to my office to have some study time before dinner. It was amazing how conflicts occurred in my home that first hour or so after I got home. It seemed like my plans were always interrupted. It was very frustrating for my wife and me, and I let my family know that I was frustrated!

The Lord has had mercy on my family and ministered to me that when I go home, I am a servant to my family. As I drive home from work at the end of the day, I always pass by a particular landmark that reminds me to pray.

*"Lord, I have no idea what I have waiting for me at home. Help me be a servant to my wife and children. Help me set aside my own needs and minister to them."*

● **Have you noticed any frustrations during the first hour or so after arriving home from work?**  Yes  No

● **Take a moment and write out some of the conflicts that seem to be common.** \_\_\_\_\_

When I go home I listen to my wife and kids and find out the details of their day. My attitude is that this is their time. They need me. What a privilege. My life changed and so did my wife and kids. Instead of chaos when I walk in the door, it is exciting because I no longer resist and selfishly pull away from them. This also applies to moms. Today there are more and more moms who must work outside of the home, especially single moms. I've had moms tell me,

*"I just need my space. That first hour is mine."*

Aren't you glad Jesus never said, *"just give Me some space?"* Jesus did retreat from the crowds to spend time alone with His Father in prayer. We also need to spend time in prayer with our Heavenly Father. The drive home at night is a wonderful opportunity to turn the music or radio off, and ask God to prepare your heart to meet the needs of your family. Our home is our priority, not our jobs. We have to keep this in mind, and practically live this out by being ministers in our homes.

**Love does not seek to have its own way.**

*"For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it."  
-Matthew 16:25*

*"Let no one seek his own, but each one the other's well-being."  
-1 Corinthians 10:24*

● Have you been seeking to have your own way in your home?

- Yes     No

If you answered 'yes,' write out your commitment to change, asking God to strengthen you to follow through. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

8. Love does not think evil.

Love does not keep score of our children's failures or mistakes and then *beat them over the head with them* when an opportunity arises.

*"...keeps no records of wrongs."*  
-1 Corinthians 13:5 (NIV)

*"...thinks no evil."*  
-1 Corinthians 13:5 (NKJ)

*"...is not irritable or touchy. It does not hold grudges and will hardly even notice when others do it wrong."*  
-1 Corinthians 13:5 (TLB)

When parents do not grasp the biblical principles of disciplining their children, they often revert to this common practice. When children disobey or fail to live up to their parents' expectations, their parents often keep this mistake in their memory or stick the mistake *in their back pocket*. Later, when the child wants to do something or go somewhere, the parent pulls it back out,

*"So you want to go to the football game with your friends, do you? Remember last Friday night when I wanted you to take the trash out, and you wouldn't do that for me? Now you want me to let you go out with your friends. I don't think so! You think about this next time I ask you to do something."*

If this is the system that you are using, it is wrong, and it is sin. In our next chapter, *Training Up Your Children*, we will get very specific about how a parent should effectively deal with discipline problems. Harboring our kids' mistakes, and then bringing them back up later in order to shame or berate them, is an indication that the parent is guilty of the sin of unforgiveness.

When we come to Christ, He knows full well the depth of our sinfulness and depravity. Yet the Bible tells us that when we ask Him to forgive us, He is faithful to forgive and also to forget our sins. He never brings them back or uses our past against us. Forgiveness is a choice, not a feeling. *Feelings are good passengers, but poor drivers*. We cannot operate on feelings and emotions. As parents we often get our feelings hurt. There is a part of us that wants to take it personally. But we are called to follow Christ's example--forgiving and forgetting! When our kids do things that hurt us, we are only getting a glimpse of how much Jesus loves us, though we have hurt Him. These are opportunities for us to extend mercy toward our children.

Love does not think evil.

*"...for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."*  
-Jeremiah 31:34

*"And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you."*  
-Ephesians 4:32

- Have you been following Christ's example of forgiving and forgetting your children's mistakes?  Yes  No

### 9. Love does not rejoice in unrighteousness.

This happens when our children fall into sin or face self-imposed trials, and out of the hardness of our hearts, we say such things to them as,

*"I told you so. Maybe next time you will listen to me. You deserve what you got."*

We need to always be deeply grieved when our children walk in sin and suffer the consequences. Often, as parents don't realize what we are doing. In the depravity of our own hearts, we can find ourselves inwardly glad to see our kids *get what they deserve* when they have ignored our counsel and resisted our guidance.

When we ignore God's Word, resist the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and fall into sin and error, God does not rejoice. Instead, His heart is broken over our foolishness and rebellion. When we find ourselves not practicing love in this area, we must confess this to God, asking Him to forgive us, repent and turn from this sin. God will change our hearts as we obey Him.

### Love does not rejoice in unrighteousness.

- Have you secretly rejoiced in your heart when you have seen your children experience consequences for their sins or failures?  
 Yes  No

### 10. Not rejoicing in the truth.

Not rejoicing in the truth is when we fail to praise our children for their good deeds. Do you freely point out your child's weaknesses or failures, yet seldom point out their qualities and goodness? In counseling, I always ask parents what percentage of their conversation with their children on a daily basis is positive, and what percentage is negative. Unfortunately, most parents who come to me for counseling have been struggling with their children. The parents that are honest admit that a higher percentage of their communication has become negative: questioning, challenging, and accusing their children.

We need to always keep this in check, evaluating ourselves especially when we have strong-willed children who seem to be constantly disagreeing or challenging our authority. We can come to the place where we don't see their qualities and only focus on their mistakes. We need to determine to look for areas to praise our children. It is so destructive when we take on a controlling, critical nature looking for their failures. If we are looking for them to mess up, they will most likely *fulfill our prophecies*. With strong-willed children, we may have to look real hard to find things about which to encourage them. The Bible tells us that God, who knows the darkness that dwells within each one of us, thinks precious thoughts about us. He can help us see preciousness in our children.

*"Fools mock at sin, but among the upright there is favor."  
-Proverbs 14:9*

*"...I was crushed by their adulterous heart which has departed from Me..."  
-Ezekiel 6:9*

*"How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God! How great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they would be more in number than the sand; when I awake, I am still with You."*

-Psalm 139:17-18

*"Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good."*

-Romans 12:9

*"Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ."*

-Galatians 6:2

My son Nicholas is not strong academically. I feel his pain! In school I struggled to carry a 1.5 grade point average. I hated school. I wanted out as quickly as I could get out, and Nick was the same way. He and I do have some positive qualities in common. We both love to work hard and work with our hands. We also like to ride motorcycles and surf. Nick is an incredibly gifted pianist. Justin, on the other hand, is extremely strong academically. He would much rather spend three hours in his room doing homework than work with his hands. He's an 'A' student on the honor roll. But Justin doesn't like motorcycles and isn't the least bit interested in learning to surf. My sons are at polar extremes. I would never compare the two of them. Never! I have to focus on my sons' individual strengths and abilities and encourage them accordingly. I would be a foolish parent if I disregarded Nick's work ethic, and insisted that he *pull those grades up like Justin*. On the other hand, I would be equally foolish if I neglected to let Justin know how proud I am of his academic skill and complained that he should play the piano like his brother.

We need to study our children, to learn their strengths, and to praise them for their qualities and good deeds.

## Love rejoices in the truth.

- Take a moment to list each of your children's strengths.

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## 11. Not bearing all things.

**Bear** – *To endure; to tolerate; to suffer; to carry burdens; to suffer patiently.*

This happens when a child has failed to meet a parent's expectations, and the parent responds by criticizing, avoiding, ignoring or neglecting. When parenting gets too difficult, some parents tell themselves that they *can't take it anymore* and, basically, give up on their children. Kids know when their parents close their hearts to them. This form of rejection is painful for kids. We can't give up on our kids! We need to faithfully support them in the seasons of life and the hardships that accompany these seasons. It is a shame to see how many parents play *head games*, pout and give their kids the *silent treatment*.

Because Nick struggled in school, he had one to two hours of homework every evening from the time he was in the fourth grade. He could read a paragraph three times and not comprehend what he was reading. I had the same problem when I was in school. But when I was a kid, they just said I was dumb. Sometimes, those homework sessions with Nick were grueling for his mother and me. Our second son Justin stopped asking for our assistance with homework years ago. But with Nick, it was constant.

I've had parents tell me,

*"My first two kids did great in school, but my last kid, if I don't sit down with him every night, he just won't do his homework. It drives me crazy!"*

Without a whole lot of compassion, I tell them,

*“Well then, sit down with him and help him. If that’s what he needs, then do it! Patiently and lovingly assist your child to do the best and be the best he can be. You read a page, and then let him read a page.”*

Parenting is our job. That’s why we get to be called *parents!* Even more than a job, it is our ministry. We need to adjust to our kids’ needs and their personalities, and do whatever it takes to help them.

### Love bears all things.

- Do you have a particular child whose weaknesses have been unbearable to you?  Yes  No

Explain. \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

### 12. Not believing or hoping all things.

This is consistently doubting what your child says before you know all the facts. Parents must have a willingness to always pursue a trusting relationship with their children even after much distrustful behavior occurs. Some kids go through stages where they tell lies. Lying is something that kids learn when they are very young. Remember when you brought your infant home from the hospital, and after a few weeks, they figured out that when you lay them down and they start crying, you will pick them up. They are manipulating us and in a sense, lying to us. There is nothing really wrong with them, they just want to get picked up. If they act as though something is wrong, we will do what they want us to do. That is their deceitful nature rearing its ugly head! I have had parents freak out when their children lie. They tell me,

*“I can put up with anything, but when they lie, that’s it.”*

I tell them,

*“You are a liar, too. We all lie; every one of us. It is part of our sin nature.”*

One of the root causes why young children habitually lie is that they have low self worth. They believe that they are not valuable, good enough or complete; therefore, they will do or say anything to avoid disappointing us. Am I suggesting that we simply let our kids lie? No way! In the lesson *Training Up Your Children*, we will learn about establishing boundaries and enforcing consequences when our children go beyond those boundaries. I recommend that the consequences be doubled when we find out, beyond a doubt, that our child has lied.

Parents, we are to hope and believe all things and demonstrate it in our attitude, hoping that they will tell the truth. When they don’t tell the truth, calmly enforce the pre-determined consequences.

### Love believes and hopes all things.

- Have you put more emphasis on lying than on your children’s other failures?  Yes  No

*“And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance...”*  
 -Romans 5:3

13. Not enduring all things.

**Endure** – *To continue in the same state without perishing; to last; to tolerate; to remain; to continue or persist.*

How much time do you spend one-on-one with your children? To endure all things emphasizes spending time with them. Spending time with our kids is something that we have to pursue, especially as they get older.

Having two busy teenagers, I have learned that I have to actively pursue them. It was easier when they were small. They pursued me. As a family we often went camping, fishing and enjoyed other outdoor activities together. My sons are older now, and their sphere of activity has widened and doesn't always include me! There was a part of me that wanted to take it personally, get offended and pull away from them.

We need to endure. We can't give up as our kids get older. It's not a popularity contest. We will always be their parents. That will never change, but the relationship does change.

In order to spend time with my kids, I have to meet them where they are with the activities that they individually enjoy. Nick and I are both very active, and finding activities we enjoy doing together is easy. But with Justin, it is a different story. I have always been active: riding motorcycles, surfing and diving. Justin likes to walk on the beach and collect seashells or go rock climbing. I had to adjust in order to spend time with Justin. I endured his differences and learned to appreciate seashells and rock climbing. Years ago I took up the hobby of sailing, and Justin began to go with me. At first he wasn't real excited about going, but now he loves to go out with me. I have to make an effort to plan trips so we can spend time together. I put them on my calendar, most of the time weeks in advance.

My daughter Katie likes to jump on the trampoline. In my younger years I used to do flips and twirls, but now fifteen minutes of jumping and bouncing is about all these old knees can handle. I endure and adjust for her. I love her and want to spend time with her.

*"...just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."  
-Matthew 20:28*

● **Take a moment and write out some of the activities that each of your children enjoys.** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

● **How much time do you spend enjoying these activities with them?**  
\_\_\_\_\_

● **Are you pursuing spending time with your children?**  Yes  No

● **Are you willing to participate in and *enjoy* activities that you would not ordinarily choose for the sake of spending time with your children?**  
 Yes  No

● **Stop right now and pray, asking God for His insight and help. If married, openly discuss with your spouse things you can do to provide opportunities to spend more time one-on-one with your children.**

### Suggested Activities:

Hiking	Kayaking	Flying kites
Swimming	Sewing or crafts	Diving
Bicycling	Walking the dog	Boating
Mountain biking	Board games	Canoeing
Window shopping	Card games	Fishing
Rock climbing	Computer games	Surfing
Sporting events	Skiing	Tea Parties
Jumping on a trampoline	Movies, plays, concerts, etc	

Obviously, I have used examples and applications from my own family as well as from counseling other families. You must let the Lord speak to you personally about how the biblical truths of 1Corinthians 13 should and can be lived out in your own home toward your children.

**Parenting Principle:** *Love is not a feeling or an emotion, but an action that is defined in the Word of God.*

## Day 3

### WHAT IS COMMUNICATION?

**Communication** - *The act of exchanging information, interchange of thoughts or opinions; to share or participate.*

Communication is giving out words and receiving words, or *listening*.

**Listen** - *To give close attention with the purpose of hearing, to give ear.*

I think God had something else in mind other than balancing out our head when He gave us two ears and one mouth! As parents, we find it much easier to *speak at* our children than to *listen to* them.

### WE COMMUNICATE IN THE FOLLOWING WAYS

#### 1. Visual

The most powerful way that we communicate is through our facial expression. Visual is 55% of our communication.

Let's look at an example, which is familiar to most people. A mother is driving down the busy freeway with her kids in the backseat, when suddenly a careless driver cuts her off, causing her to swerve frantically, nearly running off the road. A combination of emotions from fear and panic to rage boils up within the mother, causing her to twist her face and shriek with hysteria,

*"A joyful heart makes a cheerful face, but when the heart is sad, the spirit is broken."  
-Proverbs 15:13  
(NAU)*

*“You idiot! Are you trying to kill somebody? Who taught you how to drive?”*

The kids are shaken both from the near miss *and* from observing the transformation or *deform-ation* of their parent from relative calm to maniac within a matter of seconds!

Later that afternoon little Johnny goes running through the house, oblivious that his shoes are caked with mud! By the time his mother catches up with the footprints, anger boils up within her, causing her to twist her face and shriek with hysteria,

*“Johnny! I told you not to play in the mud. Why didn’t you take your shoes off! Don’t you care that your father worked hard to pay for our new carpet? Do you think I live to clean up after you...”*

Little Johnny looks up to his mother’s face and sees the same expression that he observed hours earlier, directed at a stranger, whom she described as an *idiot*. If visual expression is 55% of communication, what did Johnny’s mother communicate to her precious child?

● **Is an angry countenance common during discipline?**

- Yes     No

**2. Tone of Voice**

Sometimes it is necessary to use a stern voice, but the demeaning habit of yelling at our children is never acceptable. Tone of voice is 38% of our communication. God never yells at His children, and we should never yell at His children either!

Proverbs 15:1 reminds us that,

*“A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.”*

● **Do you commonly practice the habit of yelling at your children?**

- Yes     No

**3. Verbal**

Only 7% of our communication is actual words that we speak; the actual words that come out of our mouth. We wonder why youth today have such low self worth. When parents do not consider these things and show contempt through their facial expressions or tone of voice on a regular basis, this is extremely damaging. I call this condition EDTNI or *Emotionally Deprived Through Negative Input!*

In counseling I ask parents the following question,

*“On an average day, what percentage of one-on-one communication with your child is positive, and what percentage is negative?”*

Many parents have never stopped to think about whether their communication is positive or negative.

*“Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my strength and my Redeemer.”  
-Psalm 19:14*

**Negative communication sounds like...**

*"Don't do that...why did you do that...I told you to clean your room...pick up after yourself...leave your sister alone...take out the trash..."*

If a parent is communicating one-on-one with their child ten minutes per day, and 75% is negative, how much positive communication are they having?

**Positive communication sounds like...**

*"You look nice...how was school today...how are your friends...what would you like for dinner tonight..."*

Parents are the most influential people in their child's life. If the most influential person in your life primarily gave you orders, questioned, challenged, accused you and talked down to you, how would you begin to perceive yourself?

- **Take a moment to consider your relationship with your children. Write out how many minutes of one-on-one communication you have with each child per day, and what percentage of that communication is negative and positive.**

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Many adults are still struggling with emotional scars due to the negative treatment they received from their parent. If this is striking a cord with you, take a moment and turn to Appendix E, *Biblical Principles of Forgiveness and Reconciliation*.

**THE INGREDIENTS OF LOVING COMMUNICATION****1. Communicating love originates in our heart.**

What is in our heart falls out of our mouth. As Jesus said in Matthew 15:18,

*"...those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart..."*

If we do not have an intimate relationship with Christ and are not spending time daily with our Lord; crawling into His lap, reading His Word and letting Him speak to our heart, worshipping and thanking Him, giving Him our burdens and gaining His perspective, our hearts will be calloused, empty and bitter. Jesus said,

*"...if anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.'"*  
-John 7:37-38

Jesus wants us to be filled with His life in order that His life would flow through us and onto others. Parenting provides countless opportunities that can trouble, frustrate, irritate or disturb us. What is inside our hearts will spill out.

- **Recall a recent situation when you were challenged as a parent. How did you respond? What spilled out?** \_\_\_\_\_

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**2. Loving communication is a response to the value we place on the person to whom we are communicating.**

It is a decision to place value on a person. Let me illustrate with a fictitious story.

Let's say two security guards arrive at your home in an armored car. The guards emerge carrying a diamond valued at \$500,000,000! They place the diamond on a velvet pillow and allowed you and your family to pass the diamond and marvel at its beauty. When it came around to your turn, would you handle it carelessly or carefully? I believe, based on the value of the diamond, that you would use utmost care. You would probably be in awe at the opportunity to hold something so precious. You wouldn't want to drop it.

Let's say the guards leave, taking the diamond with them, and you hear a knock at the door. A man arrives and pulls out a piece of glass, which to the naked eye, looks identical to the \$500,000,000 diamond. It is valued at \$3.87. Again, you pass it around. Only this time, nobody is awed. Nobody passes the glass carefully. The stranger takes the \$3.87 glass and leaves.

There is another knock at the door. The man returns and announces that the diamond brought by the security guards was really glass, and the glass he brought was really the \$500,000,000 diamond!

The moral of this simple story is this: When we *believe* that something is valuable, we handle it with care. When we believe that something does not have value, we handle it carelessly. It is a choice. As parents, when we value our children with the value that God says they have, we will treat them with care. When parents foolishly lose sight of their children's true value, they treat them with contempt.

● **What behavior in your children has caused you to devalue them in the way you react to them?** \_\_\_\_\_

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**3. Loving communication is a learned skill.**

You may have developed some unhealthy methods of communicating. Perhaps your parents were *screamers*, so you are a screamer. Maybe you have pulled away from your child, and there is **no** communication. God can and will teach you to communicate love to your children. As we become Christ-centered, rather than self-centered, He teaches and changes us.

● **Take a moment to ponder the Scriptures to the left. What do these verses mean to you personally in your communication toward your children?** \_\_\_\_\_

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*"The heart of the righteous studies how to answer, but the mouth of the wicked pours forth evil."  
-Proverbs 15:28*

*"The heart of the wise teaches his mouth and adds learning to his lips."  
-Proverbs 16:23*

**Parenting Principle:** *Loving communication originates in our hearts, is a response to the value we place on others, and is a learned skill.*

## DEDICATING OUR CHILDREN TO THE LORD

*“Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it.”  
-Proverbs 22:6*

This Scripture is commonly used as a hopeful guarantee that if parents raise their children right, their children will turn out okay. This sounds good, but it is not a correct biblical interpretation. In fact, if parents *could* parent perfectly, there is no guarantee that their children would respond to that perfect parenting and turn out to be perfect people. It just doesn't work that way! God has given everyone, even our kids, freedom of choice. As parents, we can do everything we are supposed to do to the best of our God-given ability, and our kids may still fail. But be encouraged. God has a plan for our children. He even has a plan to use our failures or their mistakes for ultimate good.

In Proverbs 22:6, the word *train* in the original Hebrew is the word *hanak*, which means, *“to dedicate or set aside for divine service.”* What God is telling us in this verse is that we, as parents, are to be mindful that our children are not ours, but His. We are not to approach our children as our possessions to do with as we please. They are *God's* children. To dedicate means, *“to give back to the Lord.”*

Many churches, including the church my family and I attend, have baby dedications, when the parents and their child stand before the congregation acknowledging that the child is a gift from the Lord, praying for the parents as a church family and dedicating the child back to the Lord. Baby dedications are obedience to Proverbs 22:6.

Parents are instructed to know in their hearts, and demonstrate in their actions, that their kids belong to God. Understanding this truth is where we begin to understand our children's true value. Our children are entrusted to us for a season, but they belong to the Lord. When we borrow something of value from a friend, we are mindful to return the item to them in good condition. We take care to be responsible, knowing that we will answer to the owner if we return the item marred or damaged.

This is very important! We will not be held responsible for the choices our children make, but for the choices **we** make in raising them. God will hold us accountable for the care or carelessness we take with His children. When our kids make mistakes, fail or do something dumb, we often freak out and take it personally, as if God is going to judge us for our kids' mistakes and failures. Parents, it is freeing to understand that as we do our part, God will faithfully do His part.

*“Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD, the fruit of the womb is a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are the children of one's youth. Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them; they shall not be ashamed, but shall speak with their enemies in the gate.”  
-Psalm 127:3-5*

The value of our children is found in what God has said about them, not in their personalities. God said, *“this is My gift to you.”* This truth does not change if you are a step-parent, have a blended family, adopted children, or are a single parent. These children are the Lord's. When they are well-behaved, they are gifts from the Lord. When they misbehave, they are still gifts from the Lord.

*“And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.”  
-Romans 8:28*

*“Behold, children are a gift of the LORD, the fruit of the womb is a reward.”  
-Psalm 127:3  
(NAU)*

Their value has nothing to do with how they act; therefore, how we value them should not be based upon their behavior. How often we fail to live in this truth! How often we allow our children's failures or the differences in their personalities to dictate how we feel about them!

If the Lord were to hand deliver our children to us, leaving us with instructions, it would probably change the way we treat them. Imagine the Lord saying,

*"Here is My gift to you. This precious gift comes with an instruction manual. I'm always available to assist you along the way. Call on Me anytime. I will be coming back and checking in periodically to see how you are taking care of this gift. You won't know ahead of time when I am coming. I'm going to be invisible, but I will be back often."*

The fact is that God's Word tells us that this is what God has done. He has loaned our children to us and given us instructions. The Bible guides us how to wisely raise His children. Let's go back to Proverbs 22:6,

*"Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it."*

The statement, *"train up a child in the way he should go..."* comes from a Hebrew idiom that said, *"upon the mouth of his ways,"* which means, *"according to the demands of his/her personality, conduct or stage of life."* What God is saying here is that parents are to adjust to their children's individual needs based upon their unique personalities. We are to love them, meet their emotional needs, adjust to their personalities and the stages of life that they experience. You will learn, as you progress through this workbook, that this is not to be confused with compromise.

We read in Isaiah 57:16 that God is the creator of the soul.

*"For I will not contend forever, nor will I always be angry; for the spirit would fail before Me, and the souls which I have made."*

The soul is made up of our mind, will and emotions. Our soul is our personality. God uniquely created each of us. The fact that there are no two fingerprints alike is evidence that confirms this truth. God formed us, then, in a sense, autographed our fingertips! He gave us our individual personalities. Genetically, parents contribute to their child's hair, eye, skin color and other physical traits, but God created their personalities. When we observe behavior traits in our children that are similar to parents, grandparents, Uncle Joe or Aunt Martha, we can draw some conclusions that are not based on biblical principles. When we place emphasis on genetic predisposition rather than on the sovereignty of God, we can begin to believe that our child's behavior is predisposed; therefore, they can't help it. As parents, we think we are not responsible to train them to overcome in these areas.

For example, if little Johnny has a bad temper, *like his father*, or little Suzy is impatient, *like her mother*, their parents can erroneously accept these behaviors rather than love, train and discipline them. I have counseled many Christian parents who, believing this philosophy, have parented their children with confusion, guilt and blame-shifting, which has kept them from doing God's will. Perhaps your personality clashes with your child's, and you have come to believe that God may have given you the wrong child! Parents must settle this

*"For You formed my inward parts; you covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvelous are Your works, and that my soul knows very well. My frame was not hidden from You, when I was made in secret, and skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth."*

-Psalm 139:13-15

issue. God gave your children their personality, then He *gifted* you with that child, and He does not make mistakes.

● **Take a moment and reflect on this truth. Perhaps you have come to believe that God made a mistake by giving you that child. If this is the case, I urge you to stop before you progress with this study, and write out your confession to the Lord. Ask God for the strength to see your child's unique personality as His perfect will.**

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There is a time and a season for all things. God designed the *terrible two's*, and the personality and developmental changes through those early years. He also designed the developmental changes of adolescence. God did not do this to make life difficult for parents; however, He will use these changes to get our attention and to remind us that we desperately need Him. He has a purpose and a plan. We must continually keep this in mind, embrace these changes and strive to understand what our kids are experiencing. Then ask God how we can consistently and effectively parent them.

Proverbs 22:6 is a clear instruction to parents to be students of their children, spending time with them, meeting their emotional needs and adjusting in all situations to communicate to them in love. Remember that we communicate by our visual expression, tone of voice and with what actually comes out of our mouth.

I read a survey of four hundred women who had two or more children and had never been married. The survey found that the number one common denominator they all shared was that these women had a poor or no relationship with their fathers. They had been abandoned, abused or rejected physically and/or emotionally. This survey only emphasizes what I have seen as a counselor. Dads, it is very, very important that you spend time with your children, including your teenage daughters. Typically, when little girls start developing, approaching puberty and becoming young women, their fathers don't know how to approach them. It is all too common for fathers to pull away and quit touching their daughters altogether. If daughters sense their dads are uncomfortable, they also begin pulling away. Don't give up and don't pull back. Touching, in the appropriate way, is vital to instilling self-worth and a healthy self-image in our daughters. Hugging them, a kiss on the cheek or forehead, squeezing their shoulders, tugging on their hair, holding their hand and so forth are all healthy ways to express love and affirmation to your daughter.

As our children mature and change, we must adapt or adjust to their personalities and stages of life. We are not to compromise, but to adapt.

**Adapt** - *To make suitable, to fit, to adjust, to alter so as to fit for a new use; to render fit by changing; to meet the demands of a new environment.*

*"To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven..."*  
-Ecclesiastes 3:1

*"Even as I have seen,  
those who plow iniquity  
and sow trouble reap the  
same."*

-Job 4:8

*"Sow for yourselves  
righteousness; reap in  
mercy; break up your  
fallow ground, for it is time  
to seek the LORD, till He  
comes and rains  
righteousness on you."*

-Hosea 10:12

*"But the wisdom that is  
from above is first pure,  
then peaceable, gentle,  
willing to yield, full of  
mercy and good fruits,  
without partiality and  
without hypocrisy. Now the  
fruit of righteousness is  
sown in peace by those  
who make peace."*

-James 3:17-18

*"Do not be deceived, God  
is not mocked; for  
whatever a man sows, this  
he will also reap."*

-Galatians 6:7

When I teach parenting classes, I ask if anyone would like to volunteer to take a tape recorder home, and for the following week, record all of the activity in their home; every conversation! Then bring the recorder back the next week, and let the entire class listen. As you can imagine, I have never had a volunteer!

The fact is that God is audience to everything that is done and said in our homes. And our children's minds are like tape recorders. For the first ten to thirteen years of our kids' lives, they are on *record* mode. Remember that 55% of our communication is visual; therefore, our facial expressions are also indelibly imprinted on our children's minds. Our tone of voice, which is 38% of our communication, will also be recorded. When kids approach puberty, they go on *playback* mode. Whatever was programmed into their little hearts and minds comes right back out. This is truly sobering. I know that many of you have already experienced this reality in your homes.

God's Word teaches that we reap what we sow. Our words and actions, like sowing seeds will eventually germinate, sprout and bear fruit. If we sow seeds, of righteousness, we will reap righteousness. However, the opposite is also true; if we sow careless words and deeds, we will reap the same. When we find ourselves reaping the consequences of our past, we must be willing to take ownership of our own faults or failures, confess to the Lord, and to those whom we may have offended, and commit to obey the Lord.

● **Take a moment and carefully read James 3:17-18. How do these truths relate to your communication with your child?**

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Parents can often provoke their children to anger when they fail to recognize that they are gifts from God and do not practice biblical, loving communication toward them.

*"Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged."*

-Colossians 3:21

Though this Scripture is directed toward *dads*, it certainly also applies to moms. Perhaps your own parents did not practice loving communication toward you, and you are still being affected by what they said to you or did not say to you as a child. When we rehearse the old recordings over and over in our minds, it leads to resentment.

**Resentment** - *A feeling of indignant displeasure or persistent ill will at something regarded as a wrong, insult or injury.*

Resentment toward our parents will affect our relationships with our own children. God did not make a mistake in your life. He did not give you the wrong parents. It was not God's plan for you to be hurt, offended, abandoned or abused. He has a plan to use the circumstances from your past to strengthen you and use you to minister to others, especially your own children. To help you take the necessary steps to forgiveness and reconciliation, turn to Appendix E, *Biblical Principles for Forgiveness and Reconciliation*.

Yes, parenting *is* a ministry. It is not always easy or convenient and can be downright exhausting. Sometimes the daily grind can push a parent to the edge of insanity, but raising our children is one of the most important and rewarding things we will do in this lifetime. Our obedience to the Lord, and the sacrifices we make, will be turned into blessings.

To be a minister means to go beyond our natural selves, our weaknesses, prejudices and expectations, and to operate by the power of the Holy Spirit.

- **How do we love people who don't show love in return?**
- **How do we keep our own temperments from clashing with our kids' temperments?**
- **How do we not let the daily struggles affect us in such a way that we sin?**

Apart from a parent's submission to Christ, this is absolutely impossible!

**Parenting Principle:** *Our children are not our possessions. They belong to the Lord.*

## Day 4

### THE BATTLE IS ON!

Because God created the family and desires to use the family for His glory --to produce the parent's transformation, and to produce godly children, the family is the target of God's enemy. As parents, it is vital that we understand that our homes are battlegrounds, and that we know our enemy. We erroneously come to believe that it is '*them*' (the kids) against '*us*' (the parent).

The Bible teaches that our battle is spiritual, and our enemy is Satan, not our children or our spouse! Let us look at four common reasons why parents fail in the area of Loving Communication:

1. **Unforgiveness**
2. **The Set Up**
3. **Persecution**
4. **Selfishness**

#### 1. UNFORGIVENESS

God's Word contains seven thousand promises from our loving Heavenly Father, the comfort of the Psalms which addresses every human fear, disappointment and frustration, and the wisdom of the Proverbs that provides guidance for the everyday situations of life. In addition to the promises, comfort and guidance of Scripture, God also gives His children commandments to obey. The Bible contains the spiritual laws that govern all mankind, believers as well as non-believers. These laws are absolute and non-negotiable. If we follow and obey these principles, we will be protected and walk in the paths of righteousness, experiencing God's blessings and living in His promises. If we neglect or disregard these principles, our way will be difficult.

*"Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD, the fruit of the womb is a reward...happy is the man who has his quiver full of them; they shall not be ashamed, but shall speak with their enemies in the gate."*

*-Psalm 127:3-5  
(NAU)*

*"... the LORD has been a witness between you and the wife of your youth... though she is your companion and your wife by covenant. 'But not one has done {so} who has a remnant of the Spirit. And what did {that} one {do} while he was seeking a godly offspring? Take heed then to your spirit, and let no one deal treacherously against the wife of your youth...'"*  
*-Malachi 2:14, 15*

*"...we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places."*  
*-Ephesians 6:12*

“...the way of the treacherous is hard.”  
-Proverbs 13:15  
(NAU)

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.”  
-2 Corinthians 5:17

“See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled...”  
-Hebrews 12:15  
(NAU)

“For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”  
-Matthew 6:14-15

“...bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.”  
-Colossians 3:13

One such biblical principle is the principle of forgiveness. I have found that the most common reason that parents do not love their kids and communicate love to them is because of their lack of forgiveness. In 2 Corinthians 5:17 we are given a wonderful promise that when we accept Christ, our life becomes new. Many people use this Scripture as an *escape clause*, believing that because they are new in Christ, they do not have to address or deal with their past. Because we live in a fallen world and are *sinners* who were *parented by sinners*, many adults in the body of Christ have pasts that included hurts, abuse, neglect and/or abandonment. In fact, in many situations it was the difficulties of childhood that caused them to seek Christ. However, the past cannot simply be brushed aside and forgotten, because this opens the door to a multitude of destructive behaviors. When we have been hurt emotionally, especially by a parent who has influential power over us, it opens our hearts and minds to addictive behaviors. Many adults I have worked with have confessed that from adolescence, they became involved with drugs, alcohol, pornography and so on.

The Bible teaches that in order to *forget*, we must first *forgive* those who have offended us. If we do not forgive, a root of bitterness settles into our heart, which troubles us and defiles those we come in contact with, especially our children! Most Christians feel that they have forgiven, but their behavior in their homes often indicates that they have not. When parents yell, scream, judge and struggle to love and demonstrate affection to their children, especially strong-willed children, it is often an indication that they have forgiveness issues with their own parents. They are troubled within and as a result, defile others. Many parents find themselves actually treating their children with the same harshness or abuse that they received from their parents. The only antidote or remedy to counteract the effects of the poison of unforgiveness is found in the Word. Matthew 6:14,15 does not suggest that a Christian that is harboring unforgiveness will lose their salvation, but that they will experience serious consequences. It is our human nature to want to withhold forgiveness and feel justified about it, unless or until the offender takes ownership of their actions and apologizes. As Christians, we have a higher standard. Jesus Christ was hurt, abused, offended, neglected and abandoned, yet He willingly forgave. We must follow our Lord's example:

“Then Jesus said, ‘Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do...’”  
-Luke 23:34

**Note:** For a thorough study on the biblical principles of forgiveness, refer to Appendix E, *Biblical Principles of Forgiveness and Reconciliation*.

**Parenting Principle:** *Forgiveness is a biblical principle that parents must practice daily.*

## 2. THE SET UP

One of Satan's common methods of causing distraction, dissension and division in the home is through what I call **The Set Up**.

Our mind receives thoughts from three sources. The first source is our own soul, psyche or self. These are thoughts related to our own needs, feelings, opinions, etc. We know when our thoughts originate from our own soul because they are dominated with words like *I, me or myself*. For example, *"I am tired. I need to eat. I am thirsty. I don't like how that person is treating me. I want to be by myself."* These are our own thoughts and feelings.

As Christians, our minds can also receive thoughts or messages from the Holy Spirit. God's Word teaches us in 1 Corinthians 2:16 that, because we have the Holy Spirit indwelling in our hearts, *we have the mind of Christ*.

As we walk in an abiding relationship with Christ, fill our hearts with the truths of His Word and meditate on His righteousness, our minds become receptive and open for the Holy Spirit to speak words of guidance, encouragement, wisdom and instruction to us. We can know when we have received a thought from the Holy Spirit because it is scriptural, true, edifies and draws us to the Lord. How comforting to know that, as children of God, we are not left to our own understanding. God desires to speak to us and will speak to us through His word and by the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Finally, our minds receive thoughts from demons. Even believers who love the Lord Jesus can experience spiritual oppression, having demonic thoughts bombard their minds. We know that a thought has a demonic origin when it falls into one of the following categories:

### 1. Lies

*"...the devil...does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own {nature} for he is a liar and the father of lies."*  
-John 8:44

### 2. Condemnation or accusations against ourselves or others

*"...the devil and Satan...the accuser of our brethren, has been thrown down, he who accuses them before our God day and night."*  
-Revelation 12:9,10

### 3. Temptations to sin

*"And the tempter came and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread."*  
-Matthew 4:3

When we have thoughts that are lies (opposed to biblical truth), condemning of others or ourselves, or temptations to sin against God, we can be certain that we are experiencing spiritual warfare. We cannot control the fiery darts of the evil one (See Ephesians 6:16) from bombarding our thought lives; however, we can control what we do with those thoughts. God says that we must take every thought that comes into our mind and weigh that thought against the Word of God. If a thought does not *pass the test*, God says we must punish it by expelling it from our minds.

*"For 'who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct Him?' But we have the mind of Christ."  
-1 Corinthians 2:16*

*"...your eyes shall see your teachers. Your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, 'This is the way, walk in it,' whenever you turn to the right hand or whenever you turn to the left."  
-Isaiah 30:20-21  
(NAU)*

*"Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, 'Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!' But He turned and said to Peter, 'Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.'"  
-Matthew 16:22-23*

*“For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled.”*  
-2 Corinthians 10:4-6

*“Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy-- meditate on these things.”*  
-Philippians 4:8

Bringing every thought captive is a discipline that must be practiced continually. Every sin is first conceived in our minds before we act upon the temptation; therefore, we must, if we are pursuing holiness, practice this discipline. God gives us a very specific checklist in Philippians 4:8. If we neglect to obey God's command, our disobedience will be the enemy's opportunity to come against our families. The following story illustrates this truth:

A few years ago I went to pick up Nick from a junior high youth group he was attending. I got there early and was waiting in the church parking lot when an old friend arrived to pick up his son. When he saw me, he jumped out of his car and ran up to my window.

*“Hey Craig, did you hear what happened? A group of kids, including your son and mine, ditched youth group tonight and are down the street at some girl's house playing basketball. Man, when my son gets here, I'm gonna really let him have it!”*

When I asked him how he got this information, he went on to tell me that his wife's friend, who lives next door to the house where the kids were playing basketball, saw his son and called his wife. He continued,

*“Can you believe our kids? I'm a lay pastor. Can you believe how embarrassing this is for me? The whole church will know! He's really gonna pay for this!”*

I had counseled this man years earlier and lead him to the Lord. Before I knew it, I had these thoughts coming into my head,

*“Gosh, I'm a pastor. What does this guy think of me? I can't believe Nick would do this. What about my reputation? Does he think he can get away with sneaking off? He thinks I won't find out? Now that I think about it, Nick hasn't been listening to me lately. This is it! When he gets here, I'm gonna let him have it!”*

Satan was bombarding my mind with lies, accusations and temptations. I didn't know the truth about the situation, only hearsay from an upset father. Before I knew it, I was agreeing with Satan's accusations against my son, and I was tempted to *let my son have it*. My own prideful concerns about what this guy thought of me were fueling my anger. My carnal nature was having a field day! This situation was the *set up*, and Satan was trying to capitalize on it. Satan had set me up! He dangled the hook in my face, I took it and he was reeling me in!

Thank God for His grace and mercy. The Holy Spirit began to bring to my remembrance my own youth:

*“Craig, how many church groups did you get kicked out of when you were a kid? What things were you doing when you were 13? When you were Nick's age, did you even go to youth group?”*

Nick finally arrived and came up to the car asking if I could give his friend a ride home. I agreed, knowing that I couldn't confront him in front of another kid. Within a few seconds, Nick piped in,

*“Hey, Dad, I have to tell you what happened tonight. We didn’t go to youth group because they were having a graduation ceremony and said we didn’t have to attend if we didn’t want to, but we needed to call our parents. One of the kids lives down the street and asked if we wanted to play basketball at her house, so we did.”*

I played dumb, as if I didn’t know what had happened, then responded,

*“You know, Nick, we’ve never had this happen before. Next time you decide not to be where you are supposed to be, we want a phone call. Let your mom and me make that decision. You don’t have the authority to make those decisions yet.”*

He didn’t give me any excuses, but agreed that he would call next time. That was it. It was over. Lesson learned on both ends. He learned to call next time, and I learned a great lesson in bringing my thoughts captive to Christ.

The following day, one of the mothers of the kids from the youth group called my wife. She told her that her daughter was one of the kids in this group that left youth group to go play basketball. Her daughter told her that as they were walking back to the church, they began discussing among themselves how they were going to lie to their parents. Nick said to them,

*“Don’t lie, you guys. Why would you lie? Just tell the truth. Our parents will find out anyway!”*

I can only imagine how I would have reacted to Nick the night before if I had continued in the direction that I was heading in my thoughts. Instead of my son and me communicating and coming to an agreement, I would have reacted in my flesh, and said and done things I would have regretted later. This is how it works. Satan loves to get in the midst of our daily interaction, flinging his fiery darts of lies, condemnation and temptations to divide our homes. Parents, when we are not obedient to practice the discipline of bringing our thoughts captive, we can open the door for Satan’s oppression.

● **Take a moment and reflect upon what you have learned about The Set Up, Satan’s attack on our minds. What are some of the lies or fiery darts that the enemy has shot at you regarding your children?**

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**Parenting Principle:** *Parents must repent of or rebuke every thought regarding their children that is contrary to the Word of God.*

*"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so? Therefore, you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect."*

*-Matthew 5:43-48*

*"...I will not be burdensome to you; for I do not seek yours, but you. For the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children. And I will very gladly spend and be spent for your souls..."*

*-2 Corinthians 12:14-15*

### 3. THE PERSECUTION

Another assault against communicating love to our children is **The Persecution**. Read Matthew 5:43-48 and fill in the blanks.

- \_\_\_\_\_ your enemies.
- \_\_\_\_\_ those who curse you.
- \_\_\_\_\_ to those who hate you.
- \_\_\_\_\_ for those who spitefully use and persecute you.

This verse is not one that is commonly quoted in a book on parenting. What does loving, blessing, doing good and praying for our enemies have to do with parenting? As you will see, the principles laid out in this verse have everything to do with our mindset toward our children.

Many people enter into parenting with some unrealistic ideals and expectations. Some people have children because they want someone to love, and to be loved, to make up for the disappointments and pain of their own childhood, or because that's just what you do when you grow up! It doesn't take long for the reality of the responsibility to hit; usually, the first night the new baby comes home from the hospital! It's an incredible sight to see two educated, intelligent adults come under the controlling and manipulating spell of seven pounds of screaming humanity. From day one, children need, take and use their parents. Babies are not the least bit concerned if mom and dad, who work hard all day, get a good night's sleep. Toddlers don't so much as blush at humiliating their parents in public. Children typically are not concerned about their parents' finances; in fact, small children think that if we run low on money, we just drive through the bank and get more! They eat our food, take no thought of turning off the lights to cut down on the electric bill, or think twice about using mom's new Tupperware to make mud pies. This, parents, is the way God made it! Parenting is a ministry! Oftentimes, it is a ministry to the thankless!

All this being said, why would anyone want to be a parent? The answer to that question can only be found as we grow in our understanding of why God became a parent! He did it out of love for us. *"For God so loved the world."* We begin to fathom God's love for us in our love toward our own children. Though at times, they push us beyond our limits, there are few greater privileges in this life than being called 'mommy' or 'daddy.'

Because we are sinners parenting sinners, our kids' sin nature, lack of self-control and immaturity can persecute us.

**Persecute** - *To pursue in a manner to injure, grieve, or afflict; to oppress; to set upon with cruelty; to cause to suffer.*

This persecution comes to us when our children challenge us, refuse to respond to our correction and training, rebel against our authority, or resist our love. They often act like our enemies and treat us like we are their enemies. Naturally, most parents take this personally and, in time, become discouraged or even harden their hearts against their children.

Read the following Scripture:

*“For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God. For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps.”*

-1 Peter 2:20-21

God says that we are blessed when we are persecuted for Christ’s sake or for our obedience to Christ. Because of our children’s lack of self-control, immaturity and sin nature, they oppose us even when we parent them according to the principles laid out in Scripture. God will bless us as we remain consistent and faithful to obey Him. We are stewards, entrusted by God to carry His message to our children by word and deed.

**Steward** - *Overseer; manager; one who acts as a custodian, administrator or supervisor*

As God’s stewards over our families, we must examine our hearts and check our motives daily, having as our main objective to please the Lord. Our motive should not be to succeed at being *good* parents or even to raise *good* kids, but to please God. As He examines our hearts, God is faithful to reveal to us what He sees!

**Parenting Principle:** *Our motive should not be to succeed at being good parents or even to raise good kids, but to please God.*

#### 4. SELFISHNESS

Finally, we fail in loving and communicating love to our children because of **Selfishness**.

Because we are sinners, we are selfish by nature and we love conditionally. Most of us never realized how selfish we were until we became parents. These little *balls of flesh* take us to the heights of joy and, at times, to the depths of irritation and frustration! When the Lord sees fit to *bless* us with a strong-willed *mule* of a child, we are brought to the end of ourselves on a daily basis. It is possible for most of us to practice self-control in our relationships with fellow church members or co-workers, but these dear children of ours reveal how truly selfish and conditional we are. This is all part of God’s wonderful plan of transformation in *our* lives. God tests us and uses our children in the process.

We learn in the Word that God refines those whom He loves.

**Refine** - *To reduce to a fine, unmixed or pure state; to separate from extraneous matter; to free from dross or alloy, as metals; to free or cleanse from impurities.*

God likens our persecution and suffering to the process of purifying silver and gold. In their natural state, these metals are mixed with impurities. Their beauty, usefulness and value are only discovered when the impurities are removed. The refining process is intended to purge, purify and refine, not damage or destroy. The refiner places the crushed metal into a crucible and prepares a

*“As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.”*

-1 Peter 4:10

*“But as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who tests our hearts.”*

-1 Thessalonians 2:4

*“...does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil...”*

-1 Corinthians 13:5

*“For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this:*

*‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’”*

-Galatians 5:14

*“Many shall be purified, made white, and refined, but the wicked shall do wickedly; and none of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand...”*  
-Daniel 12:10

*“He will sit as a refiner and a purifier of silver; he will purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer to the LORD an offering in righteousness.”*  
-Malachi 3:3

*“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”*  
-1 John 1:9

*“Therefore, if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.”*  
-Matthew 5:23-24

fire underneath. He is wise in his trade and knows how much heat to apply in order to melt, but not to harm, the metal. He watches and waits for the impurities to rise to the surface, then carefully scrapes them off. He continues to intensify the heat, which releases more dross. The refiner's trained eye knows that all of the impurities are removed when he can clearly see his reflection in the melted silver or gold. God uses the heat of our trials, suffering and persecution to bring the dross of our lives to the surface to purify us that we might reflect His image.

**Dross** – Scum which forms on the surface of a metal when molten or melting, due to the rising of dirt and impurities to the surface; waste matter; any worthless matter separated from the better part, as dregs, scum or chaff.

● **Has the Lord been heating up your life through circumstances?**

Yes     No

● **Are you willing to yield to Him in these areas?**  Yes     No

What does dross from the human heart look like? Galatians 5:19-20 gives a thorough list:

*“When you follow the desires of your sinful nature, your lives will produce these evil results: sexual immorality, impure thoughts, eagerness for lustful pleasure, idolatry, participation in demonic activities, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, divisions, the feeling that everyone is wrong except those in your own group.”*  
(NLT)

When the persecution from our children causes hostility, quarreling, jealousy, resentment, outbursts of anger or any of the other impurities mentioned above to surface in our lives, God wants to scrape them away. He wants us to reflect His image. How does God scrape away these impurities? He does not do this work against our will. We must voluntarily participate in God's refining process in our life. Every situation that arises where we respond inappropriately must be first taken to the Lord. We must say, *“God, I recognize this is sin. Please forgive me.”* Then we must go to the person we have offended (i.e., our children) and, in genuine confession, ask them to forgive us. Remember that this refining process does not take place overnight, but by a series of applying heat and scraping dross. When we submit ourselves to God's refining process, recognizing that impurities remain that need to be removed, God will be faithful to complete the work. As parents, our children are often God's instruments to heat us up and melt us down!

● **Is it appropriate to apologize to a one year old when we have lost our temper?**

● **If we tell a teenager we are sorry for our actions, will they lose respect for our authority or think we are weak?**

When you and I fail in the way we treat our children, no matter what their age, no matter what the circumstance, we must take full responsibility. If we don't practice the biblical principles of reconciliation and forgiveness, and deny our responsibility rather than allowing God to scrape away the dross, we will stir it back into our lives. It doesn't go away, but lies dormant until the next opportunity

arises for it to surface. This happens over and over again, because parents often do not understand God's purpose in this persecution. Rather than seeing God's hand in the process, parents begin to take on the attitude that there is something wrong with their child. Parents, God calls us to be stewards over our children, to love and train them. God will use their temperaments and personalities, as well as the daily circumstances of life, to purify and transform us. It is essential that we spend time daily in God's Word, allowing His truths to change our minds, cleanse our thoughts, purify our motives, correct our errors and instruct us in the way of righteousness.

*"For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings."*  
 -Hebrews 2:10

*"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."*  
 -Romans 12:1-2

**Parenting Principle:** God uses the difficulties we encounter in raising our children to reveal our selfishness.

## Day 5

### CONCLUSION

As we have seen, the Bible has a lot to say about communication. We must learn to love our children as God's Word instructs us, not how we think we should. I have learned in my own life, as well as in counseling other parents, that many times we desperately fail to live by God's standard. We can unknowingly become stumbling blocks to our children by not practicing these things.

- **Read the following Scriptures. Using the spaces below each verse, write out how you, as a parent, can apply these truths:**

*"Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice."*  
 -Ephesians 4:29-31

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*"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him."*  
 -Colossians 3:16-17

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*"Therefore, be imitators of God as dear children. And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma"*  
-Ephesians 5:1-2

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*"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."*  
-Philippians 4:13

We are ministers and we need to see parenting as a ministry. This is why our relationship with Christ must be our first priority. God promises to empower us with His Holy Spirit to fulfill His commandments. Therefore, we cannot doubt that He will enable us to accomplish the high calling of loving our children according to the standard of His Word.

Perhaps you have discovered in this study that you are failing in some of these areas. When we fail, we must confess to God that we have failed and repent, asking Him to forgive us. Then we must cry out to God and, in humility, ask Him to teach us to love our children as He loves us. However, if we allow our mistakes or inabilities to become a barrier to obedience, we are telling God that there is something He has not taken into account. I hear it all the time,

*"Well, that's just the way I am. That's just me. I can't help it. I've tried to change, but I can't. My father/mother was the same way. It's in my genes!"*

Every element of self-reliance must be slain by the power of God. Our complete weakness and dependence provide occasions for the Spirit of God to manifest His power in us.

I know what it is like to be controlled and driven by anger. I know what it means to lose your temper over the smallest things. I was a raving maniac the first four or five years of Nicholas' life. I took failures and childishness personally.

*"You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures."*  
-James 4:3

Every mistake Nick made was a direct threat to my authority. I dealt with it one way: punishment. As we will see in the next lesson, *Training Up Your Children*, punishment does not train. It motivates, but it does not train. I made many mistakes with my son, of which I am ashamed today. Thank God for healing memories. Nick doesn't remember any of that.

Several years ago, when God began revealing these truths to me and teaching me about parenting, it broke my heart. I cried and I fasted, asking God to break me of these ungodly habits of anger. If you have the same struggle with anger and lack of self-control, you may feel that you can never change. It is true that you cannot change yourself, but God is faithful. This is too big for you, but it is not too big for God! If you desire change, and you humbly pray for it, God will change you. It is His will. These principles for parenting are God's promises for all of His children, but we have to desire to do His will.

We are concerned about and consumed by things like our mortgages, our kid's school and how our kid behaves. We need to get concerned and get serious about seeking God for our own personal walk with Him, our own personal holiness and obedience to His commandments. We need to be concerned and serious in prayer, asking Christ to change our hearts in these areas.

*"If you ask anything in My name, I will do it."*  
-John 14:14

Go back through this lesson, and review the twelve **Parenting Principles** you have learned. Re-write the principles below in your own words.

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2) \_\_\_\_\_  
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3) \_\_\_\_\_  
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12) \_\_\_\_\_  
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# INTRODUCTION TO TRAINING UP YOUR CHILDREN

## Week 4

### Day 1

In order for discipline or training to work effectively, there must be a healthy *relationship* between the parent and the child. When the relationship is strained or non-existent, the parent's role as the child's teacher and trainer is hindered or diminished. Authority without relationship creates hostility. Our modern penal system, which works primarily on a punishment basis, is a good example of this principle. Prisons have the power to punish inmates, but little power to reform or produce lasting inward change. Sadly, the statistics reveal that the majority of those individuals once incarcerated will eventually return to prison.

As we begin to study this aspect of parenting, it is important to understand that we cannot place more emphasis on disciplining our children than on loving them. Love is the most powerful motivator to encourage our children to make right decisions. As they get older, become more independent and spend less time with us, especially during their teen years, it is essential that we consistently communicate love to them. When parents do not practice loving communication toward their children, this can hinder the child's desire to make good choices. Because God wanted us to understand the importance of loving one another, He was very specific in defining love as we learned in 1 Corinthians 13 in the previous Lesson. It is amazing that, as we go through these descriptives of love, we realize how often we are not communicating love to our children. The opposite of each of those attributes of love is hate, wrong attitudes and actions, and sin! We must see that behaving toward our children in an unloving manner is wrong. It is sin! As a counselor, I have discovered that many teens cannot articulate why they feel the way they do, and why they are so angry. They do not know why. Most often it is because of the lack of love they are experiencing from their parents, especially during discipline.

It is important that you do not place more emphasis on this chapter than on the previous chapter. Loving communication and training work together and build upon each other. Love without training teaches children to be self-centered, while discipline without love provokes and embitters them.

### TRAINING IS TWOFOLD

*"And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord."*

*-Ephesians 6:4 (NKJ)*

*"Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord."*

*-Ephesians 6:4 (NAU)*

**Bring them up** - *To bring up to maturity, to train or educate.*

**Discipline** - *Training, chastening, or correction.*

**Instruction** - *Admonition, warning, exhortation, any word of encouragement or reproof which leads to correct behavior.*

*"Love is patient, love is kind {and} is not jealous; love does not brag {and} is not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong {suffered}, does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails..."*  
-1 Corinthians 13:4-8a  
(NAU)

*“You shall teach them diligently to your children...”*  
-Deuteronomy 6:7

Training up our children has two main components. The first is spiritual discipleship. Discipling our children means instilling God’s Word into their hearts through example and instruction, teaching them to pray, and how to have a relationship with God. Did you know that God has commanded parents to disciple their kids? He did not entrust the church with this task. Yet, I would dare to say that today over 90% of the children within the body of Christ are not being disciplined at home. Parents have relinquished this responsibility to the church. Sadly, the church took on this responsibility, rather than exhorting parents to continue spiritual training within their homes. This does not mean that the church bears no responsibility for the children. The church is commissioned by God to support, come alongside, and encourage parents and families.

The second component in training is discipline. As parents, we are to instill the character traits of a mature adult into our children, which are morals and values, personal responsibility and self-control. They are not born with these character traits, nor do they naturally acquire them. They must be trained. God’s Word clearly teaches that this, as well as spiritual discipleship, is the role of the parent.

**Disciple** - *(verb) Instilling God’s Word and morals and values into our children’s hearts through example and instruction, teaching them to pray, and how to have a relationship with God (spiritual training).*

**Discipline** - *Instilling the character traits of a mature adult which are: personal responsibility, and self-control into our children (training behavior).*

● **Are you discipling your children in the Lord in your home?**

Yes     No

Explain. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

● **Are you disciplining your children to become mature adults?**

Yes     No

Explain. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Before we learn how to apply the two components of training our children, I first want to talk about God’s management style in our homes. From the beginning of time, God’s plan for the family has been for a man and a woman to marry, stay married and raise children together. However, due to the death of a spouse and/or divorce, which are two realities of life, many homes consist of single-parent families and blended families

If you are a single parent, I encourage you to read through this lesson, keeping in mind that *you* are the authority in your home under Christ. Turn to Appendix F, *Essentials for Single Parents*, for some helpful insight and encouragement for parents raising their children alone! In addition, understanding the following truths are absolutely essential should you to choose to remarry in the future.

**Parenting Principle:** *Training up our children includes both spiritual discipleship and disciplining them to mature adulthood.*

## GOD’S MANAGEMENT STYLE

If you have ever been employed by a large company or corporation, you know that there was a management style in place. Without this structure, there would be anarchy with devastating consequences. It is equally important that our homes operate according to God’s management style. Many families that I have counseled have suffered major problems due to the fact that their homes were out of order. The division present within the home is reflected outside the home. When Christian families are disobedient to God, even out of ignorance, they malign the Word of God.

**Malign** - *To make malignant, or to injure.*

We often wonder why people today are not beating down the doors of our churches in search of answers, saying, *“We want to be like our Christian neighbors. We want what they have!”* For the most part, the church today is not coming alongside parents and discipling them in the faith or instructing them to parent their children according to God’s Word. When our lives are out of order, God cannot and will not bless us.

At the creation of man, God introduced His perfect plan--His management style to our first parents, Adam and Eve, in the Garden of Eden as recorded in chapter two of Genesis:

*“And the Lord God said, ‘It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him’...*

*Out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to Adam to see what he would call them. And whatever Adam called each living creature, that was its name...*

*But for Adam there was not found a helper comparable to him.*

*And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place.*

*Then the rib which the Lord God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man.”*

*-Genesis 2:18-22*

Marriage was the first institution that God created. According to the account in Genesis, God, seeing that it was not good for the man to be alone, gave him a helper or a helpmate (Genesis 2:18). God formed the man out of the dust of the ground (Genesis 2:7), but He formed or, literally, *built* the woman out of the rib of the man (Genesis 2:21-22). God was demonstrating the role that the husband and wife would have in one another’s lives. They would be mutually dependent upon one another. The man needed companionship. The man needed help! God provided that help through the woman. Women would *make up* for what was lacking in the man and vice versa. The woman’s life came from the man, and man’s life would proceed from the woman.

● **Wives, are you a helper/helpmate to your husband?**

- Yes     No

*“...to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed.”*  
-Titus 2:5

*“Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.”*  
-Ephesians 5:22-24

*“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself.”*  
-Ephesians 5:25-28

- How are you, as a wife, helping your husband to be all that God has called him to be, fulfilling his God-given role in the home?

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- Husbands, are you experiencing companionship with your wife?

Yes     No

- How are you, as a husband, receiving help from your wife?

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Adam's response, when God presented him with his wife, recorded in Genesis 2:23, was classic!

*"And Adam said:*

*This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called woman because she was taken out of man."*

Adam's excitement was lost in the translation! Remember that previously God had paraded the animal kingdom before the man in search of a suitable companion. Imagine Adam opening his eyes and seeing this beautiful woman who would be his wife. In essence, he exclaims, "*she's just like me, or this hits the mark.*" Adam finally had a companion who was compatible or suitable to him! Adam and Eve knew, understood and experienced their equality before God. Sin had not yet entered the scene; so they had perfect unity and absolute harmonious companionship.

*"Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.*

*And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed."*  
-Genesis 2:24-25

Adam was the leader and head of the family, and Eve was his helper. On that day there was no power struggle, no conflict, no misunderstanding between them and no battle of the sexes! They were naked and not ashamed. They were oblivious to evil and absolutely innocent.

**Parenting Principle:** *God intended marriage to be a relationship of mutual dependence and companionship.*

**SIN ERODES GOD’S MANAGEMENT STYLE**

From the beginning God established the structure for the home. Unfortunately, as we turn the page of our Bible to chapter three of Genesis, we learn that domestic tranquility was short-lived.

In Genesis 3:1 the serpent enters the scene with no introduction or explanation. We learn that, in contrast to man’s innocence, the serpent was shrewd and cunning. Satan disguised himself as a shining serpent in order to converse with and ultimately deceive the woman.

In verses 1-8 the downfall of man unfolds:

**Satan planted doubt in Eve’s mind.**

*“Indeed, has God said...” V. 1*

**Satan lied to the woman.**

*“You surely shall not die.” V. 4*

**Satan enticed Eve with an evil desire.**

*“For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” V. 5*

**Satan deceived the woman and she sinned.**

*“...the woman saw...she took and ate...” V. 6*

**Deceived** - *To cause to accept as true or valid what is false or invalid, to believe a lie, to be lead astray, or ensnared.*

**Satan used the woman’s influence over her husband to lead him to sin.**

*“...she also gave to her husband, and he ate.” V. 6*

God’s order had been violated. The couple’s relationship to God and to one another was marred. Stripped of their righteousness and innocence, they would suffer the consequences of their rebellion. The curses resulting from the fall are recorded In Genesis 3:16-19.

*“To the woman He said, ‘I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; in pain you shall bring forth children; your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.’” V. 16*

The same word *desire* in Genesis 3:16 is also used in Genesis 4:7 meaning, a *desire to dominate*. The man has been given authority over his wife, yet she would thereafter struggle to submit and, instead, desire to dominate in the relationship.

● **Wives, are there areas in which you are struggling to submit to your husband’s leadership?**  Yes  No

**Explain.** \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

*“If you do well, will not {your countenance} be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it.”  
 -Genesis 4:7  
 (NAU)*

In verse 17 we read about the consequences of sin to the man:

*“Then to Adam He said, ‘Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, You shall not eat of it;’*

*Cursed is the ground for your sake; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life.*

*Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, and you shall eat the herb of the field.*

*In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you shall return.”*

*“Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin...”  
-Romans 5:12*

Before the fall, the earth bountifully yielded fruit (See Genesis 2:8-9). Adam was the keeper of the garden, which God planted (See Genesis 2:15). After the fall, the ground, being cursed, would no longer spontaneously yield fruit. Adam would toil and strive against thorns and thistles in order to feed his family. By failing to guard his wife from the spiritual attack which lead her to sin, then following her into sin, Adam negated the authority that God had given him to oversee his family. He would be held responsible for sin entering the world. The curse of sin continues to take its toll. In countless homes today, husbands struggle with insecurity in their leadership role, while their wives resist their attempts to lead. Typically, men, like Adam, neglect to take their stand as the authority in the home, and women, like Eve, desire to rule.

● **Husbands, in what ways are you leading in your home?**

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God never intended for a woman to be the authority figure in the home; instead, she is to submit to her husband's leadership. The man, on the other hand, needs the help and support of his wife in order to fulfill his role as head of the family under the lordship of Jesus Christ. This is God's wonderful plan: His management style that we, as Christians, are to submit to in order to be blessed.

● **Husbands, how are you supporting your wife in the home?**

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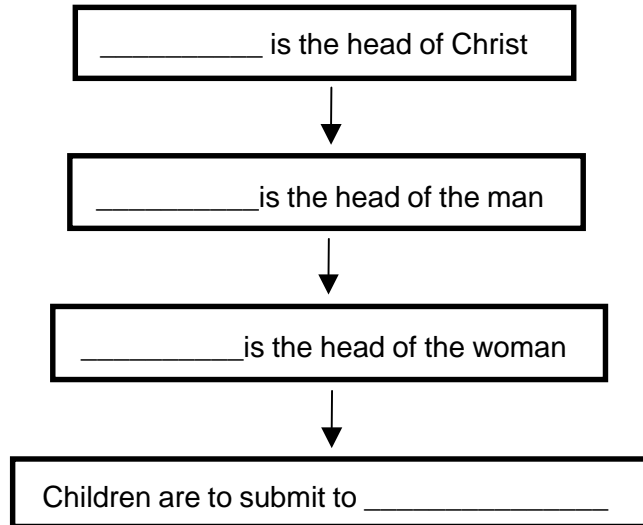
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**Parenting Principle:** *As in the Garden of Eden, Satan continues today to attack marriages and the family.*

## BIBLICAL LEADERSHIP IN THE HOME

In Christ Jesus, we are redeemed from the curse of sin and can walk in newness of life as we yield to the Savior.

Read 1 Corinthians 11:3 and Colossians 3:18-21, and fill in the chart below.



● What commands are given to husbands and fathers in Colossians 3:19 and 21? \_\_\_\_\_

**Bitter** - Distasteful or distressing to the mind or disagreeable.

**Provoke** - To incite, stimulate, irritate or rouse to anger.

Headship is not dictatorship or lordship, but loving leadership, with Jesus Christ as the example. God's instruction to pastors in 1 Peter 5:2,3 also applies to leadership in the home.

*"Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock."*

In a sense, fathers, we are to pastor our families. Jesus Christ is our High Priest. He has placed us as priests over our homes. A priest has the authority to perform the sacred rites or duties of a religious institution, such as the family. The sacred rites of the family include spiritual discipleship and overseeing the discipline of the children.

In the Old Testament we read of Job who, acting as priest of his home, regularly rose early to make sacrifices for his children. Though we no longer offer sacrifices for sin, fathers fulfill this priesthood through spiritual leadership in their homes by disciplining and disciplining their children and praying with their families.

*"Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us..."*  
-Galatians 3:13

*"But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God."*  
-1 Corinthians 11:3

*"Wives, submit to your own husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives and do not be bitter toward them. Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord. Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged."*  
-Colossians 3:18-21

*"Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Christ Jesus."*  
-Hebrews 3:1

*“Now his sons would go and feast in their houses, each on his appointed day, and would send and invite their three sisters to eat and drink with them. So it was, when the days of feasting had run their course, that Job would send and sanctify them, and he would rise early in the morning and offer burnt offerings according to the number of them all. For Job said, ‘It may be that my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts.’ Thus Job did regularly.”*

*-Job 1:4-5*

The father is not the sole disciplinarian or discipler of the children; however, he is to make sure that this is carried out. Sadly, today in most homes, the mothers are the spiritual leaders and the main disciplinarians. Most men do not see themselves as priests.

● **Fathers, do you see yourself as a priest?**    **Yes**    **No**

The husband's/father's leadership role in his home is so vital that Scripture teaches that any man who aspires to a position of leadership in the church must first and foremost be committed to fulfilling his leadership role in his own home. Leaders are called by God to set the example to the people. This does not mean that there is one standard for leaders and another standard for the people. This is why Paul urged the Corinthians to *“Imitate Me as I imitate Christ.”* (1 Corinthians 11:1)

*“He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity.”*

*-1 Timothy 3:4*

**Manage** - *To rule, lead, shepherd and guide.*

The verse that follows concludes, *“but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?”* Scripture is clear that a man who is not the spiritual leader in his home is disqualified from church leadership. Unfortunately, we seldom see this Scripture enforced in the church today!

Many men today, rather than lead, take a passive position, relinquishing their responsibility and authority as leader of the household to their wives. Many men voice attitudes such as,

*“I don't want to lead. I don't want to be involved. My wife is more spiritual and knows the Bible more than I do. The kids listen to her and just get angry at me, or I get angry at them.”*

● **When a father relinquishes his responsibility to lead as the Lord instructs, should he expect to receive God's blessings?**

**Yes**    **No**

**Parenting Principle:** *God ordained the order of submission and authority in the home.*

## MANAGING WITH UNITY

Taking on your God-given responsibility as the head of the home does not mean that your wife is a silent partner. Men must allow and encourage their wives to come alongside them, exercise their gifts and use their talents to contribute to the family. I thank God for my wife and the insight she gives me. We work together as a team, consistently discipling (spiritual training) and disciplining (training behavior) our children. God has given her intuition and input that I need in setting boundaries and rules for our kids, establishing our budget and making our home run smoothly. I would be a fool to take a stand such as:

*“This is the way it is, and that’s that! My dad did it this way, so that’s the way we will do it!”*

I exhort you husbands to involve your wives, listen to them and allow them to fulfill their God-given responsibility to be your helpmate. God has given your wife gifts in areas where you are weak. You need your wife.

● **Husbands, take a moment and write out some of your wife’s gifts or strengths. (For example: “She is more discerning of the children’s feelings.” or “She helps me see the children’s point of view.”)**

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God’s Word clearly teaches that husbands are the leaders in the home; therefore, a man who either takes a passive position, expecting his wife to raise the children, or unfairly dominates his wife and children is out of God’s will, and is therefore a fool. A majority of Christian homes today are suffering the consequences of husbands failing to biblically lead their families. When resentment and rebellion in the children and loss of respect and unity in the marriage arises, most men are oblivious that they may be the root problem and instead blame their wives or judge their children.

Men, we need to repent and ask God for His forgiveness and strength to lead according to His instructions.

According to Colossians 3:18, the wife is to submit to her husband’s leadership *in the Lord*. She is to submit unless his leadership is in conflict with *specific* scriptural commands. We learn in Acts 5:29 that, “*we must obey God rather than men.*” No child of God in any situation is ever directed to sin against God. This also applies to a woman married to a non-believer. It is God’s will for her to encourage him to lead the family, and then follow his leadership, *unless* in doing so she would be sinning against God.

Many times I have heard a woman complain about her husband’s lack of spirituality and conclude,

*“He doesn’t read the Bible or pray with me or the kids, so I don’t have to submit or support him in his decisions.”*

These same women are frustrated, angry and often depressed, but do not see the connection. These feelings are the consequences of being out of God’s will. God never said that a woman married to a spiritually weak husband is exempt from submitting to him. Instead, a godly woman must dedicate herself

*“He who troubles his own house will inherit the wind, and the fool will be servant to the wise of heart.”*  
-Proverbs 11:29

*“The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but he who heeds counsel is wise.”*  
-Proverbs 12:15

*"Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives, when they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear."  
-1 Peter 3:1-2*

to God and pray diligently for her husband to become all that God wants him to be. I believe that most men have a desire to lead, but because of weakness of character, past failures by themselves or others, and the sin nature, they are discouraged or unwilling. God has given men authority and women influence. What does 1 Peter 3:1-2 say about a godly woman's influence over her unsaved, backslidden or struggling husband?

● **What should a wife say?** \_\_\_\_\_

● **How can a husband be won over?** \_\_\_\_\_

What about blended families? In many blended families, rather than looking to God and following His management style, the mindset is,

*"These are my kids, and those are your kids. I'll discipline my kids and let you know if I need your help."*

I would venture to say that this has played a major role in as many as 80% of the divorces among blended families. Perhaps these couples felt that because of their particular circumstances, they were exempt from these biblical principles, and therefore, they failed to embrace them. In reality, the Word of God instructs us that all children belong to Him. They are merely loaned to us by God to love and train. It does not matter if children live in a blended family or with both biological parents. God's plan does not change.

I recently purchased a Webster's New International Dictionary dated 1944. I love looking up words in this huge leather-bound book. I am constantly amazed at how the meanings of many words have been altered since 1944.

Not surprising, most of the biblical implications of the English language have been removed from our modern dictionaries. For example, in 1944 the word *husband* meant, *the male head of household, one who manages and directs a household, leadership and authority within the house*. By 1996 Webster's defined *husband* simply as, *a man who is married*. Apparently, the standard and the expectation has been lowered! In 1944 the word *manage* is defined as, *to conduct and direct, to handle successfully or cope with, to administer, to render and keep one submissive, to guide by careful or delicate treatment, to treat with care, and to husband*. That's not in today's dictionary!

Man's authority and woman's submission in marriage does not mean inferiority for women. It simply means that the husband, not the wife, is the head of the home. This includes the training of the children. Think of it this way: dad is the president and mom is the vice-president, dad is the coach and mom is the cheerleader. Now, does that hurt? Is that offensive to you? Remember that the curses resulting from the Fall suggest that the man will hesitate to accept his leadership role, and the wife will desire to usurp her husband's authority.

God knows that we need His power to love and discipline our kids. When we are not in God's order, we will not have His power. God does not bless disobedience. According to Romans 13, those who resist His authority structure are resisting God, thus bringing His divine judgement. When most couples experience His judgement of their disobedience, instead of recognizing God's hand of disapproval and repenting, they judge and blame one another.

*"...there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves."  
-Romans 13:1-2*

**Parenting Principle:** *Christian couples must continually pray, seeking God's strength to obey and maintain His management style in the home.*

## Day 2

### THE DOWNWARD SPIRAL TO DISORDER

Dads, how do you act or react in the home? For the first few years of my son Nicholas' life, he got me angrier than any human being on earth! I would overreact, yell, spank too hard and generally go berserk over his mistakes. How do you think my wife reacted to my overreacting? "You're a fool!" Though she didn't always express it, that's the way she felt. As a nurturer, she felt that she had to protect her little *chick* from his foolish father. Because I was out-of-control, she began defending him and correcting me in his presence. Naturally, this bred conflict between her and me because she was challenging my authority! Dissention set in, and our marriage relationship was affected. Unfortunately, this same scenario is all too common. I'm thankful that the Lord used the disunity in my home as a wake-up call for me.

- **Is there a similar scenario in your home?  Yes  No**  
**If you responded yes, confess this to God, asking Him to forgive you, then go to your family members and ask them to forgive you. As you walk in humility and obedience, God will both bless you and empower you to follow in His ways in your home.**

Unless God is allowed to intervene and establish His order in the home, the downward spiral continues, further eroding the foundation of the marriage relationship. Over a period of time, there is a loss of respect and trust, which adversely affects the intimacy in the marriage. Most men will only hold out for so long when this happens and will yield in most other areas to preserve the sexual relationship. "Alright, you can take the authority over the children. Let me know if you need my help." Dad steps back, and mom steps up to the plate, becoming the main disciplinarian and authority over the children, believing that she can do a better job than her husband. Dad only gets involved when things really get out of hand or if mom asks for his input.

This system may work for awhile in homes with complacent children. However, if you have a strong-willed child, or when adolescence hits, watch out! This system will crumble! When mothers abandon their God-ordained role of nurturer and cherisher and become leader, disciplinarian and coach rather than cheerleader, their children will eventually resent them, their husbands will criticize them and they will bear the guilt of being out of God's will.

Our main objective in life ought to be to fulfill God's will and purpose, and to glorify Him within the walls of our own homes. Along with King David, our conviction ought to be,

*"...I will walk within my house in the integrity of my heart."  
 -Psalm 101:2 (NAU)*

*"A foolish son is the ruin of his father, and the contentions of a wife are a continual dripping."  
 -Proverbs 19:13*

*"A foolish son is a grief to his father, and bitterness to her who bore him."  
 -Proverbs 17:25*

*"How unhappy the home where both a foolish son and a contentious wife are found! They are very likely to be found together; for where the wife disputes her husband's authority, siding with the children in opposition to his proper discipline, the effect on the home will be anything but good.*

*It is very common thing to see parents disputing and wrangling before their household. The deadly result is that the sons and daughters learn to despise the father's authority and to defy the mother's correction when she does attempt it. These children grow up with a lawless, disobedient spirit, bent on having their own way and persisting in their refusal to submit to proper discipline."  
 -H.A. Ironside, 1908*

“...that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.”  
-2Thessalonians 1:12

When we design substandard methods for managing our families, we are living in disobedience and dishonoring God within our homes. Some of you may have many years of unbiblical habits in your marriage. Change is always hard at first, but the rewards for obedience far exceed the work and sacrifices.

You begin with a willingness to embrace God’s management style. Dads, for you this means that you must commit your laziness and fears to God and step forward as the leader. Moms, for you this means that you must put your trust in the Savior, support your husband’s decisions and follow through by daily stepping back and allowing him to lead. Your children may be in a state of shock for awhile, but you must proceed in obedience to the Lord, and watch Him work!

**Parenting Principle:** *If parents do not submit to God’s management style, they will experience disunity and division in the home.*

## MANAGEMENT STYLE EVALUATION

As a couple, read and ponder the following questions. Keep in mind that the purpose of this exercise is **not** to find fault in your spouse, but to allow God to speak to **you** about your own weaknesses! Be aware that if you respond with resentment or pride, you will be hindered from yielding to the conviction of the Holy Spirit.

1. **Dad**, when your children are in your presence, do you discipline them (or do you leave it up to your wife)?  **Yes**  **No**  **Sometimes**
2. **Mom**, do you consult your husband for input on all aspects of discipline with the children?  **Yes**  **No**  **Sometimes**
3. **Dad**, do you listen to your wife’s input on the emotional state of your children?  **Yes**  **No**  **Sometimes**
4. **Mom**, do you keep information from your husband, not informing him on everything regarding the children?  **Yes**  **No**  **Sometimes**
5. **Dad**, when mom says *no* and the kids come to you, do you always consult with your wife before responding?  **Yes**  **No**  **Sometimes**
6. **Mom**, do you find yourself arguing with your children, defending yourself and your rule or disciplinary decision?  **Yes**  **No**  **Sometimes**
7. **Parents**, have you sat down together and agreed on the rules and disciplines you will use with your children?  **Yes**  **No**
8. **Parents**, do you disagree in front of your children over rules or discipline issues?  **Yes**  **No**  **Sometimes**

- Use the space below to write out your commitment to begin pursuing God's management style in your home.

Husband: \_\_\_\_\_

Wife: \_\_\_\_\_

## Day 3 \_\_\_\_\_

### ROLES OF THE MOTHER AND FATHER

Because God places such high value on the family, and because He knew that raising children would be a challenging, and often overwhelming responsibility, He lovingly provided instructions for parents in His Word as stated in 1Thessalonians 2:7-13. The Bible is our parenting manual.

Parenting is a privilege! It is God's desire to bless the marriage relationship, that it would produce *godly offspring*.

*"But did He not make them one, having a remnant of the Spirit? And why one? He seeks godly offspring. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously with the wife of his youth."*  
-Malachi 2:15

Though 1 Thessalonians 2:7-13 is instruction for spiritual parenting and discipleship (mature Christians helping young believers grow in the faith), the roles of the mother and the father in the maturing process of the child are clearly outlined.

As Christian parents our desire for our children should, above all else, be that they become godly, mature adults. We should diligently pray for our children as the Apostle Paul prayed for the young Thessalonian believers, that they would,

*"...walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory."*  
-1Thessalonians 2:12

Scripture clearly defines the roles of the parents to be a mother who is caring and a father who is responsible.

### THE CARING MOTHER

**The caring mother is gentle with her children.**

*"But we proved to be gentle among you..." V. 7*

**Gentle** - Mild, peaceable, quiet, composed.

Some women are gentle by nature, while others have a coarser demeanor. The word *proved* in this verse originated from a Hebrew word implying a *state of change, condition, or the passing from one state to another, to become*. By determining to yield daily to the Holy Spirit, God will help mothers to become all that He calls them to be! A gentle mother *is not* out of control, angry, yelling and judging.

*"A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger."*  
-Proverbs 15:1

*"But we proved to be gentle among you, as a nursing {mother} tenderly cares for her own children.*

*Having so fond an affection for you, we were well-pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own*

*lives, because you had become very dear to us.*

*For you recall, brethren, our labor and hardship, {how} working night and day so as not to be a*

*burden to any of you, we proclaimed to you the gospel of God. You are*

*witnesses, and {so is} God, how devoutly and uprightly and blamelessly*

*we behaved toward you believers; just as you know how we {were}*

*exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you*

*as a father {would} his own children, so that you would walk in a manner worthy*

*of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory. For this reason we*

*also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you*

*heard from us, you accepted {it} not {as} the word of men, but {for} what*

*it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who*

*believe."*  
-1 Thessalonians 2:7-13  
(NAU)

*“But we proved to be gentle among you, as a nursing {mother} tenderly cares for her own children.*

*Having so fond an affection for you, we were well-pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives, because you had become very dear to us.”*  
-1 Thessalonians 2:7-8 (NAU)

## The caring mother nurtures her children.

*“...as a nursing mother...” V. 7*

**Nurse** - *The act of nursing, suckle, nourish, train, something that nourishes, to supply with nourishment, to educate, to foster, to further the development of someone or something.*

From the time of conception and throughout the life of the child, a mother is called to nurture her children. Obviously the methods of nurturing change with the maturity of the child, but a mother’s heart should always be to nourish and build up her children. The role of the mother is to make her children feel secure in her love and acceptance, by her actions and her words. A nurturing mother *does not* use harsh words, ignore her children or withhold affection from them.

## The caring mother is tender with her children.

*“...tenderly cares for her own children.” V. 7*

**Tender Care (Cherish)** - *To give heed to, to pay attention to, to minister, to soften by heat, to keep warm as of birds covering their young with feathers, to cherish with tender love, to foster with tender care.* Vine’s Expository Dictionary

A caring mother keeps her heart soft and tender towards her children, which is not always easy. It is easy for a mother to become hardened or calloused from disappointment, frustration, fatigue, or other pressures. A caring mother must continually be yielding to the Holy Spirit to guard her heart. A tender mother forgives her children and seeks their forgiveness when she has been wrong.

## The caring mother displays affection for her children.

*“Having so fond an affection for...” V. 8*

**Fond affection (affectionately desirous)** - *A longing or yearning after, prizing highly.*

Nurturing, care, and fond affection require touch. A mother must affirm her children with hugs, kisses, encouraging words, and other appropriate displays of affection. An affectionate mother *knows* her children individually and studies how to make each child feel special by baking a cake, leaving notes in their lunches, or doing individual activities with them.

## The caring mother gives of herself in order to do what is best for her children.

*“...well pleased to impart to you the gospel of God but also our own lives...” V. 8*

The caring mother understands that her priority is to place the loving and training of her children before her own needs. She loves her children with God’s *supernatural* love, despite the mistakes, failures and sin nature of her children.

● **Mothers, what principles have you learned from 1 Thessalonians 2 that have most ministered to you about your role as a mother?**

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- How does this biblical role differ from your current parenting style?

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- Have you seen the importance of being available to nurture and comfort your child after they have been disciplined? Have you been open and approachable to them in the past?  Yes  No

**Parenting Principle:** *The mother's primary role is to lovingly care for and nurture her children.*

## THE RESPONSIBLE FATHER

**The responsible father works to support his family.**

*"...our labor and hardship, how working night and day so as not to be a burden to any of you." V. 9*

God's Word is not suggesting that fathers work to the point of neglecting their families, but rather to work responsibly, that the family would not be burdened financially. The responsible father is instructed to maintain a job in order to care for the needs of his family while not neglecting the priorities of a husband and father.

*"...for the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children."  
-2 Corinthians 12:14*

**The responsible father is a witness of the Christian faith to his family.**

*"You are witnesses, and so is God, how devoutly and uprightly and blamelessly we behaved toward you..." V. 10*

Fathers are called by God to be the spiritual leaders in the home and role models to their children. A father does not abandon his responsibility to his wife to disciple the children, but takes the authority as the priest in his home. A responsible father does not compromise in his speech, nor does he find pleasure in things that might stumble or offend his children.

**Devoutly** - *Holy, pious, sacred, dedicated to God.*

**Uprightly** - *With integrity and honesty, just, uprightness of character and behavior, daily desiring to live life according to what pleases God.*

**Blamelessly** - *Faultless, able to stand a critics' scrutiny.*

**The responsible father takes time to talk with his family; to train, teach and discipline them.**

*"...we were exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you as a father would his own children." V. 11*

**Exhort** - *To call to one's side, to encourage.*

*"For you recall, brethren, our labor and hardship, {how} working night and day so as not to be a burden to any of you, we proclaimed to you the gospel of God.*

*You are witnesses, and {so is} God, how devoutly and uprightly and blamelessly we behaved toward you believers;*

*just as you know how we {were} exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you as a father {would} his own children..."  
-1 Thessalonians 2:9-11  
(NAU)*

**Encourage or Comfort** - *To inspire, support; console in time of trouble or worry, soothing encouragement designed to cheer up and to inspire correct behavior.*

**Implore** - *To call or pray for earnestly, giving personal witness. Solemn, earnest entreaty, urging.*

To train is to *rear up to maturity, or to discipline.* The responsible father does not neglect his God-given role nor does he delegate it to his wife, but takes the authority as the leader, shepherd and servant in the home.

● **Fathers, what principles have you learned from 1Thessalonians 2 that have most ministered to you about your role as a father?**

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● **How does this biblical role differ from your current parenting style?**

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**Parenting Principle:** *The father's primary role is to responsibly provide for his family and to oversee the discipleship and training of his children.*

**STARTING OVER IN YOUR MANAGEMENT STYLE**

God's Word can be sobering. As we recognize where we are in comparison to where we *ought to be*, there is the temptation to judge and accuse one another or become discouraged and hopeless about our situation.

As we go through progress through this lesson, it is very important to not only view it through God's management style, but to apply these principles of training with dad leading.

**TRAINING UP YOUR CHILDREN - PART I**

*Day 4*

**DISCIPLING YOUR CHILDREN TO SPIRITUAL MATURITY**

One of the greatest blessings that a parent can experience is the privilege of leading their child to Christ and helping them mature in the Lord. Jesus said that we must become like children to enter the kingdom of God. Young children are trusting and have not developed cynical opinions or attitudes about spiritual truths. While adults challenge the existence of heaven and angels, most children, believing that God loves them and given the opportunity, will respond with childlike faith. The same gullible minds that believe an overweight man in a red suit driven by a sleigh of reindeer will bring them gifts on Christmas Eve can be told the truth about the Savior.

*"If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them."  
-John 13:17*

*"...assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven..."  
-Matthew 18:3*

Most small children will accept the simple truths of the gospel. They understand that they are sinners (they know that they do naughty things). They can believe that the God who made them loves them and sent His Son from heaven to die on the cross for them, and that He will forgive them and live in their hearts if they invite Him. Most children will anxiously follow along in the sinner's prayer. Does God listen to prayers of small children? Absolutely! As soon as your child can talk, you should begin to lovingly teach them about the Lord and His desire to have a relationship with them. Parents err when they neglect to teach their children about God's gift of salvation by assuming that they are too young, or that this is the responsibility of the Sunday school. Remember the Apostle Paul's words to Timothy:

*"For I am mindful of the sincere faith within you, which first dwelt in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am sure that is in you as well..."*

*"...and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus."  
-2 Timothy 1:5 & 3:15*

**Note:** Please turn to Appendix B, *How to Lead a Child to Christ*.

**Disciple** - (noun) *A student or a learner, whose life gradually and progressively takes on the character of the teacher.*

In Matthew 10:25, Jesus said, *"It is enough for the disciple that he become as his teacher."* The objective of discipleship is to encourage a young believer to walk with the Savior, to grow in the knowledge of our Teacher, Jesus Christ, through His Word, and to be transformed into His image. God has commissioned us to make disciples. This high calling must begin in our own homes. This is often over looked by Christian parents who may feel an obligation to disciple outside the home, but fail to realize that the commission applies at home as well.

In Lesson Two, *A Strong Foundation*, we learned of the absolute necessity to have our lives built upon the foundation of intimacy with Christ. As we looked into Deuteronomy 6:1-6, we saw that God had instructed the children of Israel that they, their sons and their grandsons were to carefully observe His commandments, motivated by love for Him. The commitment and obedience of the fathers was to extend beyond themselves to the following generations. Spiritual training (discipleship) of the children is the privilege and responsibility of their parents. I have observed within the body of Christ that the majority of parents today have relinquished their responsibility to Sunday school programs and/or Christian schools. Parents, this is not a choice! It is direct disobedience when we neglect or refuse to actively disciple our children within our home.

We disciple our children first by our example, then by our instruction. As we raise our children, they observe not only what we say, but also what we do. The powerful influence we have over them can determine if they will follow or if they will rebel.

### **Hypocrisy breeds rebellion!**

If we desire our children to walk with the Lord, we must set the example. Charles Stanley wrote, *"Nothing makes the kingdom of God more attractive to unbelievers than believers whose lives are characterized by the fruit of the*

*"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit..."  
-Matthew 28:19*

*"You shall teach them diligently to your children..."  
-Deuteronomy 6:7*

*Spirit.*” I will add that nothing makes the kingdom of God more unappealing and undesirable to our children than growing up in a home where Christianity is preached, but not practiced. When our kids grow up in homes where God’s love and true Christianity are lived out, they will not be as easily drawn into the world, where truth is compromised and righteousness is mocked.

Let’s look at God’s instructions to us for discipling our kids.

Before we can teach our kids the Scriptures, God’s truth must first be in our own hearts and lived out in our own lives. Deuteronomy 6:6 says,

*“And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart.”*

● **Is your daily personal devotional time on track?**  Yes  No

**Deuteronomy 6:7-9 elaborates on how parents are to disciple their children:**

*“You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.*

*You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes.*

*You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.”*

**We must disciple our children diligently (verse 7):**

*“You shall teach them diligently to your children...”*

**Diligently** - *Perseveringly attentive; steady and earnest in application to a subject or pursuit; prosecuted with careful attention and effort; not careless or negligent.*

● **Based on Deuteronomy 4:9, what do you believe God is commanding you to do?** \_\_\_\_\_

**We must disciple our children always (verse 7-9):**

*“...when you sit in your house...”*

We must take the time and seize the daily opportunities at home to communicate biblical principles to our children after school, during meals together, before going to bed, when they experience disappointments or failures, etc.

My son Nick came home from school one day and told me about a problem he was having with a boy from school. I shared with him the right way to deal with the situation, but he insisted that he would handle it his way, which was to ignore the problem. Nick ignored the problem, but the problem did not go away. A week later, he and the other boy ended up getting in a fight at school. Both boys were expelled for two days. The situation gave me the opportunity to help Nick learn a valuable lesson (I also got two days of free labor at home!). He learned that if he had handled the situation according to the biblical principles I had shared with him, he would have been spared some trouble.

Our kids may not always listen to our instructions, but life and the daily situations of life provide countless opportunities for us to share God’s truths with them.

*“Only take heed to yourself, and diligently keep yourself, lest you forget the things your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life. And teach them to your children and your grandchildren...”*  
-Deuteronomy 4:9

We must be prepared to seize these opportunities. Do you pursue and maintain communication with your children, or are they pursuing you? If we pursue and maintain communication with our children in the early years (ages one to twelve), they will be much more likely to have an open heart toward our instructions and advice in their teen years.

● **Take a few moments to reflect on David’s words in Psalms 40:9,10. Have you ‘proclaimed the good news of righteousness’ within your home?**

Yes     No

**Give an example.** \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**We must disciple them,**

*“...when you walk by the way...”*

When we are away from home with our child, driving in the car, enjoying entertainment or hobbies, activities with friends, spending money, etc., we should, whenever possible, relate life experiences to biblical truths.

**We must disciple them,**

*“...when you lie down, and when you rise up...”*

At all times being mindful of our responsibility to God to disciple our children. We read in 2 Timothy 4:2 to *“Be ready in season and out of season.”* This readiness in season and out is the result of our own intimacy with Christ, seeking God daily in His Word, and prayer.

**We must disciple them by personal example,**

*“You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes.”*

A frontlet or phylactery was a small leather pouch that contained pieces of parchment paper inscribed with Scriptures. The frontlets were worn by religious Jews, who tied them around their heads with the pouch dangling down the center of their forehead. The frontlet was a self-reminder of the commandments of God throughout the day and a statement to others that the wearer was dedicated to God.

In reality, the outward appearance of holiness did not reflect the true spiritual condition of the heart. Though frontlets are no longer worn as signs of holiness, they illustrate an important lesson for us today. First, we should be ever mindful of God’s Word as we go through our day. We should begin each day in quiet time devotions with the Lord in His Word, prayer and meditation. Secondly, as followers of Jesus Christ, the statements that we make to the watching world of extended family, friends, co-workers, strangers and especially our children are not devices on our foreheads, bumper stickers on our cars or jewelry around our necks, but righteousness lived out in our daily lives.

*“I have proclaimed the good news of righteousness in the great assembly; indeed, I do not restrain my lips, O LORD, You Yourself know. I have not hidden Your righteousness within my heart; I have declared Your faithfulness and Your salvation; I have not concealed Your lovingkindness and Your truth from the great assembly.”*  
 -Psalm 40:9-10

*"Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night. He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither, and whatever he does shall prosper."*  
-Psalm 1:1-3

● Take a moment to ponder Psalm 1:1-3. Does this describe your life?

Yes     No

Explain. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**We must disciple them within our homes,**

*"...you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates."*

To disciple our children in our homes, they must be godly homes! Everything that passes through our doorways must represent righteousness and truth, and honor God. This includes the music we listen to, the television and videos we watch, the board games we play, the books and magazines we read and all Internet interaction. Parents, this begins with us! Remember that hypocrisy breeds rebellion. A double standard in this area will damage our authority and our kid's respect for us. Do you have some housecleaning to do? I have often found in counseling families that the open door for the enemy into the home is through ungodly entertainment. Romans 1:32 gives a sober warning that when we approve of and find pleasure in sin, we are guilty, even if we do not participate.

Often when our kids approach puberty, they begin to withdraw to their rooms and insist upon their privacy. We should allow our children some space and respect their privacy; however, God's Word holds us accountable for everything that passes through the doorways of our homes. Our child's room should never become off limits to us. I do not suggest snooping for the sake of snooping, but you do have the right, as God's appointed authority figure in the home, (not to mention, the one who pays the mortgage) to go into your child's room at any time.

According to Genesis 35:2-3 Jacob began 'cleaning his household' by first making confession of his intent to his family, then enlisting their cooperation.

● Make a list of the music, videos, magazines, posters, television programs, books and other forms of entertainment that you and/or your children are currently enjoying.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

● If Jesus visited your home today, do you believe He would approve of these materials?  Yes     No

● Do you need to make some changes in your home in this area?  
 Yes     No

*"...who knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them."*  
-Romans 1:32

*"And Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him, 'Put away the foreign gods that are among you, purify yourselves and change your garments; let them arise...'"*  
-Genesis 35:2-3

*"... as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."*  
-Joshua 24:15

- Is there anything in your home that may be tempting or stumbling your children that should be removed?  Yes  No

Explain. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

- Pray and ask God to forgive you for any compromise and to give you the strength and courage to make these changes so that Jesus would be glorified in your home.

**Parenting Principle:** *God commands parents to disciple their own children.*

## Day 5 \_\_\_\_\_

### PREPARING FOR BATTLE

Remember those cowboy and Indian movies from the old days, when they used bows and arrows? How many times have you seen an Indian pull out an arrow and try to defend himself by fighting with it like a sword? Never! An arrow is an offensive weapon. It is not used in hand-to-hand combat. It is made to be pulled back and fire off offensively before the enemy gets to you. You may be wondering what this has to do with parenting! Let's look at Psalms 127:3-5:

*"Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb is a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are the children of one's youth. Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them; they shall not be ashamed, but shall speak with their enemies in the gate."*

God's Word makes it very clear that our kids are to be perceived in our minds like arrows to a warrior, as offensive, not defensive weapons. Let me explain. Parents often have the mindset, "If I can just get my kids through high school without drugs, sex or getting kicked out of school, I'll be happy." This is a defensive attitude! If we have this attitude, we will not have the courage to encourage, exhort and train our kids to be offensive.

**Offensive** - *Designed for attack.*

Let me use another example. A farmer owned a large barren field that had the potential to become fertile farmland, yet the farmer, believing that nothing would grow, neglected to work the ground and plant the good seeds. The land did not remain barren, but was soon overtaken by weeds. Likewise, if parents have a complacent and/or a defeated attitude toward their children and do not plant the Word of God in the hearts, preparing them to live offensively for Christ, the world's philosophies will soon overtake them.

Initially, an arrow is a rough, crude stick that is meticulously whittled, shaped, polished and prepared for flight. God has called us to train, prepare, exhort and rear up our children to maturity that they might live offensively in this world. If we don't believe this, we will not apply these principles, and our children will lack power to stand firm against the enemy and will be useless for the kingdom of God.

*"And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it."*

*-Matthew 16:18*

*"Well doth David call children 'arrows'; for if they be well bred, they shoot at their parents' enemies; and if they be evil bred, they shoot at their parents."*

*-Henry Smith,  
1560-1591*

*"But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves."*

*-James 1:22*

*"...Jesus knew their thoughts, and said to them: 'Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand.'"*

*-Matthew 12:25*

*"...fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind."*

*-Philippians 2:2*

The Bible tells us that the gates of Hades will not overpower the church (Matthew 16:18), yet so many members of the body of Christ live their lives defensively. I believe this is why so many churches are not growing, expanding and impacting their communities for Christ. Rather than being offensive weapons for the Lord, the average Christians today are afraid to share their faith. Sadly, we have settled for far less, being content to say,

*"I don't do drugs, I don't cuss, I don't smoke, I go to church so I'm a good Christian."*

In John 6:44, Jesus testified that *"No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him..."* In reality, we cannot make our children become Christians. We cannot convict them of sin, give them a hunger and thirst for righteousness or make them live godly lives. This is the ministry of the Spirit of God in their lives. I praise the Lord for this truth. God will faithfully do His part, but we must do our part, which is to lead them to the knowledge of the Savior and equip them in righteousness and right living.

● **Have you been preparing your children to live offensively or defensively in this world?** \_\_\_\_\_

Read on to learn some practical tools to raise your children to be offensive weapons.

***Parenting Principle:*** *Parents should perceive their children as offensive weapons for Christ.*

## TEACHING YOUR CHILDREN GOD'S PRECEPTS AND COMMANDMENTS

As we have clearly seen in this lesson, God has instructed us to disciple our children by our example and by instruction. The following are some prerequisites and guidelines:

**Parents should continually evaluate themselves biblically and be faithfully obedient to Scripture in order to avoid hypocrisy when correcting their children.**

There are no perfect parents. God is not expecting perfection. He does, however, command us to surrender to His will and purpose daily. I urge you to examine your devotional, private and public life. Are you continuing to practice ungodly habits and doing nothing about it?

**Parents should be one in mind and judgment (unity).**

When parents are not united and working together, divisions and schisms develop throughout the entire family. It also creates an environment where the children learn manipulation skills, causing them to rebel against their parents' authority and undermine their influence to teach scriptural truth. A single mother or a woman with an unsaved husband must take the spiritual leadership role.

Fathers should pray with their spouses and children every day. If you are a single parent or married to an unbeliever, you can lead your family to the altar in prayer. Single parents should initiate daily family prayer. Family Bible studies should be done regularly. Choose an evening that is the most convenient, set aside an hour, make some popcorn and milkshakes, and open God's Word as a family. Keep in mind the following suggestions:

- A. **Keep it simple.** The objectives are to instill God's Word in your children's hearts and to teach them to seek God's guidance. You are not trying to produce Bible scholars!
- B. **Keep it short.** Family members have different attention spans. Be sensitive to that fact in order to keep Bible studies a fun family time, rather than a lecture that your children will come to dread. If you have children that are of different age groups, you can split them up. Mom can teach the younger children a simple lesson, and dad can teach the older children a lesson appropriate for their age.
- C. **Make it exciting.** Psalm 16:11 tells us that "...In Your presence is fullness of joy; in Your right hand there are pleasures forever." Are you experiencing joy in God's presence? Your love and excitement for your faith will be transferred to your children. You can use games, Bible story books, videos, etc.
- D. **Be flexible.** All families experience unexpected events and schedule changes (child's sports or school activities, birthdays, etc). If necessary, re-schedule your Bible study night to an alternate day to accommodate changes. Don't be so rigid that you become legalistic!
- E. **Be consistent.** While flexibility is sometimes a necessity, you must be consistent with your Bible studies. Maintain a balance.
- F. **Be realistic with your expectations of your children.** Teaching our children about God should occur over a lifetime. Remember that you are sowing seed now that may not bear fruit and be harvested for a season.
- G. **Don't put it off!** Change can be uncomfortable. You may be nervous or afraid that it won't go the way you've planned. Review the points above and get started. You can develop your program as you go and personalize the Bible study for your family.

Note: Turn to Appendix D, *Recommended Devotional and Discipleship Books*, for some helpful tools for family devotions.

● Have you been neglecting the spiritual discipleship of your children, but now understand and want to obey God in this area?

Yes     No

● What has God revealed to you concerning changes that need to be made in your home in the area of discipleship?

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*"Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need."*  
-Hebrews 4:16

*"...pray without ceasing..."*  
-1Thessalonians 5:17

*"Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You!"*  
-Psalm 119:11

*"And I will delight myself in Your commandments, which I love."*  
-Psalm 119:47

*"You are my portion, O LORD; I have said that I would keep Your words."*  
-Psalm 119:57

*"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path."*  
-Psalm 119:105

- Write out your commitment to begin discipling your children.

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- Pray, asking God to help you to follow through and get started.
- Choose the most convenient night of the week.
- Commit to a starting date.
- Tell your kids about the family Bible study night.
- Get started, remain consistent and watch God bless your family!

**Parenting Principle:** *Parents disciple their children by their godly example and by teaching them the Word of God.*

Go back through this lesson and review the eleven **Parenting Principles** you have learned. Re-write the principles below in your own words.

1) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4) \_\_\_\_\_  
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5) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
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6) \_\_\_\_\_  
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7) \_\_\_\_\_  
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8) \_\_\_\_\_  
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9) \_\_\_\_\_  
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10) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

11) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## TRAINING UP YOUR CHILDREN - PART II

### Day 1

### Week 5

#### DISCIPLINING YOUR CHILDREN TO MATURITY

Most Christian parents are familiar with the exhortation from Ephesians 6:4, to "...bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord." What exactly does this mean?

**Bring them up** - *To bring up to maturity, to train or educate.*

**Discipline** - *Training, chastening, or correction.*

**Instruction** - *Admonition, warning, exhortation, any word of encouragement or reproof which leads to correct behavior.*

Bringing our children up to maturity means shaping and instilling godly character traits in them. This is not instantaneous, but a slow, steady process. Just as a stick of wood is transformed into a smooth, effective arrow through whittling, shaping and polishing, bringing our children up to maturity is a slow, meticulous process. As the craftsman works, he has in mind the finished product, and he does not stop his work until his goal is reached. How can we expect to mold and shape our children if we do not have a defined goal, or if we are unwilling to patiently persist until we attain that goal?

- **As parents, what should be our goals for our children?**
- **What *finished product* should we have in our minds as we train our children?**
- **What is our target or our bull's-eye?**

**Parenting Principle:** *God has called parents to raise their children to maturity.*

#### THE CHARACTER TRAITS OF A MATURE ADULT



It has been said that if we aim at nothing, we will probably hit nothing! If we don't know where we are going, we will probably get there! The goal of mature adulthood can be described under the following headings

##### 1. Morals and Values

To have morals and values is to have an understanding of right and wrong. In the Bible we find the word righteousness, which means "*that which is right, just, upright, worthy, and free from wrong, guilt or sin.*" Morals and values are instilled

in our children through spiritual discipleship, by our example of righteous living and by our instruction from God's Word.

*"For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the LORD, to do righteousness and justice, that the LORD may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him."*

-Genesis 18:19

## 2. Personal Responsibility

Personal responsibility is the ability to take care of ourselves, to follow through on our commitments and responsibilities without being prompted by others. Children need to be coached and reminded; mature adults do not!

*"The soul of a lazy man desires and has nothing; but the soul of the diligent shall be made rich."*

-Proverbs 13:4

*"And let our people also learn to maintain good works, to meet urgent needs, that they may not be unfruitful."*

-Titus 3:14

## 3. Self-Control

Self-control is the ability to govern ourselves emotionally, physically and spiritually, not yielding to the path of least resistance.

Emotions

*"A fool vents all his feelings, but a wise man holds them back."*

-Proverbs 29:11

Behavior

*"You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked..."*

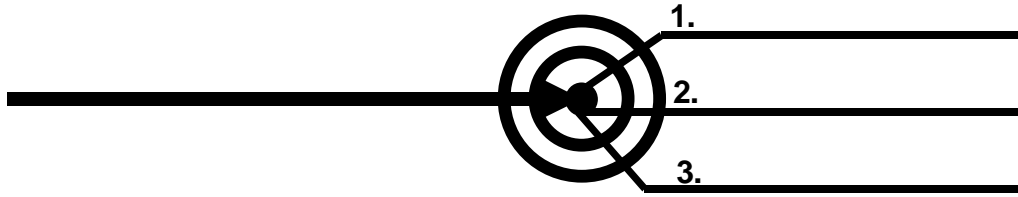
-2 Peter 3:17

These are the character traits that make a man or woman mature. Nobody is born with these attributes. They must be learned and developed over a period of time. Reaching a particular age does not make an individual mature. Nobody magically becomes mature on their 18th or 21st birthday! Getting a job, getting married or becoming a parent does not prove maturity. Unfortunately, the world is full of employed, married adult parents who have no morals and values, lack personal responsibility and exercise little self-control!

This is why it is so important for parents to know and understand where they are supposed to be leading their children. If we don't know where we are going, we most likely will end up some place where we do not want to be! I know of many parents, who, rather than enjoying their golden years doting over their grandchildren, are supporting or raising their grandchildren because their own children never matured and took responsibility.

- **If we do not have a clear goal of where we are going, how are we going to measure the progress of the success along the way?**
- **Without a clear goal, how will parents have an effective process in place to direct their kids?**

- Fill in the three components of mature adulthood.



The following are some of the characteristics of an *immature adult* who has not received or accepted proper training:

- Continues in sinful habits
- Lack of commitment to God, home and career
- Overspending
- Starts but doesn't finish projects
- Avoids making commitments
- Easily distracted from commitment
- Cluttered and/or unorganized lifestyle
- Displays ingratitude

- Perhaps you have examined your own life as you read the three character traits of a mature adult and realize that you lack in these areas. If you know that you display characteristics of an immature adult, ask God to forgive you and give you strength to change. You may also consider seeking some biblical counsel.

*"If you ask anything in My name, I will do it."  
-John 14:14*

**Parenting Principle:** *The character traits of a mature adult are morals and values, personal responsibility and self-control.*

### AN AIMLESS PATH

When a teenager comes into my office for counseling, I always ask them for their definition of a mature adult. The most common response that I get is, "*I don't know.*" When I ask these same puzzled teens about their future, they usually have some plans in place, a goal or a direction that they want to follow. This sounds good, but as they unfold their plans, I discover that most of them are going in the wrong direction, and their plans or methods to get there are obscure!

- Who is responsible to tell our kids where they should be going?
- Who is going to show them and give them understanding of the bull's-eye?

This responsibility falls on the parents! Our kids need to understand what it means to be a mature adult. The majority of kids I talk to, especially boys, do not even equate morals and values, personal responsibility and self-control with maturity.

In Proverbs 23:7, we read,

*"For as he thinks in his heart, so is he..."*

“...thinks in his heart...” refers to what an individual believes to be true about themselves. If a young man believes that being a man is smoking cigarettes, having sex, staying out late and not having anyone telling him what to do, that is what he will aspire to do. Therefore, it is vital that we make sure our kids know the truth (the definition of a mature adult). We are to set the mark and make it clear. A bull’s-eye not seen makes for one bad target!

“...so is he...” refers to a man’s actions or behavior, which result from what is in his heart. Most parents spend more time and energy trying to change their child’s behavior, rather than focusing on their heart (spiritual discipleship). What a boy or girl thinks and believes in their heart affects how they behave. Therefore, it is essential that we love and disciple our children, getting to the heart of the matter. If we are attempting to fulfill our responsibility to disciple our children by example and instruction, but are not loving them as God’s Word instructs us, we can become a tool of the enemy in taking part in training a rebellious heart.

**Parenting Principle:** *Parents must teach their children to be a mature adult.*

## Day 2

### THE FOUR TOOLS OF TRAINING

Let’s look at how we can instill personal responsibility and self-control in our children. I call the ingredients to make this happen, the *Four Tools of Training*, which are:

1. **Rules/Boundaries**
2. **Discipline/Consequences**
3. **Punishment**
4. **Consistency**

I strongly recommend that you do not attempt to implement any of these tools until you have completed the workbook.

#### 1. RULES/BOUNDARIES

Rules and boundaries are like vegetables. Most kids don’t like them, but they are a vital part of a healthy diet. Kids may tell you that they don’t like rules and boundaries, but they know in their heart that they need them. Rules and boundaries also give our children security and stability.

**Rules and boundaries must be clearly written out.**

Parents tell me all the time,

*“My kids know what I expect of them. The rules don’t need to be written. They know them.”*

However, when I ask kids to tell me the family rules, they aren’t in agreement. In fact, sometimes the kids give me more rules than their parents did, which means that the parents forgot their own rules! We forget things! What is really odd is that if I ask the dad and mom separately, they have two different sets of rules!

*Rules need to be written.* Apparently, God thought writing out rules was important. Let's read Deuteronomy 4:13-14:

*"So He declared to you His covenant which He commanded you to perform, the Ten Commandments; and He wrote them on two tablets of stone.*

*And the Lord commanded me at that time to teach you statutes and judgments, that you might observe them in the land which you cross over to possess."*

God made it clear for us, and we need to follow His example and do the same for our kids.

## **Rules must be written out because it eliminates confusion for both parents and children.**

If anybody in leadership, whether in the work force, government or church, does not articulate his expectations to those under his authority, he will surely fail. Clearly stated rules, boundaries and goals let our kids know where they are going, how they are going to get there and the process involved. Unwritten rules are as confusing and divisive for husbands and wives as for the children, which brings us to the next point.

## **Rules must be written out, because it helps build and maintain unity in the family.**

It promotes a team spirit, not only between the parents, but also the children.

## **Rules must be written out because it removes double-mindedness and unfairness.**

Have you ever heard one of your children say about one of their siblings,

*"You love him more than me?"*

One of the reasons that kids feel this way is because without written rules and predetermined discipline, there is the potential for parents to act differently toward a more challenging child than they do toward a complacent child. The challenging child will begin to perceive, by your actions, that you love their sibling more. When the rules are written, and the discipline for breaking the rules is predetermined and equally enforced, unfairness will be eliminated.

## **Rules must be written out because it helps parents be consistent.**

We are more apt to follow through with rules that are written. I have found this to be challenging for many parents, mainly because it holds them accountable. Many couples have told me,

*"Things were going great at home when we had our rules written down, but after a couple of months, we slowly slipped back into our old habits."*

I've also heard,

*"It's just too hard to go through the changes and maintain this, so we just went back to the way things were!"*

Parents, this is so important. If we are not willing to make changes, be accountable and remain consistent, how can we expect to train our kids to live responsible, self-controlled lives?

God governed the nation of Israel with Ten Commandments. How many rules should we have in our homes to govern and train our children? I have found that most homes can run smoothly with five or six rules.

- **Take a few moments to jot down the rules that you are currently enforcing in your home. If married, write your lists separately, then compare. If your children are over eight years old, ask them to tell you what they think the rules are. (For example: no hitting others, no leaving the yard, no phone calls after 9:00 p.m., etc.)**

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**Parenting Principle:** *Rules must be clearly defined and written out.*

## 2. DISCIPLINE/CONSEQUENCES

As we saw in Ephesians 6:4,

*“And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.”*

Training occurs when our children consistently experience the natural (or their parents’ predetermined) discipline/consequences for their inappropriate actions, disobedience or poor choices.

**Discipline** - *To train.*

**Consequences** - *That which follows from a preceeding action.*

**Train** - *To instruct and control or correct, to mold and perfect.*

Deuteronomy 11:26-28 says,

*“Behold, I set before you today a blessing and a curse; the blessing, if you obey the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you today. And the curse, if you do not obey the commandments of the Lord your God, but turn aside from the way which I command you today, to go after other gods which you have not known.”*

Consistently through the Scriptures, we see that God clearly communicated to man a condition for blessing and a consequence for disobedience. God gave man freedom to choose for himself. It is a simple principle. A principle which we must embrace and apply as we raise our children.

The disciplines/consequences we enforce should be predetermined, not chosen at random when a situation arises. When we don’t use predetermined discipline/consequences, we parent based upon how we feel at that moment. This is

dangerous because our feelings change day to day, minute by minute! When we are having a good day, and our children break a rule, our consequences tend to be light. However, when we are having a bad day, we bring out all the guns for the same broken rule. This is not fair and will not effectively train our kids! Instead, this will provoke them to wrath. Every rule or boundary must have a predetermined discipline/consequence. This removes the *good day/bad day* parenting and discipline based upon mood or emotion. Emotions have the potential to destroy training. The perception that emotional parenting gives our children is that we are not disciplining or training them, but taking their mistakes and failures personally and getting revenge!

**Parents must discipline their children because God commands it.**

*“Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.”*  
 -Proverbs 22:6

God’s Word clearly commands us to discipline our children. To be careless in this area is to be disobedient to the Lord!

**Parents must discipline their children because it demonstrates love.**

*“For whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives.”*  
 -Hebrews 12:6

I have worked with many kids in juvenile hall who have told me in anger,

*“I know my parents don’t love me.”*

This was not necessarily because their parents beat them, introduced them to drugs, didn’t pay their bills or moved around all the time. They were convinced that their parents did not love them because they did not discipline them! Instinctively, kids know that when their parents won’t take the time and effort to teach them right from wrong, to correct and train them, to enforce rules and discipline, that they just don’t care and don’t love them.

**Parents must discipline their children to raise them to be mature adults and not remain children.**

*“...bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.”*  
 -Ephesians 6:4

Sometimes, as parents, we forget that our goal is to raise mature adults. Mere age does not make an adult; rather, maturity is characterized by **morals and values, personal responsibility and self-control**. It is evident in our society that many individuals of age are not mature adults.

**Parents must discipline their children because it keeps peace in the home.**

*“Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.”*  
 -Hebrews 12:11

Though we would all agree that homes where children dwell are hotbeds of excitement, noise, hectic schedules, accidents, tears and countless unexpected events on a daily basis, I believe that as Christians, our homes should be a place where God’s peace reigns!

● Would you describe your home environment as peaceful, calm, harmonious and unified?  Yes  No

● How would you describe the prevailing environment of your home? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Parenting Principle:** Discipline instills the character traits of maturity in our children.

## Day 3 \_\_\_\_\_

### 3. PUNISHMENT

Punishment does not train, but it is a powerful *motivator* to get our kids to accept our training. Our prison system is failing because it punishes, but does not train.

**Punishment** - A measured amount of pain to motivate, or the infliction of a penalty.

If you look up the word *punishment* in the dictionary, the definition does not include anger, yelling, cussing, judging or threatening! Yet, why is it so common for those actions to accompany punishment in so many homes? Many parents have come to believe that if they don't get angry, raise their voices and twist their faces that their kids will not take them seriously. On the contrary, when parents lose control, their punishment does not motivate their children, but provokes them.

For punishment to be effective, parents have to get control of their anger, frustration and emotions. Does this mean that you cannot use a stern voice? No! A stern voice shows that you are unbending, uncompromising and intending to follow through on what you say, which is appropriate. Yelling, screaming, threatening, nagging and so on are not! If you have practice this bad habit in the home, you need to confess, repent and ask God to change you! Review Lesson 3, *Loving Communication*. We are called by God to love our children even when issuing discipline or punishment.

*"Do not withhold correction from a child, for if you beat him with a rod, he will not die. You shall beat him with a rod, and deliver his soul from hell."*  
-Proverbs 23:13-14

Because this Scripture has been misused and taken out of context, it is largely disregarded today. We are instructed here to use pain when necessary in correcting our children. No loving parent enjoys using pain to motivate his or her children, but sometimes it is necessary.

*"Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it."*  
-Hebrews 12:11

Using pain to motivate our children is not joyful. The old saying, “*this is going to hurt me more than it will hurt you*” is true. It breaks my heart, especially with my little daughter, to follow through when she refuses the discipline, but I follow through because I love her. Used correctly, pain to motivate produces results! Hebrews 12:11 assures us that afterward it brings peace in the home and teaches our children righteousness.

Child psychologists today vehemently protest, claiming that using pain damages kids emotionally, humiliates them and lowers their self-worth. I would never suggest that abuse in any degree is ever appropriate. I have seen the physical and emotional scars that have resulted from physical and verbal abuse. However, pain is a tool by God’s design to teach us our limits and keep us from danger!

For example, a child cannot learn to ride a bicycle without experiencing some pain, and in some cases, a lot of pain! The enthusiastic parents puts training wheels on the new bike, and his child experiences the freedom of sailing down the street. In time, however, the child starts getting teased, the older kids call him a *baby*, peer pressure wins and the training wheels have to go! The enthusiastic parent pushes the child down the street, holding onto the back of the bike, then lets go! Most of the time, without the training wheels to balance the bike, the child loses control, his face meets the pavement and PAIN! I have never heard of a child in that situation stand up and cry,

*“Oh, I’m emotionally scarred for life! I can’t ever look at that bicycle again!”*

They experience pain, associate the pain with falling down, and are left with bruises and scrapes, but most kids almost immediately get back on the bike, determined to succeed! The pain did not damage the child’s self-esteem, but taught him to pay closer attention to what he was doing, hold the handlebars steadier and motivated him to be more careful. Pain is a part of life. Pain teaches us. To look at pain, or issuing pain to our kids as something that is going to be emotionally detrimental to them, is foolish. Abuse is wrong. Spanking in anger is wrong. However, pain applied biblically brings peace in the home and teaches our children righteousness.

● **Have you used pain to motivate your children?**  Yes  No

**Explain.** \_\_\_\_\_

Years ago I worked with a couple who had a very strong-willed four year old. They were convinced that they would never use spanking as a punishment. I shared with them that I believed they had no choice in this matter. With this child’s personality, I believed he would eventually end up in some serious trouble if they did not get control of him through establishing boundaries, enforcing appropriate discipline and proper punishment. They did not take this counsel very well! In fact, they did not take the counsel at all. Time passed and the child’s rebellion and defiance got out of hand. By the time he was twelve years old, he was out of control, disrespectful, with no regard for his parents’ rules. Out of sheer frustration, the dad finally started to implement spanking. You can imagine what spanking turns into when the child is twelve years old! Fights! Sadly, this boy ended up incarcerated by the time he was sixteen years old.

*“It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I may learn Your statutes.”  
-Psalm 119:71*

*"But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live?"*  
-Hebrews 12:8-9

*"Young twigs are easily bent and made to grow another way, old trees most difficult. So persons in youth are most easily turned than others."*

-Jonathan Edwards

The Bible teaches that one of the evidences that we are children of God is found in the truth that God chastens or disciplines us. Hebrews 12:8 confirms that if we are without discipline, we are illegitimate children and not sons. When this father refused to chasten and discipline his son, he was, in fact, treating his son as an illegitimate child and not his own. This father bred disrespect into the heart of his child. In the original Greek the word *corrected* in Hebrews 12:9 means *discipline by punishment*. The Bible is very clear that in order to have peace and respect within our homes, we must use appropriate punishment when needed.

Some kids by nature have a gentle temperament and do not require pain to motivate them to do right; they accept discipline and follow the rules. My son Justin is a pleaser. Doing the right thing is important to him. In fact, for the longest time when he failed, he was his own worst enemy. He thought he was bad. I have told him,

*"It is not bad to fail, son. It is okay. It is your pride that is driving you to believe this. God expects you to fail. You are not perfect."*

I have probably only spanked him five times in his whole life. My older son Nicholas was a different story! Now, Nick is very responsible, hard working and a pleasure to be around. But because of his strong-willed personality, he required pain to motivate him to accept our discipline and to obey. I believe that if I had not used pain to motivate him, or if I had punished him in anger, I would not have a relationship with him today. God is the creator of the body and the soul. He formed my son Nicholas and gave him his unique personality, his strengths, gifts and weaknesses. God then entrusted him to me to train!

Let me illustrate this truth. Only special breeds of thoroughbred horses are trained for racing. There are gentle ponies perfectly suited as pets or sleek horses trained for equestrian performances, but these horses could not compete and win a race at the Kentucky Derby. Racehorses have a natural instinct or bent. It is great to watch these horses before the race. They do not casually line up and patiently wait for the race to begin. They are contained in steel cages behind the starting gate--snorting, jumping, anxiously awaiting the opening of the gate and their opportunity to do what they do best. To attempt to break one of these horses and harness it to a wagon to give hay rides at the county fair would be frustrating for the horse and the trainer.

In a sense, this is what parents often try to do with their strong-willed children. Many parents I have worked with have come to believe that their strong-willed child was bad, or something was wrong with them because they couldn't sit still, listen in the classroom and didn't want to follow the rules at home. Their efforts to break the child and force them to conform only ended in frustration and resentment. When my son was seven years old, we discovered that his name, *Nicholas*, means *a leader of people*. Believe me, he is! He wanted to rule from infancy. This is his bent from the Lord. The Lord did not tell me to destroy that natural tendency, but to train, disciple (spiritual training) and discipline (training behavior) him. Because he has a strong personality, part of that training required implementing punishment that was painful.

**Parenting Principle:** *Punishment is a powerful motivator for our kids to accept our training.*

**Notice the order of the first three tools of the *Four Tools of Training*:**

1. Rules
2. Discipline
3. Punishment

It is crucial that this order be maintained. Let me give you an example of how this flows. Let's say you have a three year old who has discovered the joy of jumping on the couch. Everyday you remind, correct, threaten and lecture him on why he should not jump on the couch. The result is hours and hours of negative communication and frustration.

Now, let's look at this same scenario, using the tools of training. Your rule is, "*No jumping on the couch.*" The discipline for breaking the rule is "*Three minutes time-out in a designated chair.*" I recommend using a kitchen timer. Three minutes is a long time for an antsy three year old to sit still; however, if he can watch the timer moving, it helps divert his attention from having to sit still. The child is being trained to stop jumping on the couch by being made to sit still for three minutes. If the child refuses the discipline by choosing to get out of the chair before the timer goes off, he is asking for the motivator, the predetermined punishment. Poor choice!

Spank the child (See *Principles for the Use of Spanking* on page 131), put the child back in the chair and reset the timer. When we don't understand the principles of rules, discipline and punishment and how to use these tools, our children begin to perceive that all forms of discipline are punishment and/or revenge. The result is that we provoke and erode our relationship with them instead of train them.

#### **4. CONSISTENCY**

Consistency in parenting means to follow through with your plan. Many people can agree on what needs to be done, i.e. the rules and discipline, but they become lazy or discouraged and fail to consistently follow through. Consistency is as important as the other tools. If you are inconsistent, your discipline will fail!

A great example of failure due to inconsistency is found on our roads and highways. Living in Southern California where everybody is in a hurry, speeding on the freeways is common. The reason most people speed is because most people speed! Everybody does it! Actually the problem of speeding persists because of the inconsistency of the Highway Patrol. They cannot be in all places at all times! But suppose they invented a computer chip and required all drivers to have it installed in their vehicles. Every time a vehicle exceeded the speed limit, a signal would be sent by satellite to the Police Department, and two days later, the offender would be sent a ticket and a hefty fine in the mail. You can bet that overnight, bad driving habits would be broken. Long-time speeders would be trained to stay within the limits and boundaries of the law, if the authorities were able to be consistent. Likewise, consistency in parenting is crucial! When rules, discipline and punishment are not consistently enforced, training is minimized or even impossible.

No Consistency = No Training = No Peace

I have seen many parents get off to a good start, establish their rules, discipline and punishment, and remain consistent for a while. The kids begin to respond, some behavior problems are brought under control and the home begins to run more smoothly. Ironically, when many parents see positive changes, they start easing up. They gradually default back to their original style of parenting, old problems resurface and in no time, the family is in the condition that originally brought them in for counseling.

Without consistency, we teach our children situational ethics and manipulation skills. I have had many irate parents in my office give detailed accounts of how their child manipulates them. When I ask direct questions about their rules, discipline, punishment, unity between parents and consistency in discipline, it is clear that, by their style of parenting, they have unwittingly taught and encouraged their child to manipulate. Parents, we are the role models, teachers and the primary influence in our children's lives during their formative years. Home is the training ground for life. Our children carry into their adult life careers, marriage and parenting their own children the traits and habits that we instill in them.

Finally, we must be consistent in parenting, because consistency guards us against relying on our feelings and emotions, which change daily! We must put a clear plan in place and faithfully follow through. If you find yourself sliding back into your former style of parenting--not enforcing rules, not following through with discipline, yelling, nagging and so forth--don't throw out the whole system. Don't let yourself become discouraged and believe that this structure is impossible for your family. Confess your weakness to the Lord, acknowledge the failure to your family and agree to get back on course.

"...a fool repeats his folly."  
-Proverbs 26:11

● Have you been teaching your child manipulation skills through your inconsistency?  Yes  No  
If yes, explain. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Parenting Principle:** *Without consistency, we teach our children situational ethics and manipulation skills.*

● Review the *Four Tools of Training* on pages 106-114. Write a brief definition for each.

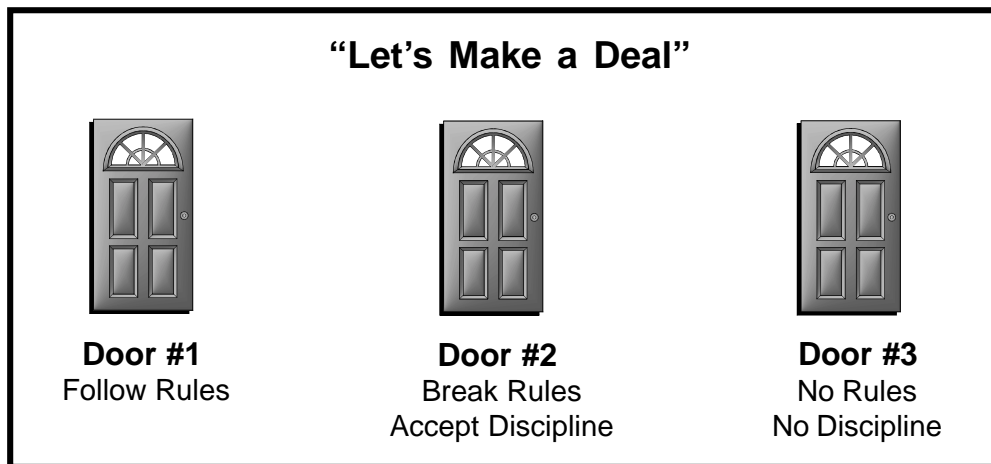
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# Day 4

## LET'S MAKE A DEAL

When I was growing up, there was a popular game show on television called "Let's Make A Deal." Many of you who are old enough probably remember the program. The studio audience dressed in wild costumes, hoping to attract the attention of the host and be selected to choose one of three doors on stage. Behind each door was a prize or a *booby* prize. The contestants could go home with a car, a boat or a can of tuna!

Many kids want to play "Let's Make A Deal" when it comes to rules and discipline. When they are put to the test of obedience, typical children would like to have three choices:



The three doors represent our children's response to our training. We want them to choose the first door and follow our rules. Choosing the second door represents breaking the rules and accepting the discipline for the disobedience. Most kids, especially strong-willed children, want Door #3: *"I don't have to accept the rule, and I should not have discipline!"* This is like a driver getting pulled over for speeding, issued a citation, then going to court and fighting the fine. He chose to speed, knows that he is guilty, but doesn't want to accept the discipline. This is childish behavior. Our children are childish. Accepting discipline for our actions is developed with maturity.

Knowing that our kids are not yet mature and that they do not readily take responsibility for their actions, how should we respond to them when they choose Door #3? Shock, anger, screaming, yelling, judging them or becoming frustrated and bitter toward them? Unfortunately, this is the way many parents behave! Instead, we must remove Door # 3 as an option for them. We need to calmly and consistently enforce the written rules, and clearly communicate to them that they only have two choices, either accept the rule, or break the rule and accept the discipline. Period! Children who are raised without discipline for their actions become adults who do not take responsibility or ownership for their actions! Many parents have unknowingly allowed their children the third option for years and now have the challenge of re-training themselves and their children to break this ineffective parenting style. In Lesson Two we studied Proverbs 22:6, which reminds us to,

*"Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it."*

Every child is uniquely different. One may need more rules and tougher discipline, while another child in the same family willingly sticks with the program.

When Nicholas started elementary school, my wife and I were called into the classroom for a parent/teacher conference three or four times a year! Nick wanted to run the classroom! He would try to tell the teacher what to do and when to do it. When he got bored or disinterested with the subject matter in the classroom, he would goof off and disrupt the class! That was our Nick. The teacher always asked us, "*Do you use discipline in the home with your son?*" After affirming that we certainly did discipline, I always suggested to the teacher that we come up with some methods to discipline Nick at school, and then to communicate with me right away, so that I could discipline him again at home. I wanted my son to know that my influence and parenting reached even into the school! This was our routine almost every year until Nicholas got into seventh grade. The teachers were always relieved when the school year was over, and Nick moved to the next grade!

Two years later, these same teachers had our younger son, Justin, in their classroom. Same home, same parents, same method of discipline, same rules, but totally different child. All the teachers adored our little prince. He was never disciplined in the classroom. At the end of the year, they were sad to see him go!

Nick was not a *bad* child, and Justin was not a *good* child. God uniquely created both of them and gave them individual personalities, strengths and weaknesses. I had to learn to adjust my parenting to the needs of my two sons. Justin never needed a rule about classroom behavior. Nick needed a set of rules that particularly pertained to him. It was not necessary for me, in the name of fairness, to give Justin classroom rules just because Nick had them.

Some kids resist doing their homework; therefore, they need a written rule pertaining to getting their homework done. On one hand, Justin would go into his room every night and spend hours on his homework. He never needed to be asked or reminded. On the other hand, Nick never voluntarily do his homework, so we had to give him a homework rule. The rule was that from 7:00 to 8:00 p.m., Nick would do his homework. He was not allowed to watch television or talk on the telephone until his homework was finished. Nick needed more structure.

One thing is true of most children, they will take the path of least resistance and often refuse our guidance. When this happens, we must not take their failures and mistakes personally and forget that our job is to love and train them. Their mistakes are part of this journey. We must do our part in parenting them, even in the difficult times. Some parents act as if they think God made a mistake and gave them the wrong child. When parents feel this way about their child, it affects their ability to parent. The parent begins to pull away emotionally or to parent their child harshly. The child who needs the love, affirmation and training of the parent, senses the disapproval and rejection and also pulls away and becomes more rebellious.

*"For You formed my inward parts; you covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvelous are Your works, and that my soul knows very well."  
-Psalm 139:13-14*

● By your behavior toward a particular child, are you demonstrating that you have come to believe that God made a mistake and gave you the wrong child?  Yes  No

● If yes, I strongly recommend you take the following steps to reconciliation:

1. Confess this to the Lord, and ask Him to forgive you for believing He made a mistake and to forgive you for rejecting or resenting the gift He gave you.

*"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."  
-1 John 1:9*

2. Ask God to fill your heart with renewed love for your child.

*"Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us."  
-Romans 5:5*

3. Go to your child and make an *age-appropriate* confession. For example, "We have not been getting along very well lately. I have been very impatient with you, and I need to apologize. I love you and am so glad to be your mom/dad..."

4. Pray with your child.

**Parenting Principle:** God did not make a mistake when He gave our children the ability to choose.

## Day 5

### ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIOR

I often hear parents tell their children, "You can get your driver's license when you act better." or "I'll let you go to your friend's house when you have a better attitude." How are our children supposed to interpret statements like that? This is parenting by emotions and feelings! We must give our kids tangible goals that can be measured, and define the behaviors that will be disciplined. We must understand that we can train *behavior*, not *attitudes*. Attitudes are a heart issue, and only God can transform the heart.

**Attitude** - A mental position or bearing as indicating action, feeling, emotion or mood.

**Behavior** - The act or manner of behaving. An action one does or fails to do (i.e. breaking a rule or not doing what is expected).

Our children's hearts are fragile. Their surroundings, life situations and family relationships affect their attitudes. Emotions such as happiness, disappointment, sorrow, anger, irritability, etc., are natural emotions.

Parents must allow their children, especially teens, to feel natural human emotions. A child's negative emotions are evidenced in their body language,

*“Be angry, and do not sin.  
Meditate within your heart  
on your bed, and be still.  
Selah”  
-Psalm 4:4*

such as slouching in a chair, crossing their arms, not looking their parent in the face, pouting, frowning or displaying angry facial expressions, etc. When parents try to govern or correct their child's feelings, emotions and attitudes, they generally only provoke them. However, when a child, out of a bad attitude, acts out in disrespectful behavior, such as slamming doors, throwing things, using disrespectful language and outright disobedience, this behavior should be disciplined.

In Psalm 4:4 we learn that we can be angry, but we must not let the emotion of anger lead us into sin. It is an act of self-control to feel anger, yet not allow our feelings to influence our behavior. Because our children are not yet mature adults, they lack self-control. By disciplining disrespectful behavior, we are training them to develop self-control. When we know that our children have experienced disappointment or had a bad day, we must understand, give them time to feel and sort out their feelings, and when their emotions subside, give them loving instructive criticism and godly instruction. As we progress through this manual, you will learn how this is done.

**Parenting Principle:** *Parents must discipline behaviors not attitudes.*

### DISOBEDIENCE VERSES DEFIANCE

Let's differentiate between disobedience and defiance.

**Disobedience** - *Purposely and/or irresponsibly breaking a rule or transgressing a boundary.*

**Defiance** - *Unwillingness to yield to authority and training Refusing to be disciplined.*

Disobedience is typical childish behavior that requires training. Defiance is refusing the parent's training and requires punishment to motivate the child to respond to the discipline.

### TRAINING OR REVENGE

**Revenge** - *To inflict injury in return for an insult.*

Revenge is wrong. Revenge is selfish. Revenge is immature and is not Christ-like! If our attitude, when implementing discipline, is motivated by vengeance, our children will know it. Does the following sound familiar?

*“I don't like you right now, so if you cross this line, you are really going to get it! I have the power to make your life miserable, and I will if you do that again!”*

When we harbor these feelings, our actions follow. Rather than training our children, we will only provoke and embitter them against us, promoting further defiant behavior.

- Have you been getting revenge toward your children rather than training them?  Yes  No

If yes, explain. \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Our motivation, while disciplining our children, should be love for them and obedience to God, not our own selfishness. Training, motivated by love, teaches our children. It is fair. It transforms and shapes our child's heart and character. It does not destroy their spirit or cause division.

Raising children is challenging and can be very difficult, especially when we are blessed with a strong-willed child. We must remember that God did not make a mistake when He gifted us with these children. If we find ourselves becoming hardened to our children, it is an indication that our intimacy with Christ is lacking. Remember that our children do not make our attitudes. They reveal them. They are God's tools to expose our character and our weaknesses.

**Note: I urge you not to move forward until you are certain that your heart and attitude are right in this area. You may want to refer back to *Our Transformation* in Lesson One, page 33.**

***Parenting Principle:*** *Our children do not make our attitudes. They reveal them.*

Go back through this lesson, and review the ten ***Parenting Principles*** you have learned. Re-write the principles below in your own words.

- 1) \_\_\_\_\_  
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- 2) \_\_\_\_\_  
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- 10) \_\_\_\_\_  
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# Day 1

# Week 6

In this section of our workbook, you will learn some practical ways to implement the training principles you have learned. Do not try to implement any changes in your home until you have completed the entire workbook.

Take a moment before beginning this very important section and pray! Pray for God's guidance, correction and encouragement. Pray that you would have a teachable heart and mind. If you are married, pray as a couple. Ask God for understanding and renewed hope to move ahead and make the necessary changes within your home. If you have been taking your children's mistakes and disobedience personally, reacting in anger or have not followed through consistently, be assured that God will help you. Old habits die hard, but with God's help, through the power of the Holy Spirit, you can change! It is God's will for you to lovingly discipline the children He has loaned to you. Remember that He loves your children more than you ever could, so trust Him.

**Note:** I want to encourage you to read this chapter even if your children are older. You may discover some root problems of resentment with a particular child or with your spouse.

## IMPLEMENTING THE TOOLS OF TRAINING FOR AGES TWO TO THREE

Parenting is a life-altering experience and can be pure joy. Those *firsts* that we experience as new parents are worth more than money could buy; the first smile, the first time they say "dada" and their first wobbly steps. When others admire our offspring, we swell up with pride. Those early days and months are precious and a calm before the storm, known as the toddler years. The toddler years, commonly referred to as the *Terrible Two's*, are often marked by spilling, throwing and destroying things, hurting themselves and often embarrassing their parents! Most toddlers say, "no" before they say, "yes." They shake their head back and forth in protest before they shake it up and down in agreement. They are selfish. No toddler willingly shares his toys. It doesn't take long for new parents to agree with God that their little tot was born with a sin nature! They are *little balls of flesh*, selfish, controlling and manipulating.

Parents must try to keep a sense of humor during this time in order to keep from losing their minds! Because children at this age will test and challenge parental authority daily, it is very important during this time to establish your authority and begin to instill boundaries.

Maybe your first child was very complacent, and you breezed through the toddler years; then your second child came along, determined to *rule the roost*. The confidence that you gained parenting your good-natured child is now being shaken. If my wife and I had three children just like our Justin, we would think we were experts on parenting. We may have self-righteously judged other parents whose children were not as well behaved. Justin was an absolute *pleaser*. Actually God was having mercy on us after our strong-willed Nicholas and blessed us with a *pleaser*. Both of my sons are wonderful gifts from God, but it was Nick that the Lord used to challenge me as a man and as a father and taught me to be more like Christ.

*"Behold, I was brought  
forth in iniquity, and in sin  
my mother conceived  
me."*

*-Psalm 51:5*

To survive and succeed during the toddler years, it is essential for parents to support each other and work as a team. A lot of men delegate the care of their young children to their wives. I know that I was guilty of this fallacy when Nick and Justin were small. I remember one Sunday morning when I was awakened to the reality of my responsibility as a father. I was involved in leadership at my church, so it was *very important* that I get to church early. I was *needed* at church. I was in *leadership* at church and had to be available in case somebody needed to be *ministered* to! On this particular Sunday morning, I had eaten my breakfast, had my coffee and sat waiting in the car for Cha Cha and the boys, who were then ages four and two. My frustration level rose as I looked at my watch for the tenth time. Finally, my family piled into the car.

*“Honey, we are going to be ten minutes late again. This is ridiculous. I hate being late.”*

My beautiful wife looked over at me with a scary gleam in her eye and said,

*“Why don’t you help?”*

Now, I know that many women may be thinking,

*“What an idiot!”*

But, honestly, it had never entered my mind. At that time in my life I assumed that my wife was 100% responsible to get the kids up, dress them, feed them and get them in the car on time so I could *minister* at church! I was in leadership, they needed me there. I looked at her, astonished at the concept, and said,

*“What do you mean?”*

It wasn’t that I was a rotten husband or was unconcerned about my wife’s feelings. I just did not know. I felt that since I was the breadwinner in the family that she was supposed to do all the little kid stuff at home! I figured when they got old enough, I would play ball and do man stuff with them. What a revelation!

God was teaching me to be a father and a loving husband. I could resist the lessons and be a fool in my own home, or I could submit to God and learn to be a minister in my home--to my own family **first!**

*“An overseer...must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity (but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?).”*

*-1 Timothy 3:2-5*

I was able to go through the wonderful learning curve of getting sons ready for church. I learned that strong-willed children, like Nick, like to make choices. On Saturday night we would get his clothes picked out for the next morning. I would lay out two or three sets of clothes, and let him choose. It was amazing. He was in control just a little bit! He loved it! I learned that Justin didn’t care what he wore to church. I could put him in any old thing, and he was happy! I learned to appreciate my wife! She loved our new routine. Instead of tension and the silent treatment in the car, and flashing an instant saintly smile when we pulled in the church parking lot, we had God’s peace and joy.

**Parenting Principle:** *Our first ministry is our family.*

**IMPORTANT POINTS TO PRACTICE WITH SMALL CHILDREN**

**Love them.** Don't break their spirits by getting angry and yelling at them. When you are angry, you exasperate your kids. Imagine somebody ten times your size with a loud booming voice, veins popping out of their neck, eyes bulging, screaming at you! Not fair! Think of it this way, do you use gasoline to put out a fire? My Nicholas did not understand why he was stubborn or why he would argue and debate over every rule I gave him. He didn't know why these thoughts came into his head. He wasn't able to articulate and understand this. God gave him a strong personality, which I needed to train. When I got angry, screamed, yelled and got bent out of shape, I was exasperating him to further bad behavior.

**Stay calm.** If you lose control, you also lose credibility. When your kids see you *freaking out*, they take the opportunity to use manipulation on you and get revenge. When you are out of control, they get out of control. When you disrespect them, they will disrespect you in return. If you have developed this habit of reacting, I suggest that you help yourself break this habit by first asking the Lord to forgive you (repent), then go to your children and ask them to forgive you (confess). Do not let another day go by! This is a very important principle. In a sense you are holding yourself accountable to God and to your children. I cannot tell you how many times I have gone to bed to settle in for a good night's sleep, only to have the Holy Spirit nudge my heart with His conviction about the way I have reacted to one of my children. Many times I have gotten out of my bed, gone down to Nick's room and humbled myself before him:

*"Hey, Nick, what you did today was wrong, but how I dealt with it was wrong. Would you forgive me?"*

Whether your child is five or fifteen, you owe them an apology, if you respond to them with ungodly behavior!

*"A wrathful man stirs up strife, but he who is slow to anger allays contention."  
-Proverbs 15:18*

● **After reviewing Matthew 5:23-24, if you have failed in this area, how will you obey God's instruction?** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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At this age, your children's cognitive skills, their understanding of life, their ability to process information and experiences, make judgments and understand concepts are limited. They do not comprehend the difference between discipline and punishment. They will understand later on as you remain consistent, calm and patiently work with them. Often when small children are corrected or disciplined, they respond with, "You don't love me." Maybe you have heard this from your child. You can explain to them that you love them, but if you scream and yell when correcting them, you may have a difficult time convincing them that this is what love looks like! Learning how to discipline, correct and train without anger and frustration is so important!

*"The heart of the righteous studies how to answer, but the mouth of the wicked pours forth evil."  
-Proverbs 15:28*

*"Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift."  
-Matthew 5:23-24*

*“Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord.”*  
-Colossians 3:20

**Teach them to obey and respect authority.** Your kids must be taught that you are the God-given authority in their lives. They need to know that you are giving them rules and discipline and punishing them when necessary, because this is what God has commanded you to do. This is why it is so important that you walk in intimate fellowship with God everyday! If you expect your children to submit to your authority, you must show them, by example, that you are in submission to God’s authority.

**In all possible situations, kid-proof your home.** You may have a complacent child who would not dream of pulling handfuls of soil out of your houseplants or playing with that expensive collectible when you’re not looking, but most small children will fall into temptation. Whether it is wandering into their older sibling’s unattended room, the danger of cleaning products under the kitchen sink, or a multitude of other potential mishaps, do your best to take preventative measures. Close doors, put safety locks on cupboards, place fragile items out of reach and clear coffee tables, if necessary. Many parents believe that their small children should have self-control, therefore, they continue to battle over these trivial issues. If the majority of the communication directed to your child is negative, *“Don’t touch that. How many times do I have to tell you to leave that alone? Don’t go in your sister’s room!”* you are both wearing yourself out and producing needless tension in the relationship.

- **List anything you need to change or items you need to re-locate in your home to end negative communication with your child.**
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**Parenting Principle:** *Lovingly establish respect for your authority.*

## **USING TIME OUT AS A DISCIPLINE**

Many parents put their children in time out by sending them to their room for a period of time. I suggest, especially with small children ages two to five, that you choose a particular chair, and use it consistently for time out. I do not suggest that you stick them in a corner and make them stare at a blank wall. That is demeaning and does not teach or train them. The principle of discipline is not for parents to choose methods that their kids hate, but methods by which their children are willing to yield. Humiliation and frustration are not motivators to obedience.

Purchase an inexpensive kitchen timer. Set the timer according to the child’s age. For example, three minutes for a three year old, four minutes for a four year old and so on. You need to put some conditions on this discipline. For example, the child is not allowed to move the chair across the floor, and their buttocks must stay in the chair at all times. Many children, especially if they are strong-willed, want to find a way to obey you their own way, which may mean scooting the chair across the floor, or squirming in the chair and turning upside down, etc. It makes them feel like they are winning or are in control! Their thought process is something like this,

*“I’ve got to win. I’ve got to win. I’ve got to win. How can I win? I can’t get out of this chair, or I’ll get spanked, so I’ll stand up in the chair. She gets really mad if I scrape the chair across the floor or rock back and forth and make a lot of noise!”*

The conditions are,

*“If you get out of the chair, your bottom gets out of the chair, or the chair scoots, you get one swat on your bottom, and the timer starts over.”*

I have had moms tell me,

*“I had to do that nine times this week.”*

I tell them,

*“Good. Remain consistent. I guarantee you that within a week, it will be down to four or five times, then two or three times, and eventually your child will learn!”*

Don’t get angry, disgusted, emotional or take it personally if you have to repeat the discipline over and over. Remain calm and repeat the discipline. Three minutes is a long time for an antsy three year old to sit still. Using a kitchen timer gives the child something to focus on; watching the timer move, listening to the ticking and anticipating the ringer going off. Remember that you are training. You want to make it as easy as possible for your children to submit to the discipline.

### **EXAMPLES OF APPROPRIATE RULES FOR CHILDREN AGES ONE TO THREE:**

#### **Rule #1 – Obey parents.**

**Discipline (for disobedience) – Time out.**

#### **Rule #2 – Respect one another at all times.**

**Discipline (for disrespect) – Time out.**

**Example:** If your child screams at you for telling them *no* or for not allowing them to do something, you need to discipline this behavior. If under the age of two, a spanking would be appropriate (See *Principles For The Use Of Spanking*, page 131). If your child is two years or older, give them a time out in a chair for two minutes. You must explain to them that the time out is the discipline for showing disrespect toward you by screaming at you. If they refuse the discipline by either not getting in the chair or by leaving before the timer goes off, they are asking for the punishment, which is a spanking. If they choose the spanking due to their defiant behavior, make sure you put them back in the chair after the spanking and start the timer over. At first this can be a challenge, but be consistent and follow through. In time your child will respond to your training.

There are times when you will have no other choice, but to give your child an ultimatum. For example, if you are late for an appointment, your child refuses to get out of the bathtub and you do not have time to give them a time out, you can tell them, *“If you don’t get out now, you will get a spanking.”*

**Rule #3 – No biting (if biting is a problem).  
Discipline (for disobedience) – Time out.**

**Rule #4 – No hitting.  
Discipline (for disobedience) – Time out.**

## Day 2

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### DEALING WITH DEFIANT BEHAVIOR

**Defiance** - *Provoking to combat, a challenge or declaration of hostility, a state of opposition, disposition to resist, or contempt of opposition.*

Many parents overlook defiance in small children, deluded into believing that,

*“Oh, he is only three. He will outgrow it. It will be much easier when he turns four.”*

Wrong! The older a child gets and the longer a parent waits to establish their authority over that child, the harder it gets. Children don't outgrow defiant behavior. In fact, as children mature, their manipulative skills and self-will sharpen and get stronger. It is easier to break a willful toddler than a willful teenager!

This is why God has instructed parents to train up their children while they are young! Some small children will respond to a spanking with,

*“That didn't hurt!”*

Telling you the spanking did not hurt is defying your discipline and denying your authority. Let me give you a good response to that challenge.

*“Oh, it didn't. Would you like another spanking?”*

If they do not answer you, calmly give them another spanking. Then ask,

*“Do you have anything to say now?”*

If they do not answer you, do not take this as disrespect or defiance. This exercise ends when the toddler submits to and accepts your authority without verbal defiance to your question. Parents, this is obedience to God's instruction to us in Proverbs 23:13-14:

*“Do not withhold correction from a child, for if you beat him with a rod, he will not die. You shall beat him with a rod, and deliver his soul from hell.”*

When children are allowed to rebel against their parents, the first authority figures in their lives, it sets them up to live in rebellion to all authority, including God, their ultimate authority! The opposite is also true. When children learn to respect the words and rules of their parents at a young age, they learn to deny themselves, they learn that there is absolute right and wrong, and they learn to yield to authority, which makes it easier to submit to God. You must remember that children ages fourteen to eighteen months do not understand the meaning of the word *respect*. You are teaching them what this word means as you lovingly discipline them.

*“Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.”  
-Proverbs 22:6*

*“Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves.”  
-Romans 13:1-2*

*“Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.”  
-Ephesians 6:1*

**Parenting Principle:** *Youthful defiance must be disciplined.*

## POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT

Positive reinforcement is a system of rewards for good behavior using charts, graphs, stars, points and so on as an incentive. When children are *good*, they get rewarded, when they are not so good, they get nothing. The theory is that the expectation of a reward will motivate them to be good.

In *Loving Communication*, we learned that the most powerful motivator and the most effective method of developing self-worth is love. We are to praise them for their strengths, encourage them in their weaknesses, and affirm our children on an ongoing basis, because they are precious gifts from God. Good behavior is expected, not rewarded. Our love for them, and how we demonstrate that love, should not change because of their failures or mistakes.

As our children mature, our attitude toward their failures should be similar to when they first began to walk. As proud parents, we helped them, cheered them on, picked them up when they fell and encouraged them to keep trying. A loving parent would never tell a stumbling toddler,

*“You idiot. Get up. You’re making me look like a bad parent. The kid next door walked two months before you. What’s wrong with you?”*

When our little ones were learning to walk, we clearly understood that the most powerful way to motivate them with was with loving communication. Our words encouraged and inspired them to keep trying and affirmed their value to us.

*“Come on, you can do it. Let me hold your hand. You’re doing great! Mommy is so proud of you.”*

As our children grow and mature, try and fail, or simply make mistakes, this same loving communication is the most effective way to motivate them. Gold stars, charts and *brownie points* can never motivate a child like loving communication combined with discipline.

I’m not saying that positive reinforcement is always wrong. Used in the right way, it can be effective. A mother recently asked for advice on her three year old who was still wetting his pants. I suggested that she motivate him to stop his play and go to the restroom by putting a sucker in the restroom down low enough for him to see it, but too high for him to reach it. Every time he used the bathroom instead of his pants, give him a sucker. Obviously, in time, you stop rewarding him for good hygiene! This is a wonderful way to get the child’s attention and motivate them to self-control.

If your child is struggling academically, I suggest that you put together a plan with a short-term, practical goal. For example,

*“If you work really hard on this subject, and bring up that grade, at the end of the quarter I’ll take you to Disneyland.”*

Positive reinforcement used sparingly for specific goals with your children are fine, but do not make this your primary source of discipline. If you use this as your sole method to train your children, as they get older, they will up the ante! If all you have are charts and stars, your child will someday look you eye to eye and say,

*“I don’t want it. I don’t want treats, rewards, or... I’m not going to do my chores. I’m not going to be good. I don’t care about points.”*

Then what will you do? I have worked with many parents who brought up their children on this system, and when they reached nine or ten years old, they found it did not work anymore! Their children had been raised to believe that there were no absolutes, that everything was negotiable and that they didn’t have to do anything unless they got rewarded or paid for it.

***Parenting Principle:*** *Good behavior is expected, not rewarded.*

### COUNTING DOES NOT COUNT

I don’t know who first conceived the idea of parents *counting down* to get their children to obey, but it is not effective, and it certainly is not biblical. Counting encourages manipulation and disrespect toward parents. Because we all possess a fallen sin nature, we resist being told what to do. By nature, we oppose authority. Remember when you were a child and someone older than you made you do something that you did not want to do? The typical childish response is to want to get revenge. If you use counting, you are providing your child with an opportunity to get childish revenge against you for exercising authority over them.

Let’s look at a possible scenario of a mother who uses counting as a method of discipline to control her *strong-willed* three-year-old son:

While visiting a neighbor, the young boy eyeballs and reaches for a breakable vase. The mother knows her son’s inquisitive nature and senses that a battle of wills is imminent. She musters up courage and uses an authoritative, but calm, voice and says,

*“Don’t touch that or you’ll break it.”*

The child, seeing that his mother is distracted in conversation, seizes the opportunity to exert his power and embarks on a showdown! He moves in closer...The mother, fearing an embarrassing scene, attempts to intimidate her child by raising her voice and threatens,

*“You better not touch that. Do you want a spanking?”*

Isn’t that a genuinely foolish question? I wonder how many children turn to their parents and respond in the positive? Knowing the routine, the boy inches his chubby little hand closer to the forbidden object. Only moments earlier, the mother was a pleasant, attractive woman, but now frustration has caused her face to flush red and slightly twisted, small veins are bulging on her neck, and the tone of her voice has reached a piercing crescendo.

*"I told you to get away from there. Do you hear me! I'm going to count... 1...2...2 ½ ...2 ¾ ...3!"*

As the frazzled mother reaches the magic number three, her son retreats and walks away, content that for a few brief moment, he had controlled the situation, and, more importantly, controlled his mother!

The boy really did not care about the vase; he simply wanted to manipulate his mother. He succeeded to get her upset and made her count to three, getting revenge against her for ignoring him or telling him what to do! It was a small victory, but when you are three feet tall, it doesn't take much!

I had to learn this lesson when Nick was small. It was so wonderful when I finally grasped this principle and could say, "No" to my son with a smile on my face, and then follow through. He learned that I meant what I said. I didn't have to be angry toward him to get him to respond. I came to understand that I had taught him to manipulate me through my lack of parenting skills. I was exasperating him to further bad habits. He was getting revenge against me, which fed his ego, pride and controlling personality. I had to change.

"No!", "Don't!", and "Stop!" are not negative statements.

● Are you a counter?  Yes  No

If yes, what has this illustration taught you about your child?

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**Parenting Principle:** *If we are not direct in our training, we teach our children that everything in life is negotiable.*

**PRINCIPLES FOR THE USE OF SPANKING:  
USING A MEASURED AMOUNT OF PAIN FOR PUNISHMENT**

**Note:** If you have been court mandated to not use corporal punishment (spanking) in your home, (Romans 13:1) I suggest that you use time out, restriction and withholding privileges. If you have a strong-willed, defiant child between the ages of two and six who will not accept these methods of discipline, and acts out with uncontrolled aggression, I suggest that you constrain the child on your lap with your arms and legs wrapped around them in a loving and firm way. Hold them until they accept the discipline by calming down and stop thrashing or screaming.

**1. Choose ahead of time what defiant behavior will be punished with a spanking.**

If you are married, husband and wife should discuss when and how to spank your child. For example, two swats on their bottom if they refuse a time out or refuse to obey your request in a time crunch when you would have otherwise used a time out.

*"... let your 'Yes,' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No,' lest you fall into judgment."  
-James 5:12*

*"Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves."  
-Romans 13:1-2*

*"No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it."*  
-Hebrews 12:11  
(NIV)

## 2. Spank your child in love.

For punishment to be effective, it must be in the context of a loving relationship. If you are screaming, yelling, grabbing your child by the arm and smacking wherever you can get an opening, you are not spanking in love! Your child knows when you are spanking in anger or revenge and not in love. Unfortunately, parents are human, and sometimes our children do make us angry, especially if we are correcting them for the same behavior for the hundredth time! *When this occurs, take a break and calm yourself down before punishing your child!* Respond calmly, do not react in haste.

## 3. Spank your child in private, away from brothers and sisters or other adults.

One of the most demeaning things parents can do is to spank their children in the presence of others. Remember that we spank to punish rebellion, not to embarrass, humiliate or break our children's spirit. Respect your child and spank in private.

## 4. Be consistent.

If you say you are going to spank your child for a certain behavior, make sure you always spank for that behavior. Don't let them talk you out of it with, *"Sorry, sorry, sorry. I love you. I won't do it again..."* Your children need to learn that you are true to your word, therefore, follow through!

## 5. Talk with your child in a firm but loving voice.

Explain to them that they are being punished because they refused the discipline.

## 6. Affirm your love after punishment.

Some kids don't want you to touch them right away after a spanking. They want to pout. Let them. I have had moms tell me,

*"I had to spank him twice. Once for the punishment, then again because he showed disrespect by not letting me hug him after the first spanking!"*

In training, we must remember that we govern our children's behavior, not their emotions. If your child needs some time after a spanking to let his emotions subside, give him some time. When Nick was small, it would sometimes take him hours to warm up to me after I had punished him. He would eventually come and lay down or sit down within my reach. It was his signal to me that he was ready. I would reach over to him and put my hand on his shoulder or rub his head to reassure him of my unchanging love for him. Justin, on the other hand, was in my lap instantly after being disciplined or punished. My two boys were completely different, and I had to adjust to them.

Some parents give their kids emotional consequences along with the discipline or punishment, *taking their mistakes personally*, carrying grudges and harboring resentment toward them. When our children break a rule or disobey, are disciplined and punished (if they are unwilling to accept the discipline), it is over! The break in the relationship due to rebellion is mended, fellowship restored, and the slate is clean!

**7. Spank your children as soon as possible after an act of defiance. Use the opportunity to *motivate* your child to accept the training.**

Immediately use the opportunity to train your child to do what is right. If you are in a situation that requires a spanking, and you can spank, don't say, "*later*" or "*tomorrow*." In today's society, if you spank your child in a public place, you are taking the risk of somebody contesting your right to spank your child or even reporting you to Child Protective Services. *It is legal to spank your child, if you spank your child properly.* You cannot spank in anger, leave marks or spank in any area besides the buttocks. There is a reason why God provided us with a padded behind!

*"Let all things be done decently and in order."  
-1 Corinthians 14:40*

**8. Never spank your child in anger or when you are not in control of your emotions.**

If you are out of control, you will spank too hard. The goal is not to spank as hard as you can to get your child to cry and scream as hard as they can! When Nicholas had to be spanked when he was small, he would usually just take it, offering neither emotion nor tears. If I was at all angry or *in the flesh* at the time, I wanted some kind of reaction from him. It is amazing what ungodly thoughts fly through our minds when our flesh is in control! "*I've got to get this little kid to cry, or it's not working!*"

*"...a rod is for the back of him who is devoid of understanding."  
-Proverbs 10:13*

Spanking is not for the purpose of making them cry. Spanking is punishment as a result of our child not accepting the discipline when they have broken a rule. We need to calmly and consistently follow through, give them the measured amount of pain, and it is over!

*" 'As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten...'"  
-Revelation 3:19*

**9. Never spank your child in a way that shows disrespect.**

Appropriate, effective spanking does not require pulling down your child's pants. I've had parents say,

*"I make them pull down their pants and bend over my knee."*

This is disrespectful and demeaning to your child. Remember that the purpose of spanking is not to inflict as much pain as possible!

**10. Never spank your child more than necessary.**

Remember to use a measured amount of pain. Determine ahead of time if you will give them one or two swats, then follow through. Don't keep swatting until you finally hear them cry. Don't *react* to a situation, instead *respond* according to your predetermined plan. If your child tells you that it doesn't hurt, ask them if they want another spanking. If they do not answer you, calmly give them another spanking. Don't spank them harder or longer, but repeat the same spanking, then calmly ask them if have anything to say now. If they do not answer you, do not take this as disrespect or defiance. The exercise ends when the child submits to and accepts your authority without verbal defiance to your question. Some strong-willed kids will continue to challenge you to a few more spankings, but most understand the concept by this point.

*"But the fruit of the Spirit is...self-control..."  
-Galatians 5:22-23*

“Chasten your son while there is hope, and do not set your heart on his destruction.”  
-Proverbs 19:18

“Do not withhold discipline from a child; if you punish him with the rod, he will not die. Punish him with the rod and save his soul from death.”  
-Proverbs 23:13-14 (NIV)

**11. Never spank your child for childishness or messiness.**

Spanking should only be used for willful disobedience or as punishment if they refuse a discipline. You’ve heard the old saying, “Don’t cry over spilled milk.” I will add, “Don’t spank over spilled milk!” Spanking a child for behaving like a child is unfair and will only provoke and embitter them.

**12. Never allow your child to manipulate you.**

If they can get away with it, children will use emotional manipulation on their parents. If your child tries to divert a deserved spanking by accusing you of not loving them, by apologizing profusely, “sorry, sorry, sorry,” or vowing to “never do that again,” don’t fall for it! This is manipulation. If you give in to this drama, you will train them in the fine art of manipulation, which they will use against you again and again!

**13. Never allow excessive crying, screaming or yelling during or after a spanking.**

Don’t accept your child going berserk when you spank them. This is also a form of manipulation. Children reason that if they scream and yell, especially when other people are within earshot, you will either backdown or be intimidated. If your child has already developed this habit, don’t let it continue. Explain to them that this is no longer acceptable, and that if they choose to continue, there will be additional discipline. Take the child to their bedroom, explaining to them that it is okay for them to be angry, but their acting out on their anger is not okay and requires that they have a time out for a predetermined period of time. The time begins after they have quit screaming.

A child guilty of wrong should be chastened in his early years while he is still impressionable. To neglect needed discipline contributes to the danger of natural consequences that accompany a child’s foolish behavior.

**Parenting Principle:** *Spanking is an effective punishment when administered with love and self-control.*

● Take the thirteen *Principles for the Use of Spanking* and using the space below, re-write each principle in your own words:

- 1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 4. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_  
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12. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
13. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Day 3 \_\_\_\_\_

### IMPLEMENTING THE TOOLS OF TRAINING FOR AGES FOUR TO EIGHT

During this time the child's personality is beginning to develop and come out. All children are different. Their temperaments and personalities are not the same, so do not compare them. During this period they are beginning to understand the difference between discipline and punishment. Usually by the time girls are five or six, they have a keen understanding of the concept. God programmed boys' cognitive skills a little slower. Parents, be patient with your sons during these years.

This is a time to begin implementing related discipline. As an example, most kids at this age have a bicycle, which provides parents with a wonderful training opportunity.

The rule is,

*"You can ride your bike within these clearly defined boundaries. You may not go beyond these boundaries."*

If their foolish little eyes look beyond the boundaries, and their foolish little mind directs their foolish little feet to follow their foolish little eyes, and they go outside the defined boundaries, the discipline is that they lose their bike privileges for two days.

Don't punish them with a spanking or time out for their disobedience, but give them a discipline *related* to the behavior. Two days later when their discipline is fulfilled, remind them of the boundary, and give them their bike back. Proud to have their wheels again, your child will think twice before exceeding the boundary. Granted, most kids require this lesson to be repeated. Depending on their temperament, they may spend the next few years getting this down. Whenever possible, the discipline should be *related* and always *defined* for the child.

Many parents make the mistake of grounding or putting their child on restriction for everything. We'll talk about restriction in the section on teenagers. Restriction is effective when used properly, but beware of using it to get revenge and make your child's life miserable because they have disobeyed you.

### **EXAMPLES OF APPROPRIATE RULES FOR CHILDREN AGES FOUR TO EIGHT:**

#### **Rule #1 – Obey parents.**

**Discipline– Time out (5-8 minutes).**

#### **Rule #2 – Respect one another at all times.**

**Discipline– Time out (5-8 minutes).**

Time out is a good discipline when this rule is broken. Set the kitchen timer the number of minutes based on the child's age. If the child refuses or gets out of the chair before the timer goes off, they are asking for the punishment. The timer starts over.

#### **Rule #3 – No physical fighting or verbal arguing with siblings.**

**Discipline - Time out (5-8 minutes).**

Let's talk about this rule. This is a common problem in many families. Parents, there is a remedy. You don't have to go out of your mind over this or continue to act as jury and judge trying to figure out, "*who started it*" or who said what to whom! Unless you actually see one child with a bat in his hand and the other child with a knot on his head, it's almost impossible to get the real facts. Don't let the kids pull you into their mess; instead, go get the kitchen timer. Set the timer for fifteen minutes, then announce,

*"The first one to speak to the other in the next 15 minutes is going to be the one to get the discipline."*

Don't monitor them, but walk into another room. The first child who speaks to the other, tattles on the other for talking, making faces at him, sticking his tongue out at him or makes any other noise has to do the discipline. This is a wonderful little tool to put an end to childish sibling squabbling and parent manipulation! Remember to use a timer!

### **THE DISCIPLINE BOX**

To make a Discipline Box, take an ordinary box no bigger than a shoebox. Decorate it, write your child's name on it, label it *Discipline* Box or leave it plain. Write individual household and/or outdoor chores on small pieces of paper, fold the papers and place them inside the Box. Make sure the chores are age-appropriate and can be completed in three to fifteen minutes. In other words, if your child is seven years old, *wash the car* is not an appropriate discipline (I would not have wanted my seven year old to wash my car!).

Used correctly, the Box can take care of 90% of your discipline issues. When your child breaks a written rule or disobeys, the discipline is to pull a chore from the Box. When they pull the discipline, they do the chore immediately, and that chore goes back into the Box to be pulled again. It is completely random and, used correctly, removes potential for disciplining by feelings or emotions. Do not give your child the option to say,

*“I don’t want to do that one. Let me pull another one!”*

If the discipline is not appropriate for that moment, you, as the parent, have the option to instruct your child to pull a different one. For example, if the chore is *sweep the patio*, and it is dark or pouring down rain, they need to pull another discipline. Or, if they pull *vacuum the living room*, and that discipline was already pulled that day, have them re-pull. If the child broke a rule at bedtime, they do their discipline when they come home from school the next day. They have no privileges until they have completed the discipline. Believe it or not, the Discipline Box can actually be fun! Nick and Justin were six and eight years old when they got a Discipline Box. Because my sons had Boxes, my little Katie asked for her own when she was six years old. She associated The Box with *big-ness*! Katie got her own Box with *Katie-appropriate discipline chores* inside.

Depending on your child’s maturity level and cognitive skills, you usually want to introduce the Discipline Box between the ages of five and seven years old. I suggest you keep the Box someplace where your kids can’t get to it. I’ve had parents tell me that their child’s Discipline Box had mysteriously disappeared! We had a situation in our home where Nick pulled out of the Box, *clean all the toilets in the house*. I hadn’t put that in the Box. I asked my wife and she hadn’t put it in the Box either. I knew something was amiss, so I dumped out all the disciplines from the Box and found another paper that read, *do all of Justin’s chores*. That was kind of like writing graffiti on a wall, then signing your name! Justin rarely had to pull from the Box, and he decided to have a little fun with his brother!

Above all, keep a positive and encouraging attitude toward your children. If your child is angry while doing their discipline, which is often the case, walk away and let them work through their emotions. If their anger causes them to do a poor job, don’t yell, lecture or berate them, and don’t let them get away with it. Instead, calmly tell them that they have not completed their discipline, that their work is unacceptable and that they must go back and do it properly. If you use pulling weeds as a discipline, I suggest that instead of the discipline being, *weed for twenty minutes*, that you designate an area to be weeded. This way, you won’t find your son or daughter standing around for eighteen minutes and end up pulling two weeds! They can clear the designated area in ten minutes, or ten hours. It’s up to them!

The Discipline Box is a tool that, used properly, will aid in training your children to maturity while teaching them to obey rules and stay within defined boundaries. They will also learn that there are immediate consequences for their actions. An added bonus is that they will also learn how to work! Everybody benefits. I once told my son Nick that by the time he was grown, he would be the best weed-puller in the world! As you enforce the use of the Box calmly and

consistently, your child will learn that as they use self-control in their words and actions, they have freedom, and when they don't, they have work. Make sure that your children understand that this is the purpose of The Box and its contents.

### THE DISCIPLINE LIST

If you have teenagers, you can adapt the Discipline Box concept using a list rather than a box. Older kids may perceive the Box as childish and accept the List easier. Make a list of chores and number them. The List works just like the Box except, instead of pulling a discipline from a box, they do the next chore on the List. As with the Box, if the next item on the List is not practical for them to do at that time, simply skip it and go on to the next appropriate chore. Check off each chore when it has been completed. When you finish the List, just start over again from the top.

#### Discipline Box or List Suggestions:

- Vacuum a particular room
- Clean all mirrors in the bathrooms
- Clean toilets in all bathrooms
- Dust living room
- Wash four windows, inside and out
- Clean out refrigerator
- Sweep garage
- Wash car
- Vacuum inside of car
- Clean-up back yard – (dog)
- Mow back yard
- Pull weeds in front flower bed
- Water back yard – 20 minutes
- Water front yard – 20 minutes

## Day 4

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### IMPLEMENTING THE TOOLS OF TRAINING FOR AGES NINE TO TWELVE

If the rules and discipline, the foundation of the training, has been laid during the first nine years, the transition into adolescence will be smoother. It is a good idea to plan to wean yourself off of spanking your child by the time they are twelve. Some strong-willed children absolutely need to be spanked in order to get them to bend, but in most cases, by the time a child reaches twelve or thirteen, spanking should not be used as punishment. A good rule of thumb for moms is that they stop using spanking for punishment by the time their child is ten. When a child refuses the discipline from mom while dad is away from the home, it is alright for mom to say,

*“When your dad gets home...”*

I have found that work is one of the most effective tools for punishment outside of spanking. I suggest half-hour increments. I will be giving you some suggestions for specific work-related discipline and punishment as we move through this lesson.

This is also a time to allow your child to be trained by life's *natural consequences*. Let me explain by example. Let's say that you have a son or daughter who continually forgets to take their lunch to school, which forces them to call mom to leave work, run home, get their lunch and take it to them. Mom, you can lecture them, let them know how irresponsible they are being and that your boss is getting upset with you, but as long as you are willing to cater to their irresponsibility, it will continue. You need to motivate your child to take responsibility. In this scenario, the best way to motivate them is to simply let them go hungry! This is not cruel and unusual punishment. It is *natural consequences*. If your child goes hungry for a day or two, or four or five, they will eventually learn to remember their lunch before heading out the door in the morning.

Natural consequences are a great teacher! I had one mom tell me that she would give her son lunch money at the beginning of the week for the entire week, but he kept loaning money to his friends, so he was broke before the week was over. Again, this mom would get telephone calls at work from her hungry son, wanting her to bring him lunch money. I told her,

*"Quit leaving work. You're not teaching him anything. Let him go hungry."*

She took my counsel, but called me two weeks later.

*"It's not working. Now he keeps borrowing money from his friends. He now owes some kid at school \$20.00, who told my son that if he doesn't pay him back, he will beat him up."*

I told her to either let her son get beaten up or give him \$20.00 worth of work around the house, and let him earn the money he owed. Obviously chores were the better of the two choices! The worse thing she could have done was to give her son the money. He would have learned nothing about responsibility!

### **EXAMPLES OF APPROPRIATE RULES FOR CHILDREN AGES NINE TO TWELVE:**

**Rule #1 – Obey Parents.**

**Discipline– Draw from Discipline Box.**

**Rule #2 – Respect one another at all times.**

**Discipline– Draw from Discipline Box.**

**Rule #3 – Be ready for school by 7:30 a.m.**

**Discipline– Be awakened at 5:00 a.m. the following morning or go to bed one half hour earlier that night.**

A source of frustration in many households is the morning routine--getting kids up, dressed, fed and ready to walk out the door on time for school. The common scenario is for moms to charge in their child's room three or four times saying things like,

*"It's time to get up. If you don't get out of that bed right now, you'll go to bed at 7:00 tonight. You're going to be late for school again. You're going to make me late for work. Who's going to drag you out of bed when you are in college?"*

Typically, this fiasco is followed by more negative words and nagging, then complete silence all the way to school where mom tears into the parking lot, child gets out of the car and slams the door without looking back.

Let me make a suggestion. If your kids are eight years and older, buy them their own alarm clocks, teach them how to use them and begin making them responsible to get out of bed and be ready for school on time each morning. Let them know that five minutes after their alarm goes off, you will come into their room with a large glass of cold water. If they are still in the bed when you come in, you will help them get out of bed by pouring the glass of water on them. Because their bed is wet, they have to change their sheets, then they will go to bed a half-hour earlier that night.

Some people might feel that beginning their child's day dousing them with a cold glass of water is harsh. On the contrary, beginning a child's day with negative communication, nagging, lecturing and anger does far more to erode the parent/child relationship. My son Justin hated to get up in the morning. He would get up, turn off his alarm and then crawl back into bed. Justin's warm and cozy little bed became a *bad* place. I gave new meaning to the term waterbed! Flying out of bed, removing his sheets, putting them in the dryer, then remaking his bed was a discipline he determined he did not want to pay for five minutes in bed. I only had to do that twice. Mornings at my house are a wonderful time now. When I drop my son off at school, we both have smiles on our faces and kind parting words.

### **ADDITIONAL METHODS OF PUNISHMENT**

As we saw earlier in this chapter, punishment is *a measured amount of pain to motivate or the infliction of a penalty*. Because they are almost adults, your adolescents may go through periods where they feel they are too old for your rules and discipline and may test your structure. Obviously, by the time your child is a teenager, the years of time outs and spankings to motivate them are over. Most parents of teens resort to restriction and taking away privileges as the primary methods of discipline and punishment. Restriction or Shut Down and Saturday Work, used appropriately as a punishment, can produce positive results.

#### **SHUT DOWN**

If your child refuses the discipline, the punishment I suggest you use is Shut Down. Shut Down means that your child has no privileges: no television, telephone, music or friends over, and may include being confined to their bedroom. Their only freedoms will be to go to school or church, eat meals and use the restroom. This continues until they are willing to accept the discipline. Shut Down is total restriction and can last for five minutes or five days, which will depend on the child's willingness to yield to your training. Don't yell, nag, judge or lecture them! Don't go into their room and ask them if they have had enough yet! They will eventually come to their senses, emerge from their room and accept the discipline, having learned a wonderful lesson!

#### **SATURDAY WORK**

Saturday Work is an effective punishment when you have a child who refuses to accept the authority left in charge (mother, step-parent, grandparent, babysitter or guardian). For example, when Nick turned fourteen years old, he decided he was too old to obey his mom. When he disobeyed her

and refused the discipline, he willingly accepted Shut Down and went to his room. When this became a common occurrence, my wife and I discussed the problem and decided that Nick would have to draw two disciplines from The Box when I came home and one-half hour of Saturday Work per incident. This eventually helped my son yield to his mother's authority in my absence.

If you have a child who repeatedly neglects to do their assigned chores when you are not present, you can add one-half hour increments of Saturday Work over and above the predetermined discipline.

Let me make it clear that the punishment is not one-half hour of work, but one-half hour *worth* of work. Determine a job that should take one-half hour, and require them to do that job. If they have a bad attitude and choose to drag the work out for three hours, let them! The teen is on Shut Down until the work is completed.

## Day 5

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### IMPLEMENTING THE TOOLS OF TRAINING FOR AGES THIRTEEN TO EIGHTEEN

Kids go through a multitude of changes between the ages of thirteen and eighteen. This season of change is called *puberty*. Puberty is a period of two to four years when children gradually change and become young adults. This wonderful transformation can be frightening for them and frustrating for us! Parents, hang on tight. This could be a bumpy ride!

Puberty is also a time when kids go through a real growth spurt. As their physical strength increases, the shape of their body begins to look more like that of an adult. Your son's voice will begin to change. Ironically, before they acquire a deep *manly* voice, like dad, they go through a *squeaky* period where they sound more like mom, especially over the telephone! Your daughter will experience the embarrassment and excitement of getting their first bra. This can be a difficult time for both parent and teen. Parents must remember that they are the adults and need to have patience and compassion with their maturing child!

Emotionally they are becoming more independent. They have a strong desire to be accepted by their peers and begin to pursue close friendships. They are developing their sexuality and are much more aware of the opposite sex. In our sex-obsessed society, our kids are exposed to many temptations, pressures and mixed messages about sex. This is why it is so important that home be a place where sexual purity and morality is the standard. It is also very important that parents openly discuss sex with their children. They need to hear the truth and develop healthy attitudes about sex, which they can only get from you. If you don't answer their questions and satisfy their curiosity, they will get their information or *misinformation* from their friends!

**Note:** To assist you in setting healthy boundaries for your child with opposite sex friends, refer to our tape series, *What Is Teen Dating Anyway? Biblical Principles for Opposite Sex Friends*.

*"To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven..."*  
-Ecclesiastes 3:1

Cognitively, they begin to think abstractly and symbolically, which means in a nutshell, that they begin to think a lot like we think! When they perceive that something is not right, they have the ability to look at the situation with some clear understanding. They will be able to see another person's point of view. Teens commonly, but not always, test the structure and the values they were raised on.

Your children have been observing and absorbing your words and actions for their entire lives. They know you very well. Be warned that if there is any division in your management style, any contradictions in your rules, or any hypocrisy, your pubescent teen will surely point it out!

As our children begin to progress toward adolescence (girls usually begin puberty at ages eleven to thirteen, and boys at ages twelve to fifteen), we should move away from spanking and onto different methods of punishment. I have found in most cases that spanking older children does more harm than good by provoking and humiliating them. The Discipline Box or List is a powerful tool for training children, ages six to seventeen. Work and/or total restriction is a great motivator (punishment) to get an adolescent to accept discipline.

They become more goal-oriented, having a desire to get on with their lives and do something. They can become antsy, impatient and anxious. This is why parents need to be directing their adolescents in positive directions, keeping them focused on the goals of maturity. The changes that teens go through do not happen by accident. This is a part of God's perfect design. Our children did not ask for puberty. Many kids have a very difficult time accepting these changes, which is why parents need to educate themselves and help their children understand and get through these changes. Think of it this way, each one of these changes (physical, emotional and cognitive) are tools that God has provided them in order to become mature adults.

This is a time to begin to allow them more freedom and independence. Respect their privacy, yet without compromise. Don't snoop in your child's room just for the sake of snooping! Your sons and daughters need to know that you see them as *young adults*, not children! One of the ways to do this is by making their thirteenth birthday a very special event. Spend time with your child discussing the changes they are facing. Let them know that you love them by taking every opportunity to reaffirm your love for them and their value to you. Let them know that you are on their team, and that you will be there to support them and to help them through this time.

**Note:** For further insight on relating to your adolescent, refer to our tape series *Understanding Teens*.

Our adolescent kids may begin to *look* like adults, but they are not yet mature adults. Many parents make the mistake of pulling back from the training process when their kids become teenagers. You can stop training when they become responsible, mature adults or when they leave your home, whichever comes first. You need to make this clear to them. Remember that you are *training* them, not *controlling* them.

One of the most important areas of training is the area of *respect*. Parents must first model respect, then, without compromise, expect respect from their young adult children. Kids that have been raised in a home where family members show mutual respect for one another will generally become respectful teens and adults. However, even in the best of environments, kids will test to see how far they can push their parents. You must always keep in mind that you are the God-ordained authority in your home. You should never allow your kids to be *sarcastic, disrespectful or mouthy*, saying things like, “*Get out of my room!*” or be bossy or rude to their siblings.

I have counseled with many parents whose teens, as young as thirteen, *tell* their parents what they are going to do instead of *asking* for their permission. Once parents have broadened the boundary and given their kids freedom to come and go and simply *inform* them, it is very hard to regain that ground! It happens gradually. Parents beware! Freedom is the name of the game for teens. Many of their friends have little rules and participation from their parents, and your kids may try to push you into letting go too soon. Teenagers are notorious for making statements like,

“*You don’t trust me!*”

This is a form of manipulation and pressuring you through guilt. Knowing and approving of where your kids are going, who they are spending time with, and exercising the authority over them to tell them, ‘*no*,’ is not a trust issue! It is called loving parenting!

Inspired by the tragic Columbine killings, two school administrators from Southern California took leave from their jobs and set out on an eleven thousand mile journey across America in the summer of 1999 to interview teens, ages thirteen to nineteen in search of answers to the question, “*Why are kids killing kids?*” The findings of the “Children’s Crusade” were not what most people might have expected. What most of the kids told them is this:

- Kids are killing kids because their parents have abandoned them; sometimes physically, sometimes emotionally.
- Kids are killing kids because adults aren’t listening and paying enough attention to them.
- Kids are killing kids because they’ve been given too much freedom and not enough discipline.
- Kids are killing kids because the stress and the pressure at school and from their peers can be overwhelming.

We want to blame the problems with youth today on the influences of television, the movie or music industry, video games or peer pressure. Parents, we are the most influential force in our children’s lives. They cannot always articulate this, mainly because of the stress and pressure at school and from their peers, but they know that we love and care about them when we give them boundaries and take the time to stay involved in their lives.

Another common issue for parents of teens is curfew. Teenagers love to be busy, going, doing, participating in sports, school and youth group activities, part-time jobs and socializing with their friends. There is nothing wrong with this. In fact, it is good for them to interact with their peers, build healthy friendships

and participate in positive activities. As adults, we wish we had *half* of their energy! However, if their social life begins to dominate them, and their friends become *everything* to them, leaving little or no time for home and family interaction, it is unhealthy.

I know of many teens who have a curfew of eight o'clock on school nights and ten or eleven o'clock on weekends. Parents often feel pressured by their kids to establish these curfews, because "*all my friends get to stay out.*" Once you begin to allow them to spend the majority of their waking hours outside of the home, it is very difficult or impossible to bring them back into the family circle. Don't let this happen! These final years, before our kids reach adulthood, are extremely important training years. If you only see your teens in passing at the front door, you have lost your ability to influence and teach them.

Obviously, if the atmosphere of your home is tense or unloving, and if your relationship with your teen is strained, they are going to do anything and go anywhere just to avoid you. If mom has perfected *the fine art of nagging*, or dad is always poised and prepared with a lecture on responsibility, home will become nothing more than a pit stop to eat, sleep and do their laundry!

I recommend that you pick two or three nights a week when they can enjoy activities away from the home (youth group or other healthy, positive activities). Let me clarify that you should always know exactly where they are going, who they are with and when they will be home. In addition to this being loving parenting, it is also the Law. You are legally responsible for your minor children. Set rules for them that apply when they are away from the home. Depending on their age, you may want to require them to call you when they get to their destination and to call if plans change. Stay involved with your kids, know their friends and don't let them pull away from you too soon. My house is always full of teenagers! There are many days when my wife and I long for a quiet house, but we know there will be time for that later. What is most important now is providing a good environment for our kids, opening our home to their friends and staying connected with them.

Rather than setting a blanket curfew, which can give them too much freedom, know and approve their plans and have them be home by a reasonable time based on those plans. For example, if the movie is over at 10:00 p.m., give them traveling time, and require them to be home by 10:30 or 11:00 p.m.

### **EXAMPLES OF APPROPRIATE RULES FOR CHILDREN AGES THIRTEEN TO EIGHTEEN:**

**Rule #1- Obey parents.**

**Discipline - The Discipline Box or List.**

**Rule #2 - Respect one another at all times.**

**Discipline - The Discipline Box or List.**

**Rule #3 - Clean up your own personal messes expediently.**

**Discipline - The Discipline Box or List.**

**Rule #4 - Telephone privileges until 9:00 p.m. on weekdays and 10:00 p.m. on weekends with approval.**

**Discipline - No telephone privileges for two days.**

## **DRIVING PRIVILEGES**

In addition to Shut Down and Saturday Work, taking away your teen's driver's license is another good form of punishment. If they do not have self-control and respect for rules in the home, they are not showing the maturity and responsibility they need to safely operate a vehicle! Parents have the power through the Department of Motor Vehicles to revoke the license of their minor child. Parents must determine the expected goals and time frame and communicate these expectations to their child. Communicating to your child that they can have their driving privileges restored when they "*have a better attitude*" will only provoke them.

**Note:** If you have a son or daughter who continues in defiant behavior, refusing to accept your authority and discipline, I strongly recommend that you involve outside authority (police juvenile division, school board and counselor). In severe cases of drugs and alcohol, contact the authorities to establish a record to get your child in front of a judge who will recommend diversion programs and/or counseling.

***Parenting Principle:*** *Training ends when your children become responsible, mature adults or are no longer under your financial support.*

## **CHORES**

Giving your kids chores provides a great opportunity to train them, teach them work ethics and promote unity, belonging and mutual responsibility within the family structure.

### **Five important ingredients for success:**

- 1. Make them fair.** For example, it is not fair to have your daughter wash dishes every night and your son mow the lawn once a week. Boys can do household chores, and girls can do light outdoor chores.
- 2. Make them age-appropriate.** Obviously, you would not have a six year old wash the dishes or lug around a heavy vacuum cleaner. They can certainly begin learning by helping you.
- 3. Write out the chores.** Chores, just like rules, must be written out.
- 4. Determine and write out when the chores are to be completed (day and time).** For example, the trash will be taken out every Wednesday before 6:00 p.m. If the trash is not taken out by the determined day and time, there will be discipline. Do not remind or nag your child to complete their chore! At 6:01 if the trash has not been taken out, calmly remind your child to do their chore and then pull a consequence from the Discipline Box or List.

You want your children to learn to think ahead and take responsibility. If you are constantly reminding them of their responsibilities, what are you teaching them? Nothing except dependence upon you!

**5. Train, don't nag!** Nagging is negative communication that erodes and destroys the parent/child relationship and the parents' influence in their child's life.

**EXAMPLES OF APPROPRIATE CHORES FOR CHILDREN:**

**Chore:** Clean your room before leaving for school and by 10:00 a.m. on weekends.

**Discipline:** Draw from the Discipline Box or List.

**Chore:** Feed, water and clean up after the dog on Monday, Wednesday and Saturday by 6:00 p.m.

**Discipline:** Take care of the dog for seven days in a row on your own.

**Chore:** Water the houseplants on Tuesday and Friday by 5:00 p.m.

**Discipline:** Draw from the Discipline Box or List.

**Chore:** Clean the bathroom sink and tub every Monday and Thursday by 7:00 p.m.

**Discipline:** Draw from the Discipline Box or List.

Go back through this lesson, and review the seven *Parenting Principles* you have learned. Re-write the principles below in your own words.

1) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4) \_\_\_\_\_  
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\_\_\_\_\_

5) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

6) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

7) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



## STARTING OVER

## Week 7

## Day 1

## STEPS TO STARTING OVER

Starting over is just that. It is implementing the truths, tools and principles for parenting that you have learned, and *starting over* with your family. Along the way as I have presented these principles to you, I have urged you to consider your current parenting methods. I believe that God has revealed areas in your life pertaining to the management style in your marriage and parenting your children where you have failed to live up to His standard in your home. When we read God's Word, God's Word reads us! Like a sword, the Word cuts through us, judging our thoughts and the intentions of our heart. As we obey God's Word and apply biblical truths to our life, like water, the Word washes away all impurities. Like the refiner's fire, the Word exposes the dross--the things in our lives that do not glorify God, which He wants to remove. Like a rock, the Word breaks up the hardness of our hearts. Finally, the Word is a good seed planted in our hearts. When humbly received, this seed takes root deep in our lives and bears fruit for God's glory and the building up of others.

*"Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night. He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper."*

-Psalm 1:1-3

Because our homes are so important, and our families are so valuable, it can be very discouraging when we feel that we have failed. I want to encourage you that God's mercies are new every morning! Because we have a great, compassionate God, who faithfully loves us with His great love, we can have a great hope in His ability to come to our side and bring His strength, wisdom, love and healing. God is able and ready to bless our homes, but we must desire and strive for all that He requires of us. In this final lesson, I want to give you the steps that I believe you must follow in order to move away from negative, ineffective and perhaps destructive parenting and start over.

*"Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure."*

-Philippians 2:12

## STEP ONE - CONFESS TO GOD

The first step in Starting Over is to be honest before God by humbly confessing or admitting our failures, mistakes and sin against Him. God knows that we are sinners. Jesus shed His innocent blood on the cross because all mankind is guilty before God and incapable of saving themselves. When we accept Christ as Savior and Lord, we do not immediately cease sinning. The process of sanctification, whereby we become conformed to the image of Christ, takes place over our entire lifetime! When we confess to God, we are not telling Him something that He does not already know. He has read every thought, known every motive, heard every word spoken and witnessed every action taken in our homes. Prayer is acknowledging to God that we are dependent on Him and are placing our trust in Him. Confession is not simply

*"For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."*

-Hebrews 4:12

*"...that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word..."*

-Ephesians 5:26

*"'Is not My word like a fire?' says the LORD, 'And like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?'"*

-Jeremiah 23:29

*"Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you."*

-James 1:21

(NIV)

*"Through the LORD'S mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not.*

*They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness. 'The LORD is my portion,' says my soul, 'Therefore I hope in Him!'"*

-Lamentations 3:22-24

“...they are all under sin. As it is written: ‘There is none righteous, no, not one; there is none who understands; there is none who seeks after God. They have all turned aside; they have together become unprofitable; there is none who does good, no, not one.’ ”  
-Romans 3:9-12

“And I prayed to the LORD my God, and made confession, and said, ‘O Lord, great and awesome God, who keeps His covenant and mercy with those who love Him, and with those who keep His commandments, ‘we have sinned and committed iniquity, we have done wickedly and rebelled, even by departing from Your precepts and Your judgments.’ ”  
-Daniel 9:4-5

“Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. ‘I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.’ ”  
-John 15:4-5

telling God what we have done or failed to do, but *it is also agreeing* with Him that we have been wrong. The Bible tells us that God is faithful and just to forgive us when we confess our sins to Him. He cleans the slate, giving us a fresh start and making it possible for us to start over.

“...For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.”  
- Jeremiah 31:34

● **As you have gone through this workbook, has the Lord revealed any sin in your life?**  Yes  No

**If you answered yes, know that God, in His kindness and mercy, will graciously forgive you as you humbly seek to obey His will for your life by following the steps of forgiveness and reconciliation below.**

## 1. Confess your sins to the Lord.

**Confess** – *To acknowledge, own or admit a fault or a debt.*

“When I kept silent, my bones grew old through my groaning all the day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; my vitality was turned into the drought of summer. Selah I acknowledged my sin to You, and my iniquity I have not hidden. I said, ‘I will confess my transgressions to the LORD,’ and You forgave the iniquity of my sin. Selah”  
-Psalm 32:3-5

“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.”  
-1 John 1:9-10

## 2. By faith receive God’s forgiveness for your sins, confident that He has accepted you as His child.

“But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.”  
-Hebrews 11:6

“All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.”  
-John 6:37  
(KJV)

## 3. Repent by turning from your sin and sinful behavior, and commit daily to walk in an abiding intimacy and obedience with Christ.

**Repent** – *To resolve, to amend one’s life as a result of contrition for one’s sins, to feel regret for one has done or omitted to do.*

“...repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance.”  
- Acts 26:20

“And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever—the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.”  
-John 14:16-17

#### 4. Pursue accountability for your commitment to turn from sin and walk in obedience by confessing to your spouse, a pastor or a godly friend who will keep your confidence and support you in prayer.

*"Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much."  
-James 5:16*

#### Pray the following suggested prayer:

*Lord Jesus, thank you for dying on the cross for all of my sins. Thank you for your faithfulness to me to complete the work you began in my life. Thank you for blessing me with my children. I now understand that they are gifts from You. Forgive me for not treating these children as gifts. Forgive me for the mistakes that I have made in raising them. Help me to put You first in my life, then to love and train Your children according to Your will and ways. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

## Day 2

### STEP TWO - CONFESS TO OTHERS

After we have made our hearts right with God through confession to Him, we must confess to those we have failed, offended, stumbled or sinned against, and seek their forgiveness.

God has given us spiritual principles that govern us. Whether we are Christians or non-Christians, whether we believe God's principles or reject them, nevertheless, these spiritual principles govern our lives. One such principle is that of forgiveness and reconciliation. God commands us to go to those whom we have offended, humbly seek their forgiveness and when possible, be reconciled to them.

Matthew 5:23-24 tells us we must be reconciled to our brothers *before* we can present our offering before the Lord. If we are not obedient to this biblical principle, our relationship and fellowship with God will be hindered. God does not bless disobedience! God is commanding us to be obedient to do *our* part. We are not responsible for the response of the other person.

We are warned in Ephesians 4:26 to make peace in our homes *today*. Do not put it off for a *better* day. Each day that passes without resolving conflict gives Satan opportunities to cause more division, distraction and destruction in our homes and families.

*"Be angry, and do not sin": do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil."  
-Ephesians 4:26-27*

This process is simple. Long discourses, explanations or excuses are not necessary. In fact, as Proverbs 10:19 tells us, a wise man uses *few* words!

*"When there are many words, transgression is unavoidable, but he who restrains his lips is wise."  
-Proverbs 10:19*

Simply tell your child, *"I am sorry for the mistakes I have made in parenting you. Please forgive me for the anger, yelling, not being united, being unfair..."* It

*"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."  
-Philippians 4:13*

*"Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift."  
-Matthew 5:23-24*

*"If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men."  
-Romans 12:18*

does not matter if your child is seven-months or seventeen years old. They may not understand. They may not believe that you are sincere. You must be willing to follow through on your words and by your consistency, build trust with your child.

Because a parent's influence over their child is so powerful, forgiveness and reconciliation is a biblical principle that we must practice daily. A parent's critical, thoughtless or harsh words can cut through their child's heart like a knife. If we do not take part in mending the wounds we inflict through confession and forgiveness, infection will eventually set in. In time a hurting heart will become a hardened heart. I have had many teenagers in my office whose parents unknowingly wounded their hearts repeatedly. To defend themselves against their parents' verbal ammunition, these kids become hardened. Most of the time, the parents are oblivious that they were the cause of the breakdown in their relationship with their kids. A child's tender heart can become like a raw nerve or a cavity; the parent's cutting or harsh words are like ice water agitating their child's heart. *Every time we fail in parenting or offend our children, we need to go to them and apologize.*

## Day 3

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### STEP THREE - FORGIVE OTHERS

Finally, God commands us to forgive those who hurt or offend us, which includes our own children! Perhaps your children have lacked gratitude and respect for you, have defied your authority or sinned against you. Our kids have a fallen nature, therefore, they are very capable of sin. Because we are their God-ordained authority figures, their rebellion is often directed at us. Because we love them and are responsible for their well being, their sin always touches us. This being true, parents must daily apply the principle of forgiveness and reconciliation toward their children!

As we have seen, our children's disobedience must be disciplined. When we consistently practice the Tools of Training, which are Rules (written out), Discipline (when they break a rule), and Punishment (when they refuse the discipline), we must follow through by forgiving them so that the loving parent/child relationship can be reconciled. Many parents fail in this area, which results in the division we see in so many homes today.

Remember when your children were learning to walk, you held their hand, steadied them and cheered them on. When they fell, you picked them up and lovingly set them back on their feet. It would be absurd for a parent to resent their wobbly toddler for stumbling or falling! Imagine the parent of a one year old saying,

*"He's falling down on purpose. He's doing that just to irritate me or embarrass me in front of the other parents. He's not trying hard enough. If he loved me, he would walk!"*

A loving parent would never be so foolish. Yet, when we take our children's failures personally, when we refuse to forgive and forget their mistakes (even if they have made the same mistake dozens of times), we are just as foolish. As parents of growing children, we must keep in mind that they are *learning to walk*

*"And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses. But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses."*  
-Mark 11:25-26

*"...bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do."*  
-Colossians 3:13-14

in a multitude of ways, and we must be there to support them, steady them, cheer them on and pick them up when they fall down.

We must remember that our homes are training grounds and that parenting is a ministry. We are serving God as we minister to and train up *His* children. Forgiving our children is a non-negotiable requirement of this ministry. Depending upon our children's personalities, they may not seek out our forgiveness. Some kids are naturally more sensitive, while others plow through life with no apparent concern for the feelings of others. By our actions, as well as our instruction, we are teaching our kids and leading them toward maturity.

Remember that as we are training our children, God is training us! Our transformation is sometimes a painful process! If we trust in Him, God will use the disappointments and grief that we experience from our children's failures and mistakes to conform us to His image.

### **Biblical forgiveness means:**

- Not keeping a record of wrongs suffered.

*"Love...keeps no record of when it has been wronged."  
-1 Corinthians 13:4-5  
(NLT)*

- Not gossiping to others about another person's mistakes, failures, or sins.

*"All the words of my mouth are with righteousness; nothing crooked or perverse is in them."  
-Proverbs 8:8*

- Restoring fellowship with the forgiven person, as far as is biblically possible.

*"Love...is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things."  
-1 Corinthians 13:4-7*

- Forgiveness is to be granted without exception or limitations.

*"And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen. For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."  
-Matthew 6:12-15*

## *Day 4* \_\_\_\_\_

### **SETTING UP THE FAMILY MEETING**

#### **STEP ONE**

In a two-parent family, the husband and wife should meet first to pray over and agree upon the important points to discuss in the family meeting. Make a strategic *plan of attack* in starting over with your children. Prayerfully write out the rules, disciplines and appropriate punishment, and the chores for each of your children. Remember that your attitude in approaching the family meeting is all-important. If your children sense that you are motivated by frustration or have a negative or defeated attitude, they will follow suit. You must have an attitude that reflects confidence in the Lord and the truths that He has shown

*"And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you."  
-Ephesians 4:32*

*"My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing."  
-James 1:2-4*

*"But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: 'God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.'"  
-James 4:6*

you, along with genuine humility, or your attempts to start over with your family will be hindered. If God resists or opposes a proud heart, know that your children will also resist and oppose you if you do not approach them with a humble heart.

**Note:** If you are a single-parent, refer to Appendix F, *Essentials for Single Parents* for some helpful suggestions.

● Turn to the *Family Rules and Disciplines Chart* and the *Chore Chart* in Appendices J and K. I recommend that you photocopy and use pencil to complete the charts in order to make changes and corrections if necessary.

## Day 5

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### STEP TWO

If one of your children has had a serious relationship problem with either parent, the parents should first meet individually with this child. The purpose for this meeting is to humbly acknowledge the past problems and seek reconciliation with the child by asking for forgiveness for the mistakes that you have made. Communicate to your child that you have completed a biblical parenting course and that the Lord has revealed some biblical truths and parenting principles to you that you did not know, or that you have previously neglected to follow. Be specific and acknowledge your weaknesses and faults. For example, admit that you have been critical, judgmental, unloving, unfair, impatient, etc. Give your child an opportunity to ask you to forgive them, but do not expect or require this of them. Most likely, they are not yet at the place where they will acknowledge their error. Keep in mind that you are the parent, and you are setting the example for your child. As you follow through, your child will eventually understand and take ownership, though this may take years! Be obedient to do your part, and the Lord will bless you! End this meeting by praying with your child.

### STEP THREE

When you have your rules, disciplines and appropriate punishment, and chore lists written out, set up your family meeting. Provide a copy of the individual lists for each child. Begin your family meeting with prayer, asking God for His help and guidance for your home. In a two-parent family, the fathers should open in prayer and take the lead in the meeting. Many dads who have not been accustomed to praying with their families may find this uncomfortable. I urge you, dads, to take the spiritual leadership role in your home. God will honor your obedience, and it will get easier in time. Dad, begin by apologizing, if necessary, to your children as a group. Ask them to forgive you for your mistakes, sin and/or lack of understanding as a parent. Acknowledge to your children specifically if you have been impatient, unkind, used unfair punishment, shown partiality toward a particular child, been negligent, preoccupied with yourself or your work, allowed the sin of anger and yelling, etc., to dominate your parenting, and that you now understand that you have been wrong. Be specific, but keep in mind that it is not necessary for you to re-play your child's entire life.

Even if you have already said these things to your children individually, it is important that you communicate this to your entire family. Let your other children know that you have already asked for forgiveness from a particular child. Your

children have observed you treating their sibling harshly or unfairly. They need to know that you know you were wrong in this behavior. This will show them your humility and genuine repentance. When dad has finished with his confession and asking the children for forgiveness, it will be mom's turn to do the same. A very common habit that moms develop, especially as their children get older, is nagging and judging them instead of nurturing and affirming. Remember that this is a sin, that your children do not *make* you do it and that you need to tell them that you are sorry for your unloving communication. Give your children an opportunity to voice their feelings, but do not require this of them.

#### STEP FOUR

Finally, explain the rules, disciplines, punishment and chores to your children. Make sure that you communicate to them that these changes are not taking place because *they* have been bad or done something wrong that has forced you to introduce *marshal law* as a *dictator!* In a two-parent family, dad should communicate to the family that he is the head of the home, therefore, he will be the main enforcer of the rules and the main disciplinarian, and that in his absence, the children need to respect mom's authority and follow the plan. Mom should express to the children that she is embracing her husband's leadership in the home and will not usurp his authority.

**Note:** You may want to refer to page 79, *God's Management Style*.

#### It is important to help your children understand:

- This system is biblical.
- The difference between discipline (the training) and punishment (a measured amount of pain to motivate them to accept the training).
- The purpose and use of the Discipline Box or List. You may choose to have your children participate in making The Box and contributing suggestions for what disciplines will go into The Box.
- The definition of a mature adult (morals and values, personal responsibility and self-control) and that your God-given responsibility is to lovingly train them to become mature adults. Explain to them that responsibility and self-control, like muscles, are developed through exercise, and that you are their trainer to assist them in this process.
- That the family is a team, and everyone needs to work together so that the home will be a refuge and a place of peace, with each family member showing mutual respect to one another.
- The need and your desire for weekly family devotions. Let them know at this meeting what day and time your weekly devotions will take place.
- Go through each child's rules, disciplines and punishments, and chores. Let them ask you questions, and make sure that they understand exactly what you are requiring of them.

Be forewarned that, especially if you have had little structure in your home prior to this, your children will not jump for joy! Allow some grace on enforcing your

*"For the Lord disciplines those He loves, and He punishes those He accepts as His children."  
-Hebrews 12:6  
(NLT)*

*"Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; the rod of correction will drive it far from him."  
-Proverbs 22:15*

*"My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing."  
-James 1:2-4*

discipline for the first two weeks so that your children do not become overwhelmed or discouraged. Know that they *will* test your structure. Keep in mind that their testing and initially resisting the new system is not abnormal. God's Word says that our kids *need* boundaries and discipline to know that they are loved, but that foolishness is bound up in their heart, therefore, most kids will resist authority and the potential loss of their freedom. Stay calm. If your system begins to unravel when your kids push against it, this will prove to them that they cannot trust you. Remain consistent, and in time you will see the fruit in your home.

You may discover that some of your rules and disciplines were unfair or too harsh. Be sensitive to God's guidance and don't be afraid to make some compromises or changes. When your children see that you are not unreasonable, and that your goal is not to become a dictator over them, they will be more willing to cooperate. This system of operating your home on written rules, disciplines and punishment is not a contract that you are asking your kids to agree upon and sign. It is not biblical to suggest that children be given the power to decide what training they will and will not accept. You are not asking your kids to promise you that they will behave according to a new standard. You are giving them the guidelines that you will use in training them to maturity.

After the two-week grace period is over, have another brief, casual family meeting, maybe around the dinner table. At this meeting let your kids know that they have had ample time to understand the rules, and that from this point forward, when they break a rule, you are going to be consistent with the discipline.

Your child's rules, disciplines and punishment, and chore lists can be posted in a central area of the home, such as the kitchen or in your child's bedroom. Some kids might be embarrassed for their friends to come over and see their lists (the vast majority of homes today do not have order, so their friends will most likely make fun of them), so do not make an issue of where the lists are kept. Make sure they are in a safe spot and keep an extra copy on hand in case the lists *mysteriously disappear!* If your children are too young to read, I suggest you use some simple graphics on their lists to help them remember their simple rules and age-appropriate chores. If you get your younger children accustomed to written rules, it will be that much easier when they transition into adolescence.

A family meeting should be held every two months for the first six months to review team efforts and make any changes. After the first six months, have a family meeting at least every four months. Because this system has been in place in my home for so long, and my children understand what is expected of them, we are down to two meetings each year. My wife and I plan our family meetings at the beginning of summer and before school begins in the fall. Obviously, if a problem arises or we see the need to make adjustments to our rules and disciplines, we address them as they come. Because we have teenagers, we have situations and issues surface that call for an immediate *pow-wow*.

I want to urge parents not to be flippant about making changes without taking time to think through the wisdom in making the changes and agreeing together in prayer before a decision is made. God has given my wife great wisdom as a mother. She has good input. We decide together. Our kids understand that we are united, working together as a team.

## CONCLUSION

Because old habits, behaviors and patterns are not easily overcome, you may find it necessary to *start over* again and again! This is all right and should be expected. Nothing as valuable as raising our children comes easy and parents should anticipate some challenges and obstacles along the way. Many parents become discouraged and give up. Discouragement is a tool that the enemy uses to keep God's children from doing His will and experiencing His blessings! The Bible teaches that we have need of endurance or *patient continuance* in order to do God's will and receive His promises.

When you feel the frustration of past mistakes and failures as a parent, you may be tempted to question why God waited until now to reveal these biblical truths and parenting principles to you. You must trust His timing. When you feel overwhelmed, you must recall to your mind the truth that our God is a God of new beginnings. Place your trust and confidence in Him and He will give you the wisdom and strength to put these principles into practice.

May our wonderful Lord Jesus Christ bless you and your family.

*"For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise..."*  
-Hebrews 10:36

***PARENTING***

***IS A***

***MINISTRY***

APPENDICES

# APPENDICES

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<b>APPENDIX A</b>	<b>COMMITMENT TO CHRIST</b>
<b>APPENDIX B</b>	<b>HOW TO LEAD A CHILD TO CHRIST</b>
<b>APPENDIX C</b>	<b>HOW TO DEVELOP INTIMACY WITH GOD THROUGH DAILY DEVOTIONS</b>
<b>APPENDIX D</b>	<b>RECOMMENDED DEVOTIONAL AND DISCIPLESHIP BOOKS</b>
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<b>APPENDIX J</b>	<b>FAMILY RULES AND DISCIPLINES CHART</b>
<b>APPENDIX K</b>	<b>CHORE CHART</b>
<b>APPENDIX L</b>	<b>PARENT’S QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TEENAGERS</b>
<b>APPENDIX M</b>	<b>PARENT’S QUESTIONNAIRE FOR YOUTH TURNING AGE 18</b>
<b>APPENDIX N</b>	<b>PARENT SELF-EVALUATION CHECKLIST</b>
<b>APPENDIX O</b>	<b>PARENT’S COMMITMENT LETTER</b>

## Appendix A

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## COMMITMENT TO CHRIST

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Perhaps you have struggled in some areas of parenting and have come to realize that your struggles are a result of a weak or inconsistent spiritual life. God promises to bless, encourage, and strengthen us as we submit to His lordship in our life.

*"The LORD will give strength to His people; the LORD will bless His people with peace."  
-Psalm 29:11*

Write a prayer of commitment to the Lord, to put Him first in your life, and asking Him to help you parent the *gifts* (children) He has given you.

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Perhaps you have never surrendered your life to Christ. Know that God loves you and has provided the way for you to have a relationship with Him. You must simply,

### 1. Recognize and admit that you are a sinner.

*"...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."  
-Romans 3:23*

*"Jesus answered and said to him, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.'"  
-John 3:3*

### 2. Believe that Jesus paid for your sins.

*"Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.'"  
-John 14:6*

*"Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."  
-Acts 4:12*

### 3. Confess your sins to Jesus.

*"Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord."  
-Acts 3:19*

*"...that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved."  
-Romans 10:9*

### 4. Receive the gift of salvation.

*"But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name:"  
-John 1:12*

*"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."  
-Romans 6:23*

**Repeat the following prayer,**

*"Lord Jesus, I know that I am a sinner. I am sorry for my sin. Thank you for dying on the cross for me and paying the price for my sin. Please come into my heart. Fill me with your Holy Spirit and help me to be your disciple. Thank you for forgiving me and coming into my life. Thank you that I am now a child of God and that I am going to heaven." Amen*

### HOW TO LEAD A CHILD TO CHRIST

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*"But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name."*

*-John 1:12*

The only requirement to become a child of God is to believe and receive the Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible does not designate a specific age a child must reach in order to experience salvation. Jesus urged parents to bring their little children to Him, and rebuked those who attempted to keep the children away.

*"But Jesus called them to Him and said, 'Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God."*

*Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it."*  
*-Luke 18:16-17*

Most small children will respond to an invitation to ask Jesus to come into their hearts. Their innocence, sense of wonder and trusting hearts provide fertile soul for the gospel. The following are truths that a child must receive and should be explained in simple, age-appropriate language. As they mature, they will grasp the deeper meaning of these truths.

**1. God made us and everything around us. He loves us and watches over us from heaven.**

**2. God is good. He has never done or thought anything bad.**

**3. All people are sinners.**

- Explain to the child that this means that every person has done naughty things.
- Give the child examples of sin: lying, stealing from others, hitting others, etc.
- Acknowledge to the child that you have done naughty things, and that you too are a sinner.
- Ask the child if they have ever been naughty. You may need to remind them of something naughty that they did recently.

*"...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God..."*

*-Romans 3:23*

**4. God loves us even though we are sinners. He wants to forgive us.**

- Explain to the child that to forgive means to not be angry and to not remember that we have sinned.

*"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."*

*-John 3:16*

**5. Jesus is God's Son. He lived in heaven with His Father. A long time ago Jesus came to earth. He came to tell everybody how much God loves them.**

- Explain to the child that because all people are sinners Jesus died on the cross. Jesus did not stay dead. Three days later He came back to life!

**6. Because Jesus died and rose from the dead, God will forgive us for all of our sins if we believe in Jesus.**

*"...for 'whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.'"  
-Romans 10:13*

**7. Jesus now lives in heaven with His Father. He also wants to live inside of our hearts.**

- Explain to the child that if they invite Jesus, He will come to live in their hearts. They will become God's children.

*"But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name:"  
-John 1:12*

**8. Ask the child if they want Jesus to forgive them for their sins and live inside of their heart. Tell the child that even though God is in heaven, He hears us when we talk to Him.**

**9. If the child is willing, ask them to repeat, sentence by sentence, the following prayer.**

*Dear Lord Jesus,  
I know that I am a sinner. Thank you for dying on the cross for my sins. Please come into my heart and be my Lord and Savior. Thank you for forgiving me. Help me to live for you everyday. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

## HOW TO DEVELOP INTIMACY WITH GOD THROUGH DAILY DEVOTIONS

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- **Intimacy** – *Marked by very close association, contact, or friendship developing through long association; very familiar; suggesting informal warmth or privacy; of a very personal nature.*
1. Choose the best time of day (morning or evening) to commit to setting aside devotional time. Don't set yourself up for discouragement by setting a goal that you will not be able to keep. Start small, and then add time as you grow. Begin with 15 minutes.
  2. Choose a book of the Bible. Read one chapter, or less if it is a long chapter or verses that you want to ponder. In addition, you may also want to read a daily devotional. See suggestions listed below.
  3. Keep a journal. Write out what these verses mean to you.
    - **Journal** – *A record of experiences, ideas or reflections kept regularly for private use.*
  4. Pray. Specifically pray over the truths you have read, asking God to speak to you about how you can obey; what you should do or what you should change in your life in order to obey.
  5. Spend a few minutes in quiet listening. This may be uncomfortable for you at first. Living in a noise-filled world, most of us are not accustomed to sitting quietly. Persevere and God will be faithful to speak to you. Remember that the Holy Spirit is dwelling in your heart and mind and can minister to you in your thoughts!
  6. Pray. Use the following to help you pray effectively:
    - Adoration – Worship and praise God
    - Confession – Confess and repent of any known sins
    - Thanksgiving – Expressing gratitude for God's blessings in your life
    - Supplication – Humbly make requests for your needs and the needs of others
  7. Pray that God will help you to know and acknowledge His presence throughout your day.

## Appendix D

## **RECOMMENDED DEVOTIONAL AND DISCIPLESHIP BOOKS**

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### *The Bible*

*Strong Foundation Discipleship Workbook*, Family Support Foundation

*Strong Foundation Discipleship Workbook* (single-moms edition), Family Support Foundation

*Meet the Bible* by Philip Yancey and Brenda Quinn. (ISBN #0-310-22776-3)

*Everyday With Jesus* by Greg Laurie. (ISBN #1-56507-309-6)

*Self-Confrontation* by John C. Broger. (ISBN #1-878114-01-8)

*Experiencing God* by Henry Blackaby. (ISBN #0-8054-9954-7)

*Drawing Near* by John F. MacArthur. (ISBN #0-891-07758-8)

*My Utmost for His Highest* by Oswald Chambers. (ISBN #0-916441-42-3)

*The One Year Book of Psalms* by William J. Petersen and Randy Petersen. (ISBN #0-8423-4372-5)

*Streams in the Desert* by Mrs. Charles E. Cowman. (ISBN #0-310-23011-X)

### ***Devotional and Discipleship Books for Children and Adolescents***

*Favorite Bible Stories for 3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> graders*, by Rainbow Books. (ISBN #0-937282-41-3)

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## BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES FOR FORGIVENESS AND RECONCILIATION

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### THE COST OF UNFORGIVENESS

The word *forgive* means literally, *to give away*. When a debt is forgiven, the rights to payment are *given away*. If someone injures us and we forgive them, we *give away* the freedom to continue being angry and resentful towards the one who wronged us. We absorb the loss ourselves. The word *pardon* is derived from the Latin word, *perdonare*, meaning to *grant freely*. True forgiveness is undeserved, unmerited, and free. It is not *just* or *fair*. In the Scriptures, to *forget* means, *to let go from one's power*.

When we refuse to grant forgiveness, choosing rather to maintain our *right* to demand payment for wrongs done to us, we must be willing to absorb the cost incurred by that choice. Forgiveness is free, however unforgiveness carries with it a costly price tag. Unwillingness to forgive produces *resentment*. Resentment means, *to feel again*. Resentment clings to the past, reliving it over and over. Resentment, like *picking a scab*, prohibits our wounds from healing.

- ◆ In Hebrews 12:15 we learn that bitterness, like a deep root, takes a firm hold in the human heart, then grows, and produces *fruit*. However, rather than nourish others, this fruit is bitter, causes trouble, and defiles others.

*"See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled."*

-Hebrews 12:15

- ◆ Most of us do not readily admit that we have been harboring unforgiveness. However, Ephesians 4:31 teaches that there is undeniable evidence in an individual's life that the bitter tree of resentment is growing within their heart.

*"Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice."*

-Ephesians 4:31

**Wrath** – *An outburst of a strong, vengeful anger or indignation, seeking retribution.*

**Anger** – *A state of mind marked by fretfulness and grief.*

**Evil speaking** – *Unkind words, verbal abuse against someone, slander, wounding someone's reputation by evil reports, backbiting, insult and defamation.*

**Malice** – *Hateful feelings that we nurture in our hearts. A desire to see another suffer.*

Ask yourself, *"Are any of these common in my life?"*

- Pride
- Self-righteous
- Self-pity
- Emotional disturbances
- Anxiety, tension & stress
- Health problems
- Absence of peace & joy
- Eating disorders
- Lack of trust in relationships
- Lack of intimacy in marriage
- Sexual dysfunction
- Judgmental & critical of others
- Ultra-sensitive & easily offended
- Broken fellowship with Jesus

## WHY FORGIVE?

Besides the before mentioned devastation that results from unforgiveness, we are indebted to forgive because:

### ◆ GOD COMMANDS IT!

Obedience to the Father is not optional. If we pick and choose when we will and will not obey God's commands, we will live unfruitful, ineffective, and spiritually barren lives.

*"But love your enemies, and do good...and you will be sons of the Most High; for He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil men. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful."*

- Luke 6:35-36

*"And whenever you stand praying. If you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses."*

-Mark 11:25

### ◆ IN FORGIVING, WE RESEMBLE JESUS, AND BEAR THE FAMILY LIKENESS.

The term *Christian* means *little Christ*. As Christians, we are called to carry the name of Christ to a lost world. We must be willing to bear His image; to be like Him. Christ demonstrated forgiveness. He came to this earth to bring forgiveness to the guilty. He gave the commission to the church to continue proclaiming forgiveness. We must, if we are to rightly bear His name, forgive those who have offended us!

*"Then Jesus said, 'Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.' "*

-Luke 23:34

*"...the one who says he abides in Him ought to walk in the same manner as He walked."*

-1 John 2:6

### ◆ FORGIVENESS IS THE ONLY MEANS OF BREAKING THE CYCLE OF BLAME AND SUFFERING.

Forgiveness offers the way out! It does not settle all questions of blame and fairness, and often evades those questions altogether. It does allow a relationship to start over, and begin anew. This truth is demonstrated in the life of Joseph in Genesis chapters 37-45. Though he was mistreated, betrayed, abandoned by his brothers, and sold into slavery, he refused to allow the root of bitterness to take hold of his life. Shortly before being reunited with his brothers, he testified of the healing work that God had done in his life during the years of separation, as demonstrated in the naming of his sons. In Genesis 41:51,52 we read:

*"Joseph named the firstborn Manasseh, "For," he said, "God has made me forget all my trouble in all my father's household."*

*"He named the second Ephraim, "For," he said, "God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction..."*

To *forget* in this sense does not mean to cease to remember, but to *let go*, to cease to let the memory of hurtful things control your present life. Joseph's *fruitfulness* was directly related to his *forgetfulness*. Remember that resentment means to *feel again*. Joseph chose to trust God with his past. Unforgiveness imprisons us to the past and locks out all potential for a fruitful life.

During Joseph's years alone in Egypt, he allowed God to heal his heart, which had been broken by his own brothers. Later, when given the opportunity, Joseph extended love, forgiveness, and grace to his brothers. Joseph speaks to them in Genesis 45:

*"Now do not be grieved or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life...and to keep you alive by a great deliverance...He kissed all his brothers and wept on them, and afterward his brothers talked with him."*

There was no blaming, no explanations demanded, only the voice of mercy and forgiveness. The way was cleared for Joseph and his brothers to be reunited and begin a new relationship.

### ◆ FORGIVENESS RELIEVES THE BURDEN OF GUILT IN THE OFFENDER.

*"...in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus."*

-Ephesians 2:7

Joseph's brothers would have carried their grief to their graves if he had not extended forgiveness to them. Forgiveness, undeserved and unearned, can cut the cords and let the oppressive burden of guilt roll away.

If Jesus had not extended kindness to sinners, we would remain in the stranglehold of guilt. He made the first move toward us that made it possible for us to be reconciled to Him.

## THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD

**Sovereign** - *Possessing supreme power, unlimited wisdom, and absolute authority.*

*"All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, but He does according to His will in the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and no one can ward off His hand or say to Him 'What have You done?'"*

-Daniel 4:35

Psalms 139:1-18 teaches that God knows each of us intimately. All of our days were fashioned or created by Him. Before you knew God, or accepted Him as Lord and Savior He knew you and predestined all the days of your life. God gave you the gift of freewill. He chose you that you might follow Him, and gave you the freedom to reject Him.

God has given mankind freedom to do good and freedom to do evil. Therefore, the reality is that God's children live in a fallen world and are often touched by the evil around them. If God shielded His children from all evil, allowing only good, the unsaved would only be motivated to turn to Him for the guarantee of an easy life. In fact, this is the very argument that began the historic showdown in heaven between God and Satan in the life of Job.

Satan said to God,

*“Does Job fear God for nothing? Have You not made a hedge about him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. But put forth Your hand now and touch all that he has; he will surely curse You to Your face.”*  
-Job 1:9-11

*“...God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust.”*  
-James 1:13-14

God then *allowed* Satan to bring evil upon Job through the loss of his possessions, his children, and finally his health. God is a loving Father and does not *bring* evil into our lives, however for His purpose and for our ultimate good, He *allows* us to be touched by evil. The outcome of Job's suffering was trust and intimacy with God.

Job did not understand *why* God was *allowing* him to suffer (God had declared in Job 2:3 that Job was a righteous man), therefore Job asked God, “*Why?*” For several chapters Job agonizes over this question, seeking a satisfactory answer. God never answers the question, instead He directs Job's attention to His power and glory, which is displayed in His creation. Job is satisfied with a newfound understanding of the greatness of God. When we suffer we, like Job, want an explanation. “*Why, why, why?*” One of the many lessons we learn from Job is that “*Why?*” is the wrong question. We should instead ask God, “*What?*” “*God, what are You trying to teach me? What is Your will for me in this season of suffering?*”

*“Then Job answered the Lord and said, ‘I know that You can do all things, and that no purpose of Yours can be thwarted...I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear; but not my eye sees You...’”*  
-Job 42:1-6

- **Knowing that God is sovereign, what part of your life is beyond God's power, wisdom, or authority?**
- **What day or circumstance has touched you that God did not know beforehand?**
- **How should you respond to life's disappointments, difficulties, suffering, and trials?**

*“In Him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of Him who works everything in conformity with the purpose of His will.”*  
-Ephesians 1:11

We can choose to either harbor bitterness toward parents who disappointed us, a spouse who deserted us, friends who failed us, or a drunk driver who killed a loved-one, or we can place our faith in a sovereign God.

When we come to Christ, we trust Him with our eternal destiny. We must also trust Him with our past and present circumstances. He alone can comfort and strengthen us in and through our trials. He alone can bring good out of bad. Our obedience to God's Word will give us peace, and bring praise, honor, and glory to our Lord Jesus Christ.

*“...In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”*  
-1 Peter 1:3-7

## TRIALS AND TRIBULATION

### ◆ GOD'S WORD TEACHES THAT TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS ARE PART OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE.

*"These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation' but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."*

-John 16:33

Just as the refiner places the crude gold into the crucible, and administers heat in order to bring the dross to the surface, God places His beloved children in the crucible of suffering in order to refine us, and transform us into the image of our Redeemer.

*"He will sit as a smelter and purifier of silver, and He will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, so that they may present to the Lord offerings in righteousness."*

-Malachi 3:3

If we trust Him our very lives will permeate with the love, hope, and confidence of Jesus Christ. As others look at us, they will see the life, love, and righteousness of Jesus Christ in us.

*"And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son..."*

-Romans 8:28-29

This verse does not say *some things*, but *all things*. The key is faith. If we choose to believe God's promises and trust Him in the midst of our trials and tribulations, we will be victorious and God will be glorified in our life.

*"But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place."*

-2 Corinthians 2:14

- **Are you willing to allow God to transform your life through your trials?**
- **Are you willing to trust God with the pain that others have caused in your life?**
- **Are you willing to obey God and forgive that you might be set free from the bondage and pain that has resulted from unforgiveness in your life?**

"There are times, says Jesus, when God cannot lift the darkness from you, but trust Him. God will appear like an unkind friend, but He is not; He will appear like an unnatural Father, but He is not; He will appear like an unjust judge, but He is not. Keep the notion of the mind of God behind all things strong and growing. Nothing happens in any particular unless God's will is behind it, therefore you can rest in perfect confidence in Him."

-Oswald Chambers

## RECONCILIATION

To *reconcile* is to restore to friendship or harmony, or to settle or resolve differences. It is the doing away of an enmity, the bridging over of a quarrel. Reconciliation implies that the parties being reconciled were formerly hostile to one another.

*“Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.”*  
-Ephesians 4:31-32

The Scriptures instruct us to *“Let all bitterness... be put away from you... be kind... tenderhearted, forgiving...”*

- **How do we put away bitterness?**
- **How do we reconcile with someone that we have offended?**
- **How do we repair the hurt we have caused others?**
- **How do we forgive someone who has offended us?**
- **How can we change our own feelings about a wrong done?**

## IF YOU NEED TO BE FORGIVEN

***As an act of the will, you must:***

- 1. Confess your sin to God and ask Him to forgive you and, by His Holy Spirit to fill your heart with His love.**

*“Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered...When I kept silent, my bones grew old through my groaning all the day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; my vitality was turned into the drought of summer. I acknowledged my sin to You and my iniquity I have not hidden. I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,” and You forgave the iniquity of my sin.”*

*-Psalm 32:1,3-5*

*“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”*  
-1 John 1:9

*“As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.”*

*-Psalm 103:12*

Take a moment right now to cry out to God, asking Him to forgive you and to fill you with His Holy Spirit to strengthen you to obey. God alone forgives sins. He forgives and He forgets. By faith, accept God’s absolute forgiveness and cleansing.

*“Forgiveness is not an emotion...Forgiveness is an act of the will, and the will can function regardless of the temperature of the heart.”*

*-Corrie ten Boom*

- 2. If possible, go to those you have wronged, humbly make confession, and ask for their forgiveness.**

*“Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.”*

*-Matthew 5:23-24*

Write out your commitment to obey Matthew 5:23,24.

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Six of the most powerful words  
in the English language,  
“I was wrong. Please forgive me.”

If possible, do this face to face. However, due to logistics, you may have to communicate with the person by telephone or in writing. Don't let distractions or other obstacles delay this act of obedience. In our modern society, the telephone system and postal service can put us in touch with others in a day or two.

Share your decision with a trustworthy Christian friend, asking them to prayer partner with you and hold you accountable to follow through on your commitment.

### 3. Spend time daily with the Lord in His Word, and in prayer.

*“But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.”  
-Matthew 6:33*

Write out your decision to the Lord to spend time with Him *daily* in prayer, reading of His Word, and meditation.

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### 4. Ponder the meaning of the cross and the sacrifice Jesus made for your sins.

*“For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another. But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit.”  
-Titus 3:3-5*

Take a moment right now and thank Jesus for all that He has done for you, for forgiving you for all of your sins, for His perfect plan of transforming you into His image, and for the gift of His Holy Spirit.

“Whenever I see myself before God and realize something of what my blessed Lord has done for me at Calvary, I am ready to forgive anybody anything, I cannot withhold it. I do not even want to withhold it.”

-Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones

## IF YOU NEED TO FORGIVE

### 1. Pray and ask God for the strength to obey and forgive the person or persons.

*“So Jesus answered and said to them, “Assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt...if you say to this mountain, ‘Be removed and be cast 150 into the sea,’ it will be done.”  
-Matthew 21:21*

God promised to give us the strength to move mountains. This may be your Mt. Everest! We know that it is God’s will that we forgive others, so we can be confident that if we ask for His strength, it will be granted.

### 2. Communicate your forgiveness to the person or persons.

*“Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.”  
-1 John 5:14*

*“Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another.”  
-Romans 14:19*

*The word forgive is a verb, or an action word. To truly forgive requires you to take action. God is using His Word to speak to you right now, revealing truth for you to obey and act upon.*

**Edify** - To build up, or encourage.

Forgiveness is not an easy thing to do, therefore you must not try to stand alone, but seek the support and accountability of a mature Christian friend, spouse, or prayer partner.

Write out your commitment to forgive the person or persons, and give yourself a date to contact them by, so you won’t let yourself put it off!

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*“For if you forgive men their trespasses, your Heavenly Father will also forgive you.”  
-Matthew 6:14*

- **Do I have to go to them in person?**
- **Can I call or write them instead?**

In some cases, due to logistics, cost of travel, safety to you, or the ability of the other person to be quiet long enough to let you say what you need to say, a letter, email or telephone call may be the best way for you to accomplish this.

Keep these points in mind when speaking or communicating in writing:

- 1. You are doing this out of obedience to your Heavenly Father who loves and cares for you.**

He wants you to be free from the bondage and oppression you have been experiencing as a result of unforgiveness.

- 2. You do not have to rehearse every detail or act of the offense against you.**

Many times, especially when forgiving parents, they are completely unaware of what they may have done that hurt you. In other cases, it may have been blatant sin against you, for example, sexual, physical, or emotional abuse, rape, abandonment by a parent, friend, or spouse, slander spoken against you, etc. In these cases, you can be more specific as to why you need to forgive.

- 3. Do not try to compel others to own up to their offenses.**

God has called you to obey, not to be a prosecuting attorney, jury, or judge!

- 4. Keep it short.**

In most cases, due to the high level of emotions, we can find ourselves saying things we did not plan on saying that may undermine the purpose of the meeting, letter, or conversation.

- 5. Finally, ask them to forgive you for harboring bitterness toward them.**

Remember that what they may have done was wrong and offensive, but bitterness and unforgiveness is equally wrong.

*"In the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel."*

*-Romans 2:16*

*"Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judge, for in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things."*

*-Romans 2:1*

"The degree to which I am able and willing to forgive others is a clear indication of the extend to which I have personally experienced God my Father's forgiveness for me."

-Phillip Keller

## ***Maintaining Your Commitment to Forgive***

The person you have forgiven may continue to be a regular part of your life; possibly a parent, a child, or a spouse. When this is the case you may encounter a spiritual battle after you have asked for forgiveness or forgiven them.

*"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another."*

*-Galatians 5:22-26*

The forgiveness experience has changed you, but it has not necessarily changed *them*. God has had a major victory in your life in bringing you to this place of surrender and obedience, however, their position may not have changed! They may continue to hold onto bitterness toward you. If this is the case you need to seek God *daily* for His strength to extend mercy and compassion to them without compromising.

For example, if you forgave a parent for being harsh and unloving, and asked them to forgive you for harboring bitterness, yet the next time you see them, they continue to be harsh and unloving, your flesh may want to react in the way you formerly reacted. God will be faithful to produce His fruit in your life as you surrender to Him moment by moment.

*"For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places."*  
-Ephesians 6:12

You must keep in mind that your obedience in forgiving was not so that the other person or persons would change. Unless they surrender their lives and experiences to the Lord, they *cannot* change. Only God can change our hearts and renew our minds, and only if we surrender to Him.

We are involved in a spiritual battle everyday. The enemy, Satan, does not want you to obey God or have victory over sin. Therefore, he will attack your mind with past memories, evil thoughts, lies, temptations, and condemnation. You must exercise self-control and remember *what* and *whom* you are battling!

*"Be angry, and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give an opportunity to the devil."*  
-Ephesians 4:26 - 27

This is the reality in which we live! Satan hates to lose ground in your life. He does not like the idea that he has lost the ability to continue to rob you of God's peace and joy.

#### ◆ HOW DO I STOP GIVING THE DEVIL OPPORTUNITIES TO WORK HIS DESTRUCTION IN MY LIFE?

1. **Take each thought that enters your mind and measure it by God's Word to see if it is from God, from your flesh, or from the enemy.**

*"For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled."*  
-2 Corinthians 10:3-5

*"Finally brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy – meditate on these things."*  
- Philippians 4:8

2. **Pray in each instant of decision for God's power to do His will.**

*"Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."*  
-Romans 12:21

*"Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit."  
-Romans 15:13*

### 3. Resist and rebuke the devil in the name of Jesus.

*"Yet Michael the archangel, in contending with the devil...dared not bring against him a reviling accusation, but said, "The Lord rebuke you!"  
- Jude 1:9*

*"Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God...casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you...your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith..."  
-1 Peter 5:6-9*

*"... I have forgiven that one for your sakes in the presence of Christ, lest Satan take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices."  
-2 Corinthians 2:9-11*

God wants you to be aware of the devil's devices so that you can have victory. Unforgiveness is one of Satan's most powerful tactics to keep God's people in bondage!

#### ◆ **WHAT IF THE PERSON I NEED TO FORGIVE IS DECEASED? CAN I STILL FORGIVE THEM?**

Bitterness in the human heart lives on long after the object of that bitterness has died. Forgiveness is not optional, but a requirement from God which His children must obey. The death of the offender does not nullify God's Word. True, biblical forgiveness requires us to take action. We must do more than agree in our minds or hearts that we should forgive. The Bible does not command us to merely *feel* forgiveness. We must exercise our will and follow through with our actions!

You must begin with confession to the Lord. To *confess* means *to acknowledge or disclose one's misdeed, fault or sin*. It is helpful if you speak your confession out loud and verbalize your forgiveness of the deceased person, in the presence of a trusted friend, spouse, pastor, counselor, etc.

**Use the following prayer to help guide you:**

*"Lord Jesus, thank you for dying on the cross and forgiving me for all of my sins. I agree with Your Word that I must forgive this person for the hurt they caused me. I ask You for the strength to obey and speak these words of forgiveness.*

*I forgive...for...(you may say out loud, if you wish). I ask you to take away my bitterness and forgive me for holding onto this bitterness for so long. In Jesus Name I pray. Amen"*

#### ◆ **WHAT IF THE PERSON THAT I AM FORGIVING DOES NOT WANT TO RECONCILE THE RELATIONSHIP?**

You must keep in mind that you are only responsible for your part of reconciliation. Regardless of the position the other person takes, you must obey God by asking for forgiveness and giving forgiveness. If the other person refuses to grant you forgiveness or if they do not acknowledge their wrong toward you, God will still bless you for your obedience and pour out His peace, grace, and mercy upon your life. You will still experience His freedom from your bondage.

You cannot place any expectations or requirements upon what the other person may say or do, but surrender all to the Lord and trust Him to work in the midst of your circumstances. This is a major inner personal battle that many people face with this act of obedience.

We must not lean on our own understanding, but obey and surrender to God and His will. He has given us spiritual laws to govern and protect us. His Word gives us understanding and instructions in how to follow these laws. Our flesh, our pride, and fear will keep us from trusting and obeying God in these situations, but through the power of the Holy Spirit, we can overcome.

*“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him and He shall direct your paths.”*  
-Proverbs 3:5-6

**Pray this prayer:**

*“Lord Jesus, I pray for the strength to trust You in these circumstances. Help me to remember that I am doing this for You. I do not look to... for anything, but place my life in Your hands. I pray for reconciliation with this person, but I know that I can only do my part. I pray for...to surrender to You that You might be glorified. I trust you entirely with the results. In Jesus Name I pray. Amen”*

## **Conclusion**

It is awfully hard to forgive. It is harder *not* to forgive. If we do not forgive, we deny what Jesus has done for us on the cross. Our experience of God’s forgiveness is directly related to our ability to forgive. A readiness to forgive others is part of the indication that we have truly repented and received God’s forgiveness. A broken heart toward God cannot be a hard heart toward others.

Pride and fear keep us from forgiveness and reconciliation. Refusing to give in, or be broken, insisting on our rights, and defending ourselves are all indications that our selfish pride is ruling our life, rather than the Lord. If fears of ‘what-ifs’ are consuming and controlling you, you need to pray for the faith to trust and obey God. Enemies are very expensive to keep. Matthew 18:21-35 warns that an unforgiving heart will put us in an emotional prison.

*“The first and often the only person to be healed by forgiveness is the person who does the forgiving... When we genuinely forgive, we set a prisoner free and then discover that the prisoner we set free was us.”*

-Lewis Smedes

### ESSENTIALS FOR SINGLE PARENTS

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God's original plan for the family was to bring the man and woman together in the love and commitment of the marriage relationship. He would then bless their love and commitment with the gift of children. In an environment of intimacy, love, and submission to their Creator, the parents would love and train their children in God's ways. God desired that the fruit of the marriage relationship would be godly offspring.

*"... the LORD has been witness between you and the wife of your youth...she is your companion and your wife by covenant...did He not make them one...? And why one? He seeks godly offspring..."*  
- Malachi 2:14-15

When the man and woman turned from their Creator and sinned in the Garden of Eden, their intimacy with God was destroyed, they were expelled from the garden, and God's original plan for the family was affected. The Fall resulted in disunity and contention between the man and the women, which continues to dominate and destroy male and female relationships, and marriages today. In addition, the offspring from the marriage inherited their parent's sin nature, and suffered like consequences. Single parent families, resulting from death, divorce and children born to unmarried mothers were a consequence of the fall of man.

*"...Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so."*  
-Matthew 19:8

The first single parent family recorded in Scripture was Hagar, Abraham and Sarai's Egyptian maid, and her son, Ishmael, fathered by Abraham. Sarai was unable to bear children, therefore she urged her husband to father a child with Hagar. Sarai later changed her mind and resented Hagar and her son. On two occasions Hagar had personal encounters with God.

Hagar's first meeting with God was before the birth of her son. Having been harshly treated by Sarai, she fled to the wilderness. God met her there and confirmed to her that He heard her affliction. He then counseled her to return to her home, and instructed her to name her son Ishmael, which means *God hears*. Her second visitation with God was a few years later when she and Ishmael, driven from Abraham's home, departed and wandered in the wilderness. Certain that she and her son would soon die, she lifted up her voice and wept. God proved to this single parent once again that He is the God who hears. God comforted her, counseled her and opened her eyes to His will for her and her family.

*"LORD, You have heard the desire of the humble; you will prepare their heart; you will cause Your ear to hear, To do justice to the fatherless and the oppressed, that the man of the earth may oppress no more."*  
-Psalm 10:17-18

Read the account of Hagar and Ishmael in Genesis 16:1-16 and 21:9-21. Our culture has changed drastically since this family lived several thousand years ago, but single parents today share many of the same struggles, needs, feelings and emotions. Though this biblical account centers on a woman, single fathers and mothers alike know the hurt of rejection, loneliness, and fear for their children, as well as financial crisis. Consider the following important principles we learn from Hagar's experience with the *God who hears*.

- The Angel of the Lord (an Old Testament appearance of Jesus Christ) found Hagar in the wilderness.
- The Angel of the Lord guided her in the midst of her distress.
- He gave her His promises.
- He gave her hope for her future and the future of her son.
- Hagar responded to Him with faith calling God, *Elroi*, the God who sees.
- God heard the cries of her son.
- He spoke to Hagar about the welfare of her son.
- God commanded Hagar to lift up her son and hold him by the hand.
- God opened Hagar's eyes to see His provision.
- God was with Ishmael.

The important lesson that we learn from this story is that God sees, hears, cares and is waiting to intercede in the single-parent family. He loves the children in these homes, children who have suffered loss through death, divorce, or abandonment by those who were called by God to love and train them. We learn that God not only hears, but He heals. God is waiting to demonstrate His faithfulness and power to you and your children. You must respond as Hagar, with trust and obedience.

## PRINCIPLES FOR SINGLE PARENT FAMILIES

### 1. Receive your daily strength and guidance from the Lord.

Single parents must spend time daily with the Lord. If our busy lifestyles overrule our intimacy with Christ, we will soon find ourselves powerless and overwhelmed by our circumstances. We need God's perspective, wisdom, hope and guidance everyday. Parents must set the example, showing their children what it looks like to live a godly life in the midst of difficult circumstances!

*"...The helpless commits himself to You; you are the helper of the fatherless."*  
-Psalm 10:14

### 2. Encourage your child to have a relationship with the other parent.

Even if the other parent is not fulfilling their role in a consistent and biblical manner, your children need to have a relationship with that parent. Never compromise your child's physical or emotional well being. As your child grows and matures they will make their own choices about their relationship with the other parent.

### 3. Make every effort to promote unity with the other parent.

If possible, agree on your rules and methods of discipline. In order for this to happen, parents must set aside all selfishness and unforgiveness. Life can become very stressful and confusing for a child who routinely has to go back and forth between different homes. When parents are able to work together, it helps to eliminate some of this confusion. When children witness their parents working together, it is a blessing for them. In some cases this is not possible. Never put your child or yourself in an emotionally or physically dangerous or damaging situation.

*"If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men."*  
-Romans 12:18 (NAU)

## 4. Accept your child's desire to see the other parent.

You must not allow yourself to be overwhelmed that your children are spending time with their other parent. Your attitude can set the stage for behavior problems. This transition is hard enough on the children. Don't let a poor attitude on your part add to the confusion. Be sensitive to your child when they arrive home after visiting the other parent, ready to listen and express happiness if they had a good time. If necessary remind them that they are home where your rules are the standard.

## 5. Establish yourself and your children in a Bible-teaching church.

While there is no perfect church, there is a perfect church for you and your children. God's Word exhorts us to,

*"...not forsake our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another..."*  
-Hebrews 10:25

*"Those who are planted in the house of the LORD shall flourish in the courts of our God."*  
-Psalm 92:13

The church is God's family. Your children need the love, stability, mentoring and parenting of other members of the family of God. Children from single-parent families need to see how two-parent families function, and have healthy role-models.

*"A father of the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in His holy habitation. God sets the solitary in families..."*  
-Psalm 68:5-6

*"Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world."*  
-James 1:27

## 6. Pursue friendship, fellowship and fun with other Christian families.

Being unmarried, many single parents feel that they do not fit in with married couples. Although because they are parents, they also do not feel that they fit in with singles. The result can be loneliness and isolation. If parents are lonely and isolated, their children will either follow their example, or pursue a social life on their own. Take advantage of extended family, your children's school activities, as well as opportunities to participate in fellowship and social functions through your church.

*"But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin."*  
-1 John 1:7

## 7. If the need arises, seek godly counsel.

If you feel that there are issues and situations in your life or the lives of your children that need immediate attention and solutions, you may want to seek biblical counseling from your pastor or a qualified Christian counselor.

*"Where there is no counsel, the people fall; but in the multitude of counselors there is safety."*  
-Proverbs 11:14

*"The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but he who heeds counsel is wise."*  
-Proverbs 12:15

## Appendix G

**EFFECTIVE LISTENING SELF-EVALUATION**

Complete the Effective Listening Self-Evaluation to help you become more aware of your listening habits. Answer each question thoughtfully and honestly.

#	Communicating Knowledge and Attitudes	Most of the time	Frequently	Occasionally	Almost Never
1.	Tune-out your child when they say something you don't agree with or don't want to hear?				
2.	Concentrate on what is being said even if you are not really interested?				
3.	Assume you know what your child is going to say and stop listening?				
4.	Repeat in your own words what your child has just said?				
5.	Listen to your child's viewpoint, even if it differs from yours?				
6.	Open to learn something from each child, even if it seems insignificant?				
7.	Find out what words mean when they are used in ways not familiar to you?				
8.	Form a rebuttal in your head while your child is still talking?				
9.	Give the appearance of listening when you aren't?				
10.	Daydream while your child is talking?				
11.	Listen for main ideas, not just facts?				
12.	Recognize that words don't mean exactly the same thing to different people?				
13.	Listen to only what you want to hear, blotting out your child's whole message?				
14.	Look at your child when he/she is speaking?				
15.	Concentrate on your child's meaning rather than how he or she looks?				
16.	Know which words and phrases you tend to respond to emotionally?				
17.	Think about what you want to accomplish with your communication?				

#	Communicating Knowledge and Attitudes	Most of the time	Frequently	Occasionally	Almost Never
18.	Plan the best time to say what you want to say?				
19.	Think about how the other person might react to what you say?				
20.	Consider the best way to communicate (written, spoken, and/or the timing)?				
21.	Always care about your child's emotional condition when speaking to them (stressed, sad, worried, hostile, disinterested, rushed, angry, etc.)?				
22.	Adjust your communication to each child's personality?				
23.	Think, "I assumed he or she would know that?" Assuming that your child knows and understands what you are communicating and/or communicated to them?				
24.	Allow your child to vent negative feelings toward you without becoming defensive?				
25.	Regularly make efforts to increase your listening efficiency?				
26.	Take notes when necessary to help you remember?				
27.	Listen closely without being distracted by surroundings?				
28.	Listen to your child without judging or criticizing?				
29.	Restate instructions and messages to be sure you understand correctly?				
30.	Come in with a statement about what you believe your child is feeling?				

Circle the number that represents the category you checked on each item of the Effective Listening Self-Evaluation.

#	Most of the Time	Frequently	Occasionally	Almost Never
1	1	2	3	4
2	4	3	2	1
3	1	2	3	4
4	4	3	2	1
5	4	3	2	1
6	4	3	2	1
7	4	3	2	1
8	1	2	3	4
9	1	2	3	4
10	1	2	3	4
11	4	3	2	1
12	4	3	2	1
13	1	2	3	4
14	4	3	2	1
15	4	3	2	1
16	4	3	2	1
17	4	3	2	1
18	4	3	2	1
19	4	3	2	1
20	4	3	2	1
21	4	3	2	1
22	4	3	2	1
23	1	2	3	4
24	4	3	2	1
25	4	3	2	1
26	4	3	2	1
27	4	3	2	1
28	4	3	2	1
29	4	3	2	1
30	4	3	2	1
TTL				

GRAND TOTAL \_\_\_\_\_

110 - 120:	Superior Listener	_____
99 - 109:	Above Average Listener	_____
88 - 98:	Average Listener	_____
77 - 87:	Fair Listener	_____
<77:	Poor to Very Poor Listener	_____

After completing the Effective Listening Self-Evaluation and totaling your score, write out, by priority, the areas you need to change.

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

If you believe that you have not been demonstrating loving communication to your children (or a particular child), I strongly recommend that you follow the following steps to reconciliation.

**1. Confess this to the Lord and ask Him to forgive you for not communicating love to *His* child/children.**

*"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."  
-1 John 1:9*

**2. Ask God to fill your heart with renewed love for your child/children.**

*"Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us."  
-Romans 5:5*

**3. Go to your child/children and make an age-appropriate confession.**

For example, *"I love you, but I know that I have not been showing you that love with my words. I have been very impatient (unkind, etc.) and I need to apologize. Please forgive me. I love you and I am so glad to be your mom/dad."*

**4. Pray with your child.**

Use the space provided below to write out a prayer of commitment to seek the Lord to empower you to change in these areas and to become the parent to your child that God desires you to be.

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## WAYS TO TELL YOUR CHILD "I LOVE YOU"

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1. Attend their sports events, music performance, etc.
2. Find opportunities to trust your child by granting him/her a new area of responsibility.
3. Have a family picnic on a Sunday afternoon.
4. Walk in the rain and jump puddles together.
5. Listen to your child with all of your attention.
6. Sit down together and watch your child's favorite television show.
7. Skip rocks together on a lake, pond or river.
8. Say, "*I'm proud of you.*"
9. After your teenage comes in from an outing, have popcorn together by the fireplace.
10. Tell your child about the things that you appreciate most about your own parents.
11. Have a family water-balloon fight (without you as the prime target).
12. Take an evening walk together.
13. Let your child *catch you* bragging about them to a friend.
14. Hug your child *just because*.
15. Postpone an appointment and, instead, do something your child enjoys doing.
16. Surprise your child by giving them a day off from school and spend the day together.
17. Tell your daughter that she is beautiful.
18. Tell your son that he is handsome.
19. Give your child grace when he/she has made a mistake.
20. Pray with your child everyday!
21. Seize appropriate opportunities to ask your child for his/her opinion.
22. Accept their unique personality traits.
23. Write a note expressing your love for them.
24. Bake or buy their favorite cookies.



## Appendix J

**FAMILY RULES AND DISCIPLINES CHART**

Child's Name \_\_\_\_\_

**Rule 1:** \_\_\_\_\_*Discipline* \_\_\_\_\_**Rule 2:** \_\_\_\_\_*Discipline* \_\_\_\_\_**Rule 3:** \_\_\_\_\_*Discipline* \_\_\_\_\_**Rule 4:** \_\_\_\_\_*Discipline* \_\_\_\_\_**Rule 5:** \_\_\_\_\_*Discipline* \_\_\_\_\_**Rule 6:** \_\_\_\_\_*Discipline* \_\_\_\_\_**Rule 7:** \_\_\_\_\_*Discipline* \_\_\_\_\_**Rule 8:** \_\_\_\_\_*Discipline* \_\_\_\_\_**Rule 9:** \_\_\_\_\_*Discipline* \_\_\_\_\_**Rule 10:** \_\_\_\_\_*Discipline* \_\_\_\_\_

# CHORE CHART

Child's Name \_\_\_\_\_

**Chore:** \_\_\_\_\_

*Discipline* \_\_\_\_\_

**Chore:** \_\_\_\_\_

*Discipline* \_\_\_\_\_

**Chore:** \_\_\_\_\_

*Discipline* \_\_\_\_\_

**Chore:** \_\_\_\_\_

*Discipline* \_\_\_\_\_

**Chore:** \_\_\_\_\_

*Discipline* \_\_\_\_\_

**Chore:** \_\_\_\_\_

*Discipline* \_\_\_\_\_

**Chore:** \_\_\_\_\_

*Discipline* \_\_\_\_\_

**Chore:** \_\_\_\_\_

*Discipline* \_\_\_\_\_

**Chore:** \_\_\_\_\_

*Discipline* \_\_\_\_\_

**Chore:** \_\_\_\_\_

*Discipline* \_\_\_\_\_

## PARENT'S QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TEENAGERS

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Choose an appropriate time when your teen is in a relaxed mood, possibly at dinner or while playing cards or a board game together, to ask them the following questions. Be casual, not intense! Do not simply hand your children the questionnaire to complete on their own. You may have to *prod* them a little. For example, if they answer question #3, "*I don't know*," press them a little by asking, "*What are you doing at your age right now and what is important to you?*" Remember to give them time to answer. Don't tell them what *you* think they should answer, and *absolutely* do not belittle them!

1. What does the term *adolescence* mean?

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2. When does adolescence begin and end?

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3. The years between the ages of 13 and 18 is a time to be doing what?

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4. What is your definition of a mature adult, and when does someone become a mature adult?

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5. What do you think you are currently doing that is helping you become a mature adult?

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6. What role do your parents play in your life right now?

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**PARENT'S QUESTIONNAIRE FOR  
YOUTH TURNING AGE 18**

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The following questions are designed for discussion with your child just prior to his or her 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. They are most effective when discussed in a relaxed setting, for the purpose of stimulating your child to think, and to encourage a more adult relationship with your child as they are entering adulthood. It will also reveal what they believe is going to change in their relationship with you.

**1. At 18 what do mom and I owe you besides our love?**

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**2. Do you believe that the reason we help you the way we do is because we love you?**  
 Yes  No

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**3. Should we be doing more for you than we are currently doing or committed to do?**  
 Yes  No

**If yes, what should we be doing?**

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**4. Do we have the right to require anything of you in return for you continuing to live in our home?  Yes  No**  
**Explain.**

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**5. If you do not agree with something we ask or require of you what should you do?**

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**6. If you ignore our request and do something that we have made clear not to do, what do you think we should do? What should you do?**

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## **PARENT SELF-EVALUATION CHECKLIST**

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Now that you have established your parenting structure, which includes the Four Tools of Training enforced in love, you may experience times of defeat or frustration and begin believing that this parenting style does not work for your family. If this happens, don't panic and look to the world's methods! Don't fall back on old habits! Instead, use the following evaluation checklist to discern the true source of the problem.

### **YOUR SPIRITUAL FOUNDATION**

- ✓ How is your devotional life? Read Psalm 1:1-3. Would you use words like worshiping, listening, thanking, confessing, interceding, etc. to describe your daily communication with God?
- ✓ Do you read and meditate upon God's Word in a daily quiet time?
- ✓ Are you trusting God with your finances and giving tithes regularly?
- ✓ Are your priorities in accordance with God's desires for you and your family? Is the fruit of the Spirit evident in your life?

**Remember:** You must depend upon The Lord! The key is not your parenting methods, but a relationship with God!

### **COMMUNICATING IN LOVE**

- ✓ Turn to Appendix G and take the Effective Listening Self-Evaluation.
- ✓ Have you been reacting in the flesh to your children or responding to them in love?
- ✓ Take a moment and review *What Love Is Not* on pages 45-57. Are there areas where you need to improve in your communication or apologize to your children?

**Remember:** Your communication with and toward your child reflects the value you have placed upon them.

### **TRAINING YOUR CHILDREN THROUGH DISCIPLESHIP AND DISCIPLINE**

- ✓ The best way to train is by personal example. How are you doing?
- ✓ If married, are you and your spouse working together and supporting one another? How is your management style? Who is the main disciplinarian?
- ✓ Are you sticking to your rules and using **only** the pre-determined disciplines and punishment, or has nagging, yelling, empty threats, and inconsistency crept back in?
- ✓ Are you praying regularly with your children? Have you followed through with your commitment to have a weekly family Bible study?

**Remember:** God loves you and He loves your children. You must trust Him. He did not give you the wrong children. He has not given you a task beyond your ability to accomplish as you trust in Him and obey His will.

Has God revealed areas in your family relationships where you have drifted off-course? If so, follow the steps outlined below to get your home back on course.

1. Confess to God, acknowledging your weaknesses, mistakes or failures.
2. Receive God's forgiveness. Allow Him to embrace you in His arms of love and grace.
3. Repent by turning away from your error and commit to walk in obedience to His will.

## PARENT'S COMMITMENT LETTER

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Dear Parents,

As you begin these lessons, I want to encourage you that God will bless you as you seek His guidance and wisdom for your family.

*"...He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him."  
-Hebrews 11:6*

I also want to challenge you to make a serious commitment to finish the workbook. If God has led you to begin, know that He desires you to finish. After reading the following commitment, please sign and date below.

*I commit to seek the Lord's will and guidance for my family, to attend each parenting class, to complete my assigned homework, and to pray for the other parents in the class.*

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Father's Signature

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Date

---

Mother's Signature

---

Date

# ***PARENTING***

# ***IS A***

# ***MINISTRY***

## **LEADER'S GUIDE**

*Parenting is a Ministry* leader's aides available:

- CD ROM - includes *PIAM* manual in .pdf and complete audio corresponding to each lesson
- Eight-tape set - complete audio corresponding to each lesson

## ***PARENTING IS A MINISTRY LEADER'S GUIDE***

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### **THE GOAL OF THESE LESSONS IS TO TEACH AND ENCOURAGE PARENTS:**

- God's design for the family
- God's purpose for parents
- The importance of unity in the parents' marriage relationship
- The roles of the mother and father in the maturing process of their children
- How to meet their children's emotional needs through loving communication
- How to discipline (train, raise) their children to maturity
- How to incorporate changes and start over

### **THE LEADER'S RESPONSIBILITIES:**

- Oversee and conduct eight consecutive two-hour parenting classes and one follow-up meeting to be scheduled for approximately one month after the final parenting class.
- Assist parents in understanding material, using clarifying information contained in the Leader's Guide.
- Schedule classes as described in Leader's Guide. It is important that the discussion does not infringe on the prayer time.
- Lead discussion.
- Begin and end the class on time.
- Keep the conversation on track.
- Encourage the introverts and control the extroverts.
- Refer parents to pastoral counsel for marriage or other major problems that exist in the home.

### **THE LEADER SHOULD NOT:**

- Counsel parents and solve problems.
- Meet with parents outside of class time to discuss problems.
- Dominate class time discussing his own family.
- Giving his personal opinion or advice.
- Discussing any information obtained in the class with others outside of the class.
- Adding to or taking away from information given in Leader's Guide.
- Using class time to promote or teach his own views.

## WEEK ONE - Introductory Session

1. The Leader introduces himself (if married, he introduces his wife, gives names and ages of his children), welcomes the parents, and opens in prayer. He then shares the goal of the *Parenting Is A Ministry* classes, the format that will be followed each week, and the commitment that is required from the parents to complete the course.
  - The group will meet for eight consecutive two-hour sessions and one follow-up class to be scheduled for approximately one month after the final class. Check your calendar for any up-coming holidays that may conflict with the class.
  - It is essential that parents attend all eight classes. If there is a possibility that they will not be able to finish the eight-week course, they should be encouraged to postpone starting for a more convenient time.
  - Announce the date of the follow-up meeting.
  - Parents are expected to complete the homework prior to each class. If they do not complete their homework they should be asked to not share or ask questions during that class. To come unprepared, needing additional explanation, could be a distraction to the other parents.
  - Each week's homework is divided into five days. Each day's homework should take approximately one hour or less to complete.
  - Parents should be encouraged to pay special attention to the Scriptures on the side margins of each page. They are included because these biblical truths are the basis for the parenting principles.
2. It is vital that the Leader communicates to the parents that they are asked to **not** give their opinions or counsel to other parents in response to problems that will be discussed. In addition, if an emergency situation arises, the Leader should **not** attempt to handle the situation himself, but refer the parent to their pastor for counsel.
3. Ask parents to introduce themselves, tell if they are married, single, or blended family, and give the names and ages of their children.
  - Give each parent three to five minutes to share why they are attending the class and what they hope to gain.
  - The Leader must firmly, yet gently hold each person to the three to five-minute limit. You may want to purchase a kitchen timer to use when each parent begins (for those *long-winded* parents in the group).
4. Pass out 3x5 cards for parents to write out their name and the names and ages of their children (married couples do only one card). Collect the cards and, upon leaving the class, each couple or parent will take a card (make sure they do not get their own card) and commit to pray for that family for the 8-week duration of the class.

Provide 3x5 cards each week for parents to write out their prayer requests (limited to prayer needs relating to their children and/or their relationship with their children) to give to their prayer partner. Parents are asked to respect the confidentiality of the group, and **not** share these prayer requests, or any other information discussed in the group outside of the class.

**WEEK ONE - Continued**

Communicate to the parents that at the end of each class they will break up into small groups of two to four couples to pray for one another. Be sensitive to the fact that some parents may not be comfortable praying in a group. Encourage them that God hears our hearts and they can agree while the others pray, and pray silently. The others in the group will understand.

5. Pass out the ***Parenting Is A Ministry*** workbook. Ask the parents to turn to Appendix N, *Parent's Commitment Letter*.
6. The Leader should encourage the parents to be committed to this opportunity that God has given them to learn and grow. Give the parents a few minutes to read, sign and date their letter.
7. Ask the parents to turn to Appendix C, *How to Develop Intimacy With God Through Daily Devotions*. Explain that the foundation for everything that they learn in the class is their intimate relationship with Christ. Read the definition of *intimacy* and the seven points that follow.

There may be some parents in the group that do not know Christ, therefore, refer the entire group to Appendix A, *Commitment to Christ*.

8. The Leader should provide the parents with a few minutes to ask any closing questions in reference to the class.
9. The Leader should share some closing words of encouragement with the group and close in prayer.

Additional considerations – Many parents will not be able to attend the parenting class unless some arrangements are made to provide childcare. Also, in order to encourage and embrace single parents, consider providing special assistance (i.e. babysitting, transportation).

You may want to serve light refreshments (water, coffee and cookies). Hospitality will promote fellowship and unity in your group.

Be sensitive to the fact that most people are private about what goes on inside their homes. Whenever possible, alleviate potential tension with encouraging statements. For example,

- *We don't belittle our spouses here.*
- *We are all here to learn.*
- *God has a big job on His hands, but He is faithful.*
- *God did not make a mistake when He gave us our children.*
- *God knows what He is doing. We have to trust Him to tell us!*
- *It's okay that you didn't know this before. God knows you are ready to receive now.*
- *We have a powerful God. He can redeem our failures and mistakes.*
- *God has given our kid's a free will.*
- *We only have to be obedient to do our part. God will be faithful to do His part.*

## *WEEK ONE - Continued*

In addition, be sensitive to times when you need to interject light humor.

In *all* sharing times keep comments to no more than 5 minutes. You will learn who the *talkers* are in your group. If allowed, some individuals will consume the conversation. A gentle and humorous reminder at the beginning of the class, as well as getting the group accustomed to the kitchen timer is a good solution to this potential distracting problem.

Remember that you are called to *lead* the group. You are not a counselor, pastor, Bible scholar, best friend, or God-appointed problem solver!

As a leader, it is crucial that you are abiding in Christ, spending time daily in the Word and prayer. You are an example. Make sure your own home and your relationship with your spouse and family is in order before God.

## WEEK TWO - Parenting is a Ministry

The emphasis for the Leader is to help the parents understand that fulfilling their responsibility to parent their children can only be accomplished when they:

- Accept their parental roles and purpose as defined by God in His Word
- Gain God's perspective on the uniqueness and value of their children
- Commit to learn and to obey His will.

### GROUP QUESTIONS

1. How many parents here feel like they've been given a job, but are not equipped to accomplish that job? Can any of you identify with the *maze* illustration?
2. Do you believe that God's Word is the *complete* parenting manual?
3. Let me see a raise of hands from those who believe that their own parents were equipped for the task of parenting children. Any comments? The Leader should be sensitive to the fact that there may be parents in the group who were raised in unloving, controlling or abusive situations that they have not resolved through forgiveness. Be prepared to gently move the discussion on to the next point.
4. What have you learned about being a minister to your own children? What does this mean to you personally? How does knowing this effect the way you should parent your children? What changes need to take place in your home?
5. What are God's three purposes for parents?
  - God's glorification  
How do you think your children would answer the question, "*Do your parents reflect and glorify Jesus? All the time, some of the time, or not much?*"
  - The parent's transformation  
How has God used your children, their failures, mistakes and irritations as His *fingers* to transform you? Have you been resisting or accepting God's transforming work through your children?
  - To love and train our children  
Do you find it easier to love than train or vice verse?
6. What did you learn about Moses that applies to you as a parent? Have you forgotten (or not understood) that in raising your children you were serving God?
7. Have you been taking your children's failures personally?

## *WEEK TWO - Continued*

### **CLOSING PROCEDURES**

- Review the *Parenting Principles*.
- Take a few minutes to ask parents if they have any closing questions.
- Before breaking up for prayer, ask the parents how their devotional life has been in the past week, encouraging them once again that intimacy with Christ is the foundation of the Christian life.
- Break up into small groups to pray and to exchange prayer requests between prayer partners.

### **PARENTING PRINCIPLES FOR *PARENTING IS A MINISTRY***

1. The Word of God is the parent's instruction manual for raising their children and does not change due to the uniqueness of our children's personalities.
2. Parenting is a learned skill. We cannot give up or relinquish our God-given responsibility to parent our children.
3. Parents need God's wisdom and power.
4. Parents are called by God to be ministers to their children.
5. As parents/ministers, we are servants of the Lord, fulfilling His will and purpose.
6. Our purpose as parents/ministers is to glorify God, to be transformed into His image and to love and train our children.
7. To exemplify Jesus, parents must keep their eyes on the Lord and not allow their children's failures to dictate their actions and responses.

## WEEK THREE- A Strong Foundation

The emphasis for the Leader is to help the parents understand that in order to build our families, we must begin with a strong foundation, which is an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ.

### GROUP QUESTIONS

1. Read Deuteronomy 6:1-6 (or ask for a volunteer to read). What is God communicating to us through these verses?
2. What must be our motive for obedience? What things motivate most Christians?

The order must be:

- Love for God
- Storing His Word in our hearts
- Obedience to His will

3. Read Luke 6:46-49 (or ask for a volunteer to read). Why was the house of the second man ruined?

God is warning that we can be Christians, hear His Word preached, even read the Word individually, but have ruined lives due to an unwillingness to obey. Jesus said in John 13:17, *"Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them."* The blessing is not in simply *knowing*, but in *doing*.

4. What is the first step to building a strong foundation?
5. If you are here and have never *come to Christ* for salvation, or you are not certain about your salvation, please come see me after the class tonight. Perhaps God has used the challenge of parenting your children to get your attention about your relationship or lack of relationship with Him.
6. What is the second step in building a strong foundation? Read the definition of *abide* and *disciple*. Many Christians try to *be good* and *do good* but their efforts only lead to frustration because they are neglecting daily intimacy with God.
7. How did you fare on your foundation inspection? Is there room for improvement? Maybe you once had a strong foundation, but have experienced some erosion. Maybe you have gotten distracted from intimacy with the Savior. Jesus said that there are three things that can distract from devotion to Him.

*"...and the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things entering in choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful."*

*-Mark 4:19*

8. Read Matthew 14:22-31 (or ask for a volunteer to read). How does your current situation in your home relate to the disciples caught in the storm? What has God taught you that He will do through the storms of life? What must you do?
9. How does this specifically apply to parenting your children?

## WEEK THREE- Continued

### CLOSING PROCEDURES

- Review the *Parenting Principles*.
- Take a few minutes to ask if there are any closing questions
- Before breaking up for prayer, ask the parents how their devotional life has been in the past week, encouraging them that intimacy with Christ is the foundation of the Christian life.
- Break up into small groups to pray and to exchange prayer requests between prayer partners.

### PARENTING PRINCIPLES FOR A STRONG FOUNDATION

1. In order to fulfill God's plan as parents, we must establish a strong foundation through intimacy with God.
2. Abiding in an intimate relationship with Christ is the key ingredient to a strong spiritual foundation.
3. Neglecting daily devotion to Christ will result in a weak foundation.
4. When we do not make prayer and Bible reading a priority in our lives, we are rebelling against God's design for the family.
5. God's purpose in the storms of life is to transform us and draw us closer to Him.

## WEEK FOUR - Loving Communication

The emphasis for the Leader is to help the parents understand that their children have emotional needs and that they are God's provision to meet those emotional needs.

### GROUP QUESTIONS

1. Do any of you have a child with unique emotional needs (extremely shy, has unrealistic fears, ultra-sensitive, etc.)? Isn't it great to know that God created our kids, that He absolutely understands them and that He wants to use us to love them and meet their emotional needs? What a privilege it is to be a parent!
2. Were you surprised by the statistics you read that:
  - The average working mother spends approximately 11 minutes per day in one-on-one communication with her child during the week, and 30 minutes per day on weekends.
  - The average father spends about 8 minutes per day on weekdays and 14 minutes on the weekends.
  - Did you stop for a moment and ask yourself how much time you spend communicating with your children one-on-one?

Last week we read Jesus' words in Mark 14:19 that the three things that distract from devotion to Him are *the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things*. Commonly these are the same things that distract parents from spending time with their kids.

Would you all agree that we need to get our priorities in order, and do better?

3. What is the most powerful motivator to help our kids make good choices and do the right things? How do parents commonly attempt to motivate their kids?
4. What did you learn about reacting in the flesh verses responding in love? How many reactors in the group?
5. Read the definition of *Agape* from page 35. This is the love God calls us to love His children with. Does anybody find it easy to love with God's love?
6. Read 1 Corinthians 13:4-8a. What specific points on loving communication, or unloving communication, has the Holy Spirit convicted you about?

Yelling, criticizing, arrogance, rudeness, selfishness, thinking evil of your children, hardness of heart, not praising them, not hugging them, not bearing or enduring with them, not spending time with them, etc.

These are hard things to own up to in a group!

7. What are the three ways that we communicate?

Visual (55%) – Tone of Voice (38%) - Verbal (7%)

## WEEK FOUR - Continued

8. The three ingredients to loving communication are:

- What is in our hearts
- The value we place on the person we are communicating with
- It is a learned skill.

Because what is in our hearts spills out of our mouth, we must have our hearts filled with the life of Jesus. It always goes back to our strong foundation in Christ!

9. Why are our children so valuable? Have you seen (and treated) your children as God's unique creation, His children, gifts from Him, or have you seen them as your possessions?

10. Our homes are battlegrounds. Our enemy hates us because he hates God and God loves us. Our homes are one of Satan's primary targets! Satan gains a sense of satisfaction if he can succeed in bringing us down and destroying our families. Parents can unknowingly be Satan's weapons against their own children. Common reasons we fail to demonstrate love to our children are:

- Unforgiveness
- The Set Up (Satan's attacks upon our thoughts about their children)
- The Persecution (our children's rebellion, rejection of our love and guidance, mistakes and sin directed against their parents)
- Our Selfishness

11. Do you see how parents can unknowingly be tools of the enemy against their children?

### CLOSING PROCEDURES

- Review the *Parenting Principles*.
- Take a few minutes to ask if there are any closing questions.
- Before breaking up for prayer, ask the parents how their devotional life has been in the past week, encouraging them that intimacy with Christ is the foundation of the Christian life.
- Break up into small groups to pray and to exchange prayer requests between prayer partners.

### PARENTING PRINCIPLES FOR *LOVING COMMUNICATION*

1. By God's design, parents are to meet the emotional needs of their children.
2. Spending time with our children communicates our love to them.
3. Love is the most powerful motivator.
4. In order to respond in love rather than react, it is essential that we walk in the Spirit, spend time daily in prayer, and read and yield to the truths of God's Word.

*WEEK FOUR - Continued*

5. Loving our children is based on the value God places on them, not their personalities, strengths or weaknesses.
6. Love is not a feeling or an emotion, but an action that is defined in the Word of God.
7. Loving communication originates in our hearts, is a response to the value we place on others, and is a learned skill.
8. Our children are not our possessions. They belong to the Lord.
9. Forgiveness is a biblical principle that parents must practice daily.
10. Parents must repent of and rebuke every thought regarding their children that is contrary to the Word of God.
11. Our motive should not be to succeed at being good parents or even to raise good kids, but to please God.
12. God uses the difficulties we encounter in raising our children to reveal our selfishness.

## WEEK FIVE - Training Up Your Children - Part I

The emphasis for the Leader is to help the parents understand their twofold calling by God to train up their children, God's management style for married couples, biblical leadership in the home, the roles of the mother and father, and how to disciple their children.

### GROUP QUESTIONS

1. Did you know that God has called us to actually train our children? This training is twofold and defined as,

**Disciple** – (Verb) Instilling God's Word and morals and values into our children's hearts through example and instruction, teaching them to pray and how to have a relationship with God (*spiritual training*).

**Discipline** – Instilling the character traits of a mature adult, which are personal responsibility and self-control into our children (*training behavior*).

2. Though this is not a marriage class, the marriage relationship in the family is crucial, as we have learned.

From the beginning Adam (representing husbands) was the leader, and head of the family, and Eve (representing wives) was his helper. The husband needs the help and support of his wife in order to fulfill his role as head of the family under the lordship of Jesus Christ. The wife is to submit to her husband's leadership.

3. What erodes God's ideal for the marriage relationship?
4. Who is the head of the home? When Christ is the head of the home, there will be unity. When Christ is not the head of the home, there will be disunity.
5. Fathers, did you know that you are God's priests over your family under Christ, our High Priest? Fathers are to oversee the spiritual discipleship and disciplining (training behavior) of the children is carried out.
6. What did God reveal to you through the *Management Style Evaluation*? Any volunteers brave enough to share?

The answers *should* be as follows:

- |        |        |        |                                     |
|--------|--------|--------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. Yes | 3. Yes | 5. Yes | 7. Yes (you'll learn in this class) |
| 2. Yes | 4. No  | 6. No  | 8. No                               |

7. Read Deuteronomy 6:7-9 (or ask for a volunteer to read). What did you learn about how to disciple your children?
8. What changes do you need to make in your home in this area?
9. Have you taken on the mindset, "If I can just get my kids through high school without drugs, sex, or getting kicked out of school, I'll be happy?" or have you been raising them offensively for the Lord?

**WEEK FIVE - Continued**

10. Let's talk about family devotions. Does anybody have questions on the suggestions given in the book?

**CLOSING PROCEDURES**

- Review the *Parenting Principles*.
- Take a few minutes to ask if there are any closing questions.
- Before breaking up for prayer, ask the parents how their devotional life has been in the past week, encouraging them that intimacy with Christ is the foundation of the Christian life.
- Ask if anybody would like to share something that the Lord ministered to them in their personal devotions in the past week.
- Break up into small groups to pray and to exchange prayer requests between prayer partners.

**PARENTING PRINCIPLES FOR TRAINING UP YOUR CHILDREN – PART I**

1. Training up our children includes both spiritual discipleship and disciplining them to mature adulthood.
2. God intended marriage to be a relationship of mutual dependence and companionship.
3. As in the Garden of Eden, Satan continues today to attack marriages and the family.
4. God ordained the order of submission and authority in the home.
5. Christian couples must continually pray, seeking God's strength to obey and maintain His management style in the home.
6. If parents do not submit to God's management style, they will experience disunity and division in the home.
7. The mother's primary role is to lovingly care for and nurture her children.
8. The father's primary role is to responsibly provide for his family and to oversee the discipleship and training of his children.
9. God commands parents to disciple their own children.
10. Parents should perceive their children as offensive weapons for Christ.
11. Parents disciple their children by their godly example and by teaching them the Word of God.

## WEEK SIX - Training Up Your Children - Part II

The emphasis for the Leader in Week Six is to help the parents understand:

- The bull's-eye, the character traits of a mature adult and what results when parents do not direct their kids toward the goal of maturity
- The *Four Tools of Training*
- *Let's Make A Deal* (the child's three choices)
- The importance of disciplining behavior, not attitudes
- The difference between training and revenge

### GROUP QUESTION

1. Ask parents to define the three character traits of a mature adult:

- Morals and Values
- Personal Responsibility
- Self-Control

2. As you read the characteristics of an immature adult on page 99 did the Lord expose areas of immaturity in your own life?

Perhaps God has not only brought you to this class to teach you about parenting, but also to work in you personally. If God has convicted you about your own character seek out some godly counsel and yield these things to Him.

3. Understanding the *Four Tools of Training* is crucial. As you progress through this workbook these four tools will be expounded upon again and again. Understanding and implementing these tools, along with loving communication, are the essentials to parenting your children. The tools are:

- Rules/Boundaries – which must be clearly written out.  
Ask parents to explain the reasons they learned that rules should be written out.
- Discipline/Consequences – the training when our children break rules.  
Ask parents the reasons why parents must discipline their children.
- Punishment – the motivator to get our kids to accept to the training.  
Ask the parents if effective punishment requires anger, yelling, cussing, judging, or threatening.
- Consistency – to follow through with your plan.  
Ask parents what are the results when there is no consistency in training.

## WEEK SIX - Continued

4. Explain that the *Let's Make A Deal* illustration represents our children's response to our training.
  - Door #1 – Follow the rules - The parent's dream come true!
  - Door #2 – Break the rules and accept the discipline produces training – no punishment necessary
  - Door #3 – No rules and no discipline – A child's dream come true!

Children will challenge parents to give them Door #3. Parents must not respond with shock, anger, screaming, yelling, judging them, or becoming frustrated and bitter toward them, but calmly and consistently remove Door #3 as an option. Parents accomplish this on a daily basis through enforcing written rules, and consistently applying pre-determined disciplines and punishment when children refuse the discipline.

5. How many have children who commonly demonstrate a bad attitude? Actions such as, not looking at you when you correct them, pouting, frowning, angry facial expressions, rolling their eyes, etc.

What has been the result of trying to correct or discipline your child's emotions? What did you learn in this lesson that you should do? Parents, we need to discipline our kid's behavior, not try to govern their attitudes and emotions.

6. Revenge is when we try to get even with someone who has offended or wronged us. Revenge is an immature response to our loving/training ministry to our children and provokes, embitters and promotes rebellion in our kids. Revenge is a sin that must be confessed to God.

Remember that our children do not make our attitudes. They reveal them. Our children cannot make us sin.

### CLOSING PROCEDURES

- Review the *Parenting Principles*.
- Take a few minutes to ask if there are any closing questions.
- Before breaking up for prayer, ask the parents how their devotional life has been in the past week, encouraging them that intimacy with Christ is the foundation of the Christian life.
- Ask if anybody would like to share something that the Lord ministered to them in their personal devotions in the past week.
- Break up into small groups to pray and to exchange prayer requests between prayer partners.

## *WEEK SIX - Continued*

### **PARENTING PRINCIPLES FOR *TRAINING UP YOUR CHILDREN* – PART II**

1. God has called parents to raise their children to maturity.
2. The character traits of a mature adult are morals and values, personal responsibility and self-control.
3. Parents must teach their children to be a mature adult.
4. Rules must be clearly defined and written out.
5. Discipline instills the character traits of maturity in our children.
6. Punishment is a powerful motivator for our kids to accept our training.
7. Without consistency, we teach our children situational ethics and manipulations skills.
8. God did not make a mistake when He gave our children the ability to choose.
9. Parents must discipline behaviors not attitudes.
10. Our children do not make our attitudes. They reveal them.

## WEEK SEVEN - Training Up Your Children - Part III

The emphasis for the Leader is to help the parents understand:

- How to implement the *Four Tools of Training* using time out, the discipline box and other related disciplines
- How to appropriately and effectively use spanking, shut down and other related punishment
- How to determine and write out appropriate rules, disciplines and punishments for their children
- How to make a fair and reasonable chore list

### GROUP QUESTIONS

1. Explain the *Four Tools of Training*. Give parents an opportunity to ask questions pertaining to the tools and discuss how they work. Make sure the parents have grasped the principles before moving on.
  - Rules/Boundaries – must be clearly written out
  - Discipline/Consequences – the training when our children break a rule
  - Punishment – the motivator to get our kids to respond to the training
  - Consistency – to follow through with your plan every time a rule is broken
2. Ask for a show of hands from the parents that currently use time out as a discipline. Ask what they learned about how to make time out a more effective discipline.
3. Leader should make a discipline box prior to class. Explain the discipline box/discipline list and how to use them effectively.
4. Ask who in the group currently uses spanking as a discipline. Read over the *Principles for the Use of Spanking*.
5. Discuss shut down, giving parents an opportunity to ask clarifying questions.

Parents will go home and write out their rules, disciplines, punishments and chores, and bring them to the final class.

### CLOSING PROCEDURES

- Review the *Parenting Principles*.
- Take a few minutes to ask if there are any closing questions.
- Before breaking up for prayer, ask the parents how their devotional life has been in the past week, encouraging them that intimacy with Christ is the foundation of the Christian life.
- Break up into small groups to pray. Exchange prayer requests between prayer partners.

*WEEK SEVEN - Continued*

**PARENTING PRINCIPLES FOR TRAINING UP YOUR CHILDREN – PART III**

1. Our first ministry is our family
2. Lovingly establish respect for your authority.
3. Youthful defiance must be disciplined.
4. Good behavior is expected, not rewarded.
5. If we are not direct in our training, we teach our children that everything in life is negotiable.
6. Spanking is an effective punishment when administered with love and self-control.
7. Training ends when your children become responsible, mature adults or are no longer under your financial support.

## WEEK EIGHT - Starting Over

The emphasis for the Leader is to discuss the parent's rules, disciplines, punishments and chores, and to help the parents understand:

- The three steps to starting over
  - The four points of true forgiveness
  - How to set up a family meeting
  - Helping their children understand the system of rules, discipline, punishment, and chores
1. Ask for volunteers to share their rules, disciplines and punishments. The Leader should be prepared to gently make corrections or suggestions should parents have extreme or unreasonable rules, disciplines and punishments.

Allow approximately ½ hour of the class to hear and discuss the parent's lists.

2. Follow with some sharing and discussion on the parent's chores list.
3. Ask parents if they remember the three steps to starting over, which are:
  - Confession to God (humbly and honestly admitting our failures, mistakes and sin to Him)
  - Confession to those we have offended (humbly and honestly admit and apologize to those we have failed, offended, stumbled, or sinned against, seeking their forgiveness)
  - Forgive others (God commands us to forgive those who have hurt or offended us, which includes our own children)
4. The Leader should encourage the parents that in order for God to bless their homes the parents must be willing to do their part, reminding them that unbelief or pride will keep them from the will of God.
5. Next go over the four points of true forgiveness, which are:
  - Not keeping a record of wrongs suffered. This means forgiving and forgetting. To forget in this sense means to no longer let the memory of the failures or offenses of others to influence our thoughts toward others.
  - Not gossiping to others about another person's mistakes, failures or sin. This stresses the importance of loving and respecting the feelings and reputation of our children.
  - Restoring fellowship with the forgiven person, as far as is biblically possible. True forgiveness means seeking to reconcile the relationship.
  - Forgiveness is to be granted without exception or limitations.
6. Review the procedures for preparing and conducting the family meeting.

## *WEEK EIGHT - Continued*

7. Remind the parents that their attitude in approaching the family meeting is crucial. Their children will immediately detect and resist their parent's frustration, pride, negative or dominating attitude. The parents must have hearts of humility before the Lord and unity with one another.
8. Read over the *Important Points To Help Your Children Understand* on page 152, giving parents an opportunity to ask clarifying questions.

### **CLOSING PROCEDURES**

- Take a few minutes to ask if there are any closing questions.
- Before breaking up for prayer, remind the parents once again that their ability to follow through is absolutely dependent upon their personal devotional life.
- Encourage the fathers that they are priests and heads of their home by God's design and that they must walk with Him to fulfill this high calling.
- Encourage the mothers that their influence in their homes is powerful. They must be dedicated to the Lord through daily devotions and obedience in order to be their husband's helpmate and the nurturer of their children.
- Encourage the single parents that they can be enough for their children if they allow God to be enough for them!
- Remind parents that they must be diligent in praying over and praying for their children.
- Encourage the parents to continue praying for their prayer partners and suggest that they may want to keep in touch in order to support one another in prayer.
- Break up into small groups to pray. Exchange prayer requests between prayer partners.
- Remind the parents of the date for the follow-up meeting, encouraging them to attend.

## ONE MONTH FOLLOW-UP MEETING

The purpose for this meeting is for parents to share their praise reports, as well as their struggles, and to encourage one another. The Leader should be aware that some parents,

- May be frustrated
- Have not followed through with their plan
- Have come to believe that this does not work for their family
- Believe that there must be something more that they should be doing

### MEETING PROCEDURES

1. Years of bad habits are not easily broken. The Leader should remind the parents that nothing of real value is accomplished overnight and that endurance and perseverance are vital in this process.
2. Go around the room, giving each parent time to share.
3. Remember that, though this meeting is an opportunity for parents to give and receive encouragement from each other, they should be strongly discouraged from giving counsel or advice to one another.
4. The Leader should be prepared to *lighten* or alleviate potential tension with encouraging statements, such as:
  - *We don't belittle our spouses here.*
  - *We are all here to learn.*
  - *God has a big job on His hands, but He is faithful.*
  - *God did not make a mistake when He gave us our children.*
  - *God knows what He is doing. We have to trust Him to tell us!*
  - *It's okay that you didn't know this before. God knows you are ready to receive now.*
  - *We have a powerful God. He can redeem our failures and mistakes.*
  - *God has given our kid's a free will.*
  - *We only have to be obedient to do our part. God will be faithful to do His part.*
5. The Leader should also be prepared, if serious problems exist in the home, to refer parents back to their pastor.
6. Remind the parents that, as their children mature, they will need to periodically re-evaluate their rules, disciplines, punishments and chore lists, and make necessary changes.
7. Close your meeting with a group prayer time.

## ***ABOUT THE AUTHOR***

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Craig Caster is the founder and director of the Family Support Foundation Ministry, established in San Diego in 1994.

Craig has gained a reputation among many local evangelical churches as a trusted resource for counseling parents of teens in crisis. He has developed biblically based parenting tools and has taught thousands through parenting seminars hosted in churches around the country. These biblical parenting seminars have been embraced by the county of San Diego, and meet the requirement for parents under court order to attend parenting classes. Craig has authored a church youth mentoring manual to assist churches in developing mentoring programs for children from single-parent families, foster care and group homes. Craig has had over 16 years of experience working with both children and parents as a youth pastor, marriage counselor, teacher and speaker.

In addition, Craig has served on several school and community based organizations. In 1997 he was asked by the San Diego City Attorney's Office to help design their *Parenting Project* (an early intervention program for troubled teens, also providing support and resources for parents) in collaboration with the police department, juvenile probation, and the county courts.

Craig has been married for over 20 years to his high school sweetheart, Cha Cha. They are the parents of three children, Nicholas, Justin and Katelyn.

*The Family Support Foundation has been a blessing beyond words. I am happy to see their workbook, Parenting Is A Ministry that takes their vision and practical teaching and puts into the hands of all that need it. I have already used it. I recommend it to any pastor or parent who wants help that really works.*

**-Pastor Rob Hubbard, Calvary Chapel of Ramona, CA**

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*Craig Caster is a man of integrity and is truly anointed to help people learn how to parent God's way. His ministry has been effective in strengthening and equipping our leadership and the parents of our church. I strongly encourage churches to embrace FSF and the materials their ministry provides to meet a great need in our world – the need for biblical parenting.*

**-Pastor Brian Newberry, Calvary Chapel of San Diego, CA**

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*Craig Caster has captured God's heart in empowering parents with God's word to see their call as fathers and mothers as a divine commission to raise disciples in the Christian faith. This is a must read workbook for all parents who are compelled to replicate Joshua's declaration, "as for me and my family we will serve the Lord." (Joshua 24:15)*

**-Mickey Stonier, Ph.D.**

**Assistant Pastor, Horizon Christian Fellowship, San Diego, CA**

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*I know I would not be the man I am today without my father's teachings.*

**-Nicholas Caster**

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*PIAM presents biblical tools for raising children God's way. I was raised with the guidelines that are presented in this book, but have also witnessed parents who have raised their children their own way, and am aware of the outcome. I believe God has inspired my father to write this book for the body of Christ to strengthen their families.*

**-Justin Caster**

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*"Parenting is a Ministry" is a joy to study, and not only for parents, but for grandparents as well. We only wish we had this information when we were raising our eight children.*

**-Terry and Barbara Caster (Craig's parents)**

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